



April 2014

Issue No. 92

# *IN SIGHT* for Oregon Lawyers and Judges

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

## BOUNCING BACK – A SHORT GUIDE TO RESILIENCE

Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress. It means “bouncing back” from difficult experiences.

Research has shown that resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary. Being resilient does not mean that a person doesn’t experience difficulty or distress. Resilience is not a trait that people either have or do not have. It involves behaviors, thoughts, and actions that anyone can learn and develop.

Several factors are associated with resilience:

- The capacity to make realistic plans and take steps to carry them out.
- A positive view of yourself and confidence in your strengths and abilities.
- Skills in communication and problem solving.
- The capacity to manage strong feelings and impulses.

### Strategies for Building Resilience

Consider the following ways to build resilience in developing your personal strategy.

**Make connections.** Good relationships with others are important. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you strengthens resilience. Some people find that being active in their communities provides social support. Assisting others in their time of need also can benefit the helper.

**Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems.** You can’t change the fact that highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to these events. Try looking beyond the present to how future circumstances may be a little better. Note any subtle ways in which you might already feel somewhat better as you deal with difficult situations.

**Accept that change is a part of living.** Certain goals may no longer be attainable as a result of adverse situations. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter.

**Move toward your goals.** Do something regularly – even if it seems like a small accomplishment – that enables you to move toward your goals. Instead of focusing on tasks that seem unachievable, ask yourself, “What’s one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?”

**Take decisive actions.** Act on adverse situations as much as you can. Take decisive actions, rather than detaching completely from problems and stresses and wishing they would just go away.

**Look for opportunities for self-discovery.** People often learn something about themselves and may find that they have grown in some respect as a result of their struggles. Many people who have experienced tragedies and hardship have reported better relationships, greater sense of strength even while feeling vulnerable, increased sense of self-worth, a more developed spirituality, and heightened appreciation for life.

**Nurture a positive view of yourself.** Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps build resilience.

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**Keep things in perspective.** Even when facing very painful events, try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective.

**Maintain a hopeful outlook.** An optimistic outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life. Practice visualizing what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear.

**Take care of yourself.** Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in activities that you enjoy. Taking care of yourself helps to keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience.

**Additional ways of strengthening resilience may be helpful.** For example, some people write about their deepest thoughts and feelings related to trauma or other stressful events in their life. Meditation and spiritual practices help some people build connections and restore hope.

### Some Questions to Ask Yourself

- What kinds of events have been most stressful for me?
- How have those events typically affected me?
- Have I found it helpful to think of important people in my life when I am distressed?
- To whom have I reached out for support in working through a traumatic or stressful experience?
- What have I learned about myself and my interactions with others during difficult times?
- Has it been helpful for me to assist someone else going through a similar experience?
- Have I been able to overcome obstacles, and if so, how?
- What has helped make me feel more hopeful about the future?

### Staying Flexible

Resilience involves maintaining flexibility and balance in your life as you deal with stressful circumstances and traumatic events. This happens in several ways:

- Letting yourself experience strong emotions, and also realizing when you may need to avoid experiencing them at times in order to continue functioning.
- Stepping forward and taking action to deal with your problems and meet the demands of daily living, and also stepping back to rest and reenergize yourself.

- Spending time with loved ones to gain support and encouragement, and also nurturing yourself.

- Relying on others, and also relying on yourself.

The OAAP can help you build your resilience. Contact us at 503-226-1057 or 1-800-321-6227.

*Source: American Psychological Association ([www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)).*