

The Power of Resilience

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A few weeks ago I watched a segment on TV about Alex Smith (an NFL quarterback) who recently returned to the playing field after suffering a devastating leg injury during the 2018 season. He explained the process of having extensive surgical procedures (with complications) followed by grueling and intensive physical therapy over a period of many months. At the end of the piece, he expressed his gratitude to all in his support group who contributed to his ultimate success by offering emotional assistance along his arduous journey.

This story reinforced the need to be resilient as we face life's challenges, especially given what each of us has endured in 2020!

What does resilience mean?

Merriam-Webster defines resilience as follows:

- **Resilience** – an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change

While not everyone is born with the ability to be resilient, I believe this is a skill that can be learned and honed over time by proactively confronting and addressing life obstacles and setbacks.

During the past year, most of us suffered misfortune in one way or another due to the pandemic. Some people lost their jobs or saw their promising careers take a turn for the worse. Others lost loved ones to COVID-19 and were unable to honor their memory with a proper service in light of social distancing requirements. Many among us were also forced to cancel wedding ceremonies or other important social events – including long-planned family vacations.

Regardless of the calamity we have been forced to endure, with the advent of new vaccines and the promise of recovery in the new year, we all need to find ways to “bounce back” from 2020 and reclaim what we lost as we move forward. Thus, the challenge for all of us is to become more resilient in 2021!

How can you become more resilient?

In my experience, becoming resilient takes constant effort as well as the formulation of a Plan of Action that is designed to produce the results that we desire. The key ingredients should include both a positive mindset and a proactive approach that increases the likelihood of success. My advice for becoming more resilient during 2021 includes the following:

- Recognize the misfortune that you have experienced and understand its significance to you and your family
- Focus on the positive lessons you can learn from your past experience and ask yourself what you can do differently in the coming year to generate a better result
- Remain flexible and be open to new ideas, realizing that life has changed and old habits or approaches may need to be revised
- Stay positive and take an optimistic outlook on your situation while relying on your personal strengths and abilities. Assess the strengths that have produced positive outcomes for you in the past.
- Take advantage of your personal and professional network and be willing to accept the help and support offered by those in your network. Recognize that you are not alone!
- Be proactive and develop a Plan of Action that includes concrete action steps that are designed to further your goals and objectives
- Monitor your plan and be willing to make adjustments, as needed, as you face challenges and unexpected hurdles that stand in your way

What is the benefit of improved resilience?

Although the benefits of becoming more resilient may seem obvious, there are several advantages to cultivating this personality trait that are more subtle and long-lasting. Here are just a few examples of what resilience can do for each of us:

- **Spurs innovation – forces us to be creative and seek new ways of doing things**
- **Broadens skill set – enhances personal growth and development**
- **Strengthens self-reliance – improves confidence as we overcome challenges**
- **Sharpens cognitive functioning – including learning, thinking, reasoning, problem solving and decision-making**
- **Builds fortitude and resolve – develops courage to face challenges and adversity without fear**

The benefits of resilience are cumulative, and grow with each difficult situation that we face and ultimately overcome. Collectively, they give us the capacity to face future hardship with an increased ability to succeed.

The Resilience Challenge

In conclusion, the need to become more resilient after what has transpired during 2020 is paramount for all of us. Regardless of how significantly we have been impacted individually and collectively, the challenge is to possess a positive mindset and create a plan that can be successfully implemented to achieve our goals during the coming year. What will you do to recover from any misfortune that has befallen you over the past year, and who can you partner with to prosper in the coming year?