



The New Resilient: Resilience with a Positive Mindset.

Sometimes it feels like you've just gotten a good grip on things when life suddenly throws another curve ball at you. Then again, one thing is certain: throughout our lives we will all have to manage multiple smaller and larger events that will impact our lives. Given the average life expectancy is 80+ years old, it is natural that during our lifetime we might experience loss, relationship breakdowns, significant health issues and so on. Today, we can add the recent pandemic, a divorce rate of over 40% in developed countries and financial struggles. Couple these with the uncertainty that comes with the development of future technologies and potential dramatic environmental changes, and you can see how important it is to be resilient.

Many consider emerging from a successfully managed crisis a display of resilience. But what is resilience? Is it possible to learn and build skills to become resilient? Or does resilience only come by successfully overcoming major events, such as the divorce of our parents, rejection by our social group or surviving a major health crisis? Resilience is the ability to be happy and successful again after something difficult or bad has happened. It is also the quality of being able to return quickly to the good state that existed before the challenge, for example, the country's economy after a recession or nature after a natural disaster.

In 2020, it seems that we have experienced it all. And, for the foreseeable future, it looks like the pandemic will dictate our new normal. So, what does it mean to be resilient? Is there a limit to how many times you can bounce back? And how will this all play out for our social and emotional wellbeing? It is fair to say, at this stage we do not know exactly how or where we will end up. It seems that in many countries, people are experiencing a collective trauma. Therefore, I will argue that for you, your children and our nurture's wellbeing, resilience is even more important going forward. The hope is that from this chaos something new will emerge that will allow us to live in line with our values, boost the condition of our and the environment's wellbeing, and that after everything, we are more ready for the inevitable consequences that will have an impact on our lives – artificial intelligence, the state of our employment and the economy.

Since the 70s, companies have adopted Milton Friedman's theory that their primary responsibility is to maximise and put profits first, and that a business exists to make money for their owners and shareholders. Since then, companies have prioritised the wants, needs and desires of an external group over their customers, employees and often the environment. A company's goal shouldn't be production, consumption and economic growth no matter what. Instead, the end goal needs to look after the wellbeing of humans and planet earth. Currently, we are treating both as if they were tools, or instruments, to make profit. Over the years, our profit KPI's have steadily increased, while at the same time workforce has been cut down. Or, if you work in another field like the building industry, you most likely have to work and deliver much faster, while dealing with increasing safety demands and legal requirements.

The wellbeing of humans and nature should be front and centre, and a percentage of profit should serve the greater good. Simone Sinek argues there is a “lack of leadership in politics and in corporate”. And while this dilemma is beginning to gain wider recognition, it is a good idea to take responsibility now for your wellbeing and practise resilience.

How to be resilient and at what point does it impact your mental or physical health?

During my working life, I have heard statements like “Peter is not resilient*”, when in fact it was clear to most that Peter has been put under so much pressure over the years that he experienced burn out. Resilience had nothing to do with it. If an employee works overtime for years, checks emails outside of work hours and on holidays, and works on presentations over the weekend, what do you expect? For them to break up with everything else? Or what about single parents who help with homework, taxi kids around all weekend and care for their family and household all while working full time and showing passion for their job? If anyone told them to be more resilient that would simply be cruel.

So, what **can** you do? Build and strengthen your resilience in a positive and gentle way. I invite you to pick two or three activities from the list below and practise them – knowing is not enough.

- ❖ Check in with your feelings and give it a name and time (“I am stressed today”).
- ❖ Pause and get an objective perspective on your situation. What is really going on?
- ❖ Ask for or accept help from others.
- ❖ Employ a learner attitude and skip the outdated ‘know it all’ attitude.
- ❖ Learn from your mistakes; take full responsibility and see it as tool for improvement.
- ❖ Establish your [wellbeing-resilience](#) routine (sufficient sleep, 30 mins exercise per day etc.).
- ❖ Build your mental strength muscles by pushing yourself. The earlier in life, the better.
- ❖ Be the architect of your own fate and take full responsibility for it.
- ❖ Focus on your strengths, not your weaknesses.
- ❖ Think of your [problems as a challenge](#) and apply curiosity to overwrite fear.
- ❖ Connections matter. Find opportunities to share ideas and be open minded with others.
- ❖ Build your communication skills, especially now when working remotely.
- ❖ Be accountable: show up for yourself and others and leave entitlements behind.
- ❖ Show compassion and boost the resilience of others by actively conveying your faith in them.

Four protective or facilitative factors predict whether people will have resilience: high levels of confidence in their abilities, disciplined routines, having ownership (control) and having support from social or family circles. Over time, putting all the above into practise will make you emotionally, physically and socially stronger. It will make you more confident and will improve how you express your ideas and feelings, and ultimately it will set you up for the uncertainty that your future holds.

In a major crisis, I have always asked myself this one question. What are my options here? Getting back up or spiralling further down? For someone as independent as I am, there was always only one alternative, get back up by moving towards strategy. Even if it took time and I needed support from an external party or to place my energy and focus into other outlets, such as volunteering.

There is a saying, *was dich nicht umbringt macht dich stärker* ('what doesn't kill you makes you stronger'). I think this is true to a certain extent, but anyone who has experienced a major life event, such as soldiers surviving a warzone, being subjected to family violence, having parents split up, leading a company or team through a major crisis (merger, recession) or experiencing loss, will understand that the feeling of helplessness, sadness and grief is normal for a period of time. Simply applying some resilience measures aren't enough, you need support either from your social network or elsewhere.

If you find yourself overusing drugs or alcohol, having too much screen time, blaming others and feeling constant anger and helplessness, and if you're not getting sufficient sleep over a longer period of time, it is definitely time for you to seek support. If you feel uncomfortable and distressed, have pain or anxiety, or struggle getting out of bed, it often means that either your psychological needs are not met or physically something might be wrong.

[Get in touch](#) if you would like support building your resilience and reflecting on your challenges. I am here for you.

Iris – Your Transformational Coach

**name has been changed.*