

CULTIVATING RESILIENCE THROUGH PHYSICAL HEALTH AND HABITS OF THE MIND

Yale *Center for Emotional Intelligence*

Resilience is the capacity to recover from and adapt to challenging situations. It isn't something we are born with; rather, resilience is a process that is cultivated over time. It's no different than how educators regularly create strategies and processes to overcome obstacles in their teaching practice in order to reach their goals. Right now, resilience is important because situations in our school communities are more challenging than we ever anticipated. There are ways for us to cultivate resilience in both our bodies and minds, which are not separate but intertwined. It is important to care for both.

CULTIVATING RESILIENCE THROUGH PHYSICAL HEALTH HABITS

Building a resilient body takes time and persistence. We can take small steps to establish good habits that will aid us in this journey. Practicing physiological regulation with mindful breathing, self-care including a good night's sleep, nutritious food choices, and moving our bodies more, will reap positive benefits on both our mental and physical health.



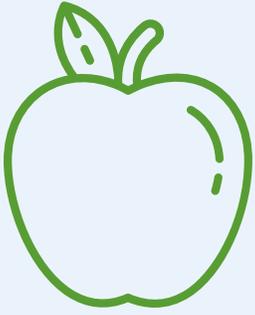
MINDFUL BREATHING

Mindful breathing can change the chemistry of our brains. Breathing blocks the biochemical effects of stress or excitement that shut down our ability to think clearly. Taking slow, deep breaths relaxes the body and mind, activating our prefrontal cortex to feel calmer and problem solve. By activating our parasympathetic nervous system with mindful breathing, we can become more resilient.

GETTING GOOD SLEEP

Getting enough quality sleep is linked to better functioning overall, including clearer thinking, better decision making, more positive mood, better emotion management, more energy, and a stronger immune system. All of these factors help us to be more resilient. Most of us need between 7 and 9 hours of sleep a night for optimal physical and mental health. Having trouble falling asleep? It helps to have pre-bedtime rituals, like taking a bath or reading a book, as these can help us fall asleep faster and stay asleep.



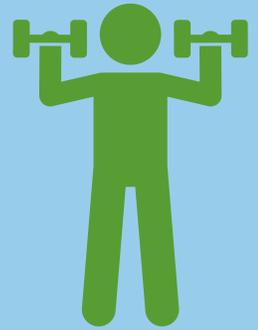


EATING WELL

Food affects our mood - it is fuel for both our body and mind. And our mood can affect what we eat. When under stress, we are more prone to turn to high caloric, fatty foods. Having healthy food ready and accessible will help us feel better mentally and physically, and help us to grow more resilient. As much as it's available to us, we can eat whole foods and a blend of protein, fat, and carbs. Work to moderate sugar and alcohol intake, and enjoy the occasional comfort food. When we fall out of a healthy eating groove, it's important to forgive ourselves and get back on track.

MOVING MORE

Moving more does wonders for mental and physical resilience. It gives us energy, prevents disease, fortifies our immune systems, helps us sleep better and live longer, and mitigates the effects of poor nutrition. When we are more active, we set a healthy lifestyle example for our children and loved ones. Finding a way to move that works for you is important. There isn't a one-size-fits-all approach, and what works for one person may not work for another.



HAVING A PLAN

Having a plan will help us turn our intentions into a reality. It's helpful to think about the obstacles we may encounter and what opportunities exist as we plan to make changes in our lives.



We can turn intentions into reality by having a plan. Think about the obstacles we may encounter and what can be done to change them.

- Identify barriers (children, work, access)
- Consider the opportunities (timing, motivation)
- Ask, "What's most important to me?"
- Set small goals
- Celebrate small victories

CULTIVATING RESILIENCE THROUGH HABITS OF MIND

Mental resilience begins with self-awareness. When we are able to recognize and understand our emotions, we are able to handle stressful situations as our best selves. By giving ourselves and others permission to feel, finding strength in our relationships with ourselves and others, healing in a way that works for us individually, and making meaning of our lives, we craft our own mental resilience.



GIVING PERMISSION TO FEEL

All emotions matter. It is important to accept how we are feeling and to give ourselves and others the permission to experience a range of emotions. When we are able to recognize and understand why we are feeling the way we do, we can then express and regulate emotions in a way that is helpful to achieving our goals.

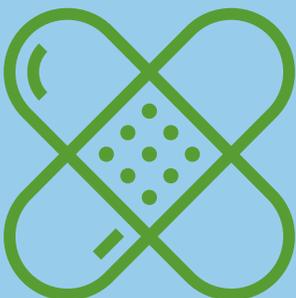
FINDING STRENGTH IN OURSELVES AND OTHERS

During any traumatic experience (national or personal), part of us changes. Research tells us that having social support or a network of people that care about us is key to healing. Expressing gratitude and appreciation for the people in our family and community will help us build and maintain relationships. It's also important to start "telling ourselves a new story." By engaging in positive self-talk or cognitive reframing, we can begin to regulate our own emotions in a helpful way that leads to more resilience.



HEALING OUR OWN WAY

Healing is a journey unique to each one of us. It's not as much about "bouncing back" as it is "becoming." There is no right or wrong way to express how we feel when we are healing, and there is not a standard time limit to how long healing should take. There is power in creating opportunities to pause and make our basic needs (health, food, shelter, and emotions) a priority. Navigating our own way of healing is essential to personal resilience.



MAKING MEANING

The experience of living through current times has created a new normal for many of us. The extraordinary is ordinary, and the ordinary is extraordinary. Intention and purpose have become more important as our lives have been altered by external factors.



We can make meaning from extraordinary life events by asking ourselves the following questions:

- How can I make my life after this event more meaningful based on the new wisdom I've gained?
- Are there questions I could have asked myself before, but didn't?
- Am I telling the story of what happened as a reflection of my personal resilience and healing?
- Am I living the life I want?
- Am I doing the things I enjoy?



For more information about managing emotions through self-care and building resilience, please check out our on-demand webinar.

<https://youtu.be/Gpz9Aq0Wwr0>