



Building Resilience to Change

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You can build resilience to change. It is possible for almost everyone to become better at dealing with change. And for some people, most people if they really put their minds to it, it is possible to learn to master change, and transform challenges into opportunities for a better life. This can be at an individual level, a company level, or even on a societal level. Following some of the most horrendous experiences known to man, have been considerable societal changes for the better. There are people, who have, literally been to hell and back, who have gotten through their experiences and gone on to make significant positive contributions to the world.

What does it mean to be resilient to change? People who are resilient to change bounce back from the onslaught of difficult and traumatic events. Resilience is the ability to adapt well to change, to recover from setbacks, and keep going in the face of adversity. People who are resilient typically take less time to bounce back, and they come back better than ever. If you are not very resilient to change, then think about becoming more resilient. Your journey through life will be a lot easier if you are.

So *how do you become more resilient to change?* There is quite a lot of agreement on how to do this.

1. **Learn to anticipate change.** The more unexpected the change, the more difficult we usually find it to deal with. Now you are not always going to be able to anticipate every change. Covid-19 being a great example of one that I don't think anyone thought of (and if you did why didn't you tell the rest of us about it?). However, you can, by keeping up to date with trends, research, and new thinking, be aware of a lot of new ideas.
2. **Build flexibility through initiating change in your life.** Get yourself more comfortable with change by being someone who creates change. Be a person who looks to innovate all the time. This could be as simple as creating a new route to the shops every month. It could be changing your routine every quarter. It could be thinking regularly about how to improve a process every two months. It could be developing a new habit every quarter. Essentially you want to proactively create change every so often, so you become used to change. This works to keep you more flexible.
3. **Increase your self-awareness.** The more you know about yourself, your strengths, your limitations, your hopes, your fears, and your typical responses to situations, the better you are going to respond to everything that happens to you, including changes. If you know your strengths, you can use those

strengths to help you move through change. If you know your limitations, you can find ways to overcome those limitations or get help from others who don't have those limitations. If you know your fears, which often are irrational and just serve to scare us silly rather than help us, you can address those fears.

4. **Be decisive.** If you are someone who battles to make decisions, you are going to struggle with change. Now you don't want to be so decisive that you do the wrong things. Ready, fire, aim is not good. You'll shoot the wrong thing and end up in a hell of a mess. But you have to make decisions at some point, and usually with change, you need to make decisions fairly quickly. Resilient people make decisions as soon as they have enough information to make the right decisions, and then they can move on.
5. **Learn how to set and achieve goals** (I have an e-course on this if you need to learn this skillset.) The better you are at setting and achieving goals the more likely change is going to work for you. Change, by its very name, suggests that things are going to have to be different. And when things are different you are going to have to do things differently. Which means you will need to change your goals. People who are quite skilled in setting and achieving goals, will also be skilled at setting and achieving new goals during times of change. If you lose your job but are good at setting a goal to find another job, change is going to be easier for you to deal with than someone who doesn't know how to set a goal to find another job.
6. **Have resources in place** This includes all kinds of resources such as people, money, networks. There is ample research to show that having social connections and strong supportive relationships makes it much easier to deal with change. Financial resources also help people deal with change. Because we live in a world where many of us need to have money in order to eat and keep a roof over our heads, money is a means of survival. And not having money is a frightening place to be. Have savings you can fall back on. Networks, personal and business, are infinitely valuable. If you need a new job, if you need ideas for your business, if you need introductions to people, then your networks are going to help you so much.
7. **Develop self-belief.** People with low self-esteem struggle with almost everything in life, especially change. If you do not believe in yourself, you will find it difficult to get other people to believe in you. And if other people don't believe in you, you will find it difficult to get another job, to have another relationship, or to get clients to believe in you. If you doubt your competence and capability, you will not even try to find good opportunities in the change. You will settle for what you believe you deserve which will be very little.
8. **Build skills, competencies, and experience.** If you are very experienced and very skilled, with a highly successful track record in your career, a job loss is not likely to get you down as much as if you have few skills, little experience, and not much of a track record. If you have run a few successful businesses over several decades and you lose your business and have to start again, it is not going to be as difficult to start over, as it was for someone who was just starting a new business for the first time. If you know you are good at relationships, and you have had lots of fulfilling, long-term relationships in the past, you are likely to feel more confident that you will have another such relationship into the future.
9. **Learn to ask for help.** Asking for help is often something we don't do. For every single problem you have that you are struggling with, the chances are that someone, somewhere, has had to deal with the same problem and has come through it. What that means is reach out and ask for help if you are stuck with a problem. Speak to people, research organisations, and find someone to contact. If someone has been through your same problem, they are a good source for helping you find the solution. The contact with others will also help you feel better, and you may even be expanding your network of contacts for the future.
10. **Have a purpose.** A purpose keeps us focused and it gives us a reason to get out of bed in the morning and carry on with life. When it looks like your life has gone to hell, a purpose can be what keeps you going. Having a purpose helps us pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and carry on. If your main purpose in life has been dealt a blow by the change, for instance your business was linked to your purpose in life and now you cannot operate your business, find another purpose.

11. **Put some fun and creativity in your life.** No matter what you are going through in your life, if you can include some moments of fun, it will be easier to endure the process. Because the change you are currently going through has thrown your life into disarray, you don't have to live there all the time. You can have a break where you go and do something that has nothing to do with the change. People who include fun in their lives have an easier time dealing with change. That break from the day to day struggle, that time out, helps to give your mind a rest from worrying about the change, and helps you to come back to your life refreshed and with new ideas.
12. **Recover well between stressful events and changes.** Recently there has been quite a bit of research which suggests that people who are resilient, are in fact, people who recover well between stressful events.^[1] That is, after a stressful event, they make a deliberate effort to relax well. They work hard when they need to. And then when they have a holiday, they have a good time.

These are very challenging times. However, we will overcome. Human beings are more capable of dealing with adversity than we realise. We truly have immense creative potential which usually only shows itself when we are challenged.

^[1] Harvard Business Review. Resilience is about how you recharge, not how you endure. 24 June 2016. Shawn Achor and Michelle Gielan