

## Supporting Clinicians Through the COVID-19 Pandemic

### Tip Sheet: Staying Resilient



This tip sheet offers suggestions staying resilient and supporting each other during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### What is resilience?

- Resilience is one's ability to experience and adapt to or overcome the situational stresses and hardships of life.



#### How resilient am I?

- Where do you fit on the resilience scale? (Adopted from work by Dr. Gail Wagnild.)
- If you are 5 or below, I suggest you seek help from your EAP program, or get a therapist or counselor to help you. (See resources below.)
- If you are 6 and above and feel you are coping ok, then you can build and maintain resilience.
- There are several different resilience scales:
  1. Conner-Davidson Resilience Scale (self-report scale)
  2. Response to stressful experiences Scale (self-report scale)
  3. Dispositional Resilience Scale
  4. Resilience scale for Children and Adolescents

Resilience Scale									
• How resilient are you?									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Total lack of purpose, flexibility, ability to bounce back, always looking back at life challenges, not adapting to stress			Somewhat able to be flexible in situations, bounce back sometimes, have a general purpose and can get on with life challenges, somewhat adapting to stress				Totally able to be flexible, bounce back, and maintain purpose, and get on with life, always adapting to stress		

#### Can some people be more resilient than others?

- Yes and no – yes in that we all have some level of resilience. Starting as toddlers, we demonstrate resilience when we get up to walk for the first time and then fall down. This happens several times and may even result in pain, but we persist to getting up over and over until we are running along. And no, because there is no known genetic link to resilience that makes someone more resilient than the other.
- But more importantly, resilience can be learned and is a trait, behavior/skill to be developed.



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## How do I maintain and build my resilience?

According to Southwick and Charney (Resilience: The Science of Mastering Life's Greatest Challenges, 2012), there are ten resilience factors:

1. Realistic optimism
2. Facing fears
3. Having a moral compass
4. Religion and spirituality
5. Having social supports
6. Having resilient role models
7. Practicing selfcare
8. Maintaining cognitive fitness – challenging yourself and learning new skills
9. Having emotional flexibility
10. Having meaning and purpose in life



## Focus on practicing good selfcare.

- Good sleep hygiene – know your pattern. Make sure to get extra sleep during stressful times. Avoid disturbing the last few hours of sleep as that is when the most REM sleep occurs. Practice good sleep hygiene. Avoid sleeping medication – most cases of insomnia are behavioral based. If you have multiple night awakenings, see your physician. Use cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) to induce asleep. Try noise machines, aroma therapy, weighted blankets, sleep socks, soft music, and exercise earlier in the day. Use helpful apps like Headspace, Calm, and BUDDHiFY.
- Healthy eating – eat a balance diet according to the ADA and load up on foods rich in antioxidants. Take supplements if you are running on fumes. Keep healthy snacks – pack and go fruits (e.g. banana, clementine, apple, grapes, all berries - blueberries/raspberries/blackberries, nuts (e.g. snack pack almonds and grains), and vegetables (e.g. carrots, snap peas, broccoli).
- Physical exercise – exercise increases endorphins and gives you energy. So, if you are feeling sluggish and need a quick pick me up – go for a brisk walk or walk up and down the stairs in your house, dance, do aerobics or Tai chi. Avoid working out too late in the evening and these endorphins may prolong time to sleep. But remember, overall, exercise improves sleep – so keep at it. Make sure you are healthy to start exercising and start low and go slow if you have conditions that may cause injury or harm.



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- Prioritize time for selfcare – Placing 'Y-O-U' on the top of the to do list is my number one activity that supports self-care. Do this every day and find time in your day that gives you a sense of control over your well-being. (See my top ten list on our webpage.)

### A focus on having emotional flexibility.

- Emotions are normal. Basic emotions are fear, sadness, anger, grief, loneliness, and anxiety.
- Face the facts, you are human too and therefore you have emotions.
- Recognize and train emotional responses to stressors.
- Emotional intelligence is a major game changer – read anything by Daniel Goleman to help support emotional intelligence of (EI)

### What happens when my resilience runs down?

- You will have difficulty coping and adjusting to acute and chronic stressors
- You will have increased risk of burnout
- You may cope in unhealthy ways – substance use, pornography, gambling, overeating, etc.
- You stop thriving and just try to survive
- You may develop worsening relationships within the family, friends, colleagues
- Patient care may worsen



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*“Finding and living from a place of meaning is the single most important avenue for being resilient.”*

*~ Beth Miller, PhD – The Women’s Book of Resilience: 12 Qualities to Cultivate. pg 168*

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### How do I get started building or maintaining my resilience?

- As with all changes, start by reflecting.
- Take a wellness hour break. Find a place that is comfortable, quiet and when you can be alone without disruptions for at least 20-30 minutes (goal would be an hour).
- Take a mental vacation! Look at pictures of nature or your favorite family holiday or past vacation pictures. Read a magazine or book you like (not work-related journals or required readings), think about a happy and positive memory.
- Reflect on your purpose and meaning and values.
- Identify with you would like to improve or intend to change.
- Start with one thing. Write it down.

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- Use our B-A-SMARTER goal and objective format. (See tip on goal setting.)
- Work toward achieving that goal that focuses on building and/or maintaining your resilience.
- Once achieved, assure it is habit and then start your next resilient goal.

(See our recommended apps in our tip sheet on Stress Reduction. But know that Headspace® is a free app that is providing a free subscription to all healthcare providers for 2020. Download the app and enter your NPI number to access the free subscription.)

**Resources:** MH specialists, coaches, psychiatry, primary doctor, etc. Each picture is hyperlinked to the actual webpage. Simply click on the picture.

- American Psychological Association: <https://www.apa.org/> - click on *psychological help center*, then *find a psychologist*.
- International Coaching Federation: <https://coachfederation.org/> - click on *find a coach*.
- American Psychiatric Association: <https://www.psychiatry.org/> - click on *Patient/Families* then click *find a psychiatrist*.
- The American College of Physicians – COVID-19 Resources for physicians. <https://www.acponline.org/>
- The American Medical Association – resources for Physicians. <https://www.ama-assn.org/>
- The National Academy of Medicine – Well-being resources. <https://nam.edu/initiatives/clinician-resilience-and-well-being/clinician-well-being-resources-during-covid-19/>

