



RESILIENCE—THE ABILITY TO BOUNCE BACK!

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YOUNG REVIEWERS:



EDDIE

AGE: 9



ELLIE

AGE: 12



JACK

AGE: 10



SAM

AGE: 11

Resilience means “bouncing back” after a setback, like when you fall off your bike but get back on and try again, or when you do not do well on a test but keep studying and improve next time. This means that when people go through tough situations, resilience helps them to adapt successfully and go back to normal quicker. For kids, resilience can come in handy when you are faced with difficult problems or new environments. Our resilience is shaped by the things we do and the people in our lives. It changes and grows as we experience new things throughout our lives. We can also increase our resilience by building supportive relationships and modeling our behavior after good role models. Resilience in childhood has a big impact on children’s mental, physical, and emotional health and continues to influence them as they grow older. By building resilience, we can improve our grades in school and enjoy life more, while also feeling less worried and sad.

BOUNCING BACK: THE STORY OF PETER, FATIMA, AND THE POWER OF RESILIENCE

Imagine Peter and Fatima, both kids your age, playing on the school's football team. They lost an important game and, naturally, all the kids felt sad about it. However, their reactions to the loss were different. Peter remained sad for days and did not want to play football for a few weeks. He continued to think about all the mistakes he made during the game, and his sad feelings got worse. He is afraid to play again because he thinks his team will lose once more. On the other hand, Fatima, after feeling a little bit sad, went back to the football field and started practicing again. Fatima reflected on the mistakes she made during the game, and she is determined to improve her football skills.

How can we explain the difference between Peter's and Fatima's reactions to the same **adversity**—the disappointing outcome of their football match? **Psychologists** would say that the key difference between Peter and Fatima is that Fatima has more **resilience**. In this article, we will explain what resilience is, what it does for people, how you can increase your resilience, and the connections between resilience, school performance, and health.

WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

Psychologists define resilience as a human characteristic or **trait**. Traits are part of who we are as humans, and all humans have the trait of resilience. However, the strength of this trait varies between people—some individuals have more resilience, while others have less.

Resilience helps us deal with tough situations such as losing a football match, receiving a low grade, or coping with our own or a family member's illness. Psychologists often describe resilience as "bouncing back" after experiencing a setback. In other words, when we encounter challenging situations, resilience enables us to adapt successfully and recover more quickly. In the example, Fatima bounced back more quickly than Peter and responded to a difficult situation in a more positive manner, showing more resilience (Figure 1) [1].

Does having strong resilience mean that we should not feel sad when something bad happens? No. When a negative event happens, such as losing something important, anyone can feel defeated, stressed, or sad—it is part of human nature. However, if we have strong resilience, we will feel these negative emotions for a shorter period and find positive ways to cope with them. Remember how Fatima returned to the football field and started practicing to improve her football skills? That is why resilience is crucial for handling **stress** throughout our lives,

ADVERSITY

Trouble, hardship, or difficulty.

PSYCHOLOGIST

A person who studied psychology and learned to find out how people think, feel, and behave, and helps them with their problems.

RESILIENCE

The ability for a person's feelings to return to normal after a challenging or tough experience. Resilience is the ability to bounce back to normal after things go wrong.

TRAIT

Physical and non-physical characteristics that describe what makes you unique, like creativity or sense of humor.

STRESS

The feeling of being worried or nervous about something, like a test, a big game, or a problem with friends. Stress is how your body reacts under pressure.

Figure 1

People differ in how much resilience they have. After losing an important football game, Fatima and Peter showed differences in their emotions over time. Fatima has higher resilience and shows a faster return to her normal emotional state than Peter, who has lower resilience, did.

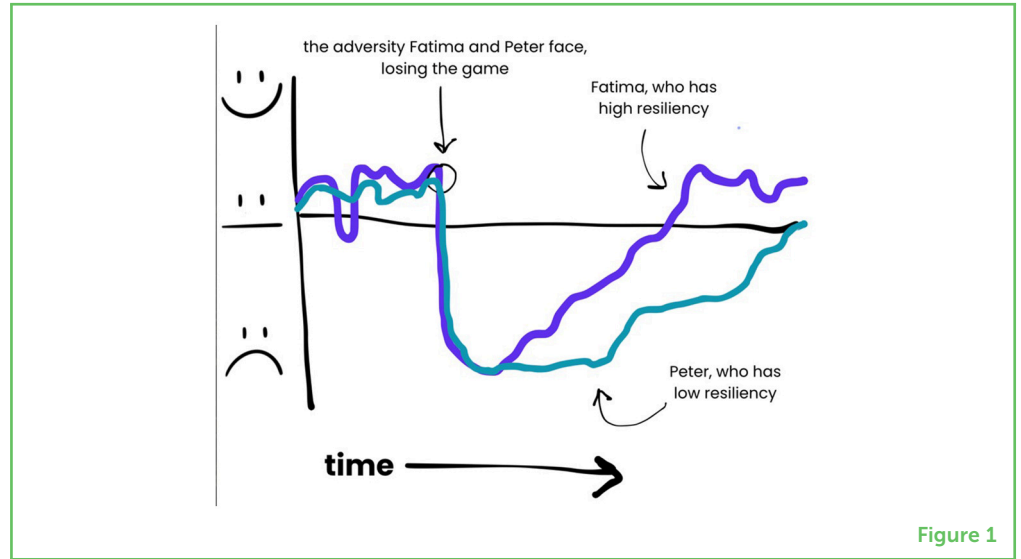


Figure 1

and why it can enhance our school performance, social relationships, quality of life, and health [2].

WHERE DOES RESILIENCE COME FROM?

Resilience is shaped by how we think, feel, and act, and by the people around us, through a variety of factors that continue to change across our lifetimes [3]. We have the power to increase our resilience by building supportive relationships and modeling our behavior after good role models. Now we will tell you about the things that we can learn and do to improve our resilience (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Your level of resilience does not have to stay the same over your entire lifetime—there are things you can do to improve it.

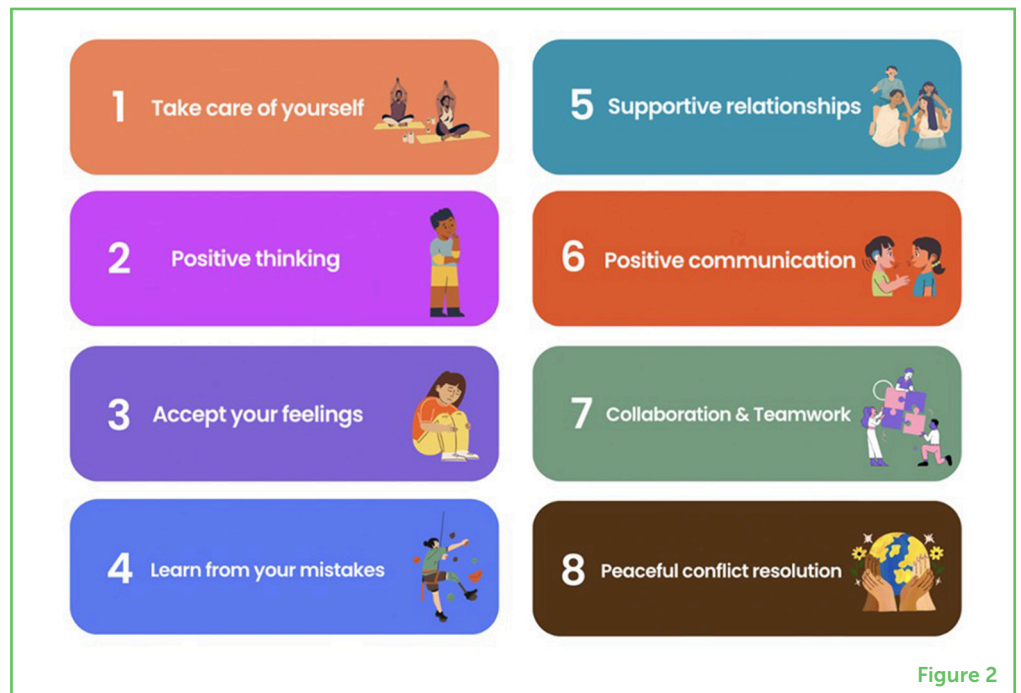


Figure 2

Taking Care of Ourselves

Resilience means taking care of our physical and emotional wellbeing. Getting enough rest, eating healthy foods, exercising, and doing activities you enjoy can help us feel better after a setback and more prepared to face future challenges.

Positive Thinking

Resilient people have positive ways to look at their lives. They focus on the good things and believe in themselves, even when things do not go as planned. They know that setbacks are temporary and that they have the power to overcome them. Positive thinking also helps us to solve problems. When we think positively about problems, we try to solve them and do not hide from them. Problem-solving does not just mean completing math homework—it also means thinking through different options and asking for help if we need it.

Accepting Our Feelings

When we lose something important, get bad grades, get sick, or see a loved one in trouble, we feel sad, anxious, or angry. These feelings are not pleasant, but they are not “bad”. We should not deny them or pretend they are not there. Instead, we can redirect these feelings into actions, to change our circumstances for the better. Fatima was sad about losing a football match. However, she used her feelings about the lost game as motivation to practice more.

Learning From Mistakes

Mistakes happen, and everyone fails sometimes. By seeing mistakes and failures as opportunities to learn from instead of just feeling bad about them, resilient people try to understand what went wrong and how they can do better next time. They learn from their experiences and become stronger because of them. Fatima tried to learn from her mistakes to become a better football player.

Positive and Supportive Relationships

Having friends, family, and other people who care about us and whom we can talk to can make a big difference. When we face challenges, these people can encourage and support us. They can remind us of our strengths and help us find solutions to problems.

Positive Communication

Another factor that increases resilience is good communication with other people. Good communication allows us to make connections and create lasting friendships with others who give us support and who can become a safety net when we face hardships.

Collaboration and Teamwork

When we work in teams and collaborate with other people, we can learn new skills, ideas, and viewpoints. These can be used to help us to deal with challenges.

Conflict Resolution

Learning how to resolve conflicts peacefully and respectfully can improve resilience. Many conflicts happen because we do not understand each other, not because we want different things. If we take time to explain what we mean and give other people a chance to explain what they mean, we can often resolve conflicts more easily. We could also try to find a compromise or a solution that considers everyone's needs. Using respectful language and active listening skills can help solve the conflict. The more conflicts we resolve peacefully, the stronger our resilience becomes.

HOW DOES RESILIENCE IMPACT SCHOOL PERFORMANCE?

In one scientific study [4], researchers looked at resilience in a group of children who all faced a similar challenge—they all struggled with reading difficulties. Struggling to read can make school frustrating and affect a child's confidence. In this study, a questionnaire was used to measure children's resiliency, to find out how kids handle tough situations. Teachers rated each child on how well they bounced back after being sick, hurt, or facing other challenges. The study found that children with more resilience had less anxiety and depression, better academic performance, and better quality of life. Interestingly, the researchers also found that the children's overall resilience increased over time [5]. This means that resilience is not a fixed trait; instead, our resilience can grow and get better over time, especially if we work on improving it. Put simply, resilience is like a muscle that gets stronger when we exercise it. So, the more we practice staying positive, learning from our mistakes, and seeking support when needed, the more resilient we become.

HORMONE

Natural chemicals made by our bodies that are transported through the blood to help our organs communicate with each other.

CORTISOL

It is a hormone your body makes when you're stressed to help you handle tough situations.

IMMUNE SYSTEM

The body's natural defense mechanism to fight off sicknesses. It includes the skin, organs, tissues, and white blood cells.

HOW DOES RESILIENCE IMPACT HEALTH AND WELLBEING?

When we face challenges, we often feel stressed. To deal with stress, the body produces stress **hormones** such as **cortisol**. Stress hormones are very important, and they help us to respond to challenges. But these same hormones also weaken the **immune system**, which protects us against disease. So the more stress we have, the more stress hormones our bodies produce, and the weaker our immune systems become. This can cause us to get sick more often, and it is an important reason why we should learn how to deal with

stress and increase our resilience so our bodies can handle stress more quickly.

RESILIENCE IN ACTION: PREPARING FOR LIFE'S CHALLENGES

Think back to Peter and Fatima. Who do you think is at bigger risk of getting sick? Peter! Because he was stressed about the lost football match for weeks, his body was more likely to produce stress hormones that can weaken his immune system and increase his chances of illness.

Resilience can be a tricky topic to understand, and even more tricky to apply to real life. But it is important to remember that resilience is not all-or-nothing, and that it can change over time. In your life, you will encounter some challenges that you can easily overcome, and others that take more effort and even some help from other people. The goal should be to reflect on what made certain problems more difficult to bounce back from, and how you can better prepare yourself for the next time. Growing up is full of difficult situations, and practicing how to overcome them can be one of the hardest but most rewarding things you can do to help you handle the challenges you will face moving into adulthood.

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YOUNG REVIEWERS



EDDIE, AGE: 9

Eddie loves dancing and making beautiful works of art. She has been homeschooling for 4 years. In her spare time she likes to spend time with her friends and sing karaoke.



ELLIE, AGE: 12

Ellie is in 6th grade, is a defensive star on her basketball team, and often gets lost in a great book series. She loves to love on her mini goldendoodle and play kickball. She is a self-proclaimed carnivore and enjoys spending time with her family, especially her three little brothers.



JACK, AGE: 10

Jack is a 4th grader with a curious mind and active body. He loves math and science, plays basketball and soccer. He is often found bouncing around on his pogo stick (no hands!) or playing the piano (both hands!). His origami collection is massive and he cannot stop reading fantasy series while eating grasshopper (mint cookie) ice cream.



SAM, AGE: 11

Sam enjoys wrestling and CrossFit. He has been homeschooling for 6 years. In his spare time he likes to spend time outdoors with his friends and ride dirtbikes.

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Jordan is an emergency medicine resident physician who recently graduated from Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine. Her research interests during school focused on mental wellness of doctors-in-training, due to how difficult the schooling process can be, as well as the emotional and mental toll working as a doctor can have. Her favorite ways to relax and recharge include hiking, swimming, and hammocking when she is not spending time with her cat named Nugget.



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Melanie is a current third year medical student at Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine. She is from Michigan and attended the University of Michigan for college, where she studied neuroscience and a minor in German. She has a pet cat named Mona.



HUDA RABBANI

Huda is a medical student who hopes to help people live healthy lives. When she is not studying, you can find her on an afternoon walk with her friends or stargazing on a clear night with her family.



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Madison is currently a third-year medical student at Oakland University William Beaumont. She went to Central Michigan University where she majored in biochemistry and minored in community health and substance use disorders. She is specifically interested in pursuing a career in emergency medicine or obstetrics/gynecology. When she is not studying for an upcoming exam, she enjoys watching Netflix, cooking, playing board games, and hanging out with her friends and family.



STEPHANIE BAKER

Stephanie completed her studies at Boston College in psychology, with a particular focus in biological psychology. She is interested in how people can improve their wellbeing by connecting to themselves and their communities. Stephanie served as chair of her local cultural council for years, whose mission was to expand access, improve education, and encourage excellence in the arts, humanities, and interpretative sciences. This sparked her love of promoting science education for kids. Stephanie currently works in data analytics at the Boston Symphony Orchestra and in her free time enjoys music, bakeries, running, and gardening.



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