

## Tapping Your Resiliency Assets

Because every traumatic event and every affected individual is unique, there are no clear guidelines for recovery. However, knowing the factors that affect psychological well-being (resilience) versus distress can help individuals cope with disaster.

Resiliency is a cluster of:

- diverse internal strengths, beliefs, behaviors or competencies (internal assets)
- external social and physical environment that accommodates and fosters growth and opportunities for success (external assets)

The degree to which an individual is resilient is dependent on the existence and interplay of internal and external assets.

### Internal assets

Highly resilient people have numerous internal characteristics, such as:

- **Healthy detachment**—distancing oneself emotionally and physically from sources of stress and trouble
- **Perseverance**—the ability to push ahead even when you don't feel like it
- **Perspective**—the ability to see the short- and long-term ramifications
- **Delaying gratification**—understanding that it may take time to feel better
- **Initiative**—taking charge of problems
- **Resourcefulness**—using imagination and expressing oneself creatively
- **Insight**—accurately identifying and owning your contribution to the problem
- **Getting into the solution**—choosing a course of action and engaging
- **Seeing the bigger picture**—incorporating the adverse event into the grand scheme of life and what it will mean in the long run
- **Willingness to try new things**

### External assets

External assets include:

- **Unconditional love from family and support from significant others.** Knowing that one is loved can make all the difference in the world. Metaphorically speaking, the question for concerned others is: How do I walk along with someone who is hurting or scared?
- **Accountability from family and significant others.** Digging out from under the rubble of adversity is hard work. Accountability to others is an essential component for helping a loved one stay on course. For example, keeping appointments with doctors or getting out of the house for coffee or fresh air are important details that might be put off if not for the persistence of a caring friend or family member.
- **Safe physical environment with appropriate social and emotional boundaries.** Feeling safe after a trauma or adversity is vital. Concerned others should think about the following:
  - Physical proximity to the source of the adversity or trauma. For example, moving out of an apartment or neighborhood where one was victimized.
  - Changing a telephone number and getting an unpublished number.

- Emotional vulnerability—blocking access to those people and situations that may provoke fear and anxiety. Many concerned friends want to help, but this can be overwhelming. Also, many unscrupulous people try to contact victims and prey on their vulnerability. Offering to screen calls and deal with these friends, well-wishers and foes helps to establish healthy boundaries.
- **Close friend, family member, clergy or mentor** who can:
  - spend adequate time
  - listen effectively
  - foster trust
  - demonstrate empathy and compassion
  - lovingly challenge maladaptive thinking and behavior

No doubt, you or your loved one can draw on many internal and external assets to support emotional recovery. Reflect on this list and be sure to use positive coping strategies that rely on these strengths.

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