

## Resilience: A Helpful Tool for Caregivers

When life takes a turn you weren't expecting and you find yourself in a place you'd rather not be, do you fall apart or face the situation with confidence and optimism? A resilient person remains strong even in the midst of unpleasant situations.

Caring for a spouse or aging parent can lead you down a road with hard decisions, unpleasant tasks, unplanned life changes and increased stress. It is easy to become overwhelmed and feel helpless and hopeless. A resilient person will look at difficulty as a challenge, not a roadblock. They continue to feel in control of their lives even in the face of adversity. How? There are specific skills that can be learned to help you become more resilient and increase your ability to cope during hard times. Try these steps to becoming a resilient caregiver.

**1.) Solve the right problems.** Instead of mulling over things you are powerless to change, focus on what you can do. There is more than one way to solve a problem. If your first solution isn't working don't give up, just try something else.

**2.) Find meaningful activities.** As a caregiver, much of your day is filled with doing things for someone else. It is easy to lose your own individuality in the hubbub of what needs to get done. It is vital to carve out time to do something you love; something that gives you energy and recharges your battery.

**3.) Get connected.** Resilient people tend to be connected to others and reach out for help when needed. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness but a sign of wisdom and strength. Attending a support group can link you to community resources and connect you with others who are in a similar situation. This in turn will ease your stress and help you feel more positive and hopeful about your situation.

**4.) Remain hopeful.** You can't change what has happened, but you can look positively toward the future. Set goals to focus on—both long-term and everyday goals. Find a success in each day to keep you feeling positive and capable. Expect good results.

**5.) Learn from experience.** Reflect back on how you faced hardships in the past. Steer clear of tactics that didn't work and build on the strategies that were successful. When you do make a mistake—like losing your temper—don't dwell on it. Figure out what led to the error—like a lack of sleep—and fix it. Resilient people tend to find practical and correctable reasons for mistakes rather than focus the blame inward to themselves as a "bad" person.

**6.) Accept and anticipate change.** Learning to expect change helps you to remain more positive when it does inevitably happen. You can learn to be flexible and adapt to changes more easily and not view them with anxiety and uncertainty.

**7.) Take pride in your accomplishments.** When you find success, whether big or small, give yourself credit. Acknowledging that an achievement was the result of your hard work and effort rather than just good luck helps you feel capable to deal with the hardships and setbacks that come your way.

Caregiving can be full of challenges and difficulties. Being a resilient caregiver will help you adapt to the tough times and not only survive these challenges, but become a stronger and more confident person in doing so.

If you have questions about your caregiving experience, please call *\*insert your contact information here\**

By Jane Mahoney  
Older Americans Act Consultant  
Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources