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Resilience– Build Up Your Ability to Bounce Back From Setback

By Caterina Rando

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When you think about what it takes to be successful in a career over the long haul, you might cite a need for intelligence, determination, strategic thinking, or the ability to communicate ideas effectively. While all these and other character traits will facilitate one's ability to create good results, there is another important characteristic that often goes unrecognized and is rarely discussed. That important character trait is resilience: your bounce–back ability.

In coaching and training entrepreneurs and executives, I've noticed that how you react to what's done to you is as important as what you do. We can make detailed strategic plans, begin daily activities to move us forward, put structures in place that support us in creating what we want—but the world will always throw us unexpected changes and unanticipated events. Betty Talmadge, an American meat broker and cookbook author, is the one who first said, "Life is what happens to you when you're making other plans." We cannot control anything or anyone else, and we create a lot of disappointment and frustration (as well as waste a lot of our life energy) when we try.

Life happens. You might be passed over for a promotion, or you might be laid off. The bid you've worked on for three weeks might go to another firm; your great assistant could move to Tahiti. Your computer and its contents could be consumed by a virus; your building could be flooded or your car stolen. At some point in everyone's life, setback occurs.

How you respond to what happens is what will make the greatest difference for you, both personally and professionally. Your resilience is what gives you the ability to get back up after you have been knocked down—even after the second and third rounds of having your plans pummeled.

If you think your bounce–back ability can use a strength–training program, follow these principles to soar through setbacks and keep your resilience revved up.

Use Your Power of Choice

Begin to look at how resilient you are in everyday occurrences. Do you let traffic, a rude comment, a delayed plane, a spilled cup of coffee, or a disappointing phone call ruin your whole day, or do you

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consciously choose to bounce right back? We do not always have a choice in what happens to us—but we always have a choice about how we react to it.

Let It Out

Talk it out with a friend, write it out in your journal, cry it out on your couch, sweat it out in the gym. Do whatever it takes to purge yourself of the emotion you feel over this setback. The bigger the setback, the longer it takes—and the more emotion you have to purge. Do not stuff feelings about the setback; acknowledge your anger, sadness, frustration or fear. Once you're in touch with those feelings, work on releasing them. A sense of closure or completion, which eventually leads to peace, is necessary in order to move forward.

Look for the Lesson

Setbacks serve. They bring with them lessons about you, about life, about relationships. When a setback erupts in your path, do not douse the flames without first examining its lesson. Learning the lessons that your setbacks deliver to you is one of the ways you build your resilience. Prepare yourself for the next surprise by learning something from this one—look for the lesson.

Build on Past Successes

Sometimes your setback might seem too much to handle. There may be times you find it hard to go on, especially after the significant personal loss of a relationship or a loved one. To help yourself bounce back during such difficult times, think about other challenges that you have faced in your lifetime. Think about how you dealt with them—and how you came through them. What worked for you at those times? Was it taking a vacation, talking to counselor, watching "I Love Lucy" reruns, or taking a leave of absence from your job? Whatever it was, ask yourself if it is time to do it again.

Plan Rejuvenation

Sometimes when we experience a setback, it can kick us into high gear. We force ourselves to try harder, work longer, do more. If setbacks motivate you to take action, that's fine—as long as it is not at the expense of your self–nurturing. Self–nurturing, the time spent rejuvenating your energy and replenishing your spirit, is more important after a setback than at any other time. Go get a massage, take a yoga class, melt in a tub of lavender suds, chat endlessly on the phone with a friend. Do whatever it is that deeply nourishes you. Make the care and feeding of yourself a top priority during times of personal challenge. It will ensure that you bounce back faster.

Ask Yourself a Powerful Question

Instead of asking yourself questions that further burden you—like "How could this happen to me?" or "What did I do to deserve this?"—ask yourself powerful questions that help build your resilience. Find ways to uplift yourself; shift your view of the situation by asking questions such as "How can I turn things around?" and "How can I support myself during this challenging time?" Even if you don't get an answer right away, keep asking yourself these powerful questions until the guidance that will best serve you appears.

It is your ability to bounce back after setbacks that will keep you successful and fulfilled over the long haul of your career and your life. What matters is not how many times you find yourself face down in the sand, but how many times you get back up and dust yourself off. Take just one of these principles

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to start with, then add another and another until resilient responses are second–nature to you. As you build these skills, why not start the day with this bold affirmation: "Go ahead, Life, send me a setback. I eat setbacks for breakfast; they are great fuel for the day!"

Caterina Rando, MA, MCC, helps people achieve success with ease. She is a success speaker, master certified coach and author of the award winning national best–seller "Learn to Power Think." To find out about her book, free e–zine, free articles and other resources, visit <http://www.caterinar.com>. Caterina can also be reached by email at cpr@caterinar.com.

Reclaiming Our Resilient Spirit

By Eileen McDargh, CSP, CPAE

Our spirits are taking a beating. The daily barrage of bad news, violence, shrinking resources, global warming, and economic slowdown can put us in a state of frustration and paralysis. Some days, getting out of bed can be a challenge.

Within the word "resilience" are actions we can take to reclaim our bounce–back ability.

R:Remember to breathe. The ability to calm down is critical in order to take stock and move forward.

E:Enlist support of others. Love people and be lovable in return. A supportive family (whether genetic or hand–picked) is what keeps people alive. The English word wretched comes from the Middle English word wrecche which means "without kin nearby."

S:Stay focused. Intentionality lays the groundwork for what we want in our life. See it, say it and claim it. Don't let external forces cloud your vision.

I:Identify your strengths. Energy and good health are two of the most essential ingredients in resiliency. Work on your physical well being first because it is the quickest way to gain control over a world that is uncontrollable.

L:Laugh out loud. You'll be amazed at the looks you get. And you'll feel better.

I:Insist on optimism. Positive mental health comes from the ability to reframe a situation. This is not the Pollyanna or head–in–sand avoidance of reality but rather a recall of ways in which you have handled similar situations.

E:Extend yourself to others. Self–absorption backfires. It only serves to deepen depression and worry. Going out to serve others lifts the cloud around yourself and allows you to become both blessed and a blessing.

N:Never say "never". The resilient spirit knows that there is always tomorrow.

T:Thanks–give it! There is much to be grateful for.

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Eileen McDargh, CSP, CPAE, is an international speaker, author and seminar leader. Her book 'The Resilient Spirit' is the companion piece to her talks on resiliency and spirit. For more information on

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