

**Session 6: Resilience**

I wish it wasn’t so, but life is going to send you challenges and setbacks. The difference between a successful person and others is the ability to get back up after a setback and to use that setback to grow. The definition of resilience is simply the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties.

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Carol Dweck pointed out that there are two basic mindsets that shape our lives: a fixed mindset or a growth mindset. A fixed mindset believe that their abilities are set and cannot change. With this belief, they need to prove they are intelligent or talented and will avoid challenges for fear of failure. A growth mindset, on the other hand, believes that with effort, skills and abilities can be increased. They seek out challenges because they represent an opportunity to improve and will persist in overcoming obstacles. This growth mindset builds resilience because a setback is not understood as evidence of a shortcoming or deficiency but rather part of the journey towards competence and growth**.**

According to Dr. Dweck, “Mindsets are just beliefs. They’re powerful beliefs, but they’re just something in your mind, and you can change your mind.” So, the first step towards increased resilience is to embrace the growth mindset and reframe failures as learning opportunities. After all, you didn’t learn to walk or ride a bicycle without falling. Resilience recognizes that it isn’t how often you get knocked down, it’s all about how often you get back up. Dr. Dweck recommends that you look at setbacks as a “not yet” situation, not as a failure. With a “not yet” frame, you understand that the goal is still possible, it simply requires more effort whereas a failure represents the end.

The characteristics of resilience are: acceptance, purpose, and flexibility. Resilient people demonstrate a sense of purpose. That can be something as simple as being excited, curious, looking forward to something or having something of value in their life. With a sense of purpose, there is more motivation to persevere through difficulties. A sense of purpose requires stepping out of the chaos of the moment to see the bigger picture and to identify what really matters.

Resilient people practice flexibility. When confronted with a setback, they allow themselves to risk failure by experimenting with creative and inventive problem-solving. They “fail-fast” and by that I mean, they try something, observe the results, and adjust their direction quickly to course correct. Failing is just feedback that informs their next effort.

You can improve your resilience by practicing three things. First, challenge your first response to a setback to ensure that it represents reality, not an unrealistic wish or unfounded fear. Second, build motivation and perseverance by clarifying your values. Knowing what really matters to you and why makes it easier to stay the course when things are tough. Finally, experiment with creative approaches and anticipate that in doing so, you will need to course correct. You don’t have to get it right the first time.

An almost magical question to ask yourself is, “Is what I am doing or thinking helping me or hurting me?” If the answer is that what you are doing or thinking is hurting you, than you know that you need to do something else or to focus your thoughts elsewhere.

Mindfulness builds resilience. People who engage in regular mindfulness practice are better able to cope with difficult thoughts and emotions. They don’t become overwhelmed by them because they are able to observe their mind, noticing when unhelpful thoughts are intruding and then letting them go. This practice allows them to resist getting drawn into wallowing in a setback. It unhooks the ruminating about problems, hurts, or frustrations. As a result, the probability of trying again increases.