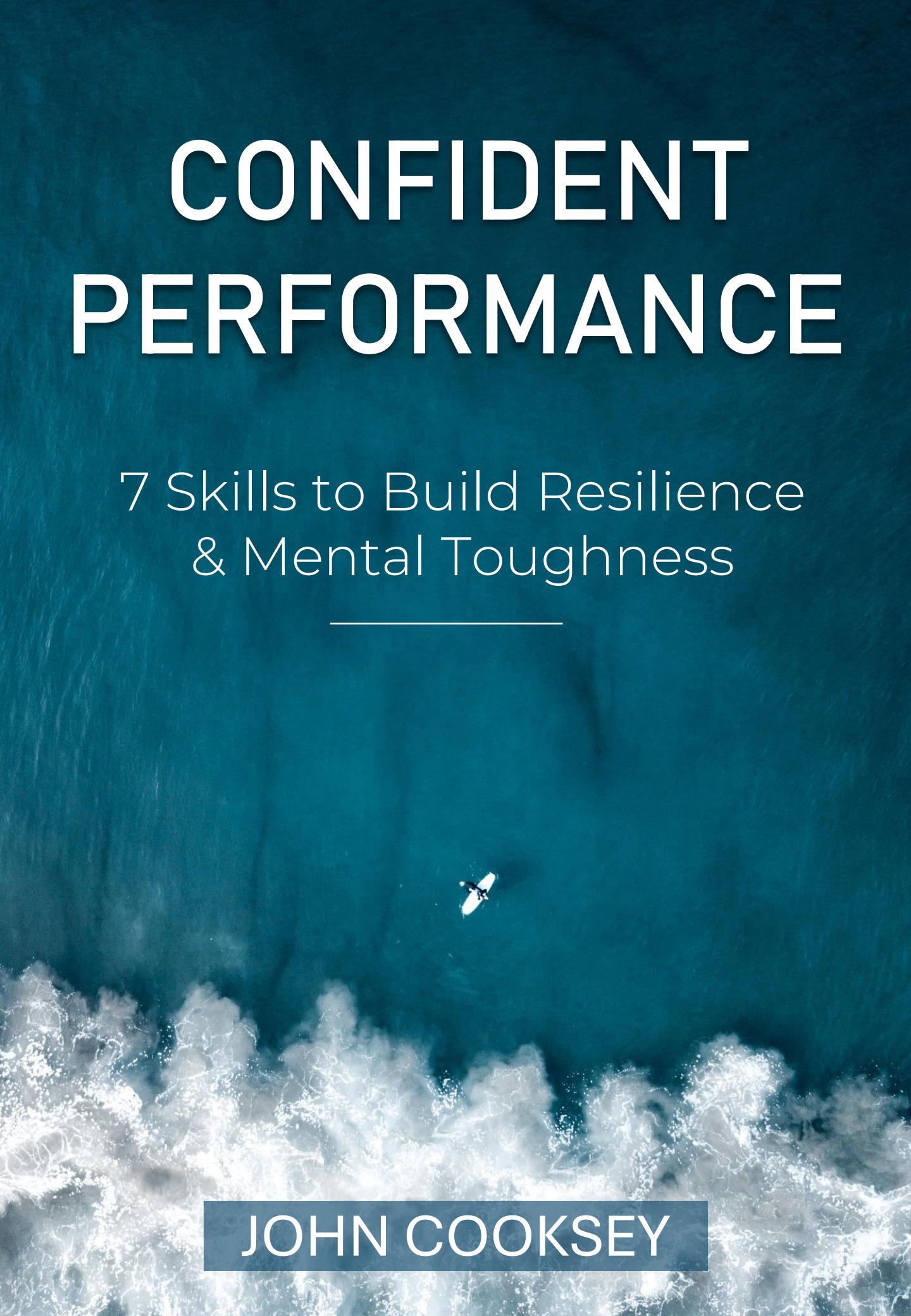

CONFIDENT
PERFORMANCE
7 Skills to Build Resilience
& Mental Toughness
JOHN COOKSEY



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Introduction

Is it possible to change the way we react to negative circumstances? What are the best skills to develop in order to improve resilience and increase mental toughness?

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from setbacks and failures and push through interference or distractions. When a resilient person then moves in a positive and confident manner with the ability to spot and seize new opportunities, this is what we call being mentally tough.

People who can more effectively manage their emotions are more able to focus on achieving their desired outcomes. Meanwhile those people who are less resilient or mentally tough can find their emotions negatively impacting their performance and wellbeing.

"The skills outlined in the book will help you maintain enthusiasm while moving from one opportunity to another in life"
John Cooksey
(Dad, Husband, Son, Friend... & A Work in Progress)

SKILL 1: Understand Resilience

Learn about resilience and how it can enhance your life. Explore what resilience really looks like in action.

SKILL 2: Develop Your Emotion Regulation Skills

Learn to handle difficult emotions with curiosity instead of with a negative reaction. Discover some key things you can do to harness the ability to keep your cool in times of chaos or confusion.

SKILL 3: Taking Responsibility

This section dives into your ability to take positive action by taking responsibility for your situation. Taking responsibility means getting curious and compassionate so you can learn and move forward with more clarity.

SKILL 4: Build Community

Times of stress can lead to isolation. Having a support system in place builds resilience by providing structure and encouragement. People who are in your community can help with problem solving and taking next skills.

SKILL 5: Strengthen Your Relationship With Yourself

It's difficult to be resilient if you're giving into critical self-talk and beating yourself up. Though it can be difficult, it's possible to change your thinking. This will in turn change your behavior and perspective.

SKILL 6: Exercise

Physical exercise is an excellent source of motivation, energy, and confidence. it's a wonderful outlet for anxiety, stress, depression, and other distressors. you'll find ways to exercise that work for you and are fun.

SKILL 7: Challenge Yourself

You can strengthen your resilience muscle by giving yourself challenges to overcome. This will improve your confidence and increase your belief in your own strength. In this section, learn what you can do to set yourself up for success.

The skills outlined in the book will help your maintain enthusiasm while moving from one opportunity to another in life.



SKILL 1: UNDERSTAND RESILIENCE

In order to strengthen resilience, it's important to understand the concept in depth. Resilience is the ability to move forward by growing through every part of life's process. Struggling is a natural part of living. **What matters is how we react to struggle.**

It's easy to let difficulty keep us down. It isn't easy to stay afloat when the waters are rocky, and **it's okay to feel that struggle.** Resilience is associated with mental toughness. Part of being tough means admitting to difficulty and working through it instead of ignoring it.

These myths often get in the way of resilience and slow down progress:

1. **Myth:** Resilient people don't feel sad. This is a common misconception. Being tough doesn't mean that you cannot feel any emotions. Re-building starts by looking at the damage and understanding it, so you can move forward.

2. **Myth: Resilient people don't take breaks.** This myth is false because sustainability of your lifestyle is of the utmost importance, and that means structuring your time to include self-care. It's not easy to stay consistent with considering yourself when you have so much going on.

3. **Myth: You were either born resilient, or you never will be.** Contrary to this belief, it's completely possible to strengthen your resilience on purpose. Skills to build this ability are straightforward and will make big, positive changes in your life.

4. **Myth: If you're not resilient, it only means you have a bad attitude.** A negative attitude can slow down progress, but it isn't the deciding factor in resilience. Strengthening resilience also has to do with taking positive action and changing negative behaviors.

5. **Myth: Resilience is only beneficial in times of difficulty.** This belief is false because the skills involved in resilience positively impact all areas of life. They improve relationships, enthusiasm, and drive, regardless of the state of your life.

6. **Myth: If you're resilient, you won't have any more problems.** Unfortunately, life isn't always perfect. It ebbs and flows and we cannot always control it. Implementing these skills as habits will help you in times of ease and times of stress.

These myths often get in the way of resilience and slow down progress:

When you practice the skills that go into being resilient, you'll notice positive changes in your life. Bouncing back from adversity doesn't mean that things will just get back to normal, but that they will get to an even better place.

Consider these benefits:

1. **Resilience strengthens motivation and drive.** You'll begin to feel more empowered when you practice these resilience skills. For example, being able to look at a situation objectively will help you take more responsibility for your happiness. This will strengthen your confidence and willingness to take risks.
2. **Resilient people make good leaders.** Part of being resilient means knowing what you can do and being transparent about what you struggle with. Good leaders are able to admit when they need extra support. Strengthening resilience will increase your ability to problem-solve and ask for direction.
3. **Self-awareness and self-motivation increase when resilience increases.** Knowing yourself means knowing when too much is on your plate and when you need to take a break. Setting boundaries with people, work, and yourself will get easier as you practice resilience skills.
4. **Improving resilience will build your ability to accept the truth of what life throws your way.** You'll always know that things will get better, and you'll find that you worry less about the worst-case-scenario.



How to Put These New Skills Into Practice

It can appear difficult to implement new habits, especially when they involve making big changes in your life. Keep in mind that you can learn something from everything you encounter, and this is a good opportunity to learn something that will improve your self-worth and enthusiasm for life.

When you're learning something new, it's easy to beat yourself up for not getting it immediately. **Let go of self-judgment and try something new.** If it doesn't work out the first time, see what might work for you in the future and go from there. Go easy on yourself when you're seeing what works for you.

Keeping a journal can help you get your thoughts out so that you don't have to keep them in your brain. Sometimes it can be overwhelming to have so many thoughts swirling around like a whirlpool. Writing it out can help ease that feeling. **Set a timer for 10 minutes and write whatever comes to you, even if it doesn't make sense.**

One of the skills you'll learn emphasizes the importance of building community. You can use this skill to implement changes you want to make by asking for accountability. Having people around you who know the changes you're trying to make will remind you of your goals.

As your self-awareness improves, so will your ability to maintain a positive outlook on your progress. If you can look back at the work you do and be proud of yourself even if you were not perfect, you'll be more confident in your ability to grow.

Part of resilience is facing difficult things head-on. That can bring up some difficult emotions. Explore how to handle those emotions in the next skill.



SKILL 2: DEVELOP YOUR EMOTION REGULATION SKILLS

There isn't very much that we have direct control over in our lives. For example, we cannot control other people, the weather, and traffic. **Though it may seem difficult, we can control our reactions to the many things we have no control over.**

If you feel like you have no control over your reactions and emotions, have no fear. There are specific things you can begin doing that will improve your ability to mindfully walk through your feelings in a productive way.

Having the ability to regulate emotions means responding to all levels of emotional situations in a way that helps you rather than hurts you. **The development of this skill will lead to more resilience by providing a way to feel emotions without letting them control your behavior.**

The inability to regulate emotions leads to insecure relationships and shame because it doesn't directly address the core emotions. Working on emotion regulation will help you identify emotions and react to situations in a reasonable way. It will help you address what is causing your suffering without engulfing you in negativity.

Re-frame the Situation

There are a number of things you can do to strengthen your ability to regulate your emotions. A great way to begin this practice is by implementing a concept called “cognitive reappraisal.” This involves changing your perspective on a negative situation into a positive one.

It's easy to assume that the worst thing possible is going to happen. We tell ourselves stories about the semantics of emails, the odd looks we get, and what the future holds for us. It's easy to wonder what the next unfortunate thing will be.

This habit creates unnecessary suffering and frequently leads to further negative emotions rather than good ones. It's impossible to mind-read and we cannot tell the future. By attempting to do so, more frustration comes and it's difficult to handle. Instead, **look at the situation objectively to consider other scenarios.**

For example, imagine you're having dinner with your family, and someone gives you a look that seems frustrated or annoyed. Immediately, your mind may start racing to the possible things that could be wrong. You play through everything you’ve ever said or done that could have caused this person to look at you that way.

If you believe these negative things so much, you'll noticed heightened negative emotions and a poor attitude. Thoughts begin to flood, and your behavior may be influenced.

Instead of assuming anything about what might have caused this situation, you can pause to take a skill back and re-reframe your perspective.

Rather than having the thought, “They are mad at me for no reason,” you could re-frame that idea and consider the thought, “They might be having an off night, or that look was not intentional.” By thinking of these things differently, you'll feel your anxiety lessen and your emotions will not turn into something too powerful to keep track of.

When you find that you're feeling strong emotions, you don't have to push them down and tell them not to exist.

Allow Negative Emotions

It's important to understand that all emotions are valid. If you tell yourself that there are emotions you're not allowed to feel, those emotions won't go away. Instead, they'll make their way into the ways you speak to yourself, behave, and regulate emotions in the future.

If you can practice accepting your emotions, you'll notice that it's easier to feel them. Acceptance doesn't mean that you have to be pleased with your emotions. It doesn't mean that you have to be at peace with the current situation. Accepting your emotions simply means that you're acknowledging the truth of what you feel.

Rather than trying to push down your emotions, it helps if you can label them instead. When you can label what you're feeling as an emotion, you can say to yourself, "Right now I am feeling anger," and you'll notice a new separateness begin to form where the emotion doesn't feel so much like it's controlling you.

It isn't always easy to acknowledge your emotions and not do anything in reaction to them. One way to develop this skill further is by practicing mindfulness skills.

Mindfulness encourages non-judgmental awareness and will help you sit with your feelings rather than react to them.



Practice these mindfulness skills for emotion regulation:

1. **Observe your breathing.** Set a timer for three minutes and simply become aware of your breathing. You don't need to breathe in a certain way or force yourself to think of anything in particular. If you can spend time simply noticing your breath, you'll begin to feel calm. When your mind wanders, just go back to noticing your breath.

2. **Spend ten minutes coloring.** Whether or not you consider yourself creative, coloring in a coloring book is a great way to focus in on one thing instead of getting swallowed up in emotions.

3. **Play an instrument.** Whether you want to learn an instrument, or you already play one, sitting down to create music is a great way to practice mindfulness. It's also helpful to write songs that can help you process your emotions in creative ways.

4. **Getting outside is a path to mindfulness when you do it with intention.** Walk outside with the intention to simply notice. Observe your surroundings and name the things you see, hear, or smell.

5. **Visualize your emotions floating by like clouds, or like leaves on a slow stream.** Close your eyes and imagine a beautiful place that is serene and comforting. Next, imagine an animal or object gently passing by. Place one of your emotions on each of those things and watch that emotion peacefully float onward.

Mindfulness helps to tether us to the present moment. These skills build resilience and they enhance your quality of life.

Doing these things daily helps strengthen your brain function and reminds you of good coping skills in the future.

Increase Positive Emotions

Whether you're in a time of distress or a time of peacefulness, it's important to have positive experiences. Sometimes we get lost in the hustle and bustle of life and we forget to have fun on purpose. By doing things to have a good time, you're setting yourself up for success in the future.

Having positive memories helps give hope when times are difficult.

If you're struggling, try doing something you've previously enjoyed. **Give yourself permission to have a nice time, even if things feel like they're falling apart around you.**

You can increase positive emotions by doing things that you enjoy. You can watch your favorite stand-up comedian, go on a hike in the woods, or enjoy a cooking class. If you can't think of anything you like, start by going on a walk or taking a shower and being mindful while doing so.

Practicing gratitude brings about positivity, even when it's hard to stay positive.

Make a gratitude list each day and see what happens in your attitude. You don't have to come up with grand things to be grateful for. If you like the pen you write with, be grateful for that pen. If you're having a bad day and can't think of anything, practice being grateful for the oxygen or your pet or your favorite meal.

You can change your current outlook by balancing your negative thoughts with some positive thoughts.

For example, if you're thinking, "I will never understand this," you can replace that thought with, "I am excited to keep learning." This offers a shift in perspective that will help with tolerating emotional distress.

Knowing how to regulate your emotions is a powerful tool for resilience. This skill offers the ability to sit with emotions and move on from them without making impulsive Decisions.

When you're going through a stressful period of life, it can feel like everything is out of control. However, you can control your reactions.



SKILL 3: TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

As mentioned, there isn't much in this world that you have the power to control. Understanding that fact will provide freedom from a lot of stress.

Just as we have the power to control our reactions to situations, we also have the power to control the next action we take.

If you're able to take a skill back and look at a situation objectively, you'll be able to use the information you gain to inform your next skills. It takes humility to look at a situation and see what you could do differently.

Every situation is an opportunity to learn more about yourself. If you can look at yourself while taking a skill back to understand with compassion, you'll be able to make wise, well-informed decisions in the future.



Get Curious

Taking responsibility for your part of your situations can help you take charge of your life. When you're able to look at your life and take a look at your role in it, you can realize your power to overcome.

Begin by getting curious about the situation. For example, if you were fired from your job, you might ask, “Was there any thing I could have done differently?” or “What can I learn from this to help me in my next job?”

Remember to have a totally non-judgmental attitude. If you're criticizing yourself, you're not taking responsibility but, instead, digging yourself further into the challenge.

You don't have to think that everything is your fault. Most of the time, it isn’t. However, it will strengthen your resilience to take an honest look at your part in your circumstance.

Are there people you need to apologize to?

Sometimes taking ownership for your actions can be difficult. It's important to have humility, especially when you're apologizing to others. Your ability to verbalize your wrong doings will display your maturity and ability to emotionally regulate.

Follow this process to apologize effectively:

1. **Before you approach the person you need to apologize to, ensure you know what you're apologizing for.** It helps to write down a few key behaviors that could have been different and that you would like to adjust.
2. **Let the person know that you'd like to talk with them about what happened and schedule a time.** If you bring this up unannounced, the other person may not be ready to talk about it yet. This gives you both an opportunity to enter the conversation mindfully.
3. **Begin the conversation by saying, "I'm sorry," and don't stop there.**
4. **Explain specifically what you're sorry for.** That way, the communication will be clear and you'll both be on the same page for the conversation.
5. **Ask the person you're talking to if there is any thing else you left out.** This part can be difficult, and it's important because it can teach you new things about this situation. It can give you new ideas for how to move forward.
6. **Ask if there is any action you can take to help ease the situation.** Collaborate together to create something that works.

Resentment can hinder the ability to apologize. If you feel resentment toward anyone, you can take responsibility of your forgiveness process.

Forgive Others

Sometimes people wrong us in big ways that impact our lives. Sometimes we feel resentment toward someone for something small, but we just cannot seem to shake it. Regardless of the situation, there are things you can do to forgive.

Others don't always live up to our expectations. They disappoint us, or they intentionally interfere with our lives. Once trust is broken, it's easy to place high expectations on what that person must do in order to prove their worthiness for your forgiveness.

Believe it or not, you have control on when and who to forgive. **You can decide to forgive someone right now, if you want, without them doing anything in return for you.**

The process of forgiveness can be long, especially if you've had resentments for a long time. However, by repeating a forgiveness exercise over and over, you'll ease the weight that resentment puts on your shoulders.

Follow these 5 skills to forgiveness:

1. **Identify your emotions.** Take a moment to get quiet and identify three emotions you feel when you think about this resentment. There is no need to react to these emotions - you can simply identify them.

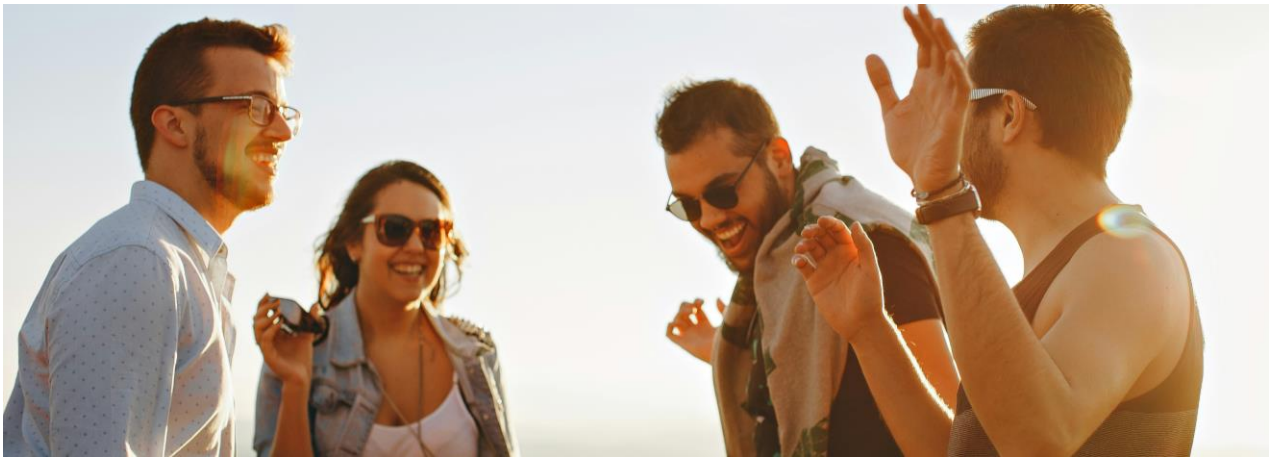
2. **Recognize exactly what you need to forgive this person for.** How did they wrong you? How was your trust broken?

3. **Say that you forgive them.** Imagine that person calmly standing in front of you. Visualize yourself speaking to them, and say, “I forgive you,” to them, over and over again. Say it at least three times and feel yourself releasing the tension of that burden.

4. **Notice how you feel when you release your resentment.** Imagine being free of this resentment by visualizing what your life would look like if you did not have to carry this around anymore.

5. **Gain positivity.** As you begin to feel better, pay attention to those good feelings and invite more to come in.

You may need to do this practice many times while forgiving one person. Over time, you'll notice less emotional pull to this person when you think of them.









Making Changes

It's difficult to understand exactly how to take responsibility for your own happiness. When things feel out of control and chaotic, it can seem even more difficult. There are a few ways you can really begin to implement changes that will last.

Begin by implementing consistent daily routines. Do the same things each morning that help you get prepared for your day. Include five minutes for a mindfulness exercise.

You can schedule your time in order to help you set boundaries and keep track of your personal growth.

Set reminders to go off throughout the day that will guide you back to the present moment. These reminders can help you to pause in the present moment and move forward from there. Maybe you're in the middle of a crisis and a reminder goes off. This will remind you that you get to make your own decision.

Check in with yourself a few times a day to identify some emotions. By getting in the practice of identifying your emotions, you'll be better able to take responsibility for them and make changes that meet your needs. When you can identify your emotions frequently, you'll be better able to identify them in times of confusion and doubt.

Remember to see every moment as a learning opportunity. Continually ask yourself, “what am I learning from this?” Thinking about this will help you feel more empowered to make changes in your life because it will increase curiosity and self-confidence.



SKILL 4: BUILD COMMUNITY

Increasing resilience means building a strong support community. You don't need to have many people in your support group, but it's important to reach out and make new connections when needed.

A community is strong catalyst for a meaningful life. Having others to share our highs and lows with gives a stronger sense of purpose and acceptance. When we're going through difficult times, it's of the utmost importance to hold on to a community.

Other people can serve as guideposts, cheerleaders, and supporters when we let them in. Building a community is a vulnerable thing to do because you have to reveal parts of yourself that show you might not be perfect.

It might feel scary at first, and then it will feel freeing and relieving.

Try these techniques to build your community:

1. **Analyse your community.** Look at the people around you and examine your relationships with them. Do they need to be closer? Do you need to meet more people? Are there ways you can open up?
2. **Strengthen connections.** Bonding with friends is important, and you can do so by inviting your friends to participate in activities you're interested in. Doing things you enjoy with the people you care about is a great way to build a stronger connection.
3. **Allow time for conversation.** Actively listen to your friends by responding to what they have to say and staying off of your phone. By getting to know your friends better, you'll allow them to get to know you better.
4. **Join a group.** You can find local groups of people who are interested in things you love. Engaging with them frequently will give you a group of people that you can confide in and rely on.
5. **Express gratitude for the people in your life.** Even if you only have a few, you can build your relationships by letting them know how much they mean to you. It can be difficult to find good friends, and expressing gratitude is a great way to allow even more friendship.
6. **Be authentic.** Authenticity breeds joy and stronger relationships with those around you. Check in with yourself and ensure you're allowing yourself to be seen.



Communicate

Communication is a skill that is indispensable for getting around daily life. Working on communication skills will enhance the connections you have with others and build new bridges.

The first thing to think about when it comes to communication is listening. Talking is important, but nothing will get done if someone isn't a good listener. **Actively listen to those you're engaging with.** You can do this by making eye contact with them, facing them, and really listening to what they're saying.

If your mind is wandering, that means you're drifting from the present moment. Bring your attention back to your conversation.

Be aware of your body language when you're with others. Much of what we say is said with our body language. Relieve any unnecessary tension in your body, relax your arms and shoulders, and ensure your arms aren't crossed.

Closed-off body language sets a negative tone. Open and positive body language is better for conversations.

Show confidence when speaking to others. If this is something you struggle with, that's okay. Practice is the only way to get better, and you'll become more comfortable. You can increase confidence by standing tall and being aware of what you say. Speak thoughtfully and listen carefully.

Having confident body language will help you become more confident mentally.

Remain Accountable

When you have a community, you have a group of people who can support you through rough times. When you're struggling, they will help you to help yourself up. When you're celebrating, they will celebrate with you.

These kinds of connections add a stronger sense of purpose and meaning in life. If you're hoping to implement some changes in your daily routine, you can call on people in your community to hold you accountable. You can do this by letting your friends know what your goals are and when you would like to complete them.

For example, if you're hoping to go to a yoga class by Wednesday, let some of your friends know your goal. Once Wednesday rolls around, they can ask you how your yoga class was. If you're nervous to attend a yoga class, you can ask one of your friends to join you to ease the stress that trying something new can bring.

Having a strong community builds resilience by ensuring that you have people who have your back.

If you're going through a difficult time, you can rely on your support community to provide encouragement and guidance. If you're stuck in a rut and are not sure what to do next, you can consult your community. They can offer new perspectives and give you ideas for solutions you had not thought of.

You never have to worry about being a burden on your support system. They can offer a light in times of darkness, and you can do the same for them when they're struggling.

The purpose of a community is to have a place where you feel accepted. By feeling accepted, you'll find a stronger feeling of hope. Others can help bring you back to reality when you have tunnel vision during a difficult situation.



SKILL 5: STRENGTHEN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOURSELF

All too often, we ignore and criticize ourselves when what we need most is self-compassion. Self-compassion involves having an accepting and non-judgmental attitude toward ourselves, no matter what. Part of building resilience is building your ability to care for yourself.

Self-Care Basics

The first skill in creating a self-compassionate outlook is taking care of the basics. **It may seem small but doing intentional things to take care of yourself can alter the way you see yourself.**

Start with hygiene. This is where you can make the quickest adjustments and begin to feel feelings of success.

Ensure you brush your teeth each day, for example. Your dentist will be happy, but even more happens. You can spend your time brushing your teeth by thinking of it as dedicated time where you're taking care of yourself.

When you take a shower, be mindful and notice how the shampoo smells, how clean you feel, and how nice the water feels. Being mindful in this way will increase your ability to care for yourself.

A great skill to building small successes is making your bed each day. This has been widely seen as an effective way to start the day because you get to start off your day with a success. Even though this may seem small, the best way to start being successful is by achieving small successes along the way.

If you're having an off morning and you make your bed anyway, you're showing a commitment to yourself and your life. That is resilience in action.

Pay attention to the food you eat. What we eat affects our brains, so it's important to nourish your brain and body with nutritious food. You don't have to change your whole diet - you can simply add a few vegetables to your dinner or eat fruit throughout the day.

Get to know what your body needs more of and give that to yourself. This is a great path to self-care.

Schedule a time each day, or even once per week, where you tidy up your home. Clean the countertops, put away the dishes, sweep the floors, and do laundry. If you can keep up with small cleaning times, you'll find that your living space feels lighter and happier.

It's important to have the environment you live in reflect your needs and who you are.

If you're having a difficult time, your house may get messy. **This clutter will hinder your growth.** If it's hard to get the motivation to clean your house, ask someone in your community to help you get started. Often, having someone there with us when we need to do difficult tasks helps us get the job done, even if they aren't a huge help.

Just knowing you have that support can make all the difference.

Addressing Critical Self-Talk

How do you talk to yourself? Spend a couple of days noticing what you say. **Start by simply observing the phrases you tell yourself.**

What do you think when you've succeeded at something? Are you proud of yourself? What do you think when you've made a mistake? Do you beat yourself up?

Some people have critical self-talk regardless of their success. If they gain a success, they think, "I have to be perfect forever," or "I could have done better." And when the mistakes happen, that critical talk gets even worse. They might say things like, "I am worthless," or "I will never get any

thing right."

A common misconception is that critical self-talk is a good motivator.

Sometimes, saying, "I love you" to yourself is seen as something to be embarrassed about. It can even be perceived as conceited.

However, positive self-talk isn't conceited. Negative self-talk isn't a good motivator. If you thrive off critical commentary, try changing your thoughts to self-compassionate ones and see what happens.

It may appear difficult to change your thoughts. Thankfully, it isn't too difficult when you commit to changing your thoughts and have willingness to do so.

After you spend time learning the negative things you say to yourself, balance those things out with positive thoughts about yourself.

For example, if one of your phrases is, "I will never reach this goal," you can turn that phrase around by balancing it out. Instead, you can say, "I am a hard worker and capable of reaching all of my goals."

Having the feeling that you'll not be able to do something is a great opportunity for some self-motivation. If you're struggling to achieve something, that's also a good time to ask for help from someone who can provide encouragement.

You can give yourself permission to praise yourself.

When you've had a long day of hard work, you can look in the mirror and say, "Wow, you really worked hard today.

Thank you." Talking to yourself in the mirror may seem strange or uncomfortable. Try saying nice things to yourself in the mirror once a day for a continuous period of time.

You'll notice that your self-talk gets nicer throughout the rest of your day and you begin being kinder to yourself.

Take Time to Care

It's important to take hold of our thoughts when we're noticing critical self talk. Thoughts are simply words, they are *not* facts. You can watch them float by, you can replace them with positive affirmations, and you can ask for help to get over them.

Taking action to love yourself is just as important as changing the way you talk to yourself. You can do this in small ways. These self-care routines go above the basics and encourage you to get a bit more creative with doing things that will nourish you.



Do these activities to practice self-compassion:

1. **Write yourself a nice note.** The note doesn't have to be long but it can be if you want. Start with just two or three sentences. Write something encouraging like, “I am glad you exist, and I am proud of the work you do.” You can give yourself the words that will help you heal.
2. **Spend an hour outside.** Get some fresh air and mindfulness while you spend time at a local park, in the forest, at the beach, or anywhere else outside. Nature is a natural healer, so being in the open air can offer a new calmness to your brain.
3. **Turn off your phone and pay attention to you.** Take a break from social media, emails, and other notifications that take you out of the present moment. By truly immersing yourself in your own time, you'll build a stronger connection to yourself. If this time feels uncomfortable, use it to say positive things to yourself.
4. **Write it out.** Keep a journal or notebook for positive, encouraging thoughts about yourself. Write out some critical self-talk phrases and then come up with balancing thoughts that work for you.
5. **Take yourself out to dinner.** It may feel uncomfortable to go to a restaurant by yourself, but it's a great practice for enjoying the time you spend with yourself. Sometimes spending time alone can feel like loneliness. Go out to eat your favorite meal in order to intentionally do something kind for yourself.

Take the time to take care of yourself. **By strengthening the relationship you have with yourself, you'll see other parts of your life improving, too.** Your relationships will be more authentic, you'll feel more motivated, and mistakes will not feel like total failures.

These habits will improve resilience by helping you self-motivate when things are difficult. **By practicing self-compassion, you're strengthening yourself to handle everything life throws your way.** If you can face difficulty without berating yourself, you'll stand tall and remain hopeful.



SKILL 6: EXERCISE

Exercise increases resilience. Part of nurturing your body is exercise, which also strengthens your mental capacity. **When you exercise, you're training your brain to respond to stress in a new way.**

Benefits of Exercise

The first thing we think of when we think of exercise is how it affects the body. It helps with weight management, muscular health, and body functioning. Exercise also reduces risk of heart attack and lowers high blood pressure.

Physical activity is important to maintain throughout your life. It helps with health risks that come with getting older and it ensures good health long-term.

There are physical benefits galore. What really makes an impact, though, is what goes on inside your brain when you make exercise a regular part of your life.

Consider these benefits of exercise:

1. **Exercise acts as a natural antidepressant.** If you're struggling with depression, exercising can help relieve the depression and give you energy to take care of the things you need to take care of. If you're not currently depressed, exercise will help decrease your risk of falling into a depressive state.

2. **Exercise eases anxiety.** It naturally calms the brain and builds new, positive neural pathways. Be mindful while you exercise. How does your body feel? Where can you relax? What are the sounds you hear? By paying attention to the details of your moment, you're benefiting from mindfulness and easing anxiety.

3. **Exercise builds resilience by providing an excellent outlet for stress.** When life is chaotic and out of control, you can participate in exercise and begin to feel better, even if for an hour. Exercising consistently reduces overall stress and helps you handle stressful situations more effectively.

4. **Exercise releases pent up energy.** By moving your body and appreciating what it can do, you're clearing out negative emotions and allowing new ones to come in. While you're exercising, it's easier to put some distance between you and your struggles.

5. **Exercise helps you cope.** You can allow yourself to feel proud of what your body can do. You can feel proud of your hard work and your progress. Giving yourself that positive attention will help you build your relationship with yourself.

6. **Exercise increases confidence and self-worth.** This occurs not only because your body is getting healthier, but also because your brain is, too. Your brain is yours to nurture and care for. A great way to do that is by getting your body moving.

Ways to Exercise

There are many paths to a healthy exercise routine that works for you. When people mention exercise, it's easy to imagine a gym or running shoes. If that doesn't sound like the right mode of exercise for you, there are many other forms of exercise that you can utilize to improve your wellbeing and resilience skills.

Try these ideas:

1. **Think about outdoor activities other than running.** Going on a nice walk is a great way to get in some mindfulness while moving your body. You can also go on a hike, go surfing, go parasailing, or partake in your favorite outdoor activity. You could even go fly a kite on a windy day.

2. **Try something you've never tried before.** It may seem intimidating but taking up a new hobby is a great way to expand your horizons. Going with a friend can be a fun memory, and taking a new class is a great way to meet others. Try rock climbing, surfing, dancing, or whatever activity interests you.

3. **Join a team sport.** We're never too old for recreational sports. Whether you like tennis, soccer, or frisbee, there's a team for it that will be happy to have you. If you're just beginning, don't worry. Joining a team is a great way to strengthen skills because they provide accountability and encouragement.

4. **Exercise in your own home.** Jump on a trampoline for 15 minutes in the morning to get a great start on your day. Use a stand-up desk and balance board while you work at your desk. Take a dance break, listening to your favorite music and dancing with lightheartedness and fun.

5. **Exercise indoors.** Sometimes, it's too hot or cold outside to do an activity that requires being outside for too long. During inclement weather, swim at an indoor pool, take a yoga class, or do Pilates.



How to Get Started with Exercise

It can be challenging to find the motivation to get started with an exercise program. If you're intimidated by exercise, there are a few things you can do to ease that fear and get excited about your physical activity.

Set goals that will help you to achieve success as you get started and beyond.

A great way to achieve these goals is by utilizing your support system and asking them to hold you accountable. **You can also ask one of your friends to begin an exercise activity with you.** If you're helping each other achieve goals, you'll get more excited to move forward.

Think of exercise as an opportunity to learn something new. **Get curious about what your body can do and try to do it.**

It's important to let go of perfectionism. Most people don't stand up on the surfboard the first time they try to surf. That's okay - it's no reason to give up. When you stick with it and see your progress, you're building your resilience that will help you in all areas of your life.

Begin your workout routine by starting small. If you want to try going to the gym, begin with just ten minutes walking on the treadmill. You can go to a yoga class and do your best on every pose, and give yourself a break to sit down if you need it.

Once you have confidence on the small stuff, you can start building up. You'll notice that the one hour you spend exercising will permeate your day in larger ways that make you feel calmer and better able to handle outside stressors.



SKILL 7: CHALLENGE YOURSELF

The only way that anything changes is if things change. If you want your life to look differently, you can take positive action to build the life you want.

First comes willingness and then comes action. If you're willing to make the changes you want to make, you're halfway there.

Taking action requires commitment. Making this commitment in a way that can hold you accountable (to your community or family) is an excellent way to ensure your follow through.

The only way to get better is through continuous practice. You can achieve goals and make progress. You don't have to be the best. The most important thing is that you gain enjoyment.

Seeing yourself get better at a new hobby is rewarding and motivating. So, set yourself up for success by setting goals and overcoming small challenges.

Building resilience happens when you challenge yourself. Challenge yourself to be more compassionate, more mindful, or more active.

Set Goals

The best place to start challenging yourself is by setting goals. Goals are a necessary component because they help you track progress and stay motivated.

You can start your goal setting by thinking about your wildest dreams. What would your life look like if you had no limitations?

Create some long-term goals based on what you want your life to look like. Then, set short-term goals that support and lead up to these long-term goals. Setting these short-term goals enables you to take one skill at a time toward a fulfilling life.

A large part of resilience is seeing the bigger picture. Think about what you can learn and move from there.

How to set short term goals:

1. **Make your goal specific.** For example, instead of saying, “I want to do a lot of push-ups,” you can say, “I want to be able to do 45 push-ups in 6 months.”
2. **Set yourself up for success by setting reasonable goals.** If you set a goal that isn't realistic for you, you're less likely to achieve it. You can get to know what you're capable of by starting small and working your way up from there.
3. **If your goals are time-oriented, you're more likely to get moving on them.** It's a good practice to set two or three small goals each week. Your goal can be, “Make my bed 6 days this week.” If you want to have a project done by a certain time, set small goals to help you take it bit-by-bit.
4. **When you vocalize your goals to someone else, you're more likely to achieve them.** This is helpful because you have someone on your team rooting for you. You also have an opportunity to share your success with someone and have encouragement you when you need it.
5. **Acknowledge your effort.** If you don't meet a goal one week, think of it as a good opportunity to practice positive self-talk. When you achieve your goals, no matter how small, celebrate! Take yourself out to a nice dinner or watch your favorite movie. Tell your community, and they can celebrate with you.

As you think about your goals, keep your values in mind. What are the things you value most? How can you live by those values?



Live According to Values

Using values as a guidepost is a great way to motivate yourself toward your goals. This is an important tool to implement because it will help during times of stress, confusion, and decision-making.

Your values help you determine the way in which you want to live your life.

For example, if you value your community, you may invite your friends over for dinner once per week. Or if you value education, you might take a class at a local community college or read interesting books.

By having a consistent set of values, you are moving towards consistency and meaning in your life. Values promote self-motivation and confidence. Your life is more fulfilling when you know what's important to you.

Values can help light the way when you're not sure what to do.

For example, if you apply for two jobs, and one of the jobs requires moving away from your family, you might choose the job that enables you to stay closer to family if that is what you value.

If you value financial success, you might choose the job that pays more.

Values are a concise guide to living your life.

When you're visualizing your values, it's important to visualize what they look like in action. It's one thing to value kindness, but it's another thing to use that value to help you be kind when you don't want to be. It may be helpful to write down various scenarios in which you might be able to apply your values.

For example, the value of honesty might look like speaking up when you're nervous or taking responsibility for behavior. The value of safety might look like evaluating risks carefully or putting on your seatbelt. If you value health, you might get yearly check-ups and eat your vegetables.

Follow this process to determine your values:

1. Begin by making a list of ten things you value.
2. Next, shorten that list to 3 - 6 values and begin visualizing them in your daily life.
3. Write down each value and put them somewhere where you see them each day.
4. Refer to your values frequently and check in with yourself to see if you're living up to them. If you're astray, non-judgmentally bring yourself back to your values.

Setting your values helps during times of stress because they give you a guideline for how you would like to live. Before you make any big decisions, pause in a moment of mindfulness and consult your values. They often offer a stronger perspective



SUMMARY

Life is rarely perfect, and sometimes it's wildly chaotic. Life is always beautiful. Being resilient will help you remember that through every dark time.

Practicing these skills will strengthen your ability to bounce back from the curve balls life can throw your way.

Keep these tools in mind and apply them to all areas of your life. Changing your thinking and behavior will strengthen your relationships with others, with yourself, and with the world around you.

Without the use of these skills, things can begin to feel like they are out of hand. You may not feel resilient, but you are. Using these skills will help you uncover how resilient you are.

First, it’s important to understand resilience.

Resilience isn't something you were just born with. Resilience can be learned and developed with the use of a few skills. Part of being a human is facing life’s curveballs. Part of being resilient is *growing* through those opportunities rather than letting them keep you down.

You can learn something from every moment and developing your resilience will help you do that.

Toughness includes admitting sadness. It's okay to feel negative emotions. Sometimes, life makes us feel sad. It's healthy to allow yourself to feel these feelings. What is important is what you do next. The actions you take when you're down set the tone for the next wave of opportunity.

When you practice resilience, you'll find more intrinsic-motivation and feel more hope. The skills that go into being resilient are excellent for leadership, relationships, and self-compassion. As you think about your thoughts, you'll become more self-aware. You'll feel empowered to build the life you want to live.

Develop your emotion regulation skills.

Despite how it may sometimes feel, you have the freedom to choose your thoughts and reactions to certain stimuli. **It's important to understand that feelings and thoughts are not facts.** The best way to begin working on changing your attitude about this is by simply noticing your thoughts.

One thing you can do when you're in a negative emotion spiral is to take a skill back and reframe the situation. It's easy to fall into traps where we tell ourselves stories about the worst-case-scenario. If you find that you're lost in a negative assumption, try balancing out your negative thoughts with positive possibilities.

Part of being resilient is being able to sit with emotions. You are allowed to have negative emotions, and you're allowed to admit it when you do. You can find ways to have the emotions without acting on them. Mindfulness skills are a great way to access calm in the chaos.

A helpful way to build yourself up is by adding to your positive memory bank. No matter how small, the more happy memories you have, the better. Getting out and doing something fun is a great way to come out of your shell and increase good feelings. You can also practice gratitude, balance your thoughts, and explore your hobbies.

Take responsibility for your path.

You have every bit of power within you to create the life you want to create. No matter where you're now, you get to choose your next skill. You can look at your life objectively to observe what could change, what needs help, and what you're proud of.

Begin by getting curious about your thoughts and behavior. Look at your situation and examine if there is a role you played in this. Sometimes it's hard to admit or hard to see. Taking responsibility requires humility. If you do owe someone an apology, make it as soon as you can and keep the conversation an open dialogue.

It can be difficult to move forward from a difficult situation or to make an apology when you're carrying around resentment. You can forgive others without their help. Work on forgiveness exercises frequently in order to move past resentment for your own development.

If you want to change, begin making changes by making small adjustments to your daily routine. By working these things into your morning or evening habits, you'll be better able to stick to them.

Set reminders that will go off throughout the day, so that you remember to practice mindfulness. You can also check in with your feelings and see what you can learn from each moment.

Cultivate a strong community.

Having a community strengthens resilience greatly because it adds so much meaning to life. Strong community increases feelings of purpose and strength. Having others around who care and love deeply adds security to life. Difficult things are made bearable by those we surround ourselves with.

There are many ways to build a stronger community with the those you do know, and begin new relationships with those you don't know. Think about your community and how you might want to adjust it. You can participate in activities with existing friends or join a club and try something new with a new group of people.

It's helpful to be authentic when you're interacting with others in order to build the strongest connections.

When you're communicating with those around you, there are a few things to keep in mind. Be aware of your body language. Having an open and receptive posture makes you more approachable. Active listening means truly engaging in the conversation, and it will let the people you care about know that you're there for them.

Use your community to hold you accountable. Having a support group surrounding you will build you up during difficult times and celebrate with you when life is good.

When you're trying new things and setting new goals, use your community to keep you in-line with the way you want to live your life.

Strengthen your relationship with yourself.

Self-compassion is the key to resilience because it prioritizes your relationship with yourself. Taking care of yourself isn't selfish. Loving yourself isn't selfish. By truly giving yourself the care and attention that you need, you'll nurture all forms of growth.

A vital part of self-compassion is recognizing critical self talk. Begin by simply observing the negative phrases you tell yourself on a daily basis. Once you notice what you say to yourself, work on coming up with balancing thoughts that are positive and reaffirming. Praise yourself for your hard work and willingness to change.

Give yourself permission to be kind to yourself. Choose a self-compassion activity that works for you and make it a regular part of your life.

Get your body in motion.

Exercise is an excellent remedy for both mental and physical health.

Physical benefits are boundless. Psychological benefits are also a huge part of exercise. By creating new neural pathways in the brain and releasing feel-good chemicals, exercise is a natural medicine for mental health. It eases anxiety, depression, stress, and other distressing issues.

Confidence and feelings of self-worth increase with exercise. This is an important skill to add to your habits, so it's important to find a way to exercise that works for you.

Challenge yourself.

Building resilience starts with you. Your resilience starts when you start taking action. Moving forward means you need to take the first skill.

When you come to feel empowered over your life, you can take any action you need to in order to create the life you want to live. Challenging yourself means encouraging yourself to go after your full potential.

Setting goals pushes you strive for what you're capable of. Believe in your best and go for it. Start by thinking of your wildest dreams. Set up some long-term goals and then start with short-term goals. Short-term goals are valuable skipping stones. Set goals each week to help move you forward.

Living according to values lights the way. You can use your set of values to give you guideposts that will lead you toward the life you want to live. If you can imagine what your values look like in action, you can start following those actions. If you have a decision to make or a skill to take, consult your values.

"These seven skills will strengthen your resilience, help discover inner strength, and develop mental toughness"

John Cooksey

(Still A Work in Progress)



John Cooksey

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John has an extensive corporate background and worked with individuals, teams and organisations to create confident connections that improve personal and professional performance.

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