

HONEST STEPS

BUILDING EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE



GAYATRI NARAIN

Emotional resilience is how an individual chooses to think and feel in difficult situations.

The feelings that arise in those situations shape our attitude, our vision and our awareness. Consequently, that attitude affects the way we deal with what is happening and the subsequent emotional consequences. Emotional resilience is when a person is able to tell the truth about their feelings and to be honest about what they are feeling.

Emotional stress is when a person is under the pressure of an unexpressed feeling. If we explore the truth of our feelings, we return to what is original and true.

The more honest a person is, the more resilient he becomes. Dealing honestly with life's problems is not just looking and understanding the events as they occur, but also taking

feelings into consideration. Truth is powerful but is not always easy to uncover. We need courage to find the deeper aspects of our feelings as they emerge. The power to face something with courage is fundamental to the power of truth. When you face your feelings, you are open and emotionally free – there's nothing to hide and you are stronger than you think. You are then able to take responsibility for the part you played.

The liberating benefits received from looking within with clarity, accepting what is discovered, and owning those feelings include, peace of mind, a sense of well-being, acceptance of the self, openness and emotional freedom with nothing to hide, a deepening trust of the self, despite mistakes, and a deepening belief in the self, despite any failures.

The ability to be truly honest with the self powerfully shapes our life. Accessing the power of the soul, the spiritual being within, is the way to heal any emotional scars. In using this power inside, we become agents to sort out the distortions of our feelings and to discover what lies beneath them. When we face our feelings, we learn what they mean. And as we grow spir-



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itually and become wiser, we learn how we distort the truth and how to be honest.

Fear is a huge obstacle to building emotional resilience and it weakens us. Perhaps we are afraid of starting over, after losing a significant other. Or the fear of admitting that I was wrong, foolish, or arrogant. Maybe we are afraid of public embarrassment, or of ad-

mitting that we have made mistakes. Perhaps we are afraid of admitting that we are hurt, not loved, or that someone used or abused us.

What role does spirituality play in building emotional resilience? Our spiritual practice provides us with strength and creative freedom to work through the blockages caused by distorted feelings. It offers

us powerful inner resources to lean on to ground ourselves in an inner reality of authenticity and truth. The spiritual resources can be prayer, meditation, contemplation, reading uplifting and sacred texts, going on spiritual retreats. However, spiritual practices should never be used as a way of bypassing or repressing emotional responses.

The spiritual approach is a healing process that transforms through transparency. This healing process lives within you. Turning inside and accessing our real self, the soul, for guidance, for hope, for comfort, for spiritual sustenance is crucial as a first step to emotional resilience. Being conversant with the true self and learning to express

one's feelings honestly is the method of a healing process. It is also important to understand our desires, needs, and self-doubts that lead us to distort the truth.

Connection with the Divine Source is a higher step, and it gives us the wisdom and spiritual skills to grow; to be creatively free to see new realities for ourselves. Connection with the Divine Source supports life and finds meaning, even in the darkest night of the soul. Connection with the Divine helps us to store greater reserves of resilience that will allow us to cope when hard times come. There is a simple optimism inherent in way one can explore the truth; in relation to emotional resilience. In exploring our feelings, we return to what is original and true in us – a dignified purpose and worth of life.

Steps we can take to start this journey of self-understanding and thence emotional resilience:

Start a self-inquiry journal: Capture ways that you coped with the daily hurdles of life. What worked differently for you today?

Power in the pause: Connect to the power of truth within the soul and access it regularly when you find yourself drifting from what is authentic and real.

Be aware: Think your thoughts and feel your feelings – think clearly and feel honestly. Check for distorted feelings of the past standing in the way of new opportunities and change them. Check for the thoughts that hold on to images of hurt and anger and transform them.

Trust yourself in relationships: Avoid self-deception and maintain a hopeful outlook. Avoid expectations, desires, needs, and make an effort to be independent of these through acceptance and understanding of their limitations and less dependency on them.

Commit to a daily spiritual practice: Foster wellness by taking care of your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Eat well, stay physically active, and avoid unhealthy coping mechanisms. Use the spiritual resources available to you.

Connect to the Divine Source: Fill the self with the subtle light that gives strength and support to clear distortions, and reinstate the clarity. This is a powerful form of resilience and of building inner capacity and resilience.

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THE REAL ME

Self-awareness is the key to self-improvement



B.K. DR. SAVITA

How we perceive ourselves as an individual determines, to a great extent, the course of the development of our unique identity. This identity includes aspects such as personality traits, beliefs, values, and experiences. Our self-awareness affects our sense of purpose and our place in society. In addition to influencing how we behave in various situations, interact with others, and make decisions, it influences our personal growth and development. When we understand ourselves deeply, we can actively work on self-improvement.

Self-improvement is usually taken to mean learning new

skills or addressing and overcoming personal challenges. To do this we are usually advised to examine ourselves to identify our weaknesses so that we know what is lacking within us. Once that is done, we draw up a plan to overcome the shortcoming. Implementing the plan may involve challenges as old habits, attitudes, and beliefs repeatedly pull us back to our old ways. In some cases, our family, friends, and colleagues may disapprove of or even oppose a change in us which they think is unnecessary or undesirable. In all these cases we set about trying to overcome the challenges. How we choose to do that may itself set us back if we become dispirited or confrontational. Such tests may lead us to conclude that self-improvement is difficult or well-nigh impossible.

There is, however, an easier way. If we change the way we see the self, the improvement we want will happen from within. This does not mean having fanciful ideas about our qualities or worth. It is about recognising, accepting, and



A diamond covered in dust does not cease to be a diamond.

appreciating our true identity – that we are souls, not bodies - and being aware of it at all times as we go about our daily life.

The human soul is innately pure, peaceful, and loving. That is why we feel comfortable and happy when we experience these qualities. On

the other hand, experiences that take us away from purity, peace, and love cause distress and sorrow. Past experiences of various kinds, including the mistakes we have made, distort our vision of the self and we end up regarding ourselves as unworthy. We accept all the flaws we spot in the self as a

part of our being. "This is how I am" we think. Then, when we look at the world from this inferior standpoint, we become disappointed and defensive, or aggressive if we want to show ourselves – and others – that we are no less than anyone else.

We can avoid these miseries

and inner battles simply by remembering who I really am – a soul who is originally pure, peaceful, and powerful. The life story that has coloured my view of the self is just the set of experiences that I have had in the recent past. It does not define who I am. A diamond covered in dust after rolling in it does not cease to be a diamond. The dust is a temporary overlay that can be removed to reveal the diamond's sparkle.

When we look beyond our story to focus on our original self and qualities and keep reminding ourselves of the same, the way we feel about the self, changes. Our perspective on the world, and our behaviour, also change. When I believe and feel that I am a pure, peaceful, and powerful soul, that reality is naturally expressed in my words and actions. I do not have to make any effort to do that. The key is my self-awareness. When that changes, my life is transformed.

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A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

There comes a time when you have to choose between turning the page or closing the book. How do I know whether to continue with something or step away from it? To stay too long is to invite stagnation; to leave too quickly is to miss an opportunity for depth and learning. If I am open, signals are always there to guide me on my journey. Today let me pay attention to subtle signals and discern the most life-giving choice.

SPIRITUAL CATHARSIS

A CONVERSATION WITH AN OLD FRIEND — ANGER



NEVILLE HODGKINSON

We all know anger causes a lot of harm. It can prevent us from understanding the reality of a situation, ruin the health of a persistently angry person, and cause hurt to others. And yet it does come up in many of us from time to time. Why is this?

I think it is often connected with feeling unloved, and

isolated. Anger forcefully draws attention to the self, allowing our presence to be felt. It enables us to be 'seen'. But to try to be seen is to miss the point.

Anger usually ends up making us feel even more isolated. When we get angry because of feeling disrespected or marginalized, it is not other people or circumstances that are causing those feelings. It is the sensitivity and emptiness within that is at the root of the problem.

Recently I sat down and had the following little chat with anger.

Me: What do you have to say about this, my old companion?

Anger: I know I make matters worse, because I come by taking hold of the reins of



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your mind, and that makes you still more lacking in self-respect. One reason why you find me attractive is that I 'blind' you temporarily, and that fools you into briefly forgetting the pain of inadequacy. But then the feeling bounces back, and you feel even more inadequate.

Me: Thank you. That is very clear. The tendency is there. The way to say goodbye to it is to remove the 'need' for you. That means staying in my own self-respect, as an eternal soul whose deepest nature is like that of the Supreme Mother and Father. However, it does not feel that simple in practice.

Anger: I have been around for a long time. Any time you become frustrated or hurt, I am liable to reappear, like a genie summoned by its master. You have to be very attentive to keeping your thoughts positive. A lot of understanding is required for that.

Me: What kind of understanding?

Anger: You need to know that although there is a lot of

negativity in today's world, it was not always like that, and it will not always be like that in the future. Time runs cyclically. There was a time when human beings were so full of truth, I did not exist at all. That same era lies ahead, but to get us back to it, the Supreme Being urges us to remember Him at every possible moment. I too will be happy if you do that, because I can see that you have had enough of me – and in any case, I am tired of being used by you to cover up your inadequacies. Fill yourself with the light of truth that is originally yours, and I will become totally redundant! Neville Hodgkinson is a UK-based author and journalist, and a long-time student of Rajyoga.