



The Examined Life -- Resilience -- Edition 21, July, 2006

A free, electronic newsletter brought to you by:

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Resilience

Resilience n.

1. The ability to recover quickly from illness, change, or misfortune; buoyancy.
2. The property of a material that enables it to resume its original shape or position after being bent, stretched, or compressed; elasticity.

I am, of course, writing about the first definition of the word. The second definition, though, is a great metaphor.

Think of a time in your life when you responded with resilience. What happened? What factors allowed you to bounce back? Did you recover right away or after you worked through the situation? Did you wallow in despair for a period of time?

I've been thinking a lot about resilience lately because a number of clients and other people in my life are displaying remarkable resilience. Ah, now you're all wondering if I'm talking about you, aren't you? If this is an especially stressful time in your life, I definitely am talking to you.

We all face challenges and being resilient includes feeling low for awhile when life gets tough. The key is to use all of your resources to work through things and come out on the other side better for the experience.

Here are some suggestions that have helped people to become more resilient in times of trouble:

- Connect with family and friends. Reach out to others. Don't try to go it alone.

- Get clear about your values and decide what is truly important.
- Notice what works rather than focus on the loss. One exercise I frequently use and recommend to others is to write down five things I'm grateful for each day. Doing this exercise for a week or longer helps to shift your perspective.
- Learn from the past or, in the case of a departed loved-one, look for and cherish the lessons they taught you.
- Acknowledge and work through the loss rather than bury it. Depending on the nature of the loss you could talk with friends, work with a therapist or coach, join a support group, journal, pray, take some quiet time or meditate.
- Take extra good care of yourself. I wonder why, when we need it the most, we tend to drop our good habits and deprive ourselves of nutritious food, adequate sleep, and stress-relieving exercise. Do all you can to support good health and energy.
- Cultivate optimism. There is evidence that a more optimistic attitude can be cultivated. See <http://www.eqtoday.com/optimism/marsha.html> for an article by Marsha Rideout about factors that contribute to optimism or the book *Learned Optimism* by Martin Seligman for more information.
- Recognize your strengths, talents and skills and take the opportunity to increase your self-knowledge.
- Look for ways around obstacles. Be persistent in working toward goals.
- Accept change. Imagine a new future.
- Keep things in perspective and enjoy your sense of humor!

Draw strength from your survival instincts and learn from your experiences. What has helped you the most in the past? When you're down in the pit, it is hard to climb out. Have a list of tried and true methods to help you get started. Send me an email if you need to borrow my list. Then, you can make your own on a better day.

Take pride in your ability to survive. You will find a way to handle whatever comes your way.

Note: If you think you may be suffering from depression get professional help. See <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/depression.cfm> for more information or <http://www.linda-peterson.net/49513.html> for an online confidential assessment.

Sources:

<http://www.apahelpcenter.org/featuredtopics/feature.php?id=6&ch=1>

<http://www.projectresilience.com/framesconcepts.htm>

<http://www.wilderdom.com/psychology/resilience/PsychologicalResilience.html>

Personal Update

I had a great time visiting my son Chris and his girlfriend Alainna in Shanghai, China for two weeks in early May (go to <http://www.exnerassociates.com/newsletter.htm> and click on [Article: A family visit to China](#) for details and pictures). In addition to seeing the local

sites we took turns hand feeding four tiny kittens – they volunteer for a new animal shelter there and were fostering the kittens. Ultimately, they couldn't resist adopting two of them.

About a week after I returned, Chris ran into a visa snafu. The positive part of that is that he came home for a 2-week visit with me which was wonderful. The negative is that he can't return to his life in Shanghai and so is in the process of settling in Hong Kong. He has an apartment. Next is finding work in Hong Kong for both Chris and Alainna, and figuring out how to move two kittens!

So, I've been a bit distracted. I'll be glad when they've worked out all the details and I am continually amazed at how resilient they both are.

Coming Events

Executive Think Time Book Discussion

(book by Ellen Fredericks & Val Williams)

Dates: 4 Wednesdays beg. 9/6

Time: 3-4 pm PDT/6-7pm EDT

Group Size: 8-10 people

Fee: \$100 (Book available from amazon.com for @ \$10); Early bird price: \$75 if registered by 8/21

Most of us intend to make time for strategic thinking but few of us succeed regularly. If you want to feel more in control, have less stress, plan more strategically, fight fewer fires and be a better leader, make time for this book!

Learn how to:

- Build Your Executive Foundation
- Carve out the time
- Ask the right questions
- Optimize your time
- Get everyone thinking

Are you ready to enhance your ability to shape the future?

Go to <http://www.exnerassociates.com/events.htm> and click on the online registration form to register via a faxed form or call 602-298-1129.

Many of my clients come to me because they want to increase their satisfaction with their work – they want to transition to a different career, their job has ended and they need to find new work, they want to start their own business, they want their current business to stop running their entire lives or they may be in a life transition that has them thinking about what's next (i.e., the kids have grown, they want to partially retire, etc).

If you are ready to make changes in your business and personal life or know someone who is, I'm looking for you. I work primarily with people in career transition and with self-directed individuals and business owners who want to maximize their effectiveness and satisfaction at work while maintaining a healthy life/work balance. Curious? Email me at DExner@ExnerAssociates.com or call 602-298-1129 to schedule a complimentary 45-minute coaching session.

If you are enjoying this newsletter, please forward it to your friends and colleagues! Or direct them to the subscription form and past issues at www.exnerassociates.com

Thanks,

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Focus is a matter of deciding what things you're not going to do.
John Carmack