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West Virginia University
EXTENSION SERVICE

Staying Positive in Negative Times

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Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying "I will try again tomorrow."

– Mary Ann Radmacher

Everyone encounters negative situations, whether it's dealing with difficult people, personal tragedies, or problematic circumstances. The media reports that focus on negative news and turmoil make many of us frazzled and confused.

With our emotions heavily influenced by our environment, it's often difficult to find the positive energy needed to move forward. The good news is, however, we have control over our reaction to life's challenges and obstacles. While we must accept the problems as a reality, we can build upon habits that nurture personal well-being and develop life-skills so that we can emerge stronger and wiser.

Resilience

Resilience is the capacity to withstand stress and catastrophes. People naturally feel a full range of emotions following adversity, but being resilient involves working through the emotions and effects of stress and pain using learned life-skills and positive energy to bounce back.

Learn how to survive

Positive thoughts and energies are vital for a fulfilling life. Negative thoughts force us to repeat self-defeating behaviors in an attempt to handle stress.

Positive thoughts are appealing to most people, but when faced with various forms and types of pain, it is not easy to focus on the positive. Resilient people employ tools to help them climb out of and move successfully through times of personal distress.

Support team

It is important to develop a personal support team that provides a caring environment. We are inspired by compassionate individuals

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who have survived adversity. Choose and interact with individuals who are willing to discuss solutions and possibilities for a positive future. Positive energy flows through people helping others, so reach out for support and be ready to reciprocate.

Know what's important

Resilient people continue to gain strength each time they respond to adversity by moving forward and keeping their core values intact. Write down your basic core values and revisit them often. When faced with challenges, ask yourself if you're reacting according to your core values.

That special place

Having somewhere you relax and refresh is essential for moving forward and reenergizing yourself. If it's a physical place, fill it with positive tools that lift your spirit, such as encouraging books, photographs, tapes, or movies. Taking mental escapes can be practiced anywhere by simply closing your eyes, breathing deep, and focusing on positive thoughts or imagery. Be sure to cut down on clutter in your space, as it can lead to additional stress.

Take care of yourself

Our physical well-being provides the strength to endure life's unexpected challenges, as well as be a strong support mentor for others. Be sure to eat nutritious foods, drink plenty of water, and exercise daily to keep your energy flowing. Don't forget that adults need a minimum of seven hours of sleep to be at their best mental peak.

Practice gratitude

By identifying and appreciating positives in our lives, our mood lifts instantly. Start a gratitude journal by listing things, people, and situations you are thankful for. Sharing at least one blessing you are thankful for can also lift the spirits of those around you.

Filter out the negative

Filling our environment with positive resources and people reduces stress and provides positive energy; however, negativity will creep back into our daily lives. Be alert to people who love to complain, gossip, or have a negative outlook on life. Avoid them when possible. When it is not possible, avoid engaging in their outrage. Remain calm, take deep breaths, and remember you are in charge of your feelings and reactions.

Learn something new

Research states that people who enjoy hobbies have better physical and mental health. Schedule time each week to enjoy doing something you love. You might also want to learn some new skills, which keep your mind sharp and boost self-confidence.

It's up to you

Life can be difficult and adversity can change lives forever; however, we have control over our reactions to the challenges. By moving forward and holding tight to our core values, we build confidence and become an inspiration for our family and friends.

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