

Institute for Strengthening Communities

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Developing Resilience

Resilience is the process of coping and “bouncing back” from tough times in life. Resilience can be learned by anyone and once you develop it, strong personal resilience will help you learn to handle life’s difficult experiences.

The American Psychological Association offers 10 suggestions to improving personal resilience:

- 1. Make connections with people.** Accept the help and support of others who care about you and are willing to listen. Be supportive of your friends and family when they need you. Being active in clubs and social groups at school or in the community is a great way to get involved and meet supportive people.
- 2. Don’t look at stressful situations as impossible problems.** Highly stressful events take place every day. Try your best to look towards the future at how things can be better and do something positive to help deal with your present situation. Think positively!
- 3. Accept that change is part of living.** Sometimes our lives change through traumatic experiences. Learning to accept things that can not be changed can help us focus on things in our lives that we CAN change.
- 4. Move towards your goals.** Ask yourself: “What’s one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?” By looking at what you can do, you can avoid thinking negatively about what you can’t do.
- 5. Take immediate action.** Rather than sitting back and wishing your problems would go away, do anything you can to move towards solving them before they get worse.
- 6. Look for opportunities for self discovery.** Struggles can frequently result in personal growth. Take a moment to look at how you have changed through personal struggle. How are you different from how you were before?
- 7. Keep a positive view of yourself.** Recognize your abilities and strengths. Write them down if it helps you remember!
- 8. Keep things in perspective.** Even when facing painful events, try to look at the bigger picture. Talking to a trusted friend or counselor can often help you from blowing things out of proportion.
- 9. Maintain a hopeful outlook.** A positive attitude lets you expect the best for your life. Try visualizing what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear.
- 10. Take care of yourself.** Pay attention to your own feelings and needs. Eat nutritiously and exercise regularly. Taking care of yourself helps keep you prepared to handle any difficult situation.

For more information, go to www.helping.apa.org.

What is violence?

The American Psychological Association defines violence as the act of purposefully hurting someone. Immediate warning signs of violence might include:

Frequent loss of temper, physical fighting, threatening others, increase in risk-taking behaviors, planning acts of violence, enjoying hurting animals, and a fascination with weapons.

The potential for violence exists when a person has a history of violent or aggressive behavior, has trouble controlling feelings like anger, fails to acknowledge the feelings or rights of others, or has been a victim of bullying.

What can you do if someone you know is showing signs of violence?

Be safe. Avoid situations where you will be alone with this person. Tell a family member, teacher, coach, friend or other person you trust about your concerns. If you feel threatened, get someone in authority to protect you instead of defending yourself. Never deal with violent behavior alone. Always seek help from an experienced professional.

Recognizing potential self-violence

Some people direct violence towards themselves when they are unable to cope with their feelings.

Warning signs of potential self-violence:

Previous suicide attempts or talking about death or dying, significant alcohol or drug use, sudden withdrawal or isolation, major changes in eating or sleeping habits, lack of interest in usual activity, giving away important possessions, hinting at not being around in the future to say goodbye.

These signs are most noteworthy in context of a recent death, breakup, or other suicides in the community. If a friend mentions suicide, take it seriously. Listen carefully and get help immediately even if they ask you to keep it a secret. If you recognize these signs in yourself, tell someone immediately and get help from a licensed mental health professional.

“Be strong. Be safe. Be cool.” Be aware, and if you or someone you know needs help, be the first one to tell an adult or professional!

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