

Resiliency – The Key to Overcoming Infidelity



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To say that an affair is one of life's most challenging events is a vast understatement. It has the ability to forever change a person's life. You can let this event define who you are and let it change you in negative ways or you can choose to learn from the experience and move on to become a stronger more resilient person.

Resiliency is a word we don't tend to use that much it seems, but the reality is that utilizing and/or improving our ability to be resilient is a common underlying theme - or goal - for most all of what we try to share in our programs and blogs.

This short guide will attempt to help you understand even more what it takes to become resilient so that you can get over this whole mess and move on to a life you want and deserve, faster and more completely.

So What Exactly is Resiliency?

Resiliency is the ability to overcome challenges of all kinds - trauma, tragedy, personal crises, life problems - and bounce back stronger, wiser, and more personally powerful.

In short...It's what we need to do when faced with the devastation of the affair. Basically, your recovery can drag on indefinitely without resiliency.

Being resilient does not mean that a person doesn't experience difficulty or distress. Emotional pain and sadness are certainly common in people who have suffered major adversity or trauma in their lives. In fact, the road to resilience is likely to involve considerable emotional distress.

In our opinion, we are all born with a certain level of resiliency as all through our lives it will kick in to help us during tough times, tragedy, stress, etc.

Take a moment to think back during times in your life when you faced some sort of adversity. How did you handle it? Were there times when it seemed as though

you really didn't have to think about how to handle it? Something just clicked inside of yourself and you powered through it?

What's interesting is that our resilience doesn't kick in until after some sort of negative occurrence. That's why many of us never realized just how strong or resilient we are until some sort of adversity comes our way and really tests us.

Factors in Resilience

A combination of factors contributes to resilience. Many studies show that the primary factor in resilience is having caring and supportive relationships within and outside the family. Relationships that create love and trust, provide role models and offer encouragement and reassurance help to bolster a person's resilience.

Several additional factors are associated with resilience, including:

- The capacity to make realistic plans and take steps to carry them out.
- A positive view of yourself and confidence in your strengths and abilities.
- Skills in communication and problem solving.
- The capacity to manage strong feelings and impulses.

All of these are factors that people can develop in themselves.

But the problem is that when a major adversity strikes – like infidelity – many of these factors can get tossed out the window and we lose sight of our ability to fight through the tough times.

It's Up to You

What we have come to learn is that your successful navigation of the adversity caused by his/her infidelity depends on you and the way you normally deal with periods of adversity.

Those who heal after such an adversity focus on finding a solution to the problem instead of focusing on the problem. In other words, if you are someone who can't let go of the idea that your spouse was unfaithful, you will probably have a harder

time healing. However, if you are someone who focuses on rebuilding the lost trust and stay open minded about finding solutions, you are more likely to save your marriage and heal.

The good news is, we can all do this. We can all develop the insight needed to work through infidelity and either save our marriages or move on to rebuild and be happy, well adjusted people. You can do this.

The Road to Resiliency

Here are some ideas for you to consider as you travel the road to resiliency...

Let Go of the Need to be Perfect. It is easy to fall into the trap of over thinking what you did during the marriage that was less than perfect. You not only expect perfection from yourself but from your spouse. When a marriage suffers from infidelity it isn't due to the lack of perfection on either spouse's part.

Do not distract yourself from the joy of life by focusing on your shortcomings or those of your spouse. Push any thoughts you have of who did what wrong out of your head and replace them with positive thoughts. Doing so will teach you tolerance, for yourself and your spouse.

Tolerance and the ability to let go of a need for you or him/her to be perfect means not only respecting your beliefs and values but his/her beliefs and values also. You may not fully understand or agree with their beliefs and values but as long as they are not abusive they have earned your tolerance.

If feelings of frustration with yourself or your spouse creep into your day, take a deep breath, exhale slowly and say to yourself, "no one is perfect" and let it go.

Embrace Change. Flexibility is an essential part of resilience. By learning how to be more adaptable, you'll be better equipped to respond when faced with a life crisis.

You can't change the fact that the affair happened, but you can change how you interpret and respond to it. Try looking beyond the present to how future

circumstances may be a little better. Note any subtle ways in which you might already feel somewhat better as you deal with difficult situations.

Resilient people often utilize these events as an opportunity to branch out in new directions. While some people may be crushed by abrupt changes, highly resilient individuals are able to adapt and ultimately thrive.

Accept the Things You Can't Change. Being happy doesn't mean that everything is perfect; it just means you have decided to look beyond the imperfections. After infidelity you will feel fear, discouragement, anxiety, insecurity, anger, confusion, disappointment, depression and dread. And maybe a few other negative emotions that are unique to you.

This is life altering and when we experience change that brings about such negative emotions it is natural to want to fight against the change instead of accepting it and embracing it.

Here's what one person had to say regarding this...

"I struggled for years during our marriage to come up with a solution to our marital problems and focused a lot of energy when he left after his affair on what I could do to change our circumstance and put the marriage back together.

By doing this I was holding myself back because instead of looking forward I was constantly looking backwards. No one moves ahead when their head is firmly planted in the past! I was lying in bed one afternoon four months after he left when I had an "Aha" moment. I realized, out of the blue that this was my opportunity to be anyone I wanted to be, to do anything I wanted to do, to determine the course my life would take. And, that realization brought with it a sense of excitement. That is when I accepted my situation and stopped trying to change it."

In order to be successful in life, you must accept the fact that everything around us changes and you have to be able to adapt to the change. What is the secret to accepting change? Letting go of our need to control a situation and focusing on things you have control over.

Stay Connected. Nurture your relationships with friends and family. When you're going through a hard time, don't withdraw from other people. Accept help from

those who care about you. Resilient people have at least one or two people in their lives they can turn to for support.

Having caring, supportive people around you acts as a protective factor during times of crisis. It is important to have people you can confide in. While simply talking about a situation with a friend or loved one will not make your pain and suffering go away, it allows you to share your feelings, gain support, receive positive feedback, and come up with possible solutions to your problems.

Just make sure that these people have your best interests in mind and understand that it is not their responsibility to make decisions for you.

Release Tension. Make sure you have outlets to express your emotions and let go of tension. You can...

- Write in a journal
- Draw
- Meditate
- Talk with a friend or counselor
- Exercise

Practice Healthy Habits. You'll manage stressful times better if you...

- Exercise regularly
- Eat a balanced diet
- Take time to rest
- Nurture yourself

After an affair it can be all too easy to neglect your own needs. Losing your appetite, ignoring exercise, and not getting enough sleep are all common reactions to this situation.

Focus on building your self-nurturance skills, even when you are troubled. Make time for activities that you enjoy. By taking care of your own needs, you can boost your overall health and resilience and be fully ready to face the challenges.

Believe in Yourself. Take pride in your abilities and what you've done. Recognize your personal strengths and qualities. Research has demonstrated that self-esteem plays an important role in coping with stress and recovering from difficult

events. Remind yourself of your strengths and accomplishments. Becoming more confident about your own ability to respond and deal with crisis is a great way to build resilience for the future.

Keep Laughing. Hold on to your sense of humor even when times are tough. Laughter relieves stress and helps you keep things in check.

Be Optimistic. A positive, hopeful outlook will make you much more resilient. Remember that whether you believe it or not, you have overcome setbacks in the past and you will do so this time as well. Try visualizing what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear.

Staying optimistic during dark periods can be difficult, but maintaining a hopeful outlook is an important part of resiliency. Positive thinking does not mean ignoring the problem in order to focus on positive outcomes. It means understanding that setbacks are transient and that you have the skills and abilities to combat the challenges you face. What you are dealing with may be difficult, but it is important to remain hopeful and positive about a brighter future.

Find a Sense of Purpose in Your Life. After her 13-year-old daughter was killed by a drunk driver, Candace Lightner founded Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD).

Upset by the driver's light sentence, Lightner decided to focus her energy into creating awareness of the dangers of drunk driving. "I promised myself on the day of Cari's death that I would fight to make this needless homicide count for something positive in the years ahead," she later explained.

In the face of crisis or tragedy, finding a sense of purpose can play an important role in recovery. This might involve becoming involved in your community, cultivating your spirituality, or participating in activities that are meaningful to you.

Establish Goals. Crisis situations are daunting. They may even seem insurmountable. Resilient people are able to view these situations in a realistic way, and then set reasonable goals to deal with the problem. When you find yourself becoming overwhelmed by a situation, take a step back to simply assess what is before you. Brainstorm possible solutions, and then break them down into manageable steps.

Do something regularly — even if it seems like a small accomplishment — that enables you to move toward your goals. Instead of focusing on tasks that seem unachievable, ask yourself, "What's one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?"

Take Steps to Solve Problems. Simply waiting for this to go away on its own only prolongs the crisis. Instead, start working on resolving the issue immediately. While there may not be any fast or simple solution, you can take steps toward making your situation better and less stressful. Focus on the progress that you have made thus far and planning your next steps, rather than becoming discouraged by the amount of work that still needs to be accomplished.

Take decisive actions. Act on adverse situations as much as you can. Take decisive actions, rather than detaching completely from problems and stresses and wishing they would just go away.

Look for opportunities for self-discovery. People often learn something about themselves and may find that they have grown in some respect as a result of their struggle with infidelity. Many people have reported better relationships, greater sense of strength even while feeling vulnerable, a more developed spirituality and heightened appreciation for life.

Some Questions to Ask Yourself

Focusing on past experiences and sources of personal strength can help you learn about what strategies for building resilience might work for you. By exploring answers to the following questions about yourself and your reactions to challenging life events, you may discover how you can respond effectively to difficult situations in your life.

Consider the following:

- What kinds of events have been most stressful for me in the past?
- How have those events typically affected me?
- Have I found it helpful to think of important people in my life when I am distressed?

- To whom have I reached out for support in working through a traumatic or stressful experience?
- What have I learned about myself and my interactions with others during difficult times?
- Has it been helpful for me to assist someone else going through a similar experience?
- Have I been able to overcome obstacles, and if so, how?
- What has helped make me feel more hopeful about the future?

Staying Flexible

Resilience after infidelity involves maintaining flexibility and balance in your life as you deal with the stressful circumstances and trauma. This happens in several ways, including:

- Letting yourself experience strong emotions, and also realizing when you may need to avoid experiencing them at times in order to continue functioning.
- Stepping forward and taking action to deal with your problems and meet the demands of daily living, and also stepping back to rest and reenergize yourself.
- Spending time with loved ones to gain support and encouragement, and also nurturing yourself.
- Relying on others, and also relying on yourself.

Keep Working on Your Skills

Resilience may take time to build, so do not become discouraged if you still struggle to cope with problematic events. According to Dr. Russ Newman, "research has shown that resilience is not an extraordinary thing but is rather ordinary and can be learned by most anyone".

Psychological resilience does not involve any specific set of behaviors or actions, but can vary dramatically from one person to the next. Focus on practicing some

of the common characteristics of resilient people listed above, but also remember to build upon your existing strengths.

In Summary

Think of resilience as similar to taking a raft trip down a river.

On a river, you may encounter rapids, turns, slow water and shallows. As in life, the changes you experience affect you differently along the way.

In traveling the river, it helps to have knowledge about it and past experience in dealing with it. Your journey should be guided by a plan, a strategy that you consider likely to work well for you.

Perseverance and trust in your ability to work your way around boulders and other obstacles are important. You can gain courage and insight by successfully navigating your way through white water. Trusted companions who accompany you on the journey can be especially helpful for dealing with rapids, upstream currents and other difficult stretches of the river.

You can climb out to rest alongside the river. But to get to the end of your journey, you need to get back in the raft and continue.

Now, notice the increasing resiliency is not about eliminating stress or erasing life's difficulties. But what it will do is give you the strength, the energy, and the resources to tackle these problems head on to adjust to adversity so that you can overcome the impact faster than ever before.

Remember that you have total control over what path your life will lead. We encourage you to focus on defining the kind of life you want going forward, setting goals that will help you attain the kind of life you wish to live and accepting the change you are now experiencing as one that will lead to bigger and better possibilities for you and your life.

The [American Psychological Association](#) was a source for this guide.