



Leaflet 8

Resilience

The nature of resilience:

Resilience has become a rather 'hackneyed' phrase, because it suggests that we need to increase our ability to cope with the pressures that are inflicted upon us rather than trying to influence the pressures.

Psychological resilience has been defined as a “*dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity*” (Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker, 2000, p. 543¹) and “*the positive role of individual differences in people’s response to stress and adversity*” (Rutter, 1987, p. 316²).

Factors influencing resilience:

Various factors have been examined in a systematic review to define what resilience in doctors might be³.

- Demographic influence
- Personality traits
- Social support
- Outside interests
- Environmental factors

Disability and resilience:

In a recent study, the duration of disability was not associated with resilience⁴. This suggests that resilience may be more related to lifespan experience than the length of experience with disability. Higher resilience with greater age also may reflect a change in expectations, self-acceptance, and attitude towards disability⁵.

People with higher levels of wellbeing can engage in less negative self-reflection than unhappy individuals, dwell less on adversity and rebound more quickly from it and react to distressing life events more positively⁶.

In a wider sense, it has been argued that resilience as a construct is especially relevant to disabled citizens.

Improving resilience:

- Intellectual interest: Doctors who maintain intellectual interest and high levels of job satisfaction have greater levels of resilience.

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1885202/>

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/3303954>

³ <https://pmj.bmj.com/content/95/1121/140>

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27165965>

⁵ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18728940>

⁶ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/B:JOHS.0000005769.54611.3c>

- Self-awareness: Self-awareness and self-reflection help individuals to recognise and accept their limitations, accept boundaries, and be realistic about what they can do professionally and personally to care for themselves.
- Time management: Resilience promoting behaviours rely on mastering time management, allowing restriction of working hours, ensuring time for the pursuit of leisure activities, and regular holidays.
- Continuing professional development: Engaging in continuing professional development promotes resilience. It does so irrespective of whether this development is structured (doing research), unstructured (reading journals), or related to group activity.
- Supportive relationships: Support from friends and work colleagues can help to reduce perceived stress and improve job satisfaction.
- Mentors: Mentors help trainees to find the pleasures in their work and are an integral component of professional training. Mentors help with stress reduction and adaptation to change.

Following the three C's⁷ can also help:

- Control what you can
- Cope with what you can't
- Concentrate on what is important.

Regularly "praising yourself" through keeping a 'gratitude diary' can also help.

Having a higher degree of psychological flexibility can vastly improve one's resilience to deal with a huge number of situations and challenges in life.

This leaflet is a summary of our more extensive Factsheet 5. For more in-depth information on the following topics, please refer to this document which can be found on the NHS Practitioner Health and the Disabled Doctors Network websites

-  The nature of resilience
-  Factors influencing resilience
-  Disability and resilience
-  Improving resilience

www.practitionerhealth.nhs.uk

www.disableddoctorsnetwork.com

⁷ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/30526108>