



Resilience

Introduction: To get started, consider the following brief vignettes about endurance, persistence and resilience. After reading through this list, choose one or two that stood out to you:

Famous People:

- ❖ *Thomas Edison* – Before finally inventing the lightbulb, Thomas Edison failed over 10,000 in his efforts. When interviewed about this, Mr. Edison stated: “I have not failed once. I have succeeded in proving that those 10,000 ways will not work. When I have eliminated the ways that will not work, I will find the way that will work.”
- ❖ *Buster Douglas* – In 1990, Buster Douglas was a 42 to 1 underdog facing Mike Tyson, the undefeated heavyweight champion of the world, who the world had deemed to be unbeatable at that time due to the ease of which he destroyed all of his previous 37 opponents. Despite almost getting knocked out himself in the 8th round Douglas survived and then later in the 10th round of the fight, Douglas slayed the mighty giant by knocking out the previously undefeated champion Mike Tyson in what is still considered one of the greatest upsets in boxing history. Douglas had lost his mother less than a month before the fight, a situation which Douglas later stated was behind his remarkable determination to win.
- ❖ *Walt Disney* – Disney’s first company went bankrupt and then he was nearly broke and moved to California to try to become an actor. Disney failed at acting too and languished unsuccessfully for 5 years with little progress until he finally come up with Mickey Mouse, which was his eventual ticket to fame and fortune.
- ❖ *Stephen King*’s first book was originally rejected by 30 publishes. He has since sold over 350 million copies of his books and still counting, to date
- ❖ *Sylvester Stallone* was broke for years and even at times homeless while being rejected over 1500 times by talent scouts prior to iconic success with his first film “Rocky”
- ❖ *Albert Einstein* reportedly could not talk until age 4 and he failed his high school entrance exam. Einstein attempted to be an insurance salesmen after college and failed at that too until later going on to be one of the greatest minds in the history of the world
- ❖ *Oprah Winfrey* reportedly survived years of childhood sexual abuse. She was fired from her first television job but did not give up and now is known to be one of the most successful television personalities of all time.
- ❖ *Michael Jordan* is considered one of the greatest basketball players of all time. Jordan was actually cut from his high school basketball team so he learned to deal with failure at a young age. In fact, in spite of all of his records and championships, Michael Jordan is famous for saying: “I have missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I have lost almost 300 games. On 26 occasions I have been entrusted to take the game-winning shot, and I missed. I have failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.”



Even more impressive are the billions of people in this world today who may not be famous but have their own remarkable story of resilience and survival...

Think about what many people have endured (or are still enduring right now) –

- ▶ Abuse
- ▶ Poverty
- ▶ Loss of loved ones
- ▶ Disability
- ▶ Injury
- ▶ Pain
- ▶ Hunger
- ▶ Rejection
- ▶ Isolation
- ▶ Homelessness
- ▶ Incarceration
- ▶ Injustice
- ▶ Sickness
- ▶ Oppression
- ▶ Persecution
- ▶ Mental Illness
- ▶ Addiction

Discuss: What are some stories that you know of resilient people who endured, persevered and survived some of these serious life struggles

**Courage is not defined by those
who fought and did not fall,
but by those who fought,
fell and rose again**





What is Your Story of Resilience? – As a group try to come up with an example for all three: **Past, Present, and Future** stories of resilience:

- ✚ **Past** – What is something you have overcome, survived, and bounced back from, in your past? What is a trial or struggle that you got through successfully because you did not give up?
- ✚ **Present** – What is a situation that you are fighting through now and you refuse to run away, quit or give in?
- ✚ **Future** – Use your imagination and come up with a story that you may be able to tell one day about your resilience once you get there. (For example: “One day I want to be able to say: After years of relapsing and going in and out of trouble, I finally got things together, completed my last treatment program and got the life I finally wanted...”)

Three Basic Concepts that Promote Resilience –

1. **Taking things “One Day at a Time”** – Resilient people look at each day as a new opportunity to improve on the day before. Every day the sun rises is a new opportunity to keep trying. Resilient people don’t let fear of the future be an excuse not to push forward and they do not let the failures and mistakes of the past weigh them down. What can I do today? – Is the way a resilient person often has to view things to keep going
2. **Bend but Don’t Break** – Resilient people may make mistakes, experience misfortune or injustice. Resilient people may get depressed, anxious or overwhelmed at times. Resilient people may have occasional or even frequent setbacks. Still, in spite of negative events, feelings, and experiences that may come up, a resilient person will not allow these things to break their spirit. Resiliency is about getting up off of the canvas if you get knocked down (but not knocked out) by life once in a while
3. **Hope** – The power of hope is well documented. Holding on to hope that things can be better is at the core of resilience. Sustaining the belief that persistence and endurance will eventually pay off can carry a resilient person through, especially during times of struggle

How are you using these concepts to promote resilience in your own life?

What else helps you to be resilient and to keep pressing forward without giving in or giving up?

