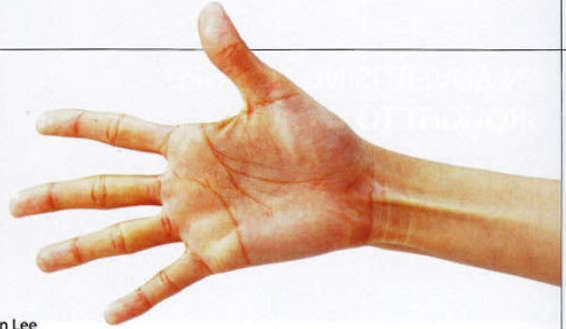


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MIND  MATTERS

## Five Ways to Bounce Back from Challenges

by Laura Lynn Lee



**A** sponge, quite the disregarded household item, has rather impressive qualities. Soak it in water – it absorbs to its maximum capacity. Twist it, wring it – it promptly returns to its original shape. This is bouncing back from adversity – having the ability to recover and move forward despite life’s challenges. And having done so, become more confident in tackling what’s ahead.

Here are five ingredients to building resilience:

### 1. Reframe

Refrain from being overly preoccupied about what has happened or how poorly you are doing.

- Instead, look beyond the situation: “Is there something I can do for myself now that will help me move forward?”
- Recall how you handled problems in the past: “How did I get through it? What did I learn that can help me now?”

### 2. Act within your control

In difficult situations, people tend to forget that there are things within their control. Take charge!

- Manage expectations. Consider: Are you over-reaching? Do you have reasonable expectations of yourself and the people you love?
- Be optimistic. Plan something that you can look forward to.
- Use humour. Laugh it off.
- Manage emotions. Let go of anger and other negative emotions that consume mental energy.
- Do, don’t just complain. Get involved. Start with a small step you can take today, rather than waiting to take the big step that you may never feel ready to take on.
- Help and be helped. Asking for help when you need it is a sign of resourcefulness and strength, not weakness. It allows you to learn from people who have been through what you are going through. Support groups can be extremely helpful in coping with grief, loss, divorce, a chronic illness, personal problems, family problems, etc. Be there for people you care about when they need you and they’ll be there for you. Remember, no man is an island.

### 3. Learn and grow


Learning makes you feel competent and fulfilled. It helps you find purpose and meaning at each stage of your life. When was the last time you learned something new, made a new friend, or pursued a new hobby or interest? Take advantage of opportunities at work and in your personal life to learn and grow. It’s never too soon or too late to do so.

### 4. Self-care

This is fundamental in building resilience and personal capacity. You can’t be resilient, no matter how hard you try, if you fail to take care of yourself. If you’re exhausted physically or emotionally overstretched, it may be twice as hard to bounce back in challenging situations.

- Get a checkup if you are not feeling well, and really rest.
- Work-life balance is important! When you can, take days off work to rejuvenate and recharge.
- Exercise and stick to a well-balanced diet. Also, limit your caffeine and alcohol intake.
- Keep life simple and don’t be afraid to say “no” when you have too much on your plate to handle.
- Self-care is particularly necessary if you are experiencing a stressful life event such as a job change, separation or the death of a relative or friend.
- Take time to recover when you experience emotional setbacks. When you are emotionally weary, be sure to get sufficient rest, eat balanced meals, make time for relaxation and seek support from your loved ones.
- Actively recognise and acknowledge your strengths, but work on improving your weaknesses. Celebrate and savour your victories as these will give you the drive to cope with your defeats.

### 5. Anticipate change

‘Change’ is quite possibly the most feared single-syllable word in the language; though simple and elegant in concept, it can be an intensely uncomfortable experience. Our natural instinct is to seek equilibrium, a comfort zone, and hold steady. The ability to handle change is a key survival skill of all resilient people. Try to anticipate change and look ahead to see what’s coming. Make a conscious effort to stay flexible. Remember the words of Alan Cohen, best known for Chicken Soup for the Soul, “It takes a lot of courage to release the familiar and seemingly secure, to embrace the new...for in movement there is life, and in change there is power.” 

#### About the author

Laura Lynn Lee is Consultant-Psychologist at Human Dynamic Asia Pacific Ltd, a people management consultancy offering EAP, outplacement consulting, critical incident stress management, learning & development and executive coaching services.