

# 10 Resilience Building Characteristics

I found this list from a handout developed by Joyce R. Thomas, Director of Counseling and Career Resources at Ozarks Technical Community College. If you want to access the entire document go to [www.otc.edu](http://www.otc.edu) Many thanks to her for allowing the use of this list!

## 1. ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

Our interactions with other people can be a source of considerable stress in our lives. By beginning to learn how to communicate assertively with others, even when they are not communicating assertively with us, we can learn to control our reactions, and stand up for our rights and reduce the amount of stress reactions we experience in our relationships.

## 2. CHANGING FAULTY OR IRRATIONAL THINKING HABITS

We are constantly engaging in self-talk. Our self-talk tells us and others a lot about how we perceive the world. Those who have positive, accurate, and realistic self-talk function in much more healthy ways than those whose self-talk is irrational and negative. Changing just the way we think or talk to ourselves is a giant step in the direction of preventative care for being overwhelmed with stress.

- Become aware and sensitive to your own self-talk and determine which parts are irrational
- Identify how "talking" this way makes you feel
- Begin disputing irrational statements and replace your irrational statements with those that are self-affirming, rational, and positive
- Continue to practice disputing and replacing irrational statements until the new statements become a natural part of your self-talk

## 3. HEALTHY DIET AND EXERCISE

In addition to the obvious benefits, exercise is an important part in reducing the daily, negative by products of our stressful lives. When you are taking care of your body through eating right and exercising, you are actively working to strengthen yourself not just physically, but emotionally and spiritually as well.

## 4. EXPANDED SUPPORT SYSTEM

Healthy social support has been shown to help buffer people against the negative effects of stress. The chemical effects on the brain of a person who is going through a stressful situation are lowered when individuals have high levels of healthy social support. Social support via support groups has been found to increase survival for patients with breast cancer and to reduce the complications associated with pregnancy and delivery.

## 5. RATIONAL PROBLEM SOLVING

People who know how to and also feel confident in their ability to solve even life's most simple problems have more strength and confidence in solving life's bigger, more stressful problems.

Learning how to weigh pros and cons and avoid quick, emotion-based decisions, allow you to face life's problems more realistically, optimistically, and confidently.

## **6. GOAL SETTING AND TIME MANAGEMENT**

Tools for effective time management have helped in the minimization of deadline anxiety, procrastination, and overall fatigue. Many of us are familiar with traditional time management tools like completing a daily time log, following a calendar, and checking off items on to-do lists. It is also important to know what your "big picture" is. People who know and follow their chosen "big picture" tend to go through life in a less hurried, more positive and directed way. These are people who know what their short and long-term goals are and are actively pursuing these goals in their day to day life. When we spend more of our time doing the things that are truly important to us, we tend to have more energy and enjoyment in accomplishing any task in our life.

## **7. SENSITIVITY TO YOUR BODY'S PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS**

Your body registers stress long before the conscious mind does. Muscle tension is your body's way of letting you know that you are under stress. Tension in your body is often overlooked. Becoming keenly aware of early signals of physical reactions to stress (chronic headaches, stiffness, and gastrointestinal stress) can give you a jump on taking care of the external problem before it becomes overwhelming and you become stressed out.

## **8. AWARENESS OF FIGHT OR FLIGHT TRIGGERS**

Most of us are aware of the events in our lives that throw us into a state of distress. Many of these events cannot be avoided (driving in heavy traffic, studying, relationship conflicts, etc.). Although we may not have power to control some of these events, we do have the power to control and prepare ourselves for such events. If, for example, you know that driving in traffic always irritates you and puts you into a negative mental state, prepare by giving yourself extra time to get to your destination, listen to relaxing music in the car, and utilize positive self-talk to help keep yourself calm. Discover what you can do to eliminate your distress in situations that cannot be changed.

## **9. HUMOR**

There are many problems that happen in our lives that definitely warrant serious attention and a lot of energy. There are also a lot of problems that don't and yet many of us put as much energy into solving the silly, minuscule problems as we do the larger, life-changing problems. Remember: humor melts stress. Not everything warrants serious attention. There are some things that are just not important enough to stress about. Save your energy for those things that are very important and remember that laughter is a great medicine.

## **10. RELAXATION**

It is very difficult to remain in a stressed out state of mind when the body is relaxed. The ability to fully relax and calm one's mind and body is crucial. Any program that you are following to reduce stress related disorders must contain some sort of relaxation training.

