



Believe in Yourself

# Advice for Building a Foundation of Resiliency

By Sandra J. Wunderlich

**T**he dictionary includes two definitions of “resiliency”: it is both the *capacity* to recover quickly from a setback, and the *ability* to be elastic. Both definitions highlight why resiliency is critical for female lawyers. The practice of law is challenging. We all experience setbacks at times, which can make us shy away from risks. While being risk adverse makes us good lawyers, taking fewer risks for ourselves translates into fewer opportunities overall. Thus, it is important that we are able to bounce back from the inevitable setbacks and remain willing to take risks. We also need the ability to adjust quickly to changing circumstances and give ourselves a break when things do not go as planned.

Although we know that we need resiliency in our practice and in our lives, it is hard to know how to develop it before we encounter a situation in which we need it. It turns out that resilient people share common attitudes and characteristics that contribute to their ability to rise from the ashes. Resilient people offer the following advice on how to develop resiliency.

**Be flexible. Expect the unexpected. Roll with it.** Resilient people are nothing if not flexible. They are able to roll with the punches and adapt their plans as things change. They bend but they don’t break. They are able to see a setback as a temporary situation and adapt to changing circumstances.

**Learn from your mistakes and grow from adversity.** Resilient people focus on what they can learn from adversity. They don’t focus on blame, but instead, they consider what they could have done differently and chalk it up to a life lesson.

**Take action.** Resilient people are action oriented. They are problem solvers. They don’t wallow in self-pity (or if they do, it is short-lived). They put one foot in front of the other to keep moving toward a solution, recognizing

that it may not come immediately. They empower themselves to come up with a solution.

**Develop relationships and stay connected.** Resilient people understand that they need the support of their friends and family when going through a difficult time. Even though they may want to withdraw, they seek out the support of people who care about them for empathy, space to grieve and recover, and encouragement. Resilient people tend to surround themselves with other resilient people *before* they need the support. If you don’t live near family or close friends, establish connections by volunteering or joining a spiritual community. Find a place to belong.

**Take care of yourself.** Resilient people take care of themselves. They exercise regularly, eat a nutritious diet, and get plenty of sleep on a consistent basis. These important self-care habits are part of their life. Good health cultivated through healthy habits is critical for developing resilience. Pay attention to your own needs. Good stress management begins with a healthy, well-rested body and soul.

**Find a way to release the stress.** Resilient people find healthy ways to release their stress. This might be through meditation, yoga, journaling, prayer, or all of the above. Perhaps it is a creative pursuit such as writing, painting, or drawing. It could be spending time in nature, or spending quiet time to recharge their batteries. Mindfulness is one of the best ways to center yourself and build your resilience. Participate in activities and hobbies that you enjoy. Find your own stress reliever and practice it regularly.

**Be grateful.** Resilient people are grateful. Gratitude gives perspective like nothing else. Being able to see the good things in your life rights your mind in a powerful way. Not only feeling it, but expressing gratitude can be a very effective way to reset your thinking and get you moving in the right direction. Keep a gratitude journal.

**Be positive.** Resilient people are optimistic. They are hopeful for a better tomorrow, and they recognize that most of the problems that they are facing today are merely temporary. They remember when they overcame setbacks in the past, and they believe that they will overcome the present challenges.



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**Have a sense of humor.** Resilient people laugh. Hold on to your sense of humor even when the going gets tough. There is something about laughter that breaks tension and lightens the soul—especially the kind that brings tears to your eyes and makes your stomach hurt because you haven’t used those muscles for a while. Studies have shown that laughter truly is good medicine. Keep a steady supply of humor in your life. If you don’t know funny people, watch funny movies or read humorous stories.

**Believe in something greater than yourself. Have a sense of purpose.** Resilient people do things that bring meaning to their life. This could be as simple as doing something kind for someone they

know or volunteering for a cause personal to them. Giving back can be a powerful way to pull yourself out of self-pity, get out of your own head, and build your resilience.

**Believe in yourself.** Resilient people take pride in their strengths, and they don’t weigh themselves down by focusing on their weaknesses. They forgive their mistakes and believe that they can do the things that they set their mind to do. Most importantly, they don’t let their failures define them. They keep moving toward their hopes and dreams, knowing that they have what it takes to make them happen. Stop trying to be perfect because you are not and neither is anybody else. Love yourself. 