

Power of Resilience

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Narrative approach says, we are always telling stories about ourselves. Stories are what help people make sense of who they are and what the world is. I am a clinical psychologist and have been practicing for a decade now. My Psychology career started after school. Psychology was never my first choice; I wanted to become a doctor. I was a good student with good grades. Everybody in my family believed I could easily crack the medical entrance, including me. But I couldn't, on both my attempts. I was shocked and sad the first time. However, I started thinking of alternative career options as soon as I learned that I also failed in my second attempt. I was sad but not distraught. I was concerned but not clueless. I applied to all the places with good psychology programs in the country. Sometimes, I wonder how a small-town girl from an all-girls school could make such a huge career decision. How easy or difficult would it have been for her? Did she know she would do so well in a subject she had never studied before? What gave her confidence?

As I raise these questions, I am trying to bring your attention to the concept of personal strength. Personal strength is about how we perceive ourselves. When we can see ourselves as a reserve of strength and ability, what becomes

possible is "being resilient." The word "resilience" comes from the Latin word *resilire*, which means to rebound or to recoil. When I think of resilience, I am reminded of a toy from my early childhood – **HIT ME**. Hit Me was an air-filled, colorful doll with a big red nose. Every time I hit it, it would fall on the ground but come back up equally



fast. No matter how hard it was hit, it always came up.

What stood out about HIT ME is not its design or size but its ability to bounce back. Hit Me didn't care how hard it was hit, where it was or who

hit it. It seemed to me that all it cared about was coming back up! That is the power of resilience. It doesn't matter how big a challenge has come your way. It doesn't matter if the timing of the challenge is correct or not. It



doesn't matter if you are ready for the challenge or not. What matters is that you believe in yourself. That you can look within and find your centre of gravity. That you can bounce back even when life punches you down.

So, when life punched me with a failure in the medical entrance exam, I bounced back with the plan to pursue psychology and become a clinical psychologist. How? Probably because I believed in my ability to read and learn. Maybe because I leaned on my family's belief about my potential.

Over the years, psychology has taught me that resilience makes it possible for people to solve problems effectively, make realistic plans, communicate clearly, manage their feelings and impulses in a healthy manner, and have confidence in their abilities. I have also learned that anyone can be resilient. All it takes is having a positive attitude, developing a good self-image, investing in positive relationships, and maintaining a good support system. Two psychologists from Australia and

the Netherlands, namely Dr Lucinda Poole and Dr Hugo Alberts, have suggested a model to improve one's resilience – the 4 S's of Resilience or Resilience Plan. The 4 S's in their model are – Support, Strategies, Sagacity, and Solution-seeking.

- 1. Identify support:** Who has supported you in the past? Who can support you in your current situation? Whom do you trust? Whom can you lean on for help and advice?
- 2. Identify strategies:** What has helped you cope with difficulties in the past? In what way have you been able to endure overwhelming thoughts and feelings? What helps you in reducing stress? It could be going for a walk, listening to music, writing down your feelings, or playing with others.
- 3. Find sagacity:** What wisdom has helped you bounce back in the past? What brought comfort in the past? What looks comforting now? What enables you to stay hopeful? Maybe it is a story, a song, a quote you read somewhere, or something you learned.
- 4. Solution-seeking behaviors:** Reflect on your ways of finding solutions. Do you tend to look for more information? Do you like to think and plan? Do you prefer discussing your problems? Do you ask for help?

These 4S's can enhance anyone's ability to bounce back from a difficult situation. Resilience is not something you are born with or something inherent. The fact that resilience is an ability that is enhanced with support, strategies, and reflection – that is the power of resilience.