



Resilience

Good days and bad days, good moods and bad moods; people tend to see these states as ruled by chance — whether you woke up on the right side of the bed, as the saying goes. Though you cannot mood-proof yourself, you can systematically reduce your vulnerability to bad moods, lost tempers, and meltdowns by tending to a few of your most basic needs. You can develop resilience — your ability to maintain balance, health, strength, and happiness or to bounce back, even (or especially) after a setback or a disappointment.

Resilience helps people bend without breaking in the face of a challenge. Since setbacks, disappointments, and challenges are par for the course in attempting change, resilience is helpful for the long haul. If this were a sprint, we might be less concerned with resilience, but helping someone change behavioral patterns is more often like an Iron Man triathlon.

The most basic — and critical — self-care strategies are:

1. Eating well
2. Sleeping well
3. Exercising enough
4. Avoiding mood-altering drugs
5. Treating illness (taking medications as prescribed, staying home and resting when sick, and so on.)

This list may seem too obvious to print. Of course, you should do these things! Yet, when people are stressed or worried, they tend to push their own self-care needs into the future, pledging to eat better after this bad patch at work is over or go to the gym when they have more time. Taking care of yourself happens in some idealized future scenario where time, energy, support, and other resources await. You don't consider that these *are* the resources you need to get to that future in one piece. You say you'll sleep more when work is not demanding. Zumba class is not a luxury to be deferred until your loved one is better; it is something you can do *now* to make things better.

We make an appeal to you here with these basic suggestions not in order to haunt you with old New Year's resolutions, but for three reasons that may inspire you, especially now:

1. ***The connection between physical and mental well-being is real and cannot be overstated.*** Perhaps you dismissed the "mind-body connection" as a philosophical choice or New Agey myth that's not for you, but it's scientific fact and a critical factor in developing greater resilience. Sleep, food, exercise and friends all affect your physiology and your mental state.
2. ***Recognizing the extraordinary stressors in your life right now may give you a motivational boost to follow through on taking basic care of yourself.*** If maintaining your ideal weight or feeling rested haven't been enough to motivate you in the past to change your diet or deal with your insomnia, consider this: diet and sleep can make the difference between unhelpfully losing your temper with your loved one and coping with grace and improving your odds of influencing change.

3. ***These are all things you can control***, at least to some extent, when other parts of your life are out of control.

What's hard about this ... Doing it. Actually, doing it. Knowing we should typically be enough. What you learn about motivation and change applies to you as much as your loved one. Tap into your motivations, problem-solve the obstacles, get support as needed, and be kind and patient with yourself when it's hard.

Material adapted from *Beyond Addiction: How Science and Kindness Help People Change*, 2014, Jeffrey Foote, PHD, Carrie Wilkens, PHD, and Nicole Kosanke, PHD, with Stephanie Higgs. pp. 104-105.