



EXPLORATION

Resilience

Readings



In the end,
love wins.
...We know it wins.
...It is an amazingly
resilient part of us.
J.K. Rowling

Photo by Alexander Grey on Pexels

1. *A Recipe for Resilience*

by Rev. Margaret Weis

This recipe has been tweaked over time, so adjust as necessary.

Sometimes it yields more servings than anticipated.

Sometimes it needs a bit more of this ingredient or that.

It comes from generations who have gone before me, and I've added my own flavor along the way.

A Recipe for Resilience

One part courage

Two parts tears of failure and doubt

One part deep listening

One part each of both silence and laughter

A dash of trust

A pinch of wonder

A heaping scoop of naps and snacks

In a separate bowl, mix together family, friends, and those who challenge you to be your best self, those with whom you disagree.

Add slowly to the larger pot, add a bay leaf for ... well, whatever it is bay leaves do, and let simmer for as long as you need (which is often longer than you realize or anticipate).

Keep the heat at an even temperature – hot enough to cook throughout, but not so hot it burns the bottom.

Can be served at room temperature, warm, or even cold if necessary. Serve alongside your favorite soft blanket, dog, cat, or other soft item.

Make often,

Share with others,
Hold onto the leftovers—you'll need them after a long day that challenges your soul.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/recipe-resilience>

2. *Resilience* by Brené Brown

Resilience — the ability to overcome adversity — has been a growing topic of study since the early 1970s. In a world plagued by stress and struggle, everyone from psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers to clergy and criminal justice researchers want to know why and how some folks are better at bouncing back from hardship than others. We want to understand why some people can cope with stress and trauma in a way that allows them to move forward in their lives, and why other people appear more affected and stuck. As I collected and analyzed my data, I recognized that many of the people I interviewed were describing stories of resilience. I heard stories about people cultivating Wholehearted lives despite adversity. I learned about people's capacities to stay mindful and authentic under great stress and anxiety, and I heard people describe how they were able to transform trauma into Wholehearted thriving.

...I knew these narratives were threaded with what we call protective factors — the things we do, have, and practice that give us the bounce.

...If you look at the current research, here are five of the most common factors of resilient people: 1. They are resourceful and have good problem-solving skills. 2. They are more likely to seek help. 3. They hold the belief that they can do something that will help them to manage their feelings and to cope. 4. They have social support available to them. 5. They are connected with others, such as family or friends. Of course, there are more factors, depend-

ing on the researchers, but these are the big ones.

Source: *The Gifts of Imperfection* by Brené Brown

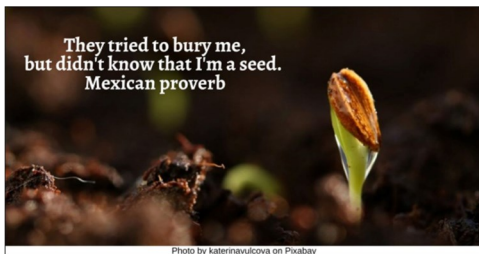
3. *The Holy Work of Showing Up* by Rev. Ashley Horan

How is it with your soul? This is the question that John Wesley, Anglican priest and the founder of Methodism, was known to ask of participants in small reflection groups. I ask you because, for me, this has been a hard week. So, beloveds, how is it with your souls?

If your response to that question is anything like mine, I want to invite you to pause as you read this. Take a deep breath, say a prayer, sing a song, light your chalice, feel the force of gravity pulling us all toward the same center—whatever helps you feel more rooted and less alone.

Now do it again. And again, and again.

And, once you feel that rootedness and connection, hear this: You are loved beyond belief. You are enough, you are precious, your work and your life matter, and you are not alone. You are part of a "we," a great cloud of witnesses living and dead who have insisted that this beautiful, broken world of ours is a blessing worthy of both deep gratitude and fierce protection. Our ancestors and our descendants are beckoning us, compelling us onward toward greater connection, greater compassion, greater commitment to one another and to the earth. Together, we are resilient and resourceful enough to say "yes" to that call, to make it our life's work in a thousand different ways, knowing that we can do no other than bind ourselves more tightly together, and throw ourselves into the holy work of showing up, again and again, to be part of building that world of which we dream but which we have not yet seen.



They tried to bury me,
but didn't know that I'm a seed.
Mexican proverb

Photo by katerinavulcova on Pixabay

Source: <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/holy-work-showing>

4. ***Resilience: Confused at a Higher Level*** by Linda Graham

"A ship is safe in harbor, but that's not what ships are for," writes Grace Hopper.

...We ...face uncertainties and unknowns, and sometimes we will encounter true catastrophes. But as we become more skillful in facing them, our resilience becomes more effortless.

Jon Kabat-Zinn, developer of mindfulness-based stress reduction, describes our strengthened capacities for resilience this way: "We all accept that no one controls the weather. Good sailors learn to read it carefully and respect its power. They will avoid storms if possible, but when caught in one, they know when to take down the sails, batten down the hatches, drop anchor and ride things out, controlling what is controllable and letting go of the rest. Training, practice, and a lot of firsthand experience in all sorts of weather are required to develop such skills so that they work for you when you need them. Developing skill in facing and effectively handling the various 'weather conditions' in your life is what we mean by the art of conscious living."

...My friend Ted worked as an electrical engineer at SRI International (Stanford Research Institute International) A plaque at the entrance to the electrical engineering lab read: "We have not solved your problems. In fact, we have more questions than when we started. But we believe we are confused at a higher level and about more important things."

...Developing and maintaining resilience requires that we continue to cultivate qualities and behaviors that support it. We can choose to make resilience a central organizing principle of our lives — not just an interesting hob-

by or occasional lifesaver, but the core that everything else aligns around, that increases our happiness and well-being.

Source: *Reviving Your Brain for Maximum Resilience and Well-Being* by Linda Graham

5. ***Kintsugi*** by Stefano Carnazzi

When a bowl, teapot or precious vase falls and breaks into a thousand pieces, we throw them away.... Yet there is an alternative, a Japanese practice that highlights and enhances the breaks thus adding value to the broken object. It's called kintsugi or kintsukuroi, literally golden ("kin") and repair ("tsugi").

This traditional Japanese art uses a precious metal — liquid gold, liquid silver or lacquer dusted with powdered gold — to bring together the pieces of a broken pottery item and at the same time enhance the breaks. The technique consists in joining fragments.... Every repaired piece is unique, because of the randomness with which ceramics shatters and the irregular patterns formed that are enhanced with the use of metals.

With this technique it's possible to create true and always different works of art, each with its own story and beauty, thanks to the unique cracks formed when the object breaks, as if they were wounds that leave different marks on each of us. ...

...The kintsugi technique suggests many things. We shouldn't throw away broken objects. When an object breaks, it doesn't mean that it is no more useful. Its breakages can become valuable. We should try to repair things because sometimes in doing so we obtain more valuable objects.

This is the essence of resilience. Each of us should look for a way to cope with traumatic events in a positive way, learn from negative experiences, take the best from them and convince ourselves that exactly these experiences make each person unique, precious.

Source: <https://www.awakin.org/v2/read/view.php?tid=2378>

6. ***The Real Arts of Survival*** by Rebecca Solnit

It's tempting to think that the arts to be learned are ...tracking, hunting, navi-

gating, skills of survival and escape. Even in the everyday world..., an anxiety to survive manifests itself in cars and clothes for far more rugged occasions than those at hand, as though to express ...the toughness of things and ...readiness to face them. But the real difficulties, the real arts of survival, seem to lie in more subtle realms. There, what's called for is a kind of resilience of the psyche, a readiness to deal with what comes next. These lay out ...what goes on in every life: the transitions whereby you cease to be who you were. Seldom is it as dramatic, but nevertheless, something of this journey between the near and the far goes on in every life. Sometimes an old photograph, an old friend, an old letter will remind you that you are not who you once were, for the person who dwelt among them ... no longer exists. Without noticing it you have traversed a great distance; the strange has become familiar and the familiar ...an outgrown garment. And some people travel far more than others. There are those who receive as birthright an adequate or at least unquestioned sense of self and those who set out to reinvent themselves, for survival or for satisfaction, and travel far. Some people inherit values and practices as a house they inhabit; some of us have to burn down that house, find our own ground, build from scratch, even as a psychological metamorphosis.

Source: *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* by Rebecca Solnit

7. ***Love and Resilience Beyond Trauma*** by Resmaa Menakem

The answer to why so many of us have difficulties is because our ancestors spent centuries here under unrelentingly brutal conditions. Generation after generation, our bodies stored trauma and intense survival energy, and passed these on to our children and grandchildren. Most of us also passed down resilience and love, of course. But, as we saw with my grandmother—and as we see with so many other human beings—resilience and love aren't sufficient to completely heal all trauma. Often, at least some of the trauma continues.

...All of this suggests that one of the best things each of us can do—not only

for ourselves, but also for our children and grandchildren—is to metabolize our pain and heal our trauma. When we heal and make more room for growth in our nervous systems, we have a better chance of spreading our emotional health to our descendants, via healthy DNA expression. In contrast, when we don't address our trauma, we may pass it on to future generations, along with some of our fear, constriction, and dirty pain.

Source: *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* by Resmaa Menakem

Wisdom Story

The Farmer and the Donkey

by unknown

One day a farmer's donkey fell down into a well. The animal cried piteously for hours as the farmer tried to figure out a way to get him out. Finally, he decided it was probably impossible and the animal was old and the well was dry anyway, so it just wasn't worth it to try and retrieve the donkey.

So, the farmer asked his neighbors to come over and help him cover up the well. They all grabbed shovels and began to shovel dirt into the well. At first when the donkey realized what was happening, he cried horribly.

Then, to everyone's amazement, he quieted down and let out some happy brays. A few shovel loads later, the farmer looked down the well to see what was happening and was astonished at what he saw.

With every shovel of dirt that hit his back, the donkey was shaking it off and taking a step up. As the farmer's neighbors continued to shovel dirt on top of the animal, he continued to shake it off and take a step up. Pretty soon, to everyone's amazement, the donkey stepped up over the edge of the well and trotted off!

Moral: Life is going to shovel dirt on you. The trick to getting out of the well is to shake it off and take a step up. Every adversity can be turned into a stepping stone. The way to get out of the deepest well is by never giving up but by shaking yourself off and taking a step up. What happens to you

isn't nearly as important as how you react to it.

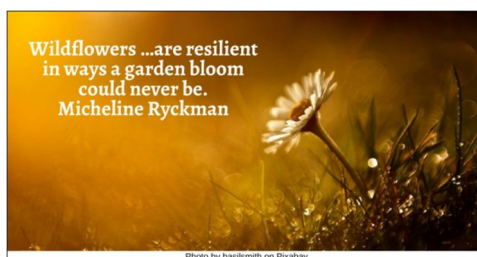
Source: <https://www.encouragemint.org/words-of-encouragemint/the-farmer-and-the-donkey>

Snippets

“Resilience is not born of circumstances any of us asked for or would have wanted. John Lennon said: ‘Life is what happens when we’re busy making other plans.’ Resilience knows about plans being thwarted. It knows disappointment and it knows loss. It knows that something or somebody can be here in one moment, and disappear the next. Resilience is sensitized to the pain of others because it knows it from firsthand experience. But resilience also knows something else. It knows there is something more than pain. It knows in plans laid to waste there are opportunities, if we have the courage and vision to see them.” *Joseph Boyd*

“A religion that promises a life without tension, a life without conflict, a life without suffering, is a religion of passivity, a religion of mediocrity, a religion of insignificance. Everything worth doing in the world is a desperate gamble ... where nothing is certain. What is love? Is it not a wild and sublime speculation that can end in ecstasy or despair? What is courage? Is it not a hazardous risk of fortune that can end in victory or defeat? What is adventure? Is it not a blind leap in the dark that can end in joy or disaster? What is faith? Is it not a prayerful flip of the coin that can end in heaven or hell? If we refuse to play the game, if we refuse to risk ourselves, if we refuse to throw the dice, we are never really alive.” *David O. Rankin*, adapted

“In my own worst seasons, I’ve come back from the colorless world of despair by forcing myself to look hard, for a long time, at a single glorious thing: a flame of red geranium outside my bedroom window. And then another: my daughter in a yellow dress. And another: the perfect outline of a full, dark sphere behind the crescent moon... until I learned to be in love with my life again. Like a stroke victim retraining new parts of the brain to grasp lost skills, I have



Wildflowers ...are resilient in ways a garden bloom could never be.
Micheline Ryckman

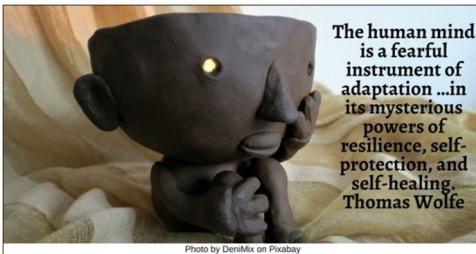
Photo by basilem on Pixabay

taught myself joy, over and over again.”
Barbara Kingsolver

“Children can’t see their budding lives through the long lens of wisdom — the wisdom that benefits from years passed, hurdles overcome, strength summoned, resilience realized, selves discovered and accepted, hearts broken but mended and love experienced in the fullest, truest majesty that the word deserves. For them, the weight of ridicule and ostracism can feel crushing and without the possibility of reprieve. And, in that dark and lonely place, desperate and confused, they can make horrible decisions that can’t be undone.” *Charles M. Blow*

“When you make your mistakes in public you will learn that they are mistakes and in being corrected you will grow. It also reminded me that being wrong and responding to correction with resilience was a higher virtue than covering up your mistakes so your students and the watching world assumed that success meant never being wrong. Working from your strengths and cultivating resilience in all matters of life have always been guiding principles for me.”
Rosaria Champagne Butterfield

“Bullying has consequences. It creates ripples that span for years. Sometimes for an entire life. They call you fat and so you stop eating. You watch what you eat until you die. They call you a nerd and so you stop reading in public. You still look over your shoulder when you read on a park bench. It destroys you, a vital part of you ...your mind, ...your heart, ...your soul even. It changes your beliefs, your lifestyle. It makes you anxious. It causes panic. It won’t let you sleep. But then again, the bullied are powerful, aren’t they? We’re resilient. We’re strong. We’re a ...force.”
Saffron A. Kent



Questions

"It's hard to say what makes the mind piece things together in a sudden lightning flash. I've come to hold the human spirit in the highest regard. Like the body, it struggles to repair itself. As cells fight off infection and conquer illness, the spirit, too, has remarkable resilience. It knows when it is harmed, and it knows when the harm is too much to bear. If it deems the injury too great, the spirit cocoons the wound, in the same fashion that the body forms a cyst around infection, until the time comes that it can deal with it. For some people, that time never comes. Some stay fractured, forever broken. You see them on the street, pushing carts. You see them in the faces of the regulars at the bar."

Karen Marie Moning

"Resilience is accepting your new reality, even if it's less good than the one you had before. You can fight it, you can do nothing but scream about what you've lost, or you can accept that and try to put together something that's good."

Elizabeth Edwards

"My scars remind me that I did indeed survive my deepest wounds. That in itself is an accomplishment. And they bring to mind something else, too. They remind me that the damage life has inflicted on me has, in many places, left me stronger and more resilient. What hurt me in the past has actually made me better equipped to face the present."

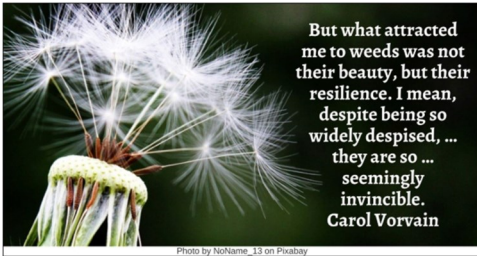
Steve Goodier

"When a storm of harassment disturbs our thinking and brings us down to our knees, the umbrella of our imagination can shield us against destructive aggression. It is offering shelter and is teaching us how to conquer ourselves, train our resilience, and grit our teeth. We better learn to adopt the virtue of endurance, as life consists of both 'passion' and 'patience.'"

4 *Erik Pevernagie*

1. In reading #1, Margaret Weis offers a recipe for resilience. The ingredients include courage, tears of failure and doubt, deep listening, silence, laughter, trust, wonder, naps, and snacks. Which of these ingredients do you feel are especially important? What ingredients would you add to the recipe? Why? Weis suggests serving it "alongside your favorite soft blanket, dog, cat, or other soft item." What would you serve this dish of resilience with? Why?
2. In reading #2, Brené Brown lists factors that promote resilience: good problem-solving skills, a tendency to seek help, the belief that you can manage your feelings and cope, having social support, and being connected with family and friends. Which of these do you think are most important. Why? Are there other factors that you would add? What? Why? Do you have a story about resilience, your own or another person's?
3. In reading #3, Ashley Horan asks, "How is it with your soul?" How would you answer her question? What role does resilience play in the condition of our soul? For Horan, showing up an aspect of resilience? Do you agree? Why or why not? How can/does our showing up make a difference?
4. In reading #4, Linda Graham writes that we confront uncertainties, unknowns, and catastrophes. As we build skills in dealing with them, "our resilience becomes more effortless." Do you agree? Why or why not? She writes about her friend, Ted, who quoted words that suggest engaging problems can leave us "confused at a higher level and about more important things." Has that happened in your life? What were the circumstances? Graham concludes with the suggestion that we "make resilience a central organizing principle of our lives." Does this make sense? Why or why not? How could you do this? How could we help children do this?
5. In reading #5, Stefano Carnazzi writes about the Japanese art of kintsugi, which uses a liquid precious metal to repair cracked or broken ceramic objects. The finished product is unique and more valuable than before it was broken. How might we apply this process to our own lives when we get "broken?" Applying kintsugi as a metaphor for our lives is, writes Carnazzi, "the essence of resilience." How does refusing to allow something to remain broken contribute to resilience?
6. In reading #6, Rebecca Solnit writes that, "the real difficulties, the real arts of survival, seem to lie in more subtle realms," and not in material things or activities. As a result, she writes, "what's called for is a kind of resilience of the psyche, a readiness to deal with what comes next." For her, resilience is necessary for the journey, planned or unexpected that we all travel. How has resilience served you in your journey of life? This journey is different for different people, as these questions make clear. Has your sense of self remained unquestioned? Why or why not? Have you had to reinvent yourself? Why? How? Have you inherited values and practices like a house you inhabit or have you had to burn down that house, find your own ground, and then build from scratch? Why?
7. In reading #7, Resmaa Menakem, referring to the damage caused by intergenerational trauma, writes that "resilience and love aren't sufficient to completely heal all trauma. Often, at least some of the trauma continues." Do you have a sense of how this could be true in some communities beset by poverty, violence, racism, and more? For people facing this, Menakem suggest that one of the best things to do "is to metabolize our pain and heal our trauma." How can this promote both freedom and resilience? What can help with this?

The following questions are related to the Snippets



8. Joseph Boyd acknowledges that resilience is not just a response to adversity. Resilience is also developed because of adversity. What value do you place on resilience? Do you have enough resilience? If yes, has that always been true? Can you identify some key experiences that built your resilience? What were they? How did they contribute to your resilience?
9. David Rankin infers that religion should help build resilience. Do you agree? Why or why not? He writes, "If we refuse to play the game, if we refuse to risk ourselves, if we refuse to throw the dice, we are never really alive." People fall on a continuum between being risk averse and risk tolerant. How do you think one's position on the continuum affects their cultivation of resiliency?
10. Barbara Kingsolver appears to draw upon her resiliency in the face of despair by looking "hard, for a long time, at a single glorious thing." It's a kind of mindfulness focused on an object of beauty. How do you get in touch with your resiliency in times of doubt, distress, or despair? Kingsolver concludes, "Like a stroke victim retraining new parts of the brain to grasp lost skills, I have taught myself joy, over and over again." Those skills include resiliency. How have you taught yourself resiliency?
11. Charles Blow writes, "Children can't see their budding lives through the long lens of wisdom." How does that long lens of wisdom help cultivate resiliency? How does resiliency inform the long lens of wisdom? Blow concludes, that children "in that dark and lonely place, desperate and confused, ... can make horrible decisions that can't be undone." How can we help children develop resiliency who do not have

the benefit of such wisdom and whose life circumstances have presented them with overwhelming adversity?

12. Rosaria Champagne Butterfield writes that in public, "being wrong and responding to correction with resilience was a higher virtue than covering up your mistakes...." What motivates people to hide their mistakes rather than responding with resilience? She concludes that, "Working from your strengths and cultivating resilience in **all** matters of life....," is important. Do you agree? Why or why not?
13. Saffron Kent writes that "Bullying ... creates ripples that span for years," especially when the damage is severe, which it often is. As a child, did you witness or experience such bullying? What feelings did it evoke? He continues with examples including, "They call you fat and so you stop eating." In what ways does giving such power to the bully undermine one's resiliency? In what ways might a bully have impaired resiliency? How can someone who was bullied build their resilience? Kent concludes, "But then again, the bullied are powerful, aren't they? We're resilient. We're strong. We're a ... force." Could such resilience grow out of having survived and/or out of empathy for others who have been abused? Why or why not? What else might lead to increased resilience following being bullied?
14. Karen Marie Moning writes about the "remarkable resilience" of the human spirit. What examples of such resilience have you witnessed directly or in history? She then explains, "It knows when it is harmed.... If it deems the injury too great, the spirit cocoons the wound, ...until the time comes that it can deal with it." Have you witnessed or experienced this? What do you think accounts for the resiliency of the human spirit?
15. Elizabeth Edwards writes that ultimately "Resilience is accepting your new reality, even if it's less good than the one you had before." Why

do we, at times, resist acceptance? Despite the difficulty, what is the value of acceptance? How can acceptance promote resiliency?

16. Artist Erik Pevernagie writes that "the umbrella of our imagination can ... train our resilience." Can imagining different outcomes of a situation promote resilience? Why? How? What else can train our resilience? How?
17. Buddhist Larry Yang believes that focusing on awakening to the exclusion of everything else is a mistake, since most of our experience is "not awakening." He writes that "We can't experience awakening without experiencing not awakening." Why would this be true? This dual reality is "freedom in the midst of suffering. This is resilience despite the forces of violence and oppression." In what way is resilience a kind of freedom? Said differently, how is diminished resilience a kind of prison?