



Gray Bear Advisors

11 Paths to Personal Resilience

People think that resilience is the ability to endure the unendurable, but really, it's the ability to pick yourself up and start over when life knocks you down. Focusing on enduring the unendurable indulges a defeatist attitude that rejects the idea that you have agency and the ability to make intentional choices. From our real-world experience and working with hundreds of clients over thousands of hours, we have come up with 11 paths to building your personal resilience. Each of these paths contains a number of steps, exercises, and mindsets that help you build your own personal resilience and live intentionally.

1. Get clear on your “north star”

When you're in crisis, it seems like “survive this crisis” is the only important thing. And you do need to survive the crisis. But what happens on the other side of the crisis? Resilient people keep the future in mind and focus on their *north star*—what they most want when the crisis has passed. This allows them to make decisions with a discerning mindset and focus on the highest order priorities.

2. Get your ego out of the way

Believing that you can control everything and that everyone should follow your instructions leads to rigidity, inflexibility, and brittleness. Resilience exists in the realm of flexibility and reality, where you can be honest and transparent about your own limitations and the limitations of those around you.

3. Practice self-regulation habits

Self-regulation means doing those things to keep yourself centered even in the direst circumstances. Instead of going, going, going until your body or mind crashes and you need a hard reboot, be sure to nudge yourself back to center constantly, in little but meaningful ways.

4. Enforce personal boundaries

Fear often takes over as the driver during crisis, and fear is a destroyer of personal boundaries. Defining and enforcing personal boundaries, however, is how you keep hold of your ability to act.

5. Detach from outcomes

When you are singularly focused on an outcome, you lose the ability to be rational, creative, and intentional on the path to that outcome. If you focus on each step instead of the outcome, you're much more likely to achieve it... sometimes in ways you didn't see at first.

6. Connect with nature

Nature can be healing. Go for a walk outdoors. Look at some flowers or a tree or a vista for a few minutes. If you can't get outside, bring nature inside with houseplants or something similar.

7. Avoid “army of one” heroism

Don’t go it alone. High achievers often crash and burn because they feel they have to do it all, have to have all the answers, and have to be the solver of every situation. That path leads to self-destruction, not to resilience.

8. Be clear, honest, and direct

Especially in difficult times, low-resilience people feel the need to hoard information and control information flow. Whether this is out of a desire to protect people or a desire for control, either way the outcome is the same—an erosion of trust. Get comfortable with transparency and truth.

9. Know you *always* have a choice

We all have freedom of choice, though none of us has freedom from consequence. When you find yourself feeling like you have no control or you’re a victim, figure out whether you are simply letting the fear of potential consequences keep you from seeing options that are, in fact, available to you.

10. Celebrate how far you have come

Resilient people take time not just to celebrate successes but to look back over time and see how far they’ve come. Low-resilience people tend to look back and see only their missteps; high-resilience people can also see the things they did right, the successes they had, and the things they learned.

11. Work with a professional coach

When people struggle with emotional situations, they mostly think that therapy is where they should turn. When you need deep emotional excavation, therapy is indeed the right modality. If you are actively in trauma, seek mental health support. Resilience, however, lies in the realm of coaching; resilience is about attitude and proactive behavior.

About Gray Bear

Gray Bear provides professional coaching, workshops, and publications in a variety of arenas including executive coaching, business coaching, philanthropic advising, caregiver and family coaching, writing and book coaching, and publishing services. Peter Dudley and Antoinette LeCouteur, the founders of Gray Bear Advisors, have coached hundreds of individuals, run scores of workshops, and spoken both virtually and in person at numerous events. Together they published a “user’s guide” for resilience in *RELIT: How to Rekindle Yourself in the Darkness of Compassion Fatigue*. Find out more at <https://graybearpublications.com/books/relit>. To learn about their coaching services and workshops, visit <https://graybearcoaching.com>.