We all have times when we are faced with trials and tribulations in our everyday life. Not one of us, young or old, is immune from stress and misfortune. There are those events or situations that may be small and seemingly insignificant, but that still require us to contend with and take care of. Then there are those highly stressful events that demand that we take action and make major adjustments in how we live our life. These stressors can range from serious illness, financial blows, or other unexpected traumas such as natural disasters, the loss of a loved one, or being a victim in an unexpected tragic situation. How do we find our strength to cope? How do we manage to move forward, and not feel crushed by the weight of a misfortune, or by the steady stream of demands and worries that fill our everyday lives?

The term “resilience” has been coined to refer to those qualities and skills that allow a person to effectively deal with all the stressful situations that life may bring one’s way. And it is not just coping ability that makes one resilient. Just as important is the ability to bounce back from adversity and disappointments, as well as knowing when to ask for help and where to find those resources. Resilience is not something a person is simply born with; it is so much more than our inborn temperament, and so much more than a set of innate abilities that we may or may not be fortunate enough to have.

Perhaps one of the most encouraging things about resilience is that one can learn and develop those skills. One does not simply “possess” resilient qualities. Resilience is truly a process – a lifelong learning process – that continually allows us to not necessarily avoid problems or stressful situations, but to effectively handle them. Some of the resilient skills have been taught to or shared with us. Some of the skills we have innately possessed. Having these skills and qualities do not make us invulnerable. They do, however, make us capable and resourceful, and not easily overwhelmed by the myriad stresses, problems or traumas that we might confront.

Even though much has been written about promoting and developing resilience in youth, it is a concept that is just as relevant to adults. We certainly want to be able to provide our young people with the skills they will need to successfully navigate the ups and downs of life. As caring adults and mentors, we should do all we can to afford them the opportunities to learn these skills. But adults need to hone their abilities as well, and to find opportunities to shore up and develop their own strengths and competencies.
How does a person build these resilient qualities? The American Psychological Association has compiled a list of ten ways to accomplish this:

- **Make connections.** Encourage and nurture good relationships with family and friends. Know who, where, and how to ask for help. Keep yourself involved. Help others. Be a mentor.

- **Don’t see crises as insurmountable problems.** There is much to be gained from how you interpret what happens in your life; how you perceive may alter how you respond to these challenges.

- **Accept that change is part of living.** Always focus on what can be changed, and what is in your control, rather than bemoan what you can’t or may not have power over.

- **Move toward your goals.** Keep your goals realistic and attainable. Work at them, make necessary adjustments, and don’t let difficulty persuade you to give up.

- **Take decisive action.** Take direct action when you can. Don’t withdraw; don’t put your head in the sand. Ask for help when you feel you can’t do it alone.

- **Look for opportunities for self-discovery.** Once again, it’s about how you interpret what has happened in your life. See challenges and crises as chances to learn about yourself, and about your abilities. Knowing that you have dealt with crises in the past lets you know that you have grown and changed regardless of what roadblocks and hardships you have encountered.

- **Nurture a positive view of yourself.** Give yourself a break. Everyone faces stress, and everyone struggles with difficult situations. Having hardships and stressful times can work to build confidence yourself and in your ability to manage life. Even when things have not worked out well, we always learn for the next time.

- **Keep things in perspective.** Don’t magnify the negative impact of difficulties, no matter how stressful. Keep your perspective. Know what you have accomplished, and know who and what resources are there for you.

- **Maintain a hopeful outlook.** Don’t ever lose sight of a better future. Optimism is not ignoring misfortune or difficulty. True optimism is about a positive outlook, and hopefulness. It is about finding ways to continually learn and grow, and to appreciate who we are, despite all we have been faced with.

- **Take care of yourself.** Find ways to nurture yourself physically, psychologically and spiritually. Not only will you feel better daily as a result, but you will also be better prepared to successfully manage the next stress that comes along in life’s journey.

Keep in mind that true resilience is **not** a matter of simply having “the right stuff”: it is actually a continuous process of learning, practicing, enhancing and sharing those skills that make us and those we care about, resilient.
