

## Preparation for Resilience (Theme for February)

What is resilience? In 2016 Sheryl Sandberg, Chief Operating Officer at Facebook, spoke of resilience in a commencement speech she gave at the University Of California, Berkeley. A year earlier her husband had died suddenly. She shared in her speech, “A few weeks after Dave died, I was talking to my friend Phil about a father-son activity that Dave was not here to do. We came up with a plan to fill in for Dave. I cried to him, “But I want Dave.” Phil put his arm around me and said, “Option A is not available. So let’s just kick the %\$@#! out of option B.” Later in the speech she stated, “The seeds of resilience are planted in the way we process the negative events in our lives.”

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines resilience as “an ability to recover from or adjust ... to adversity or change.” Resilience is a way of handling change and suffering which includes the ability to “orient quickly to the new reality, and cope with immediate challenges,” according to Al Siebert, author of *The Resiliency Advantage*. This view of dealing with difficulty is different from well-meaning advice given often in times of adversity, such as “grin and bear it” or “everything happens for a reason” or “whatever doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.”

Below are some attitudes and habits that encourage resilience. These have been found to help us through the times of trial and tragedy, allowing us to move forward.

- Being in caring relationships where we are able to express feelings and share our difficulties
- Finding ways to reflect on the issue through silence, therapy, or sharing with friends vs. jumping to distractive behavior like overeating to numb the pain of the situation
- Believing in yourself and paying attention to the flexibility of your multi-dimensional nature (being strong / gentle, serious/playful)
- Taking care of yourself (sleep, exercise, nature, finding joy)
- Considering acceptance of the situation, resisting looking back and wishing for the past; remaining flexible with the reality of diminishing options due to age, circumstance, disability, or physical limitations

Being resilient asks us to look within and also to look at how we interact with others. In our church we are a people of resilience, coming together in Grief Groups, Covenant Groups, Caring Networks, Extended Families, Wisdom Circles, UU Young Adults of ABQ, and other groups of caring, community, and support.

Here are some thoughts you might want to consider as you think about the topic of resilience.

Resilience is a muscle. Flex it enough and it will take less effort to get over the emotional punches each time. *Alecia Moore (aka Pink)*

People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within.

*Elisabeth Kübler-Ross*

The laws of nature remind us that no matter how long, seeds do grow. Push through long enough to see your seeds grow. *Andrena Sawyer*

There will be times in your life when things simply have to be replaced because they are tired, broken, worn out, harmful, outdated, or irrelevant. Take an inventory of the things that no longer serve your best and highest good so you can replace them with things which do. *Susan C. Young*

You are unlikely to find the perfect Life that you want. Even so, you can live fully with what you have, with what you have been given. And you do that by looking Life squarely in the eye, by facing it and by accepting what is, by learning to be happy despite the circumstances.

*AVIS Viswanathan*

The oak fought the wind and was broken, the willow bent when it must and survived.

*Robert Jordan, The Fires of Heaven*

You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it. *Maya Angelou*

## Questions to Ponder

1. One definition of resilience is the ability to return to one's original shape after it has been stretched, flattened, bent ... What are you feeling about resilience now? Are you feeling pulled, bent, about to snap, returning to your original shape, or realizing won't go back to that shape?
2. How did your family handle difficult times? How has that affected your own sense of resilience?
3. Think back over changes or crises in your life in the past few years. What did you do to foster resilience during those times?
4. What attitudes or habits (listened above) could you cultivate to enhance your resilience?
5. Have friends, co-workers, partners, or others helped you learn how to be resilient?
6. What did your hardest moment teach you about yourself and resilience?
7. Resilience can be about strength, but it can also be about self-compassion, rest, and giving up control. Has this kind of resilience ever helped you get through a tough time?
8. Consider one of the Spiritual Exercises in the Resilience issue of Soul Matters this month, like "Root Your Resilience in Beauty," "List 'Em and Share 'Em," or "Which of the 13 is in Your Way?" If you find one of them valuable, what was that experience like for you?

## Words of the Day

Before coming to the Gathering, think about resilience in your own life. For the Words of the Day, we will complete this sentence: "I can encourage resilience in myself by ..."

Some questions, quotes, and ideas are adapted from the Soul Matters February 2020 "Resilience" issue. Also see that issue for Spiritual Exercises and additional resources.