

10 Tips to Build Resilience in Teens and Young Adults

By AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

The ads make it look so easy to be a teen — everyone seems to be laughing, hanging out with friends, wearing exactly the right clothes. But if you're a young adult, you know that life can be pretty tough sometimes. You may face problems ranging from being bullied to the death of a friend or parent. Why is it that sometimes people can go through really rough times and still bounce back? The difference is that those who bounce back are using the skills of [resilience](#).

The good news is that resilience isn't something you're born with or not — the skills of resilience can be learned. Resilience — the ability to adapt well in the face of hard times; disasters like hurricanes, earthquakes or fires; tragedy; threats; or even high stress — is what makes some people seem like they've "got bounce" while others don't.

What are some tips that can help you learn to be resilient? As you use these tips, keep in mind that each person's journey along the road to resilience will be different — what works for you may not work for your friends.

1. Get Together

Talk with your friends and, yes, even with your parents. Understand that your parents may have more life experience than you do, even if it seems they never were your age. They may be afraid for you if you're going through really tough times and it may be harder for them to talk about it than it is for you! Don't be afraid to express your opinion, even if your parent or friend takes the opposite view. Ask questions and listen to the answers. Get connected to your community, whether it's as part of a church group or a high school group.

2. Cut Yourself Some Slack

When something bad happens in your life, the stresses of whatever you're going through may heighten daily stresses. Your emotions might already be all over the map because of hormones and physical changes; the uncertainty during a tragedy or [trauma](#) can make these shifts seem more extreme. Be prepared for this and go a little easy on yourself, and on your friends.

3. Create A Hassle-Free Zone

Make your room or apartment a "hassle-free zone" — not that you keep everyone out, but home should be a haven free from stress and anxieties. But understand that your parents and siblings may have their own stresses if something serious has just happened in your life and may want to spend a little more time than usual with you.

4. Stick To The Program

Spending time in high school or on a college campus means more choices; so let home be your constant. During a time of major stress, map out a routine and stick to it. You may be doing all kinds of new things, but don't forget the routines that give you comfort, whether it's the things you do before class, going out to lunch, or have a nightly phone call with a friend.

5. Take Care Of Yourself

Be sure to take of yourself – physically, mentally and spiritually. And get [sleep](#). If you don't, you may be more grouchy and nervous at a time when you have to stay sharp. There's a lot going on, and it's going to be tough to face if you're falling asleep on your feet.

6. Take Control

Even in the midst of tragedy, you can move toward goals one small step at a time. During a really hard time, just getting out of bed and going to school may be all you can handle, but even accomplishing that can help. Bad times make us feel out of control – grab some of that control back by taking decisive action.

7. Express Yourself

Tragedy can bring up a bunch of conflicting emotions, but sometimes, it's just too hard to talk to someone about what you're feeling. If talking isn't working, do something else to capture your emotions like start a journal, or create art.

8. Help Somebody

Nothing gets your mind off your own problems like solving someone else's. Try volunteering in your community or at your school, cleaning-up around the house or apartment, or helping a friend with his or her homework.

9. Put Things In Perspective

The very thing that has you stressed out may be all anyone is talking about now. But eventually, things change and bad times end. If you're worried about whether you've got what it takes to get through this, think back on a time when you faced up to your fears, whether it was asking someone on a date or applying for a job. Learn some relaxation techniques, whether it's thinking of a particular song in times of stress, or just taking a deep breath to calm down. Think about the important things that have stayed the same, even while the outside world is changing. When you talk about bad times, make sure you talk about good times as well.

10. Turn It Off

You want to stay informed – you may even have homework that requires you to watch the news. But sometimes, the news, with its focus on the sensational, can add to the feeling that nothing is going right. Try to limit the amount of news you take in, whether it's from television, newspapers or magazines, or the Internet. Watching a news report once informs you; watching it over and over again just adds to the stress and contributes no new knowledge.

You can learn resilience. But just because you learn resilience doesn't mean you won't feel stressed or anxious. You might have times when you aren't happy – and that's OK. Resilience is a journey, and each person will take his or her own time along the way. You may benefit from some of the resilience tips above, while some of your friends may benefit from others. The skills of resilience you learn during really bad times will be useful even after the bad times end, and they are good skills to have every day. Resilience can help you be one of the people who've "got bounce."