How to Be More Resilient

As a psychiatrist, I’ve long wondered why some people get ill in the face of stress and adversity — either mentally or physically — while others rarely succumb. What makes people resilient, and is it something they are born with or can it be acquired later in life?

New research suggests that one possible answer can be found in the brain’s so-called central executive network, which helps regulate emotions, thinking and behavior. In a study published last month, Gregory Miller, a psychologist at Northwestern University, used M.R.I. to study the brains of a racially diverse group of 218 people, ages 12 to 14, living in violent neighborhoods in Chicago. They reported that the youths who had higher levels of functional connectivity in the central executive network had better cardiac and metabolic health than their peers with lower levels of connectivity. When neighborhood homicide rates went up, the young people’s cardiometabolic risk — as measured by obesity, blood-pressure and insulin levels, among other variables — also increased, but only in youths who showed lower activity in this brain network. This was true even when the researchers controlled for other factors, like psychological distress, economic status, race or ethnicity.

One plausible explanation is that greater activity in this network increases self-control, which most likely reduces some unhealthy behaviors people often use to cope with stress, like eating junk food or smoking.

What’s curious is that the more medically hardy young people were no less anxious or depressed than their less fortunate peers, which suggests that while being more resilient makes you less vulnerable to adversity, it doesn’t guarantee happiness — or even an awareness of being resilient.

There is much still to learn about the science of resilience. Perhaps someday we might be able to protect young people exposed to violence and adversity by supplementing them with neuroprotective growth factors. We know enough now to help them by fortifying their brains through exercise, mindfulness training and support systems. And of course we should do all we can to makes these stressful environments less harmful.

Some people have won the genetic sweepstakes and are naturally tough. But there is plenty the rest of us can do to be more resilient and healthier.

Source: Richard A. Friedman, New York Times
Heart disease doesn’t happen just to older adults. It is happening to younger adults more and more often. This is partly because the conditions that lead to heart disease are happening at younger ages. February is Heart Month, the perfect time to learn about your risk for heart disease and the steps you need to take now to help your heart.

Heart disease—and the conditions that lead to it—can happen at any age. High rates of obesity and high blood pressure among younger people (ages 35-64) are putting them at risk for heart disease earlier in life. Half of all Americans have at least one of the top three risk factors for heart disease (high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and smoking).

Many of the conditions and behaviors that put people at risk for heart disease are appearing at younger ages:

- **High blood pressure.** Millions of Americans of all ages have high blood pressure, including millions of people in their 40s and 50s. Having uncontrolled high blood pressure is one of the biggest risks for heart disease and other harmful conditions, such as stroke.
- **High blood cholesterol.** High cholesterol can increase the risk for heart disease. Having diabetes and obesity, smoking, eating unhealthy foods, and not getting enough physical activity can all contribute to unhealthy cholesterol levels.
- **Smoking.** More than 37 million U.S. adults are current smokers, and thousands of young people start smoking each day. Smoking damages the blood vessels and can cause heart disease.
- **Obesity.** Carrying extra weight puts stress on the heart. More than 1 in 3 Americans—and nearly 1 in 6 children ages 2 to 19—has obesity.
- **Diabetes.** Diabetes causes sugar to build up in the blood. This can damage blood vessels and nerves that help control the heart muscle. Nearly 1 in 10 people in the United States has diabetes.
- **Physical inactivity.** Staying physically active helps keep the heart and blood vessels healthy. Only 1 in 5 adults meets the physical activity guidelines of getting 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity activity.

Source: Center for Disease Control

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**Healthy Cooking: White Chicken Chili**

**Ingredients:**
1/2 tbsp. olive oil
1 white onion, chopped
1 can mild green chiles
1 tbsp. ground cumin
2 tsp. chili powder
1/4 tsp. coriander
1/4 tsp. oregano
4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
2 can (15 oz.) chickpeas, rinsed and drained
3/4 tsp. salt, and more to taste
Black pepper to taste
3 cups shredded, cooked chicken breast
1/2 cup frozen corn
1 medium lime, juiced
1/3 cup fresh chopped cilantro, plus more for garnish
Tortilla chips and avocado for garnish

**Directions**
1. Add 1 1/2 cups of chickpeas and 1/2 cup of water to a blender. Puree until smooth, adding more water if needed.
2. Add olive oil to a large pot or dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add onion and green chiles, and cook until softened, about 3-4 minutes.
3. Stir in cumin, chili powder, coriander, and oregano. Allow the spices to cook for about 30 seconds, then add in chicken broth, blended chickpeas, remaining whole chickpeas, and salt and pepper. Simmer on low heat for 20-30 minutes.
4. After 20 minutes, stir in the chicken breast, corn, lime juice, and cilantro. Let simmer for 5-10 more minutes.
5. Enjoy! Serve with cilantro, tortilla chips, and avocado!
Tips for More Effective Personal Time Management

1. **Spend time planning and organizing.** Using time to think and plan is time well-spent. In fact, if you fail to take time for planning, you are, in effect, planning to fail. Organize in a way that makes sense to you. If you need color and pictures, use a lot on your calendar or planning book. Some people need to have papers filed away; others get their creative energy from their piles. So forget the "shoulds" and organize your way.

2. **Prioritize.** Use the 80-20 Rule originally stated by the Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto who noted that 80 percent of the reward comes from 20 percent of the effort. The trick to prioritizing is to isolate and identify that valuable 20 percent. Once identified, prioritize time to concentrate your effort on those items with the greatest reward. Prioritize by color, number or letter — whichever method makes the most sense to you. Flagging items with a deadline is another idea for helping you stick to your priorities.

3. **Use a to-do list.** Some people thrive on using a daily To Do list which they construct either the last thing the previous day or first thing in the morning. Such people may combine a To Do list with a calendar or schedule. Others prefer a "running" To Do list which is continuously being updated. Or, you may prefer a combination of the two previously described To Do lists. Whatever method works is best for you. Don't be afraid to try a new system — you just might find one that works even better than your present one!

4. **Be flexible.** Allow time for interruptions and distractions. Time management experts often suggest planning for just 50 percent or less of one's time. With only 50 percent of your time planned, you will have the flexibility to handle interruptions and the unplanned "emergency." When you expect to be interrupted, schedule routine tasks. Save (or make) larger blocks of time for your priorities. When interrupted, ask Alan Lakein's crucial question, "What is the most important thing I can be doing with my time right now?" to help you get back on track fast.

5. **Avoid being a perfectionist.** In the Malaysian culture, only the gods are considered capable of producing anything perfect. Whenever something is made, a flaw is left on purpose so the gods will not be offended. Yes, some things need to be closer to perfect than others, but perfectionism, paying unnecessary attention to detail, can be a form of procrastination.

6. **Learn to say no.** Such a small word — and so hard to say. Focusing on your goals may help. Blocking time for important, but often not scheduled, priorities such as family and friends can also help. But first you must be convinced that you and your priorities are important — that seems to be the hardest part in learning to say "no." Once convinced of their importance, saying "no" to the unimportant in life gets easier.

7. **Reward yourself.** Even for small successes, celebrate achievement of goals. Promise yourself a reward for completing each task, or finishing the total job. Then keep your promise to yourself and indulge in your reward. Doing so will help you maintain the necessary balance in life between work and play. As Ann McGee-Cooper says, "If we learn to balance excellence in work with excellence in play, fun, and relaxation, our lives become happier, healthier, and a great deal more creative."

Source: NYU
Let the wellness madness begin...

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2019 WELLNESS FAIR

Thursday, March 21
9 am - 4 pm
Weinstein Center for Recreation