



# A Personal Guide to Building Resiliency and Coping with Change

# Presenter

## Laurie Kovens



Laurie R. Kovens, LCSW, is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in practice since 1993. She has served as a clinician in medical and employee assistance settings. She has worked with clients, families, community members, and co-workers to help them adapt in the face of ongoing physical, emotional, and organizational change. Laurie works with clients from a person-centered, strengths-based approach. Treatment orientation includes: short-term, solution-focused counseling, mindfulness, cognitive/behavioral therapy (CBT), motivational interviewing, medical crisis counseling, narrative healthcare, and spiritual and psychodynamic counseling.

Laurie is also an NASW-Certified Clinical Supervisor. She is currently pursuing a Master's degree in writing with a focus on Narrative Healthcare. Laurie is a frequent presenter, focusing on prevention and recovery from burnout, organizational management and development, resilience, and the use of writing and reflection for self-care and personal and professional growth.

# Learning Objectives

- Recognize components of resiliency, from flexibility to a positive outlook
- Increase self-awareness about personal and work conditions that trigger stress in you
- Learn new ways of thinking about changes in your life that will boost your resilience

# Resiliency: True or False

1. You either have resilience or you don't.
2. Resilience is the achievement of positive outcomes in spite of personal and environmental risk factors.
3. Pathways to recovery are highly personal, and generally involve a re-definition of identity in the face of crisis or a process of progressive change.
4. Short-term settings are not useful in promoting/enhancing resilience.
5. Addressing resilience involves a specific set of specialized tools, different from tools often used in EAP counseling.

# What Is Resilience?

"The ability to withstand adverse events and stressful situations without 'falling apart,' by actively and positively coping with stress"

*Steven Stein and Howard Book*

"Ability to adapt to adversity, roll with the punches and bounce back stronger, wiser and more determined."

*Washington State Employee Assistance Program Resiliency Project*

"Resilience is a positive construct which enables individuals to 'overcome stressors or withstand negative life events and, not only recover from such experiences, but also find personal meaning in them.'"

*Grant and Kinman (2014)*

# Survey

Based on this initial overview,  
how would you rate your resilience at this time?

1. Not resilient
2. Somewhat resilient
3. Neutral
4. Resilient
5. Very resilient

# Components of Resiliency: Protective Factors



Source: SAMHSA (2014)

# Components of Resiliency: Resiliency Builders



Source: Grindley, Muir, and Tan (n.d.).



# Brief Resilience Scale

**Instructions:** Use the following scale and choose one number for each statement to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the statements

**1= Strongly Disagree   2=Disagree   3= Neutral   4= Agree   5= Strongly Agree**

1. I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times.
2. I have a hard time making it through stressful events.
3. It does not take me long to recover from a stressful event.
4. It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens.
5. I usually come through difficult times with little trouble.
6. I tend to take a long time to get over setbacks in my life.

Source: Smith, Dalen, Wiggins, Tooley, and Bernard (2008).

# Assessing Our Own Resiliency

## Personal Resiliency Builders (Individual Qualities that Facilitate Resiliency)

*Put a + by the top three or four resiliency builders you use most often. Ask yourself how you have used these in the past or currently use them. Think of how you can best apply these resiliency builders to current life problems, crises, or stressors.*

*(Optional) You can then put a  by one or two resiliency builders you think you should add to your personal repertoire.*

- Relationships** — Sociability/ability to be a friend/ability to form positive relationships
- Service** — Giving of yourself to help other people; animals; organizations; and/or social causes
- Humor** — Having and using a good sense of humor
- Inner Direction** — Basing choices/decisions on internal evaluation (internal locus of control)
- Perceptiveness** — Insightful understanding of people and situations
- Independence** — “Adaptive” distancing from unhealthy people and situations/autonomy
- Positive View of Personal Future** — Optimism; expecting a positive future
- Flexibility** — Can adjust to change; can bend as necessary to positively cope with situations

Excerpted from <http://www.resiliency.com/free-articles-resources/the-resiliency-quiz/>

# Assessing Our Own Resiliency

## **Personal Resiliency Builders** **(Individual Qualities that Facilitate Resiliency)**

*Put a + by the top three or four resiliency builders you use most often. Ask yourself how you have used these in the past or currently use them. Think of how you can best apply these resiliency builders to current life problems, crises, or stressors.*

*(Optional) You can then put a  by one or two resiliency builders you think you should add to your personal repertoire.*

- Love of Learning** — Capacity for and connection to learning
- Self-motivation** — Internal initiative and positive motivation from within
- Competence** — Being “good at something”/personal competence
- Self-Worth** — Feelings of self-worth and self-confidence
- Spirituality** — Personal faith in something greater
- Perseverance** — Keeping on despite difficulty; doesn’t give up
- Creativity** — Expressing yourself through artistic endeavor, or through other means of creativity

# Survey

1. Could you identify at least three resiliency responses you use on a regular basis? Y/N
2. Can you identify one or two areas from this list you could enhance? Y/N
3. For the items you identified for enhancement, can you identify at least one “next step” to take towards enhancing that aspect? Y/N

# Our Perceptions Affect How We Cope

**Stressor**

**Perception/Reaction**

**Response**

A



B



C

Event

Thoughts  
Beliefs  
Assumptions

Physical  
Emotional  
Behavioral

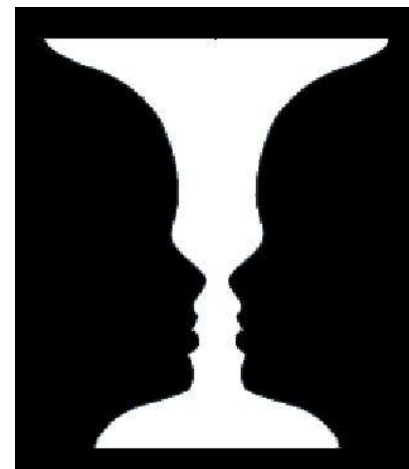
# Reactions to Stress

See the situation as a challenge

**You** have more of an impact on stress than the stressor event

See the situation as a problem

**Stressor event** has more of an impact on you



# What About Situations Farther From Our Control?

- Chronic medical or mental health issues
- Harassment or abuse
- System dysfunction (family or workplace system issues, institutionalized oppression)

# The Effects of Stress on You

- **Emotional**—Often impacts our mood, causing us to be easily agitated, feel depressed or emotionally depleted
- **Cognitive**—Contributes to inability to concentrate on the task at hand, or forgetfulness
- **Behavioral**—May cause us to change our behaviors; overeating, increasing caffeine intake or alcohol consumption, or neglecting our exercise routine
- **Physiological**—May be associated with muscle tension, gastrointestinal concerns, or general fatigue



# Stress Busters

- Practice letting go.
- Breathe slowly and deeply.
- Practice speaking more slowly than usual.
- Use a time management technique.
- Go outside for a quick break.
- Drink plenty of water and eat small, healthful snacks.
- Check your posture.
- Plan a reward for the end of your day.

# It's Time to Try Relaxing!

- Helps you to avoid becoming overly stressed
- Helps you to calm your thoughts and productively work through a stressful event
- Enables you to end your day in a relaxing way



# Diaphragmatic Breathing

- Changing your breathing will allow you to think more clearly.
- Changing your thinking will allow your breathing to slow and become deeper.
- Steps
  1. Sit back in your seat.
  2. Make your hands comfortable.
  3. Close your eyes.
  4. Take a deep breath, inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your mouth.
  5. Breathe again.
  6. Repeat until you feel calm and settled.

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation

1. Find a quiet place.
2. Find a comfortable position that supports your head and neck.
3. Close your eyes and take deep breaths.
4. Tighten the muscles in your hands (clench your fists) for 4 seconds, and then release.
5. Repeat this process with other muscles in your body.
6. Focus on letting go of the tension in that muscle area.
7. Finish with slow and even breathing.

# Survey

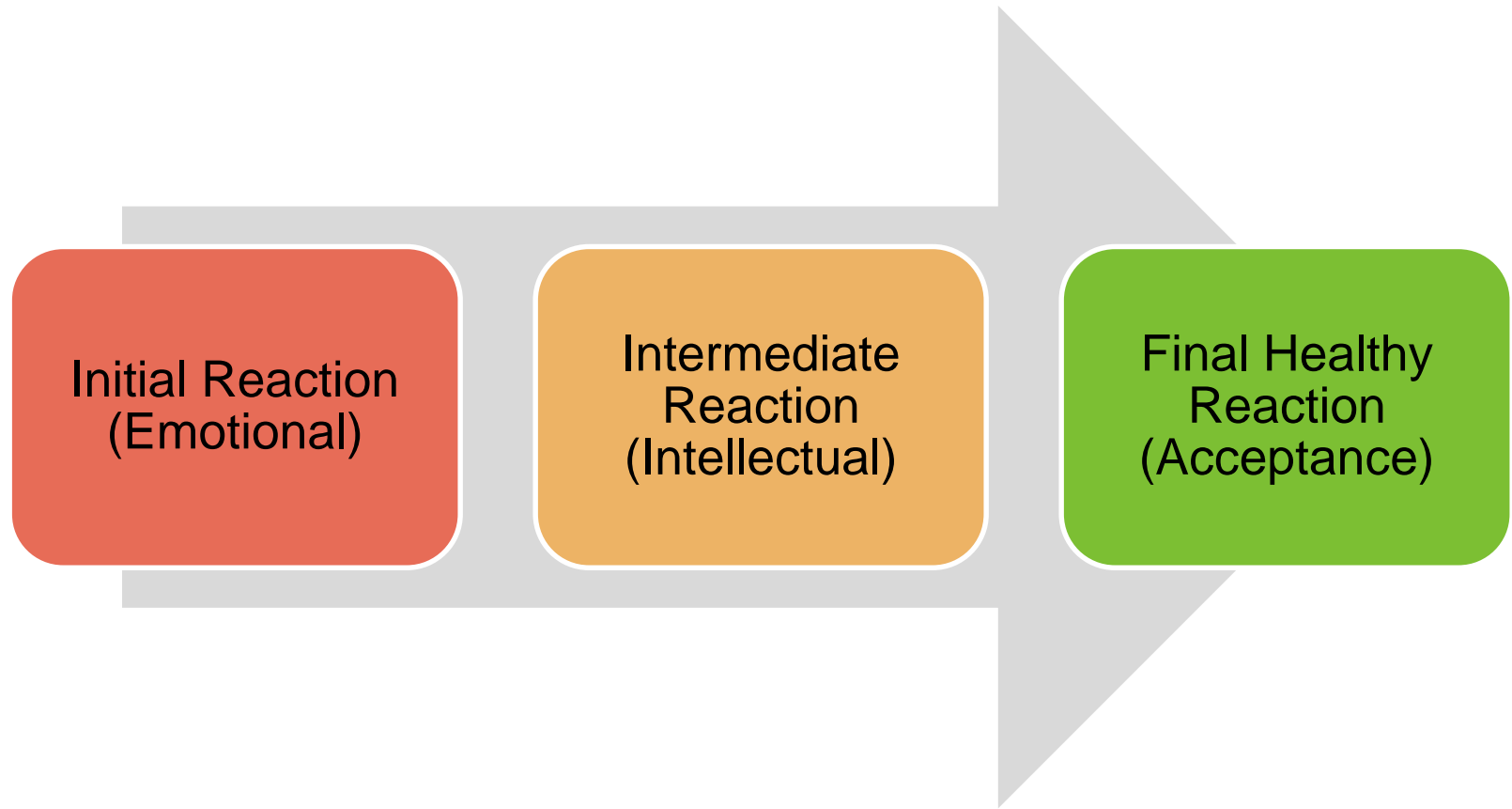
Which statement best describes your reaction when you are faced with stress or a change?

- A. I take a deep breath and move ahead.
- B. I smile and think, “Oh well.”
- C. I get angry and vent to anyone who will listen.
- D. I cry and want to run and hide.

# Why We Dislike Change

- Fear of the unknown
- Perceived risks
- Lack of control
- Loss of structure or schedule
- Perceived losses, such as a loss of
  - Security
  - Relationships
  - Trust
  - Competence

# The Three Phases of Change



# Initial Reaction: Emotional Phase

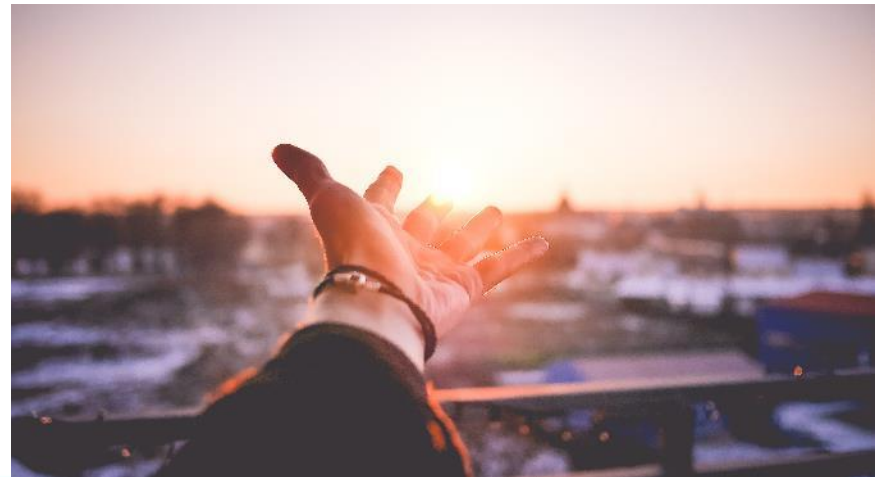
- Shock and disbelief
- Anger
- Sadness, grief, and loss
- Guilt
- Anxiety and uncertainty
- Change in trust level
- Confused thoughts
- Fatigue
- Resistance





## Intermediate Reaction: Intellectual Phase

- Voicing your thoughts
- Making a conscious decision to let go of the past
- Seeking balance in your life
- Defining the new situation
- Continuing to learn



# Final Healthy Reaction: Acceptance Phase

- Establishing clear objectives
- Being proactive
- Looking for opportunities
- Reframing the situation
- Focusing on the positive
- Taking care of yourself and others



# Tips for Responding to Change

- Seek support from friends and family.
- Take steps toward a more hopeful attitude.
- Try not to get caught up in rumors.
- Find opportunity in change.
- Learn about the new situation.

# Conclusion

- **Acknowledge your feelings**—Stress and change are normal occurrences in life; how they affect you is determined by how you prepare for and respond to both.
- **Develop a plan**—Establishing goals and identifying the steps for goal achievement aids in keeping stress at bay and allows you to feel a sense of control over outcomes.
- **Reduce stress**—Take time out every day to engage in stress management; challenge mental barriers to successful stress management and embracing change.

# Conclusion

- **Take steps to care for yourself**—A balanced lifestyle is essential to the successful navigation of both stress and change; remember, balance is key.
- **Seek professional help if needed**—Working with a mental health professional or a counselor through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) may assist you in developing and sticking to a plan.

# Resources

Contact your Employee Assistance Program for Assistance

Thank You

Questions?

# Works Cited

- Aborn, S. (2009, January). *How to cope with major life changes*. Retrieved May 16, 2016, from <http://www.familycircle.com/health/emotional/self-improvement/cope-with-major-life-changes>
- Cleveland Clinic Foundation. (Reviewed 2014, May 21). *Diaphragmatic breathing*. Retrieved April 6, 2016, from [http://my.clevelandclinic.org/disorders/chronic\\_obstructive\\_pulmonary\\_disease\\_copd/hic\\_diaphragmatic\\_breathing.aspx](http://my.clevelandclinic.org/disorders/chronic_obstructive_pulmonary_disease_copd/hic_diaphragmatic_breathing.aspx)
- Grindley, N., Muir, C., and Tan, H. (n.d.). *Resilience and self-identity in early childhood*. Retrieved October 3, 2018 from <http://edf4321.blogspot.com/>
- Henderson, N. (n.d.). *The resiliency quiz*. Retrieved October 3, 2018, from <http://www.resiliency.com/free-articles-resources/the-resiliency-quiz/>
- Louise Grant and Gail Kinman. (2014). *Emotional resilience in the helping professions and how it can be enhanced*. Health and Social Care Education, 3:1, 23-34.
- Managing Pressure. (2014, February 18). *Personal resilience and emotional intelligence: Is there a link?* Retrieved March 31, 2016, from <http://www.managingpressure.com/file/personal-resilience-and-emotional-intelligence-is-there-a-link>
- Reh, F. (Updated 2014, November 25). *How to help reduce stress at work*. Retrieved May 6, 2016, from <http://management.about.com/od/yourself/ht/ReduceStress05.htm>



# Works Cited

- SAMHSA's Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies. (2014, June). *Risk and protective factors associated with youth marijuana use using prevention research to guide prevention practice*.
- Scott, E. (Updated 2014, December 16). *Reduce tension with progressive muscle relaxation*. Retrieved April 6, 2016, from <http://stress.about.com/od/generaltechniques/ht/howtopmr.htm>
- Scott, E. (Updated 2016, March 29). *Use guided imagery for relaxation*. Retrieved April 6, 2016, from <http://stress.about.com/od/generaltechniques/ht/howtoimagery.htm>
- Smith, B. W., Dalen, J., Wiggins, K., Tooley, E., Christopher, P., and Bernard, J. (2008). *The brief resilience scale: Assessing the ability to bounce back*. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 15(3), 194-200.
- Stress Management for Health. (n.d.). *Physical effects of stress*. Retrieved May 6, 2016, from <http://www.stress-management-for-health.com/physical-effects-of-stress.html>
- Segal, J., Smith, M., Segal, M., and Robinson, L. (Updated 2016, May). *Stress symptoms, signs, and causes*. Retrieved May 6, 2016, from [http://www.helpguide.org/mental/stress\\_signs.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/stress_signs.htm)
- Stoppler, M. (2014, December 1). *Eight immediate stress-busters*. Retrieved February 25, 2016, from <http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=59875>
- The Stretching Institute. (n.d.). *Stretching at your desk or computer*. Retrieved February 8, 2016, from <http://stretchcoach.com/articles/desk-stretches/>