

## Staying Strong during Uncertain Times

The World Trade Center disaster changed our lives in ways we could not have imagined.

In the aftermath of the World Trade Center disaster, many of us experienced a range of emotions — from anger and sadness to anxiety and a sense of uncertainty. These reactions can be considered completely normal given the magnitude of the disaster.

Many of us adapted over time to the stress and change that were part of the disaster. What enabled us to adapt is a quality called resilience. Resilience involves having inner strength to cope with the many obstacles that we may face. Individually, we each have resilience. And together, our country showed great resilience and strength during and after September 11.

Staying strong and resilient is important in life. Although we may not feel it at times, crisis gives us the chance to build qualities such as courage, strength, and hope. In fact, the Chinese write the word for crisis, wei ji, by combining the word for “danger” and the word for “hidden opportunity.”



wei ji

Here are a few tips that may help to maintain or even strengthen your resilience:

**Help others in need.** Rather than feeling stressed, use the energy to help others in need. Community service and volunteer work are great ways to care for yourself and to express your compassion and caring for others. Organizations like the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and the United Way can help you find meaningful volunteer opportunities in your community.

**Connect to family and friends.** Pay attention to the close relationships in your life. Be sure to take the time to nurture your relationships with family and friends. In times of crisis, we often are reminded of the importance of connections in our lives. At these times, people naturally turn to the ones they love.

**Enjoy activities and hobbies.** Focus on activities and hobbies that give you a sense of hope and a sense of (?) security. In addition, limiting your exposure to media coverage and terrorism-related news may help to reduce the stress you feel day to day.

**Build support networks.** Join community watches, church groups, and clubs to build a network of connections. Building a network of connections will allow you and others in your community to support each other in times of need.

**Be humorous.** Laughter is said to be the best medicine. It is one way to take the focus off the negative aspects of uncertainty and to cope with it.

**Take control.** A sense of personal control is key to resilience. Take control of the things

you can and find ways to let go of those you cannot.

**Be courageous:** Finding small ways to take courageous action can help you regain control of your fears. You can take action by donating blood, checking up on friends, or returning to everyday tasks even when feeling fearful.

**Be prepared:** Get involved in your community's safety preparedness planning activities. If you have school-age children, talk with the school to discuss their safety plans and how they will affect you and your children, should an emergency occur during school hours. Familiarize yourself with workplace emergency planning protocols. Think about what a home-based emergency plan would look like for you and your family, and if you need help getting started, a local chapter of the American Red Cross can help you with this.

Here are some other examples of healthy ways to strengthen your resilience:

- Going to stress management classes like yoga
- Playing on athletic or recreation teams
- Listening to music you enjoy or going dancing
- Planting and tending your own garden or a community garden
- Keeping a journal, especially around anniversary dates
- Volunteering in your community
- Attending self-help and support groups
- Visiting elderly community residents who may need to be checked in on

Take a few minutes and think about how you can strengthen your coping during difficult times. Jot down some of them here and consider taking action on them.

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If some of the tips mentioned here may not be of help or if you are having a hard time coming up with some of your own ideas, you might benefit from talking with someone who understands your reactions. Think about talking with someone if you:

- Re-experience the World Trade Center attacks as flashbacks, memories, nightmares or frightening thoughts accompanied by intense emotions
- Use alcohol or drugs to cope
- Have difficulty with falling asleep, staying asleep or awakening
- Are irritable and have outbursts of anger
- Feel a sense of numbness or withdrawal from the pleasures of everyday life
- Feel empty or incapable of showing emotion to the loved ones in your life
- Feel extremely worried and helpless

- Feel hopeless and the sense that your life has no purpose

For help, call 1-800-LIFENET.

LIFENET will help you find resources to cope.

Project Liberty, which has offered free, confidential services to anyone affected by the World Trade Center disaster or its aftereffects, is committed to mental health promotion and wellness. Project Liberty was created by the New York State Office of Mental Health with support from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Center for Mental Health Services.

Resource Section....list out MHANYC/LIFENET, Salvation Army, United Way, ARC, etc.