

Resilience

Iva Beranek is a speaker and author in the area of spirituality and also a spiritual director.

Resilience doesn't look the same for everyone. It can depend on what is happening in a person's life. Some define resilience as an ability to 'spring back into shape' when something difficult happens, to bounce back, like a tennis ball. How many of us can do that when something difficult is going on, however? I am not even sure that it is always healthy to spring back up immediately!

When I was a teenager, growing up in Croatia, my country went through war. At the time I thought I was not affected by it, because no one close to me died. I have heard people describe resilience in a similar way, as a state of being 'unaffected'. I do not think I was resilient at the time, however. If I was, it was only as resilient as any person can be when they are so young.

Nine years after the war was over, I was at a conference where I heard a talk about trauma. At the end of the talk, I asked myself whether I had trauma from the war. At times, we

cannot respond with 'fight or flight' to situations, so instead we 'freeze'. That's what happened to me until that one evening, when I cried for the first time over what had happened. Now I know I was not 'unaffected', but I have since dealt with the pain. Dealing with this took time. I am sure it did not

'look' resilient, but my tolerance for discomfort and ability to hold deep pain grew. I believe I became more resilient through it.

An emotion and a fruit of the Spirit that speaks to me lately of resilience is joy. Having capacity and tolerance for discomfort means

that we can deal with vulnerability. Brené

Brown says, 'We simply cannot know joy without embracing vulnerability, and the way to do that is to focus on gratitude, not fear.' Brown, a professor at the University of Houston, studies 'scary emotions like anger and shame' in her research, and yet says 'I think the most terrifying human experience is joy.' When we experience joy, we can feel overwhelmed with the fear of having



it taken away from us. We do not go through healing of deep hurts merely to become resilient, but so that we can live life to the full. Before Jesus died, in the prayer to the Father, he said, 'I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them' (Jn 17:13).

For me it helps knowing that God is good. This helps me to look at the future with faith and hope, and not fear. God is a giver of good gifts. Practising gratitude helps us to notice the goodness that is in our life, as well as notice how God is active, even when things are difficult. I believe that beneath all the deep pain of life, joy is hidden.

As we journey through healing, we uncover some of that joy. We cannot force joy, but over time joy becomes a fruit of a grateful heart.

One winter I noticed a little white feather stuck in the bush in front of my window. Winds blew, it rained heavily some of the days, and yet the feather was still there. Eventually I took it inside, but it resisted the wind for more than a month. This feather is how I prefer to view resilience. We may be vulnerable, we may feel weak, but something bigger than us, the hands of a loving God, are holding us as we struggle through life. And then there comes a time when these loving hands take us 'inside', where there is peace and joy and no more harm. ❤️

PETITION

First Friday:
7th January 2022

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