

# Dr. Steven Fonso

Harnessing Resilience

## 7 ESSENTIAL STEPS TO HARNESSING RESILIENCE

Every day, people come to me with a variety of conditions, diseases, stressors, challenges, and difficult life situations.

In more than 110,000 office visits, I've learned that underneath their unique circumstances, all my patients want the same thing: to be better, to improve themselves, to be, in a way, more resilient.

Resilience is one of those things when spoken, that sounds a bit intangible. It seems like an abstract concept, although we all have a basic understanding of its meaning.

***How do we build it?***

***Were we born with it?***

***Are some people better than others at it?***

This 'it,' perfectly describes how resilience can remain abstract. It's like playing tag and saying you're 'it.' Okay, I'm 'it' but what does that mean?

Resilience in our human systems means being able to spring back from depression and illness, recover quickly from setbacks in our lives, and reshape our physical bodies when we experience trauma, stress, or injury.

There are many ways that we can influence our level of resilience. The most significant gains in resilience come from practices of both body and mind, because they are one connected unit. You can't have a thought without a body response nor can you have a body movement without a thought change.

With that premise in mind, I have identified for you the seven biggest chunks of gold you will find when digging for greater resilience. Read on for seven essential ways to improve your resilience so you can bounce back from anything.

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### 1. Breathing

Yes, it's your birthright, but most people are shallow jagged breathers. Due to overwhelming amounts of stress in life, being reactionary is the new norm. With that comes an extremely interrupted and disturbed breath.

Begin to work with your breath for 5 seconds in, 5 seconds out, in through the nose and out through the mouth. This is one of the most effective breath patterns to balance the brain and body, bringing relaxation and ease to any tense situation.

*Can I breathe fully and deeply? Can I regulate my breath in a 1:1 ratio?*

### 2. Posture/Movement

Standing tall and getting mobile wasn't just your mother's strategy. It's the strategy of elite athletic performers, spiritual teachers, and performance-based trainers and coaches. Good posture combined with good alignment and movement is a mother-load of opportunity to provide a sound mind and body.

Consider when you are depressed or overwhelmed how you position your body; stooped, slouched and bent over or curled up. Too rigid and upright is military and emotion-less, too stooped is weak and withdrawn. A flexible, strong, and mobile body is one that is most resilient.

*Can I stand upright, tall and relaxed? Can I lift my body from my core? Can I move with grace, ease, and power?*

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### 3. Laughter

A chuckle doesn't count. The belly laugh has been documented to release opioids (feel-good chemicals) in the brain and body, stimulate the diaphragm and vagus nerve for deep breathing and healing, as well as release a massive amount of tension.

There are laughter yoga classes, general laughing classes, and class clowns. Thank goodness for them -- they can lighten up any situation and bring healing to a stuffy classroom.

*Can I laugh at myself and all of my parts?*

### 4. Seeing yourself in others

Relationships get thrown when you get irritated by how the other person is behaving. Seeing yourself in others doing the same thing -- because you have -- will allow you to draw in empathy and compassion.

You make bonehead moves just like others. You judge just like others. You criticize just like others. Being irritated with another only hurts you; only inflames you; only tenses you. Remember yourself in others' shoes to ease the distress and tension.

*Who is bothering me? Who most disturbs me? Who do I most have issues with? Where have I done and do that which disturbs me?*

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### 5. Seeing the value

A master of their mind can quickly balance perceptions, and one of the ways to do so is to see benefits in the apparent chaos and opportunity in distress.

There are two sides of the coin, both good and bad, right and wrong, support and challenge, ease and difficulty in EVERY situation. Finding upsides as quickly as possible keeps the mind neutral and balanced, and is essential to staying resilient.

*What is an experience in which I think I am a victim?*

*What are the direct or indirect benefits to me of this event?*

### 6. Live in your highest values

You are in your most resilient state when you are living life according to your highest values. Doing the XYZ's of life is draining and depressing, and only serves to provide irritation and frustrations. Living in your ABC's, where you are lit up, inspired, and in love with what you are doing, is a sure way to energize the body and mind.

As a caveat, sometimes you must do things that are low on your values, and it is important to connect those things to your highest values. If you are a parent who must do the dishes, remember that a clean home provides something you value for your kids -- a safe and nurturing environment.

*What do I spend my time doing? What do I naturally surround myself with? These are my highest values around which I can center my life.*

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### 7. Thank you, I love you

Regardless of the situation, life event, mood, and condition of the body, if the heart could speak words, it would only say 'thank you' and 'I love you.'

Living a heart-centered life comes with the responsibility to be accountable for the words you use and the actions you take. Only you can decide what standards you wish to uphold for your life and relationships.

The heart is a beacon of love and gratitude. Combined with a centered mind of contentment and true understanding, mixed with a vital and enthused body, you can live a life that is congruent with your authentic self.

*Who is one person that needs to receive my love and appreciation, and can I write them a gratitude note?*

You are not broken, worn out, or done with. You have value, or you wouldn't be here right now. You have talents and gifts that only you can offer the world and relationships around you. You have unique perspectives that people need.

On the next page is an exercise you can use to begin strengthening your resilience right now. This exercise is mega-powerful because it combines all 7 essentials we have just learned. Give yourself a few minutes to experience a calm mind, energetic body, and healing in your heart.

Now, this is what resilience is all about.

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### Build your resilience in 5 minutes

- Place both hands, one on top of the other on your chest.
- Close your eyes and begin to breathe underneath your hands, focusing on the rise and fall of the breath as well as the ribcage expanding.
- Hold your posture pleasantly tall, neck long, lower back curved slightly.
- Allow your breath to inhale for 5 seconds, and exhale for 5 seconds. Your breath for this particular sequence is IN THE MOUTH, OUT THE NOSE.
- As you breathe in, allow someone to enter your mind. Don't think of anyone in particular, just allow your mind to draw someone in. As this person passes through your awareness, say thank you, I love you.
- If it is someone who you felt did more harm than good or more pain than pleasure, this would be a time to look for the benefits they had in your life while continuing to breathe. Here is an opportunity to see what you don't like in them, and see where you may have expressed similar traits in your life, so you can be truthful with yourself and see yourself in others.
- Continue this heart centered breathing for 3 to 5 minutes.

In gratitude and appreciation,

**Dr. Steven Fonso**

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