



Bounce Back!

5 keys to survive *and thrive*
through life's ups and downs

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“ *re·sil·ience* noun \ri-'zil-yən(t)s\ 1 : the capability of a strained body to recover its size and shape after deformation caused especially by compressive stress. – Merriam Webster ”

Sometimes, life just squeezes the heck out of you until you can't recognize yourself anymore.

Resiliency is about learning how to get back to who you are after one of life's big squeezes.

Or small ones.

And the best thing?

You can be even *better* than you were before.

Not only can you bounce *back*, but you can bounce *forward*.
Higher. Stronger.

Are you ready to get your bounce back?

Let's go.

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Key #1 Acceptance

- Move out of denial
- Practice non-resistance
- Accept life as it is, not as it should be
- The ONE tip you've been waiting for!

Move out of denial

Denial can occur in many forms, including:

- Outright rejection that something is happening or has happened
- The vague idea that everything will work out, even when no action is taken
- Blaming others for your situation

So, how do you move out of denial?

Gain clarity:

- 1. Take a look at your current situation.** Be honest with yourself. Are you in a bad spot right now?
- 2. Ask yourself:** If everything is going to work out okay, how exactly is that going to happen?
- 3. Sit down with a trusted friend** and ask them to reflect back to you the reality of your situation.
- 4. Learn to tolerate emotional discomfort.** We often avoid things because they hurt. Remember, you've been hurt in the past and have made it through.

Practice non-resistance

Resistance is like playing with a Chinese Finger Puzzle: The harder you pull to get out, the tighter the trap becomes.



Guess what? If you *give in* and move toward the puzzle, you find yourself free.

It's the same with accepting the rough times in life: Work *with* them instead of *against* them.

Learn the fine art of *giving in*, but not *giving up*.

Accept life as it is, not as it should be

Are you wasting a lot of time and energy fighting against your life?

Against the bad thing that's happening right now?

If so, you're fighting a losing battle trying to make your experience some vague idea of "what should be" rather than *what is right now*.

Accept that right now, this minute, *is* life –in all its flawed, joyful, mistake-prone, wonderful glory.

Take your power and energy back and accept what *is*.

Food for thought . . .

The Mathematics of Surrender

It's not about giving up,

not about defeat.

If you insist on an equation,

embrace your limited impact on outcome,

subtract old beliefs that you should be able to fix it,

add willingness to let others meet their fate.

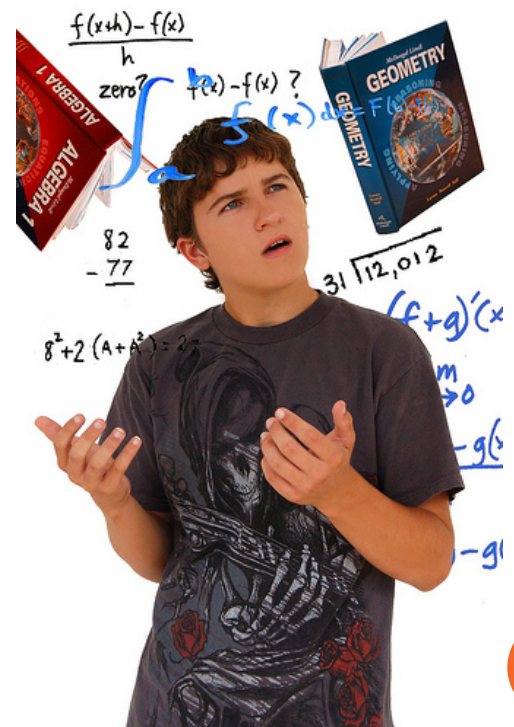
Divide this by two, as in yin and yang,

right and wrong,

good and bad.

Let it multiply until all things are equal.

~ Martha Clark Scala, © 2007



The ONE tip you've been waiting for:

No one said you have to like it.

Acceptance does **not** mean you have to like what is happening to you. That belief is a myth.

Will you learn something from the tough time you're going through?

Most likely.

But does that mean you **must** enjoy adversity?

No.

It would be great if we could all see difficulties as the master teachers they are. But in the meantime, we just need to accept them.

It's possible to accept something and dislike it at the same time.

Key #2 Gain Perspective

- Remember past experiences
- Stay in the moment
- Look at your problem from a different angle

Remember past experiences

Several years ago, shortly after my partner died, a wise and loving friend took my hand and gently placed something in it.

I looked down and saw a silver coin with four words on it:

This, too, shall pass.

It was a constant reminder to me that all things – including grief and other rough spots in life – eventually succumb to the healing nature of the passage of time.

Think back now to difficulties from your past. You're here now, so you obviously made it through.

How did you do it?

Have faith that, just like the other tough times in your life, you'll make it through the current storm, too.

Stay in the moment

Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin. ~ Mother Teresa

Where do you spend your time?

Living in the past: Chiding yourself for the mistakes that have created your current problem? Wondering why this had to happen to you?

Fretting about the future: Worrying about something that might happen? Anxious about how your current problem will turn out?

As a certain annoying television psychologist might say,

How's that workin' for ya?

Your life is happening now, in this moment. Even in the midst of troubles, life **IS**. Don't miss it.

Look at your problem from a different angle

I spoke with a woman who was led to believe that she was going to receive a promotion, but instead, when she went into her boss' office, found out that she was being laid off.

When I talked with her a few months after the event, she was doing quite well emotionally. I asked what she did to maintain her good attitude and she responded that, after the initial grieving period,

“I looked at this as an opportunity to expand rather than contract.”

She was able to see her problem from a different viewpoint, one that saw opportunities instead of closed doors.

How can you see your situation from a different angle?

Key #3 Get Social

- Find people you trust
- Talk
- Get your power back

Find people you trust

This is **not** the time to suck it up and go it alone.

One of the best ways to bounce back from hard times is to allow other people to support you emotionally.

But it's important that you choose people with whom you feel **safe** enough to talk about your problems.

Think about the people in your inner circle and ask,
“Will they give me what I need right now?”

If the answer is no to any of them, cross them off your list of support people. (They'll still be your friends; they just may not be the people you want to turn to in a crisis.)

If you don't have a big social network, find **just one person** who can support you right now. Perhaps it's a spiritual leader, neighbor, relative, or friend.

Even one will do!

Talk

You don't have to go into specifics of what's bothering you if you don't want to, but it's important that you let the people in your inner circle know that you're going through a rough time.

Research by **Sonja Lyubomirsky** has shown that it's actually very important to talk through negative events in your life.



Not only does it act as a pressure-release valve, talking about problems with others helps you to provide structure and meaning to your situation and often results in improved problem-solving skills.

But remember: It's **not** about complaining and whining. Talking it out is about getting emotional support, new perspectives, and ideas for solving problems.

Get your power back

Embarrassed to talk about your situation?

The more you allow your problem to be a secret, the more power it has over you.

By using your support system and talking about what's happening in your life, you take the power away from the deep, dark secret and put the power back where it belongs – with you.



Key #4 Positive Actions

- Positive emotions
- Happiness activities
- Problem-solving

Positive emotions

The ability to create and savor positive emotions is a “basic building block” of resilience according to some researchers.

Barbara Frederickson, the author of *Positivity*, and a leading researcher in the field of positive psychology has found that being happy or content or joyful not only calms your cardiovascular system so you can relax, but those emotions expand your mindset and social openness, among other things, which allows you to have wider ranges of ideas and more flexibility in your behaviors.



In short, positive emotions allow you to problem-solve more easily, increase social support, and increase physical health – essential resiliency skills.

Happiness activities

Happiness researcher **Sonja Lyubomirsky** has found that there are three components that make up our happiness:

- A genetic “set-point” that accounts for 50% of our happiness
- Life circumstances make up 10% of our happiness
- Intentional activities covers the remaining 40% of happiness

There’s nothing we can do about our genetic set point.

Life circumstances – getting more money, a better relationship, a new car – do make us happier. But only for a short while.

Even lottery winners eventually settle back into the same level of happiness they experienced before.

The only component that has a lasting impact is *intentional activities*.

What does that mean?

Read on for ideas that create both happiness and positivity.

Taking positive actions to increase your ability to bounce back

- **Notice positive moments**

Noticing the beautiful smile of a person walking by you, reflecting on a compliment someone gave you, or pausing to enjoy a beautiful sunset help you take “psychological timeouts” and improve your mood.

- **Practice mindfulness meditation**

Sit quietly, with your eyes closed, even for a few minutes. Focus on your breath and, as you notice your mind being active with thoughts, just allow those thoughts to float away like bubbles. And don't judge either yourself or the thoughts passing through your mind. That's the key to mindfulness meditation - lack of self-judgment. As you learn to be less judgmental toward yourself, you create more space for positive feelings about yourself and the world.

- **Practice random acts of kindness**

Helping others makes them feel good and increases your positivity, too.

- **Be grateful**

Keeping a gratitude journal can help build positive emotions. And Lyubomirsky found that doing this activity one time per week rather than three or more times per week actually increases your sense of well-being even more.

- **Talk about negative events with others, but savor and process positive events privately.**

As mentioned earlier, recalling negative events with friends allows you to create meaning and structure out of the adversity you face which then contributes to your well-being.

And, while it's certainly okay to talk about good things that happen to you with your friends, taking the time to savor and re-experience the positive events in your life privately allows you to glean the most satisfaction out of them.

Problem-solving

It's very important to develop the ability to bounce back emotionally from problems and difficulties in our lives.

But sometimes we forget one of the most essential resiliency skills:

Do something about the problem.

While some situations are out of your control and there's nothing you can really do, others are open to solutions.

Take action and try these problem-solving steps:

- 1. Accurately identify the problem.**
- 2. List all the solutions that have worked for you before.** Will they work now? Great! If not, go to #3.
- 3. Brainstorm a set of possible solutions.** You can do this by yourself or doing it with friends can be very helpful.
- 4. Choose one solution and go for it!**

Key #5 Find the Gifts/Learn the Lessons

Even in the most dire of circumstances, there are lessons to be learned and gifts to be received.

Like the woman mentioned above who saw her job loss as a chance for personal growth and expansion, just about any difficult time can bring new awareness to your life.

Some real-life examples:

- My late partner's experience with breast cancer brought her peace, joy, and a remarkable richness to her life as she learned to relish each moment and receive the incredible love and support from her friends. Knowing that she would die from the disease, Ruth still said she would not trade the experience for anything in the world.

- A friend who was audited by the IRS hated the experience, but also learned that she couldn't "do it all" which included running a business and a busy social life. She felt relieved to let go of some responsibility and hire a CPA.
- A **young Marine** who literally had his eyes blown out during the war now is able to truly experience gratitude at being given a second chance at life.
- A man who lost his wife and two daughters to a brutal robbery gone wrong created a **foundation** to honor their memories by continuing the kindness and idealism that they brought to the world. The foundation now supports young women in the sciences and those who have been affected by violence.

So how do you notice the lessons and gifts that the storms of life can blow your way?

- **Be open to the positive**

It's possible to hold two opposing things at the same time, so you can actually be very upset about your situation and still see benefits that you are receiving from it.

Next time you're facing adversity, take a deep breath and allow the idea of something positive arising even within the midst of your difficulty.

- **See what you have learned**

Like my friend who learned she couldn't "do it all," is there something that you are learning during this rough time?

Adversity tends to be one of our greatest teachers. Take advantage of it and see how it can improve your life.

- **Give it some time**

You won't always see the lesson or the gift right away.

Sometimes it will be months or years before it becomes apparent. But, even with the passing of time, remember to look back and see what you have learned from those tough times.

- **Learn to thrive through adversity**

Bouncing back is not only about surviving, but **thriving**. Don't allow adversity to get the best of you. When you're ready – and I know it might take some time – integrate your difficult experience into a newer, stronger, more resilient you!

In a nutshell . . .

The next time you find yourself in a tough spot, remember:

- **Don't resist**
- **Look at it from a different angle**
- **Use your friends**
- **Take positive actions**
- **Find the gifts/lessons in the situation**

I hope that you are not in the middle of a bad thing right now. But if you are, using some or all of these ideas will help you bounce back in a way that makes you stronger, more resilient, and able to face the future with confidence.

Happy bouncing!

P.S. Don't forget to take a look at the resources on the next few pages

P.P.S. Receive free updates on getting your bounce back by [subscribing to Bounce](#).

About Bounce

*Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.*
~ Leonard Cohen

Bounce is about developing the ability to say yes to whatever happens in life – good, bad, or indifferent. It's about being fully present, bringing the best of who we are to every situation. And it's about being able to accept ourselves completely, warts and all.

Everything you find at Bounce will help you develop your resiliency. By learning to say yes, you will be better able to bounce back from just about anything - from losing a loved one to stress at work to the dog throwing up on your shoes right before you're headed out the door.

I'm Bobbi Emel and I'm a psychotherapist with a private practice in Palo Alto, Ca. I have over 30 years of experience in the field and have been working with the concept of resiliency since 1999.



In my personal life, I enjoy photography, reading books that teach me something, and spending quality time with my wife.

Being a native Washingtonian, I've also been an avid (if not long-suffering) fan of the Seattle Mariners since 1977.

I'm looking forward to our shared time here at Bounce! The best place to start is at the [Bounce Blog](#). You can also follow me on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

If you live in California's Bay Area and are interested in individual therapy sessions [email me](#) and check out my [website](#).

Good reads about bouncing back

Taming Your Gremlin: A Surprisingly Simple Method for Getting Out of Your Own Way
Rick Carson

The Mindful Way Through Depression: Freeing Yourself From Chronic Unhappiness
Mark Williams, John Teasdale, Zindel Segal, and Jon Kabat-Zinn

Self-Compassion: Stop Beating Yourself Up and Leave Insecurity Behind
Kristin Neff

Positivity: Top-Notch Research Reveals the 3:1 Ratio That Will Change Your Life
Barbara Frederickson

The How of Happiness: A New Approach to Getting the Life You Want
Sonja Lyubomirsky

Handbook of Adult Resilience

John W. Reich, Alex J. Zautra, and John Stuart Hall

(Note: This is not a self-help book; rather, it's a compilation of scholarly articles on resilience. If you're a research nerd like me, you'll love it!)

The Art of Resilience: 100 Paths to Wisdom and Strength in an Uncertain World
Carol Orsborn

The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are

Brene Brown

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