



Resilience: Coping with Life's Problems

Resilience means being able to move through difficult times and maintain hope, as well as choose positive ways of coping with life's problems. Traditionally, Inuit have been a resilient people, overcoming great challenges. Over our history, we have learned attitudes and ways of living that helped us "live a good life." These attitudes and strategies apply to modern-day challenges as well.

What Does it Mean to be Resilient?

Resilience is partly about the personality you were born with, partly a result of our experiences and partly the way we think about events and ourselves.

We can learn to act, react and think in ways that will make it easier to work through problems and move on positively. Parents, teachers, and community leaders can teach in ways that encourage the development of resilience.

Qualities That Help Us Be More Resilient

The Ajunnginiq Centre's research with Inuit elders tells us that the following qualities and ways of living can help us cope with challenging events.

- Insight: understanding ourselves,



other people, and the situations we are in.

- Independence: making positive decisions and choosing for ourselves, rather than being too influenced by other people.

- Relationships: making trusting and caring connections with others such as teachers, elders, relatives, and friends who have built positive lives.
- Initiative: trying to do things, even if it is hard. When we try to accomplish something and succeed, it builds self-esteem and confidence. Even if we don't always reach our goals, we feel better because we tried.
- Creativity: looking at things in new ways, and even using painful experiences as building blocks for a better future.
- Humour: laughing at ourselves and finding humour in all situations.
- Morality: developing a sense of what is good and right and a sense of being a good person.

“You are going to live through hard times, difficulties...
[We] were told never to give up...” (Elder from Kangiqsualujjuaq)

Helping Others Become More Resilient

There are things that you can do for your children, students and community youth to help them develop resilience.

- Have high expectations that show you believe in their abilities, and encourage effort and achievement.

“They are never to be discouraged about what they can or cannot do. They will always feel better about their life if they are encouraged. They will always try harder then to exceed their expectation.”

(Elder from Repulse Bay)

- Provide opportunities to learn skills and knowledge that give a sense of self-worth and pride.
- Create opportunities to participate in positive activities and do things that contribute to the well-being of others.

- Help others think positively and solve problems.

Helping Yourself

There are things that you can do for yourself if you are experiencing a hard point in your life.

- Reach out and build relationships with people you respect and admire.



- Get involved in doing things for the community.
- Identify your own strengths and talents and decide how you can use them to solve problems.
- Actively build a system of supports for yourself that you can fall back on.

- Learn to use humour to challenge your negative emotions and to lessen tension between yourself and others.

- Keep trying.
- Change the way you think about a situation. See the positives rather than the negatives.

Life is not always easy and simple. It can be difficult, challenging, frustrating, and confusing. It may not always be easy to see things in a new way and be positive, but you should know that bad times will pass with time and effort. So challenge yourself and others to succeed in life. Inuit are some of the most adaptive people on earth. We all have it in us to move past hard times and build a new future.

“Each day is different, things aren't always the same... Maybe the next day happy things will be happening.”

(Elder from Hopedale)

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

The Ajunnginiq Centre at the National Aboriginal Health Organization has a number of resources on resilience and mental wellness, including:

Resilience: Overcoming Challenges and Moving on Positively

Suicide Prevention: Inuit Traditional Practices That Encouraged Resilience and Coping



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ajunnginiq centre

Telephone: 1-877-602-4445

E-mail: inuit@naho.ca

Web site: www.naho.ca/inuit/e/resources/

OTHER RESOURCES:

Growing Up Resilient: Ways to Build Resilience in Children and Youth is available from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

Telephone: 1-800-661-1111

E-mail: publications@camh.net

Web site: www.camh.net/Publications/

Reaching In Reaching Out provides resources such as guidebooks, videos and booklets for parents, teachers and others on how to promote resilience in young children.

E-mail: info@reachinginreachingout.com

Web site: www.reachinginreachingout.com