

# Resilience Tips for Your Family Building Journey

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**A process requiring resilience comes in two phases.** First there is the crisis, a time when the loss or distress is often too unbearable for you to see opportunities that may be available. Once the distress fades away, you may start to see potential in a new situation and to gain a new perspective. And that is when you can start the active work of getting re-focused on what is really important to you and what some of your next steps could be. At the IAC Center, those steps are usually related to family building and/or personal and family member growth.

**Resilience is defined** as both the ability to adapt to the difficult changes or losses that test your sense of yourself or your expectations about how your life would go; and the ability to discover new opportunities for personal growth that you can integrate into your life to create a better future.

**Resilience is the art of bouncing back from adversity.** People who are resilient still feel the same things that everybody else feels but they find ways to remain optimistic and to persevere until they have reached a happier equilibrium, even if things seem hopeless.

**The current research indicates that adults can actually learn resiliency skills** which is really good news! In general resilient people report having close, dependable relationships; thinking clearly and logically under pressure; seeing the humor in situations even under stress; handling uncertainty or unpleasant emotions; and knowing when to ask for help and where to turn. Some of these traits may come naturally to you and others may not. If you find that the journey you are on has taken the wind out of your sails, or that this is the first time in your life that you really need resiliency skills, be encouraged that you can learn some of these skills over time.

Taking good care of your self, learning some cognitive therapy techniques and group participation are the key avenues to building resilience. For now you may just want to try some of these more basic tips.

## **5 Quick Tips to improve your resiliency right now**

1. **Get Connected.** Note that the **American Psychological Association**, the **Mayo Clinic** listed exactly the same number one tip for building resilience. It is to get connected with others.

**Absolutely nothing helps more with adversity and stress than to feel the support and validation of people who understand and/or care about you.** Find a way to communicate. You do not have to isolate yourself with your pain. Share your experience with people you trust and who are able to listen with empathy and without judging you. While **family and friends** care and mean well, they may not know a lot about your family building experiences or the journey you have ahead of you. Yet your connection with them can help in different ways to sustain you during difficult times. Enjoy the parts of your connection that feel good. You can connect with different people in different ways.

Another way to get connected is to **join a support group** of people who share your concerns and are experiencing these issues at the same time that you are. Groups are not only validating but they can help you to stay the course which should help you to cope and to succeed with your goals, and often groups offer a place to relax and share some private humor as well. IAC Center has numerous support groups or can connect you with a group near you and some people enjoy online support groups as well. Some groups are for couples and some are for women. Contact [supportgroups@iaccenter.com](mailto:supportgroups@iaccenter.com) for more information.

**Connecting with your partner** during a complex family building journey is obviously important but can also be hard at times. Not knowing how to communicate with each other about infertility adds stress, and the two of you may have very different coping styles. Seeking the help of a counselor who specializes in infertility and family building options counseling often helps enormously with communication, decision making and marital stress.

Essentially you will want to **build a web of connectedness**. You may find your support within your relationship, with a friend, a counselor or in a support group; and most likely you will get something from each of these sources at different times.

2. **Take care of yourself.** Tend to your own needs and feelings, both physically and emotionally. This includes participating in activities and with people you enjoy or trying something new, exercising regularly, getting enough sleep and eating well. And if you need to, take a mental health break from obligatory social activities that upset you because your feelings about not having a baby get stirred up. This is a normal reaction to your difficult situation.

Remember this is temporary and that will not always need to do this, so it's ok to avoid uncomfortable social situations for awhile. Soon you will work through your difficulties and be ready to rejoin the social activities you are having trouble with now.

3. **Remember that laughter is always the best medicine.** Use humor and laughter whenever you can. Remaining positive or finding humor in distressing or stressful situations does not mean you are in denial. Humor is a helpful coping mechanism. If you simply cannot find humor in your situation, turn to other sources for a laugh, such as a funny book, movie or friend. File this tip under "distraction is a necessity."

4. **Work toward your goals.** All you really have to do is **take one step at a time**. At the IAC Center we use the term Crossing the Bridge because building your family will happen if you just put one foot in front of the other. The simple method of taking one step at a time can give you the chance to process your feelings and plan your goals in a more organic and manageable way. You process and move incrementally toward understanding what you can really handle and what you really want for your future. Resilient people keep learning and trying even when they feel upset. We see it all the time at the IAC Center. The answers will reveal themselves even if you do not or cannot know what they are at this point in time.

5. **Learn how to make decisions when under stress.** Are you considering Donor Egg, Donor Sperm; Embryo Donation/Adoption or a Gestational Carrier? Keep in mind that these are not just different treatment options even if they are presented to

you that way by doctors. These are very different family building options, as is adoption. IAC Center Counselors will help you to make timely decisions mindful of the long term considerations. What is involved in these processes? What will you be comfortable with for a life time? What kinds of issues might you or your child have?

Take your time. Gather information and take your feelings seriously. You will be able to make decisions that are right for you and for your family.

**A resilient person is an individual facing serious difficulties that accepts them as a pivotal moment.** Whatever brought you to this point of needing to become more resilient, may actually turn out to be the same thing that leads you to gain a new appreciation for life, for your relationships and your personal capacities to handle stress, solve problems and make sound decisions. Try to be proud of yourself and keep moving on.



**Infertility and Adoption Counseling Center**

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