

Staying Healthy When the Situation Isn't – Part II
Ten Elements of a Resiliency Mind-Set
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Part II – How do I think about situations we are likely to face as Christian cross-cultural workers facing this troubled and tarnished world? What will I do to prepare myself and others to not only survive, but to thrive and make a difference in bad situations?

Resiliency isn't automatic. But it can be intentional. There are some attitudes, mind-sets, and behaviors we can develop to become more resilient. Some of those occurring to us are the following ten:

1. A realistic assessment of the world and ourselves. The world is not perfect, logical, fair, or predictable. Good and bad happened in the past and will happen in the future. Neither am I all good or bad, but I can make a difference. I am responsible for myself and my choices and behaviors, my growth. God's Word shapes my worldview. I read it, know what it says, and am committed to developing a Christian mind. I believe strongly in God's sovereignty and sufficiency.
2. A robust theology of suffering. Suffering of every kind happens to good people and bad people. I am not exempt. My faith is not dependent on prosperity, justice, success, health. II Cor. (Paul's sufferings) and *When God Weeps* (Joni Eareckson Tada, 1997) Joni's experienced and observed suffering help me keep a perspective on my experiences.
3. Healthy convictions and values. I am not so flexible that I fail to be consistent. I know what I believe and why. I am quiet and sturdy, not aggressive or rigid. I know what my core beliefs are and I operate out of those. I am at peace with who I am.
4. Having good models. How do hardy people live? Who is hardy? What can I learn from them? They are people who can take the 'as is' and develop new plans or fix old ones. They are people who don't have to have the ideal situation to be happy. They don't have to destroy the old in order to bring change. They behave well under stress and pressure.
5. Adequate resources, both internal and external. Internal resources include self-confidence, openness to new ideas and techniques, willingness to risk,

acceptance of new experiences, strength under pressure. External resources include relationships from networks of similar and different people, people who nourish and nurture us, and who also confront and challenge us.

6. Margins. Living with a cushion. We provide a margin of safety for ourselves, planning for the unexpected, preparing for the worst, saving for an emergency. The commodity may be energy, money, time or resources. I have learned to live so I have some time for interruptions or surprises that weren't noted on my calendar. Dr. Richard Swenson says, "The spontaneous flow of progress is toward increasing stress, complexity and overload" (p. 148). If we are not intentional about providing margins of safety and space for ourselves, we are likely to be overcome by stress, complexity and overload. Knowing what nourishes and replenishes us and doing it—regularly. Taking personal responsibility for ourselves, not expecting someone else to know what we need, and take care of us.
7. A learning attitude. Resilient people are lifelong learners, those whose textbook includes circumstances, events, and situations. I am committed to growing spiritually, personally, professionally, and intellectually.
8. Highly skilled in the art of forgiving. One of the biggest problems on the mission field is the conflictual relationship that may arise between team members and within groups of missionaries. Unless we learn to forgive, our emotional health will deteriorate, as well as our relationships. The art of forgiving is the ability to manage memory and relationships, not storing and holding grudges, not harboring resentments, not keeping score. Knowing which things are unjust and morally wrong and should be dealt with as sin, and which are petty or cultural and call for spiritual generosity is characteristic of resilient people. Choosing to trust; cynicism is not part of this person.
9. Excellent at managing conflict. An absence of all conflict is not realistic, but we can learn to use conflict as a stimulus, a place where opinions can be expressed, where truth can be spoken without damage, where relationships are strengthened as a result. Resilient people know how to think about and participate in conflict and act as agents of healing where they are.
10. More interested in pleasing Christ than pleasing people. Resilient people are not swayed by popularity or discouraged by criticism, knowing the transient nature of either, living for the enduring peace of God's approval.

These are practical daily aspects of resiliency. How will you promote these in your own life?

II Corinthians is a missionary manual. Paul refers to the hardships he endured, especially in chapters 1, 4, 5, 6, 11 and 12. In chapter 4, vss. 16-18, we read these words:

“So we’re not giving up. How could we! Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without his unfolding grace. These hard times are small potatoes compared to the coming good times, the lavish celebration prepared for us. There’s far more here than meets the eye. The things we see now are here today, gone tomorrow. But the things we can’t see now will last forever.”

An eternal perspective will make all the difference. Let’s never fail to give thanks for the privilege of serving God, and being engaged in work that will last for eternity. Whether we see the results now or not, God’s Word will not return to Him void (Isa. 55:11).