

## NURTURING RESILIENCE

We all encounter both expected and unexpected transitions in our personal and work lives. However, those who are resilient are better able to navigate change, bounce back from disappointments, and welcome new opportunities. They persevere during difficult times and have a positive outlook even when experiencing trials and tribulations.

Resiliency is a trait or personal characteristic that you can nurture. In *Making Sense of Life's Transitions*, William Bridges wrote,

*"There are ways of facilitating transitions, and they begin with recognizing that letting go is at best an ambiguous experience... They involve developing new skills for negotiating the perilous passage across the 'nowhere' that separates the old life situation from the new."*

In a nutshell, successful transitions require both practical strategies and emotional fortitude. Therefore, because nearly all of life's transitions have a financial tether, it is important to also consider how you can nurture your financial resilience.

From a practical standpoint, financial resilience requires a foundation of basic financial knowledge and a strategy

for building financial security.

However, financial resilience also requires emotional strength. This is achieved by identifying your fears and behaviors in regard to money and by working to understand and overcome the underlying issues.

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A review of your money history will give you tremendous insight into the money messages that consciously and unconsciously influence how you deal with money issues on a day to day basis. These revelations are not intended to give you the opportunity to place blame, but rather to help you recognize some potential obstacles to your financial resilience. Remember, recognition is the first step to change!

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## “ANYTIME” RESOLUTIONS

The tradition of making New Year’s resolutions goes all the way back to ancient Rome. In 46 B.C., Julius Caesar developed a new calendar and named the first month of the year after Janus, the god of beginnings and endings.

Janus has always been depicted with two faces, one on the back of his head that allowed him to look into the past and one on the front of his head that allowed him to look into the future. At midnight on December 31st, the Romans imagined Janus looking back at the old year and looking forward to the new year. Therefore, he became the symbol of the resolutions made on the 1st day of each year when Romans asked their enemies for forgiveness.

In more modern times, New Year’s Eve is still an occasion for reflecting on the past year and looking forward to the New Year. However we are more apt to think about the changes we want (or need) to make and *resolve* to follow through on those changes.

Unfortunately, a major problem is that most of these resolutions are not kept. In 2007, researchers tracked over 3,000 people attempting to achieve a range of goals, including losing weight, visiting the gym, quitting smoking, and drinking less. At the start of the study, 52% of participants were confident they would be successful, but one year later, only 12% actually achieved their goals.

This is a common experience. We resolve to start a diet, to exercise, or to be more patient and loving. Within a short period of time, we realize we are not being 100% successful and so we give up. The next reaction is usually one of guilt and discouragement.

Nonetheless, establishing resolutions can be a very powerful tool for positive change and one that can be utilized throughout the year—anytime is a good time for a fresh start!

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## PATHS TO PERSONAL GROWTH & HAPPINESS

As we grow older, we also have the opportunity to grow as individuals and to develop relationships that are more “grown-up.” Here is advice from the authors of three different books on ways, through our relationships, that we can contribute to our own personal growth and happiness.

### *Creative Aging*—

In *Creative Aging*, author Nancy Bost Millner wrote, “The task of consciously aging people is to stop projecting—to stop demanding that the weather, the children, and the universe do what they want them to do.” Milner also noted that the self-aware individual will come to realize that expecting another person to complete them, take care of them, and make them happy is not only unrealistic, but also unfair.

### *Successful Aging*—

In addition, Doctors Rowe and Kahn, authors of *Successful Aging*, remind us that human beings are not meant to live solitary lives. In their research, “successful agers” reported that they thrived because of important social bonds with both family and friends. Rowe and Kahn wrote, “Talking, touching, and relating to others is essential to our well-being. These facts are not unique to children or to older men and women; they apply to all of us, from birth to death.”

### *The Virtues of Aging*—

Similarly, Jimmy Carter wrote in *The Virtues of Aging* that successful aging depends, in part, on continuing engagement in living. This task involves keeping up relationships with others and engaging in productive activities. These experiences, he maintains, “allow us to develop more self-respect and mastery over our own lives—crucial elements of the good life.”

## PURPOSEFUL PLAY

Just like children, adults need to play. Playfulness brings a lightness to life that is invaluable to our well-being. It greatly increases enjoyment of life and nourishes one’s sense of humor and spirit of optimism. Therefore, you need to make sure that your leisure activities feel like play, are of your own choosing, and make you happy.

When you follow this criteria, the benefits of leisure will spill into all areas of your life. For example, your leisure activities will relieve stress, clear your mind, and improve both your physical and emotional health. In addition, shared leisure activities can enhance your relationships.

**“The most important thing about your leisure time is not what you do with it, but the spirit with which you approach it. By making your leisure the place where you preserve a spirit of leisureliness in your life, you will not only enjoy life more—you will prolong it.”**

--Richard Bolles

In *The Three Boxes of Life*, author Richard Bolles wrote that your leisure is what you do when no one is telling you what to do. It is his belief that any activity can be a leisure activity “if you choose it freely and truly enjoy what you are doing.”

For some people, choosing “meaningful” leisure activities is a contradiction in terms. That is because they associate the word meaningful with activities that have a serious purpose. However, leisure activities can most definitely be full of purpose if they bring you enjoyment and are truly effective in refreshing your body, mind, and spirit.