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Resilience is one of humankind?s strengths

by Mark Pavilons

Some say that resilience is much more than survival; it's endurance with direction.

Yet how often are we mere mortals lost, without a map or compass to guide us?

When every rock, tree and fork in the road looks the same, what is it that keeps us moving?

Resilience, and of course, persistence.

I?think it's inherent, and just comes naturally. It may not arise in the manner or form we wish, but it's there, ready and willing to help us in our time of need.

And boy, are there many of those in this crazy journey called life.

As children, we fall in the mud, get up and walk slowly home, knowing our mom will have something to say about the state of our clothes. We fall out of a tree, check our knees to see if they're bleeding, and continue on.

As adults, we lose, suffer emotional and physical pain, and collect ourselves, and try to move on. We're a bit slower than our younger selves, a bit more hesitant.

Funny how we lose all that gusto and fearlessness we once possessed.

I?used to have a pretty high pain tolerance, and developed quite a thick skin from adolescent bullying and dents in my self-esteem outer shell. I?turned to humour, solitude, studying and creative hobbies to protect myself.

As Boomers, we had it quite good, and didn't really grasp the reality of life in general. We were too busy enjoying the simple pleasures.

But as we age, boy does reality sink in.

For me, this is as real as it gets ??ighting cancer.

When we leave our homes each day on our daily treks, we never think about getting into car accidents, tripping on the sidewalk or getting hit by a meteorite. We don't think our lives will change overnight, with a life-altering diagnosis.

But it does, my friends, and we are never prepared.

We talk about resilience making us stronger, more hopeful, more optimistic.

Well, I can tell you, facing desperate times can also reduce you to rubble, turn you into a tired, exhausted meat sack that would love to be climbing that childhood tree again. I'd give anything to turn back time. Anything.

Brené Brown said joy fuels resilience, ?ensuring we'll have reservoirs of emotional strength when hard things do happen.?

I remember times when that substance was abundant.

According to Dr. Michelle P. Maidenberg, resilience is born through adversity and when you face discomfort, setbacks, and uncertainty, not avoid them. When you persist through difficulty in service of your values, you build confidence and adaptability.

She says resilience is not a fixed trait; it's a dynamic process. It is cultivated through how we engage with adversity, not how we avoid it.

Every roadblock teaches us something valuable if we're open to noticing and accepting it. Hard times provide opportunities to grow, adapt, and reconnect with our capacity to prove to ourselves that we can endure and persevere.

She admits that we mere mortals are not in control of everything. I'd say there's plenty beyond our control.

Resilience is built through ?emotional engagement.?

In my years-long process of dealing with cancer, it's been 80% emotional. How can it not be?

Physical symptoms aside ? and I've been lucky not to have had severe ones ? cancer is a constant monkey on my back. It never leaves me, always nags at me and drains that supply of joy that was once abundant.

Resilience? Well, it's more like steadfast determination, succumbing to a litany of tests, procedures and treatments. It becomes almost rote.

More often than not ? for me anyway ? there was seldom any good news. Most of the time it was finding ways to manage the disease, and ?live alongside it.?

Not much of a positive prognosis.

What happens when options run out? My current chemo treatment is one of the final approaches. My oncologist is reaching out to others to see what's available and what's on the horizon. My fate is in the hands of new trials, the work of cutting-edge research, and leading hospitals (and we have them all).

Alas, the Internet provides little in the way of hope. There are many posts about ?miracle cures,? and the use of veterinary de-worming medication that hasn't been accepted by mainstream medicine.

While very few of these may pan out, the process, including human trials, takes time.

That's one luxury many cancer patients simply do not have.

One of the reasons we face disappointment is that we live in a society that demands quick results. But resilience requires effort, patience, and a willingness to stay no matter what.

?Resilience is very different than being numb. Resilience means you experience, you feel, you fail, you hurt. You fall. But, you keep going,? according to Yasmin Mogahed.

I can tell you that my journey has been filled with all sorts of trials and tribulations.

It's been bleak at times.

My friends tell me to stay strong and that their thoughts are with me. I've even sought out healers and religious friends who offer their prayers.

I appreciate them all, and their love. That is more fuel for this tired old guy's tank.

I get it that my acceptance is misunderstood as giving up. Some say acceptance is one of the most powerful tools for resilience.

In my experience, it hasn't made things easier. Has it made me wiser??Perhaps.

Has it made me more appreciative, and helped me embrace my blessings? A little.

Facing the end is never easy, for anyone, whether you're young or old. When I'm at the hospital awaiting treatment, I?look around at the faces in the waiting room ??rying to see how many are my age. Yes, there are younger patients, but most are seniors.

It's funny, but by looking at the wrinkled faces, they seem much more resilient that I?am.

Hmm. Perspective, wisdom, acceptance, enjoying a life well lived?

I?dunno.

I will continue to dig deep and summon my resilience.