Riding it out

Emotional resilience educator Dr Jane Foster offers wise words on how to regain and take control of your emotions.

The bonus

By incorporating these strategies into your daily life, you'll become stronger, wiser, more empathetic and less judgemental towards yourself and others.

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In a world fraught with challenges and uncertainties, emotional resilience is a critical asset for navigating the tumultuous seas of modern existence. Through extensive research and personal experience, I've developed a simple yet effective language that is designed to increase emotional resilience, empowering individuals of all ages to harness their inner strength and weather life's storms. When used daily, language can create neural pathways, establishing new patterns of thought and helping you regain and maintain control of your response to people and circumstances. Here are five powerful strategies for building emotional resilience.

Change words to remove judgement

Replacing the words 'good' and 'bad' with 'rough' and 'smooth', respectively, makes it easier to view things objectively, without judgement. "I've had a rough day" is far less judgemental than "I've had a bad day". By reframing your perceptions of emotions and dividing them into rough and smooth roads, you transform them into opportunities, as all emotional roads have a purpose. Rough roads build resilience and smooth roads build health, so no roads are off-limits. "I'm on a rough road at the moment. I just need to slow down and pull over" removes any stigma and judgement.

Rough roads don't equal failure

We've been led to believe that, to succeed, we should be on a smooth road and that we're failing if we're experiencing rough-road emotions such as sadness, anger, shame, guilt and anxiety. Realising that challenging emotions have a purpose takes away that judgement. If you want to improve your driving skills, will that happen on a smooth, easy road or a rough, more challenging one? Emotions that lead you down the rough roads are helping you to improve your driving skills and build your resilience, especially once you learn how to regain and maintain control on those challenging roads.

Gain more empowerment through choice

At the heart of emotional resilience lies the power of choice. Despite life's challenges, you can always choose your response. In emotional resilience, think of your control as your emotional steering wheel. It's where you decide what to focus on and which road to drive down. Just as you are the sole driver of a car, you should also be the only one controlling your emotional steering wheel. Yet, often, we unknowingly let others grab hold and dictate our emotional direction. By taking charge of where you steer, you regain control over your focus, emotions and destination, which is incredibly empowering.

Reframe blame with responsibility

Instead of using phrases like "You're making me angry" or "It's your fault that I'm angry", and giving others control of your steering wheel, try saying, "I'm choosing to feel angry in response to this situation." By making this subtle change of replacing 'making' with 'choosing', you reclaim ownership of the wheel rather than relinquishing control to external factors, and this then fosters a sense of empowerment rather than victimisation.

Cultivate healthy self-care practices

Self-care isn't selfish – it's essential for building emotional resilience. Prioritise activities that nourish your mind, body and soul, whether it's exercising, meditating or spending time in nature. By investing in your wellbeing, you replenish your emotional reserves and equip yourself to face life's challenges with renewed vigour. P

Dr Jane Foster's new book, It's In Your Hands: Your Steering Wheel Your Choice (Balboa Press, $58.99), offers a practical guide to controlling your reactions to develop greater emotional resilience. Find out more at emotionalresiliencetraining.com.au