

Resilience - on and off your yoga mat

By Lindsey Porter www.yoganuu.com



Often we hear that doing yoga provides a training ground for cultivating good qualities we can spread to other areas of our lives. This article explores the notion of resilience, on and off your yoga mat.

I started writing this article travelling urgently and unexpectedly south from Scotland by train, due to a family illness. It is with some irony that I encountered a delay at Newcastle, the train being terminated at York and then uncertainty whether the replacement train was going to be able to get to London at all (blockages on the track). On the plus side I was allowed to enjoy a more comfortable first class seat (even with my super saver ticket) and was given a hot chocolate – a welcome boost to my resilience in riding the waves of travel disruption. Let's face it, this is life. Be 'derailed' by it or be ready to absorb diversions, delays and find alternatives. So boosting our resilience seems to be a good thing and has become a bit of a buzz word connected to the importance of having and maintaining a positive, healthy mental attitude.

But what actually is it? So I thought I'd reach out and ask a few friends and yoga students about what resilience means to them. This is what they said;

'Try and learn from mistakes, being pragmatic and reflective. I'm overly sensitive which makes resilience hard for me sometimes so I often rely on time passing and I feel better and move on.'

'Ability to recover from difficulties, it's about a huge mix of risk and protective factors in one's life (such that there are enough right protective factors to mitigate risk factor for poor outcomes) and those can be the individual level (self-esteem) relational (parenting style) and structural (access to leisure)'

'It's the mental strength to keep going when things get tough. To keep putting one foot in front of the other when you think you can't.'

'It's having a positive attitude seeing the bright side even when the prognosis isn't great, building on successes while taking cognisance of disappointment and finding a better route to take the net time in order to get the desired result.'

'For me it's an inner strength that you need to deal with difficult situations. Something that you have gained and which can now pull you back up when you are pushed down by something.'

'Bouncing back in times of adversity'

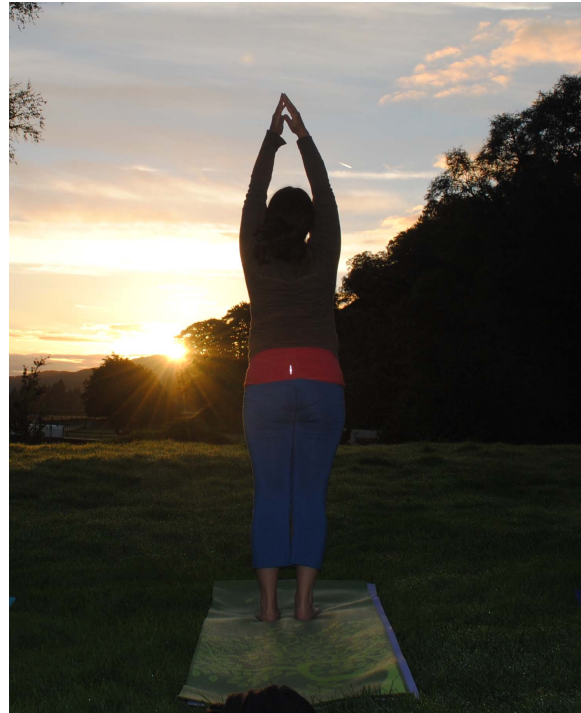
'First thoughts, keep your head down, work hard, accept the knocks, lose the ego, don't let events/people prevent you from reaching your goals, always be true to yourself, don't hold anger, grudges, love love love!'



'Facing up to a situation knowing that it may be a totally crap situation that you have little or no control over but soldiering on none the less. Also putting your own needs and feelings to one side until the situation is resolved. Being brave acknowledging a bigger picture enduring and being an adult.'

How does your personal view of resilience relate to these, similar or different?

Next, I invite you to take yourself in your mind onto your yoga mat, wherever that space maybe for you. Do you ever have a practice where you feel less than great about your body, your postures or not able to perhaps be in a posture in a way that you usually can or used to be able to. When these type of thoughts come up how do you typically react? Perhaps you berate yourself, get grumpy or bounce back, able to reframe your thoughts into a more positive place. Whichever it is for you there is a growing belief that by simply doing our yoga practice we help build our store of resilience. By working through different thoughts and experiences with our posture and breathe during our practice and exercising the ability to stay in the moment, being present and simply being with any 'derailments'. From this practice on our mat it can help us continue to be present whatever is happening around us in other areas of our lives, away from the yoga mat.



And if you now take a look back at the descriptions given to me describing resilience, specifically keeping in mind your yoga practice can you see a relevance, a connection with experiencing resilience in your yoga sessions?

To me, taking the time to get on my yoga mat whatever the external or internal 'weather' is also part of exercising my resilience muscle. Part of my journey at the moment is to stay on the path that is feeding my inner happiness, choosing not to return to well paid, well stressful corporate Financial Services life. To surrender to the higher value I've finally chosen to put onto other areas of my life including my wellbeing.

Try spending just 5 minutes on your mat or in a quiet place, contemplating what resilience means to you at this time in your life. Explore what you immediately feel are any areas you need or could do with a little more resilience too, to help your ability to cope in times of need. Then do a yoga practice and dedicate it to building resilience in these areas. Some that come up for me just now include: building some more resilience to the bombardment of different social media platforms bringing with them distractions and my insatiable need to multi task most of the time which deters me from being able to switch off. Building resilience can be part of the answer to keeping in check "stressors" in our life and a way of coping. Resilience during your practice on the mat, resilient during your life off the mat.



I'd love to hear about your experiences with building resilience through your yoga practice.

Find out more about Lindsey Porter of Yoga~Nu~U at: www.yoganuu.com

Lindsey is an accomplished Project Manager in Financial Services who is now running her own business providing Wellbeing Retreats, Yoga classes, workshops and writing articles about yoga and wellbeing. She is an experienced Akhanda Hatha Yoga teacher, NLP Practitioner, Reiki Master and Holistic Therapist.