



INTRODUCTION TO Resilience

Many people report that some of the biggest problems they face are dealing with homophobia, prejudice, sexism, and bullying. *Bullying* happens when a person uses their power, over a period of time, to emotionally or physically hurt someone *on purpose*. The person who is being hurt is “the target”. So, we can say that bullying behavior is *targeted* and *repeated*.

The repetitive nature of bullying is often considered the most damaging, because it leads to the “chipping away” of the target person’s sense of confidence and emotional strength. Prejudice-based types of bullying are especially painful to endure because they are attacking our sense of identity. These types of attacks can make us think that our needs are not important or that we are not good enough to love.

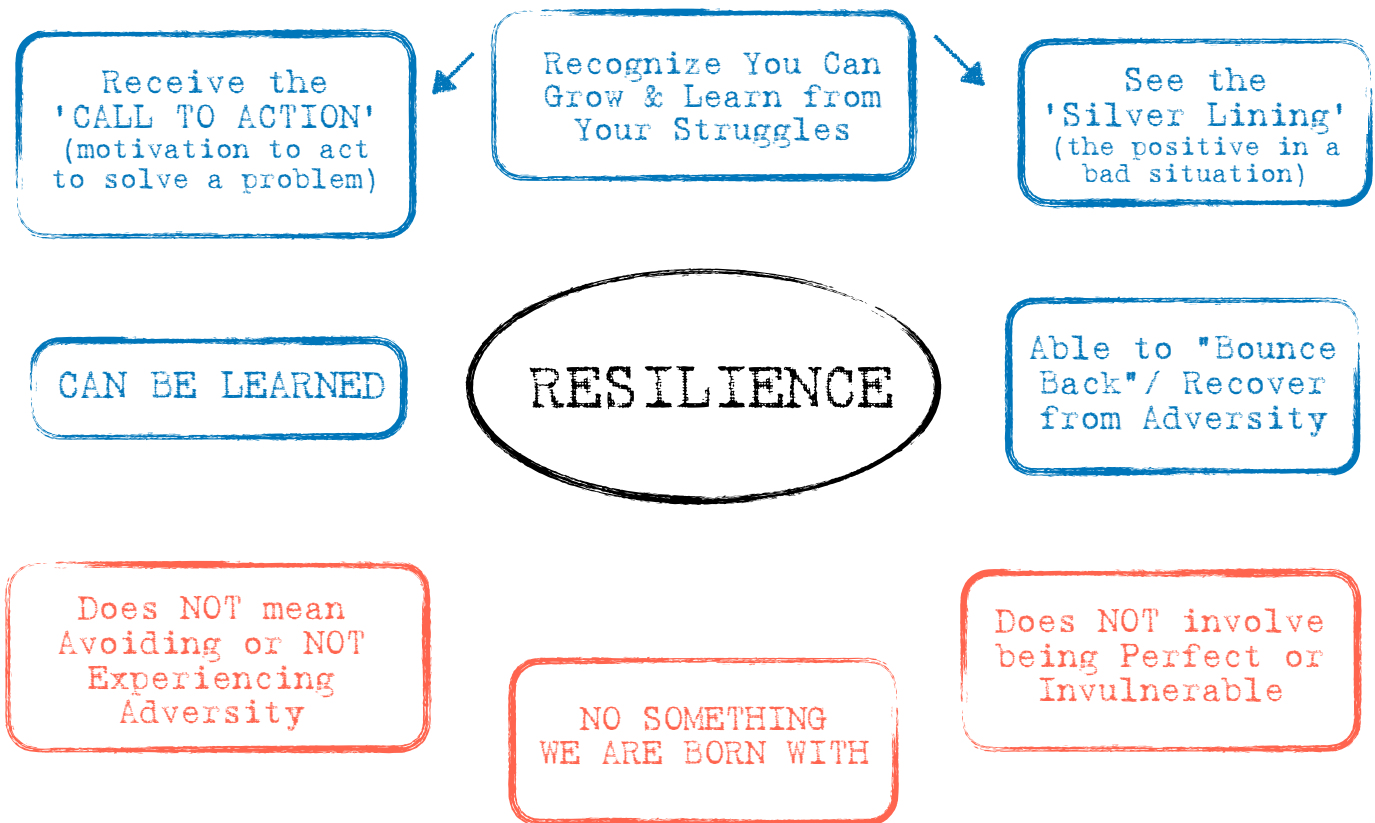
One way to protect yourself against the negative effects of bullying (and other challenging life experiences) is to use specific skills to build and to promote resiliency. To be resilient means to be able to recover from difficult experiences. It does not mean that we should ignore our feelings. It means that we can acknowledge that we are hurt and learn how to better manage this hurt, so that it does not hold us back from living our life.

Think of your favorite heroes, real or fictional, that you consider to be resilient. A hero could be someone who has overcome adversity, someone who is able to be open and genuine about who they are. Please name them or draw them and think about what makes them resilient.

Resiliency is the ability to recover or “bounce back” after a stressful, scary, or painful event or situation.

- For example, we see that superheroes, such as Korra (in the series *The Legend of Korra*) and Nico (in the TV Show *Runways*), as well as Waverly (from *Wynonna Earp*), and Quentin (from *Magicians*), may sometimes physically or emotionally “stumble,” but they are able to get back up and learn important lessons from their mistakes.

The chart below shows what resilience is and what it is not:



Let's break it down:

Resiliency is not simply something we are “born with.” Resiliency can be learned.

This is an important component for you to learn because it means *anybody* can be resilient. (For instance, when Charlie Bradbury from *Supernatural* is introduced in the TV series, she doesn't know much about supernatural monsters, such as vampires and witches, but she is able to learn how to fight these monsters over time, and she becomes a very important monster hunter).

Resiliency does not mean that we have to be “invulnerable” or perfect.

All superheroes have a version of their own “kryptonite” (something that stops them, or something that hurts them, scares them, or causes them to make a mistake). We all make mistakes and we all might have vulnerabilities, and that is also how you can learn and grow to be the very kind of hero you were meant to become.

Resiliency does not mean the absence or avoidance of adversity/difficulty altogether

Characters on the side of the Princess Rebellion from *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* make great examples of this point. Adora (the leading character of the series), as well as her friends, Bow and Glimmer, face multiple obstacles and losses during the rebellion and continuously risk their lives to stand up for what they believe in. Even knowing they could face warfare and life-threatening circumstances, they remain dedicated to their cause.

Individuals with resiliency are able to see opportunities for growth when they are facing tough times; they can see the “silver lining” in the clouds or even find a “call to action.”

“Silver lining” is the positive aspect that comes out of a difficult or painful situation. Receiving a “call to action” means that a person (a potential hero), as a result of their own personal struggle, recognizes a need or a problem and becomes motivated to take action to try to solve the problem or improve the situation.

For example:

- When Rosa Diaz on *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* comes out to her parents, it doesn't go well. Her mother is in denial and refuses to meet Rosa for the family weekly game night. While Rosa's father is supportive, he does not stand up for her. It is then that Rosa's friends came over to support her and tell her that they can play weekly board games with her instead. In that way, Rosa is able to find her chosen family during the most important time of her life.
- Korra from the *Legend of Korra*, is an Avatar, a kind of superhero who can control the elements, such as water, fire, air, and earth. Korra is the Chosen One and has a responsibility to protect others. However, after multiple traumatic experiences, Korra struggles with using her superpowers (her Avatar state) and is overwhelmed with trauma. It is when she realizes that her friends need her and she needs them, that Korra is able to work on her healing and recovery.
- Alec Lightwood from the *Shadowhunters* series goes through multiple losses, including the loss of his younger brother and a change in his relationship with his friends. His parents initially do not approve of his relationship with his boyfriend, Magnus, and Alec often feels alone. However, when his friends are in trouble, Alec remembers what he stands for and fights for what he believes in.

Resilience

Just a reminder that resiliency is the ability to recover or “bounce back” quickly from a stressful, scary, or painful event or situation.

Think about Batwoman’s origin story. In case you are not familiar with her, Batwoman is Batman’s cousin; her real name is Kate Kane. Kate’s mother and sister were killed by a gang in Gotham City.

When Kate grown up, she joins the military but is dishonorably discharged after facing homophobia and persecution.

When her father and ex-girlfriend become targets and Batman is nowhere to be found, Kate Kane becomes the very superhero Gotham needs in order to stop the most terrible villains from hurting innocent people.

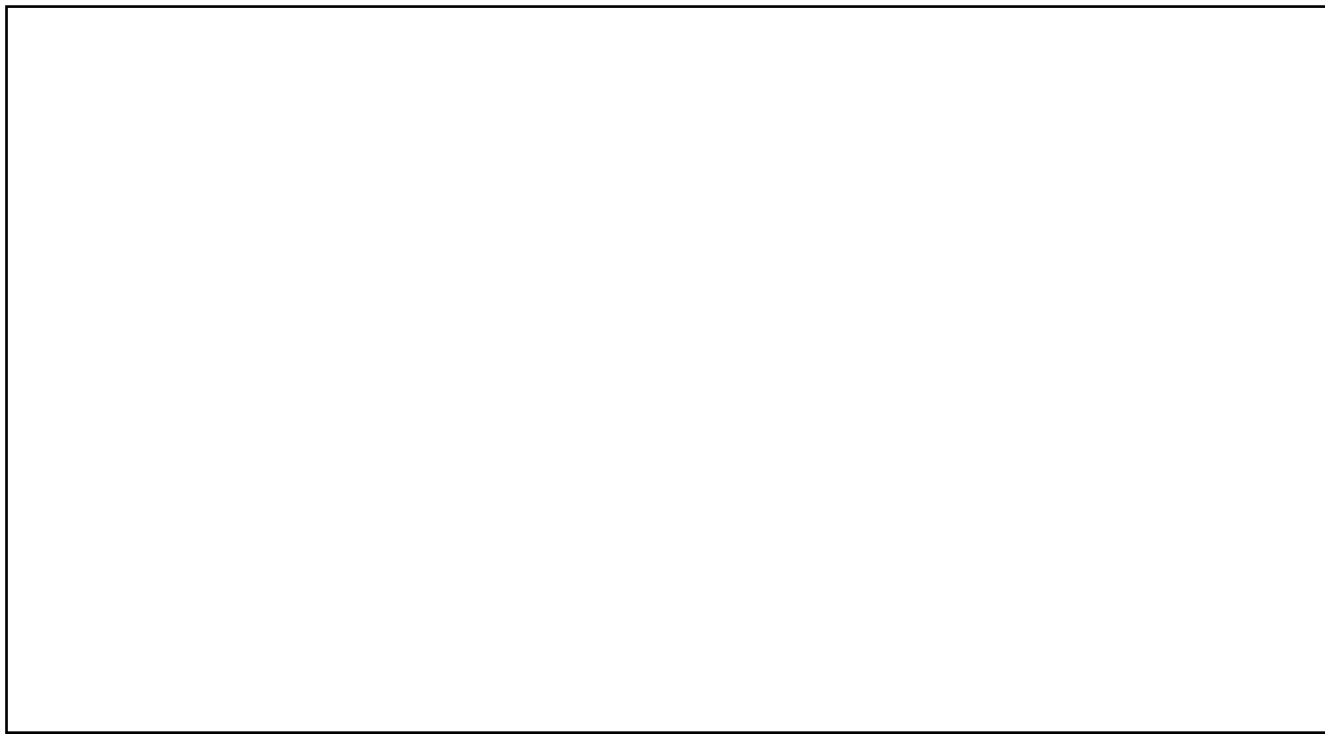
In each of our experiences, there might also be something that we can learn. For example, we might learn that we have certain powers and abilities, we might gain new friends, or gain a life mission.

The top row of the table below shows how Kate Kane both lost and gained something after she experienced her struggles. See if you can fill out the rest of the table, one row with another fictional example of your choice, for example using Batman, Harry Potter, Wonder Woman, or any other character; and the last row with your own example.

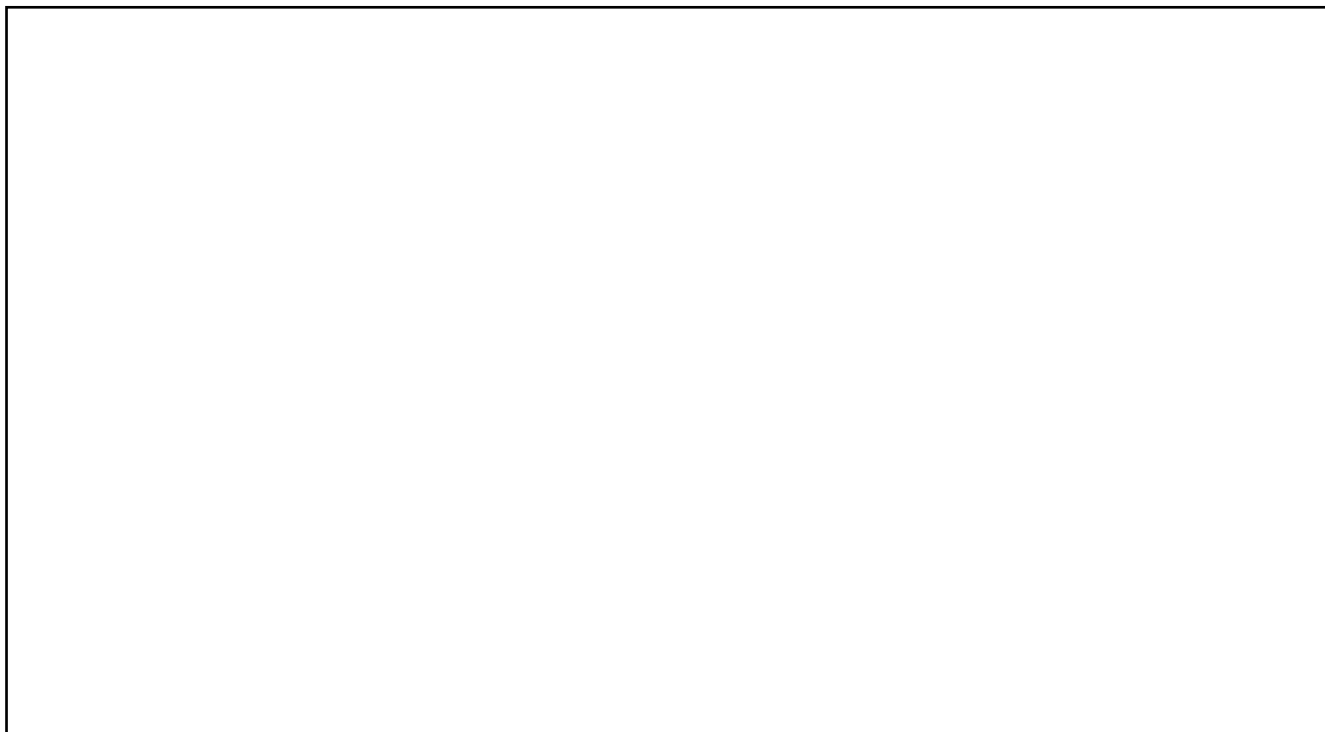
You can type or draw your answers. If you do not feel comfortable writing or drawing your answers, that’s okay. Spend sometime thinking about them instead.

	What the person lost	What they gained
Batwoman (Kate Kane)	Her mother and sister, as well as her place in the military	Kate Kane gained a sense of mission. She decided to use her abilities for good in order to help people
Your own fictional example		
Your own real-life example		

Based on the table above, how do you think the characters' painful experiences might have contributed to their resilience?



Do you think that resiliency is a learned or teachable strength? Why?



Here are some other strategies to help you build your own sense of resilience:

- Reach out to your friends on Zoom, FaceTime, Discord, or through video games
- Build good relationships with your family or your chosen family
- Take the problem or stress one day at a time (only handle what you can handle)
- Visualize how the future might get better (positive forecasting)
- Help other people who may be going through tough times – this is your call to be like Batman or Wonder Woman in real life.
- Set goals and move toward your goals
- Build a routine in your day, especially during a pandemic
- Journal, write, or paint/draw your experiences
- Avoid unnecessary drama and peer conflict
- Take care of yourself – rest, do things that you find enjoyable, take frequent breaks

When things are challenging, it is okay to take some time to grieve over the change of the relationships in your life. It is okay to take some time to heal and recover. And then, get back out there and be the beacon of light that you are to illuminate not only your path, but the path of other people too. Because you make a difference more than you might ever know. More than you might ever realize. And from the bottom of my heart, thank you for being wonderful.