

Dear Class,

Remember, [resilience](#) is the ability to overcome adversity. Resilience allows us to handle the discomfort inherent in adversity and move on. It is the ability to accept what is beyond our control and work around it. As I've said before there really isn't much we can do about what life has sent our way, but there is a **WHOLE** lot we can do about how we choose to deal with it.

I believe one of the most important [resilience skills](#) is an awareness of our thoughts. Contrary to what most people think, in the face of difficulty, or any event for that matter, it is our [thoughts](#) not the event that cause us to feel and react. What we tell ourselves will either perpetuate adversity or stymie it. Our thoughts are our explanation as to why something happened. Our thoughts are our way of making sense of life, they are our way of understanding why X event took place. In order to effectively deal with life we must understand why things happen. For example, you have a fight with your best friend. How upset you get and what you subsequently do is based on what you tell yourself about that fight, how you make sense of it. Do you say to yourself, "Every close relationship has its ups and downs, I'll just give it time. I think we were both in bad moods. I'll call Jane tomorrow." Or do you say, "Well there goes that relationship, she'll never want to talk to me again and I don't really want to talk to her. She is always getting mad. I'm never going to call her again." If you explain the incident to yourself by saying every close relationship has its ups and downs as opposed to she is always getting mad and we'll never talk to each other (both viable explanations) the subsequent behavior is very different. The results of these two different ways of thinking prompts two very different outcomes. Our explanations help us or hinder us. Our thoughts either allow us to deal effectively and go forward or not.

Our explanations of an event are based on a multitude of factors. However, the bottom line is that our thoughts are just beliefs that we make real. If this weren't the case then we would all hold the same beliefs and behave in the same way. If this weren't the case we would all have the same explanation for every event. But we don't. Furthermore, more often than not, we usually aren't aware of our explanations of events. For many, a large portion of their explanations reside in the realm of the unconscious. And therein lies the challenge to resilience. The more aware we are of what we say to ourselves in the face of adversity, the easier it is to be resilient. If we can hear our thoughts then we can make ourselves more resilient.

The beauty of this idea is, much like life, you can't control the event however, you CAN control the thoughts that arise as a result of the event. So, if you are [aware](#) of what you are saying to yourself, let's say for example during this difficult time, and what you are saying is not conducive to resilience then you can [challenge](#) your thoughts to help yourself become more resilient. This is not always an easy task, but it is one well worth the while.

In summary, when you find yourself feeling off, bothered, or just plain upset, search for your thoughts. Ask yourself, "What am I saying to myself?" Once you become aware of

what you are saying to yourself, take those thoughts, one by one and challenge them. Ask yourself, "Are these thoughts accurate, would a jury of 12 of my peers say the same things, would my best friend say this?" Use any [technique](#) that works for you to break up the counterproductive thoughts. Remember our thoughts are just beliefs we make real. You can replace one thought for another one. Remember, you are not going to change radically, you are not going from upset to elated, you are going to go from upset to a little less upset.

On another note, still in regard to your thoughts. I post these emails because I believe resilience is the key to getting through difficult times. I hope each email helps foster a new and different resilience skill. Not all of these skills will work for you, use what works. Having said that I'd love to know if there is anything within the topic of resilience that you would like to know more about? What would be useful for you?

Wishing you an awareness of your thoughts,
Susan

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