**Becoming More Resilient**

* Nina Chen, Ph.D., Human Development Specialist

Life is challenging. Why do some people have better coping skills than other people? What are some secrets for people who navigate tough times better and bounce back? Dr. Robert Brooks at Harvard Medical School indicated “some people are naturally more resilient.” But resilience can also be learned. Here are some suggestions to build resilience:

**Make connection with others.** Stay connected with family members, friends, and people who can help you celebrate good times, listen to you, and provide support through tough times. Social support and friendships are very important for resilience building and improving self-worth. Resilient people have good friendships, supportive relationships, and strong social connections.

**Have a positive and optimistic attitude.** Resilient people are generally optimistic and see things from the bright side when facing difficult situations or crises. Positive attitudes enable people to have hope and confidence in their abilities to make changes. Flexibility, accepting change, and making adjustments help resilient people put their energy into things they can control and let go of things they cannot change.

**Give back.** Helping others is another way to strengthen resilience. Many people find that they become happier and more resilient by helping others. This experience helps build their competence and fulfillment.

**Be humorous and playful.** Resilient people are playful and laugh at themselves or find humor in a situation even when dealing with difficult events. They learn to deal with stress instead of being stressed, learn from their experience, and adapt quickly.

**Be spiritual.** Resilient people are spiritual. According to a Duke University study, those people who participate in religious activities were less likely to experience depression. Even when they experience depression, their depression lifted faster than those people who were less religious. People who are active in religion are likely to cope with stress and difficult times better.

**Stay healthy.** Resilient people take care of themselves, get enough sleep, and find ways to relax to stay healthy physically and mentally. When people are in good physical and mental health, they deal with distractions and tough events better and bounce back easier.

**More Tips on Resilience**

- Be confident in yourself and your ability to solve problems.
- Be calm to manage tough situations.
- Have a supportive network.
- Show compassion.
- Make efforts to meet new people by joining new groups, activities, volunteering.
- Be proactive to think about solutions instead of just waiting for things to get better.
- Offer support to others.
- Find opportunities for self-discovery.
- See crisis and negative events as an opportunity to grow.
- Accept change as part of life.
- Set realistic expectations and steps to carry them out.

*Spanish translation provided by Kelly Loeb, MSW through support of the Kansas Department on Aging.*