



By Mental Health First Aid USA on January 8, 2021

Every year, we try to find a word to encompass the past 12 months, and there were some to be expected: *coronavirus*, *pandemic*, and *lockdown*. But the one we chose may be less obvious: *resilience*. There is no denying that 2020 was hard. But for all of its trials and tribulations, we made it to 2021.

The Oxford Dictionary [defines](#) resilience as “the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness. The ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape; elasticity.” It’s what we’ve needed to practice in 2020, and what we need as we move forward in the new year.

Stress related to COVID-19 is at an all-time high – the American Psychological Association’s Stress in America [report](#) found that nearly eight in 10 adults say COVID-19 is a major factor in their stress levels. Resilience includes our ability to bounce back from adversity and come back stronger, and while that may not come effortlessly, it is achievable. Here are some [tips](#) to help you get started:

1. **Accept change.** We all got a good dose of change in 2020! Whether we were working from home, virtual learning, or staying indoors for days at a time, we had to adapt to something completely new. Managing your expectations and allowing for flexibility are great places to start, so if things don’t happen as planned, you can continue to adapt.
2. **Keep things in perspective.** This takes practice, but a great place to begin is thinking about and writing down what you’re grateful for. When you focus on

the positives around you, the negatives don't feel as overwhelming. How you organize your thoughts matters and realizing that some things are out of your control can free you from harmful thought patterns. It helps to think about the big picture. You can't always change what happens, but you can control how you react to it.

3. **Take care of yourself.** We can't emphasize self-care enough, as it really can help bring you to a more positive and hopeful mindset. Doing nice things for yourself or planning activities you enjoy can promote a better mood, and it's a great excuse to do something enjoyable for yourself if you've been feeling down. Try going for a brisk walk, watching a funny movie, or crafting – anything that's going to make you feel more like you.
4. **Prioritize relationships.** Connecting with other people and cultivating relationships are innately human activities; we are social by nature. Lean on your social network for support if you need it. You are not alone in feeling "2020 fatigue," and investing time in your relationships will help foster a sense of solidarity. Your friends and family may need some support from you as well, so be sure to offer them help too.
5. **Seek professional help.** Last year was far from the norm, and if you're finding it hard to adjust, know that help is available. A licensed mental health professional can help you find some strategies for staying afloat and moving forward. Community organizations and faith-based groups are also available for support. The important thing to remember is that you are not alone, and your well-being is the top priority.

No matter how difficult or transformative 2020 felt, the new year is here, and you can take full advantage of this symbolic chance to start over. One day, COVID-19 will be a memory, but your resilience will remain. Staying resilient in 2021 will keep us strong, positive, and hopeful – the days are going to keep coming and new challenges will undoubtedly arise as the year unfolds. But with the right tools and strong support systems, you can tackle this year with renewed strength and confidence. You've already come so far, and that in itself is reason to celebrate. For more tips on staying resilient in the face of hardship, [take a Mental Health First Aid course](#) this year so you can #BeTheDifference for yourself and those around you in 2021.