



Does your everyday life pull you in several directions?  
A Resilient Woman carefully chooses the way she spends her time and energy  
so that she is able to bounce back to her place of integrity after being stretched.

*Illustration by Sophia Marie Day, whose mother, Ann Marie Palmer Day, is an initiate of Epsilon Kappa/St. Lawrence University*

# Resilience Is the New Balance

—by Dee Krieg Kane, Xi Gamma/Michigan State University

“I just need more balance in my life!” Have you said it? Have you heard it? Well, I don’t believe it.

I don’t think you need balance. Because if you have balance, you can be easily knocked off balance, and then what happens? You topple over! I think balance is difficult to obtain, fleeting, and impossible to maintain. There is no easy way to balance your life because each part of your life requires different amounts of time and energy at different stages. You can’t just tally up the people in your life and then evenly divide the hours in a day among them! Life doesn’t work that way.

## THE ROAD TO RESILIENCE

So, what am I offering instead? Resiliency. Your life probably pulls you in several directions at once. Think of all the roles you play: employee, friend, volunteer, daughter, garbage collector, laundress, cook, parent, exerciser, social coordinator. The list is endless. Each person and activity require your time and energy. You need to be able to be stretched in one direction, snap back, and get ready to be pulled in another direction, flexible and prepared like a tree in the wind. The tree can lean in one direction during a storm, then stand up straight, and wait until the next gust comes by. During the respite, the roots grow deeper and the branches stronger to brace itself for the next challenge. The ability to bend, stretch, grow, and return to your true self, over and over again, is essential. That’s resiliency.

### What does a resilient woman do?

- She chooses her activities carefully.
- She knows her personal success strategies.
- She consults her board of directors for guidance.
- She reflects on her experience to gain life lessons.
- She cares for her body, mind, and soul.

## THE RESILIENT WOMAN CAREFULLY CHOOSES HER ACTIVITIES

Resiliency involves knowing when to say Yes or No and being able to place borders around your personal time and resources. To do this, you need to know your values, interests, knowledge, and skills before volunteering to be on another committee!

Of course, some things in life are not optional. But for the actions that are, the next assessment determines how well it fits in with your interest, knowledge, and skills. Do you have an interest in the activity that is being requested of you? That could include reasons like it’s fun, fascinating, enjoyable, beautiful, meaningful, exciting, or rewarding to you. Not to others, but to

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If “resiliency is the new balance,” then how do you become resilient? The first step is to do a self-assessment. Get to know yourself. Do you have a firm set of values that you live by? Can you list five values that help you make decisions and determine the direction of your life? Your values might include:

- |            |            |          |
|------------|------------|----------|
| Courage    | Compassion | Security |
| Integrity  | Family     | Faith    |
| Creativity | Wisdom     | Health   |
| Loyalty    | Fairness   | Joy      |
| Humor      | Harmony    | Mercy    |
| Quality    |            |          |

Go ahead, name your five key values.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	

Keep these values in mind when you are being pulled in several directions, like Gumby. When everyone wants a piece of you, your “to-do” list is endless, and you haven’t had a minute for yourself; that’s when you ask yourself: “Does what I’m being asked to be or do fit in with my values?” If it does, then it goes in the “maybe pile.” Don’t say yes yet. If it doesn’t fit with your values, a polite “That doesn’t work for me right now,” is usually sufficient.

you. Consider if it is interesting enough to you to warrant being stretched in that direction.

Next, ask yourself if you have the knowledge or skills needed to do the activity. If it’s new information or skills, would you like to learn this or not? If it requires knowledge or skills you have, do you feel comfortable and confident about them? You are the one who gets to decide if it’s fulfilling to continue using that information or not. If it is not what you want to be involved in, remember the words “That doesn’t work for me right now.” A big part of being resilient is knowing what you want to do, what you can do, and in what direction you are willing to be stretched.

The key reason why you should run through this series of questions and answers about values, interests, knowledge, and skills before you say yes to another request is summarized in this quote: “What I do today is important because I’m exchanging a day of my life for it.” By qualifying your activities, you will find yourself more willing to dedicate your time and energy to the task because it is in alignment with who you are and what you are willing and able to do. Even if you do get stretched thin by doing it, you will be able to snap back into shape quickly if you are working within your own personal integrity and strength. Now you are on the road to resilience!

# Resilience Is the New Balance, continues

## THE RESILIENT WOMAN KNOWS HER PERSONAL SUCCESS STRATEGIES

To gauge how to best spend your time and energy, think about situations that require your strengths. A resilient woman knows her strengths and has developed personal strategies to optimize her patterns of success. Below are just three of many areas to consider when trying to develop your strategies. You may want to reflect on your personal preferences in these areas to come up with a list of your strengths.

**Leadership skills.** Do you perform best when leading the team? Are you a self-starter who



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Photo: Lisa Klare Photography, Northbrook, Ill.



prefers to manage herself? What can you spend your time and energy on that uses your style of leadership?

**Teamwork.** Do you work well with others to accomplish a goal? Do you need time to develop and implement your own ideas? Where can you strategically use your preferences?

**Communication skills.** What mode of communication suits you best? Speaking to groups, small, medium, or large? Phone calls? Writing e-mails? Writing reports? PowerPoint? Or maybe you prefer one-on-one? Let your comfort zone direct your means of communication.

Once you know your strengths in leadership, teamwork, and communication, you can develop personal strategies for getting involved. For example, you may realize that you are a self-starter who needs time to reflect on the situation to come up with great ideas and you'd rather talk about it one-on-one. Then your strategy would be to find a creative outlet, where you could design and implement your ideas while reporting to one person. This would suit you better than heading a large committee or being the treasurer of an organization.

Think about situations where you handled yourself well, felt successful about the result, and made a positive impact on yourself or others. Review the specifics of the situation and consider what went right.

Develop a list of steps and strategies that work for you. Your personality and experience have such an impact on your ability to be successful that your personal review of past situations is what will give you the information needed to develop your own toolbox of strategies.

It's been said that "Your greatest area of growth is in your strengths." With that in mind, reflect on what worked and didn't work for you in order to know which strategies to keep, and

which to discard. When you are aware of your personal strategies, you will know what situations to get involved in, and which to avoid. Knowing what you can handle will make you more resilient in your daily life.

## THE RESILIENT WOMAN HAS A PERSONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

To remain resilient, it is important to have a fresh perspective available from trusted sources. When you have ideas that you want to bounce off someone, a board of directors is there to listen. They are also there with a shoulder to cry on or a celebration for successes. They keep you focused on your values, interests, knowledge, skills, and strengths. A key service they offer is to ask you questions. An excellent board member knows the right questions to ask and relates anecdotes to you rather than tells you what to do.

Your personal board of directors may be made up of friends, neighbors, relatives, business associates, or fellow volunteers. You should choose these board members carefully. First consider the types of situations in which you might need some guidance, such as:

Relationships	Finances	Business
Entertainment	Spirituality	Health

You might think of one or two people per category. Some board members may be knowledgeable in more than one area, so they could cross over. Your board should have people you confide in, who respect your requests. Listening to others will keep your options open and your mind flexible, and prevent your blinders from impairing your decision making. Remember Confucius's saying:

*"The wise person listens to everyone and thanks them for their opinion. Then [s]he sends them away and does what [s]he thinks best."*

That's exactly what you should do. To be resilient, you listen, but then rely on your integrity and internal wisdom to determine what is best for you.

After you do this type of reflection, you will receive a gift: your life lesson. It is something that you will keep for your entire life. For example, I learned a life lesson about health after being

“What I do today is important because I'm exchanging a day of my life for it.”

### THE RESILIENT WOMAN HAS A PORTFOLIO OF LIFE LESSONS

This is the piece that is often skipped or rushed through because it seems like you're not doing anything. However, this part is vital to resiliency. To be able to stretch and bounce back, you need to look at the highs and lows in your life. So often we focus on our disappointments and take for granted our accomplishments. But to learn from our experience, we need to analyze both the highs and the lows.

Each person you meet, and each activity you choose, changes you in some way. You have to constantly review what changes work and should be kept in your portfolio and which you need to set aside. Your emotions will act as guideposts for finding the life lesson.

#### *How do you discover your personal life lessons?*

Review both positive and negative experiences, choose one, and reflect on it. The lessons hidden in each experience can only be seen by digging around afterward. Ask yourself:

- What was one of the biggest challenges or successes in your past?
- How did you feel? Was it upsetting, difficult, disorienting, or calming, clear, and honest?
- How did you act or react?
- What strengths did you use?
- What was the resolution?
- How will you modify your thoughts and actions next time the situation arises?
- Can you sum up the lesson in a word?

sick for nine months. Each life lesson contains wisdom, direction, intuition, and a sense of accomplishment, even if it was based on one of your low points. These are wonderful gifts that you can give yourself, just by reflecting on your experiences. Definitely worth keeping in your portfolio.

Each person will have different lessons. Some of the life lessons I've learned include: compassion through the death of a family member; faith through an answered prayer; and relationships between generations by writing a family history book. It took a lot of soul searching to come up with these. You may find it helpful to write the stories behind each experience to get a clear perspective on the lesson. You can only receive the lesson once you're ready to reflect. Sometimes hindsight requires a bit of distance before it becomes clear.

I know that I am working on a life lesson right now, and it's a doosie! I'm in the middle of it, and don't know where it will take me yet. But I'm willing to work through it, using my values, interests, skills, personal strategies, and board of directors, and taking care of myself along the way to keep resilient. That is, resilient enough to snap back into shape and maintain my sense of self in order to handle the next experience that comes along.

### THE RESILIENT WOMAN TAKES CARE OF HERSELF

A Resilient Woman carefully chooses the way she spends her time and energy to ensure she can bounce back to her place of integrity after being stretched. This requires that you do

something for your health and well-being. This does not mean eating a whole box of chocolates and does not only include cosmetic pampering! As much as we may enjoy a bubble bath or manicure, it's time to reach for greater rewards. Think about things with longer-lasting value. Consider rewards for your body, mind, and soul. Give yourself some “R&R&R” . . .

#### Rewards for the body:

- Rest when you need it
- Rejuvenate by exercising
- Read labels on food packages before eating to make sure it's healthy, or go straight for the fresh fruits and vegetables!
- Remember to get regular health check-ups

#### Rewards for the mind:

- Revitalize your mind with a good book
- Rekindle your creative side by making (or observing) art, poetry, music, or dance
- Research something intriguing, fascinating, or fun

#### Rewards for the soul:

- Re-energize your heart by talking with a friend or soul sister
- Reflect, meditate, or pause to listen to the wise woman within you
- Regard dreams, synchronicities, and feelings as internal indicators or guides

Or, go for the triple scoop: Try all three at once. Take a walk in a beautiful park while conversing with a friend! Only you can decide the best reward for yourself. If you remember to include body, mind, and soul when you are choosing your rewards, you will be able to bounce back to your authentic self, ready to stretch and bend as needed to live a full and resilient life. **E**