



7 Tips to Increasing Your Resilience

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Resilience is our ability to navigate ambiguity, uncertainty, change, and adversity while remaining clear-headed and emotionally balanced. I can't think of anything that has more unpredictability and challenge built into it than working with humans and horses. And that's particularly true if you're working with humans and horses at the same time.

Fortunately, resilience is like a muscle that can be built-up and strengthened. Here are

my top seven tips to help you build resilience as a trainer of horses and/or people.

1. Develop Strong Coping Skills: We all need ways to meet those moments when things have gone sideways or are suddenly more unpredictable. I recommend developing a personal toolkit of skills you've cultivated that will reliably work for you when you're beginning to become upset. Your toolkit might include techniques such

as mindfulness, deep breathing exercises, subtle movements, or positive self-talk to manage stress and maintain focus during difficult moments.

The key to coping skills is to practice them daily, training your brain to use them, so that when you need them, they'll be available to you. Your brain isn't going to think about breathing deeply when you're panicking if you haven't already practiced breathing

deeply when you *aren't* panicking. If you're having difficulty establishing coping skills, hypnosis can help you by bypassing your bad habits and other unhelpful behavior and jumpstarting your coping skills.

2. Maintain a Growth Mindset: Recognize that setbacks and failures are opportunities for growth and improvement. Approach each challenge as a chance to learn and develop new skills as a trainer or instructor.

Consider reframing mistakes, for example. You might think you always want to make fewer mistakes, but what you really want is to not make the same mistake repeatedly. Each time you make a *different* mistake, you've opened a window to learn something. Having a growth mindset is about acknowledging that your abilities aren't fixed at one level. With the proper training and practice, they can expand and grow. Failure is a state of mind.

That said, some people have a difficult time changing their mindset, despite all the journaling and reframing and pep-talks. Hypnosis can help here, as well, as it's able to reach deep into your mental programming.

3. Build a Support Network: Surround yourself with a supportive community of fellow trainers, instructors, mentors, and friends who understand the demands of your profession. Having a network of individuals who can offer guidance, encouragement, and perspective can greatly enhance resilience in the face of adversity.

At the same time, you want a diversity of perspectives in your support network. Are all your trainer-friends Gen-Xers with grown children? Are they all women? Are they all at the top of their game? Having a multigenerational support network composed of both men and women, and people who mentor you as well as those you mentor, provides you with a multitude of perspectives. And it gives you the opportunity to get and give support.



4. Practice Self-Care: What many people don't realize is that healthy boundaries are a prerequisite to successful self-care regimens. You don't want to be in a position where your self-care is necessary just to deal with the reality that people aren't treating you well or are overstepping. Ask yourself where most of your stressors come from. If they come from people mistreating you, your first self-care step is to rectify that with a calm, rational discussion.

In the absence of boundaries, your self-care is helping you deal with and heal from your hurt. Once your boundaries are better, your self-care routine involves maintaining and then increasing your well-being.

A daily self-care routine includes getting sufficient restful sleep, good nutrition, positive self-talk, and exercise to sustain your energy levels and strengthen your body. Taking breaks when needed and engaging in activities you enjoy outside of work can also help prevent burnout and replenish

your reserves. Training your brain through mindfulness and/or hypnosis is also part of any well-rounded self-care routine, as both provide you with on-the-spot actions to take that will enhance your well-being.

5. Stay Flexible and Adaptable: We all know that working with horses and humans is inherently unpredictable, and things won't always go according to plan. Meanwhile, how many times have you been surprised by what a horse or a person has done? Remember that none of us is entirely consistent, and you never know what's going on in someone's head or body that is affecting their thoughts or movements. Rather than being surprised, ask yourself what the most skillful thing to do is at that moment. Cultivate the ability to adapt quickly to changing circumstances and to find creative solutions to unexpected challenges.

In the equestrian world, we all know we need to stretch as well as be physically agile. When you're properly stretched and agile,

your body is in the best position to quickly adapt to whatever situation you're in. The same is true for your mind. Don't be rigid. When we think we know exactly how things are going to go — even what we're going to do — we're not leaving room for flexibility and creativity. Be open, yet calm.

6. Set Realistic Goals: Establish clear, achievable goals for yourself and your students, and break them down into manageable steps. I like to craft SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound) and then work my way backwards, creating a plan for the smaller goals I need to achieve along the way.

If my student's SMART goal is set to be achieved a year from now, I develop a plan for what she needs to have accomplished in nine months in order to reach that goal. And then I add what would she have to accomplish in six months, three months, and maybe all the way down to: *What could she do today to set herself up to achieve her goal a year from now?* Maybe today she needs to have a mindset that will set her up for success for tomorrow, and the day after. I use this system for myself, as well. And I particularly like having daily goals, as I can have a little win each day and celebrate it!

Goals should be realistic for the person, the ability level, and the time period. And by realistic, I mean we should always be pushing outside of our comfort zones and trying to find our potential.

Because nobody's perfect (but I hope you realize you're Perfect Enough), you will have temporary setbacks. We all do. Remember that it's not the setback that defines you, but how you handle it. Are you angry with yourself? Are you so angry that you sabotage yourself? Are you filled with shame and self-loathing? Do you throw yourself a pity party?

If you're able to learn from your setbacks and pick yourself up and move forward,

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that's resilience. Resilience helps you evolve into a better trainer and a better person. So, focus on your incremental progress, don't allow your emotions to rule you, and look for the lesson in every setback. When you view it this way, nothing is really a setback.

7. Cultivate Patience and Persistence: Understand that progress in horse training often takes time and requires patience and perseverance. Be willing to invest the time and effort needed to develop trust and rapport with your horses and students. There's no shortcut to trust; it's earned, and it happens with time, patience, and consistency. Remember that setbacks and challenges are a normal part of the process, and success often isn't linear; sometimes it's two steps forward and one back (or even vice versa!).

Finally, notice that all seven of the above tips involve practice. When we practice, we're creating habits, which are actually neural pathways. What we do repeatedly is reflected in our brain. And our brain is what tells us what we're able to do. If we're not accustomed to thinking we can achieve our goals and to seeing how it can be done, we won't suddenly be optimistic and confident when we need it most. And if we're not certain that we have the capacity to grow from adversity, our actions won't demonstrate resilience.

Practice is crucial, but it might not be sufficient. If your mental and physical habits seem to be impervious to change, hypnosis will likely help because it's a shortcut to habit change. You want a brain that does the most skillful thing without thinking, and with hypnosis, you can retrain your brain to behave in a way that serves you.

By incorporating these tips into your approach as a horse trainer or instructor, and considering hypnosis if you want to optimize your brain, you can enhance your resilience and better navigate the ups and downs of working with horses and your students.

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Laura King is the Director and Founder of Summit Hypnosis and Wellness and is a Certified Hypnotist, NLP Practitioner, Life Coach, and Sports Performance Coach. Laura has written and published several books and workbooks, including "Power To Win" for equestrians and "Perfect Enough," a guide to help you evaluate your perceptions and experiences around vital areas of your life.