Building resiliency for the year ahead



The New Year is a great time for a fresh start and for many of us that means making resolutions to lead healthier lives. However, keeping those resolutions can be challenging. This year, try something different. Concentrate on building resilience – the ability to calmly deal with difficult situations and recover from setbacks. By doing so, you'll not only be healthier but ready to deal with anything life throws your way. And it only takes a few small adjustments in your day to day life to get started.

Feeding your body

A nutritious diet is the key to good physical health. But it's also the key to regulating our moods, enhancing mental clarity, and coping with stress. Fortunately, it's not hard to improve your diet. Try these tips:

- **Eat more superfoods.** These are nutritionally rich foods full of antioxidants, substances thought to prevent or slow down cellular damage and thus help protect us against developing certain cancers, heart disease and other chronic diseases. They are basically any brightly coloured fruit and vegetables, nuts, lentils, and fatty fish (such as salmon).

  One of the most popular superfoods is blueberries. They're packed with vitamins A, C, E and B complex, magnesium and copper which may help prevent some cancers. Studies have found that blueberries also have anti-inflammatory and blood sugar-lowering properties. And they're delicious!

  More good news. The list of superfoods includes dark chocolate! Dark chocolate (at least 65 percent cacao) also contains compounds that help regulate blood pressure, LDL cholesterol and hormone levels. Other examples of superfoods include:

  - Garlic
  - Green tea
  - Honey
  - Olives and olive oil
  - Whole wheats
- **Eat breakfast**. Mom was right. Breakfast is the most important meal. Your body and brain needs energy to kick-start the day. Make it a balanced meal with complex carbohydrates, such as whole grain toast, lean protein and a fruit.
- **Eat small, frequent meals.** Your brain requires a steady supply of nutrients so it's better to eat a meal or snack every few hours than three large meals. For a snack, a piece of fruit or a few nuts will suffice.

Feeding your mind

Again, a few adjustments can make a big difference to helping you mentally weather life's storms.

- **Practice mindfulness**. Mindfulness means living in and appreciating the moment. That's easier said than done when most of us are so busy juggling the many demands of work and home. But there are some simple ways to become more mindful, including meditating, praying, listening to music, practicing yoga or tai chi or just taking five minutes to quietly sit and rest. Many people find it helpful to practice gratitude by writing down a certain number of things they are thankful for every day. This helps bring our minds to the present moment and the things that are important in our lives.
- **Maintain a positive attitude**. Resilience doesn't mean you have a positive feeling about every negative situation. It means that despite something going wrong you believe you can and will do your best to deal with the situation and move forward.
- **Connecting with others**. Having people around you with whom you can share feelings, discuss problems and receive advice is an essential part of weathering life's storms. It's also important to reach out for help when you feel overwhelmed by a situation. Contact your family doctor or Employee and Family Assistance Program and ask to speak to a counsellor.

With just a few small adjustments to your life, you can help your mind and body prepare for all the excitement and challenges the year ahead has in store!