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## Building Resiliency as Advocates from a Trauma Informed Care Approach

RESULTS' founders believed that a strong grassroots movement needs community and support to be effective. Our group model reinforces this, but we know that our groups are only as strong as the individuals who make them. Each person brings unique strengths and contributions.

As advocates, we must practice radical self-care and resilience to keep the flame lit from within. The famous poet and activist Audre Lorde said, "**Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.**" In times of trauma, grief, disappointment, and fear, we must support our own and each other's wellness. By caring for ourselves and each other, we can build a stronger, more resilient movement to end poverty.

RESULTS is committed to supporting our advocates. Here are some tools to practice self-care, build resilience, and sustain your power as an advocate and team.

### Ten Tools for Resiliency

*If you can't fly then run, if  
you can't run then walk, if  
you can't walk then crawl,  
but whatever you do you  
have to keep moving  
forward.*

– Martin Luther King, Jr.

These **10 Tools for Resiliency provided by Mental Health America** can help you feel stronger and more hopeful. Choose 2 or 3 tools that you can keep in your toolbox for when times are rough.

**1. Connecting with Others.** Research points to the benefits of social connection, which include increased happiness, better health, and a longer life. The work done in community with RESULTS and other partners helps to build bonds that strengthen our movement to end

poverty.

**2. Staying positive to foster optimism.** Trying to be optimistic doesn't mean ignoring the uglier sides of life. It just means focusing on the positive as much as possible and it gets easier with practice.

**3. Getting physically active** can relieve pent-up muscle tension, reduce anxiety and depression, and decrease stress, anger, and tension.

**4. Helping others.** Research indicates that those who consistently help other people experience less depression, greater calm, fewer pains, and better health. Beware of taking on too much, though, or you'll risk feeling resentful. When asked a favor, think it over before saying yes.

**5. Getting enough sleep** is important down to the cellular level. Sleep helps the body to re-energize its cells. It's not easy to sleep when you're feeling overwhelmed. In fact, nearly 1 in 5 Americans say [they lose sleep because of stress](#). Find [tips for improving your sleep](#).

**6. Creating joy and satisfaction.** Sometimes, we don't need to add new activities to get more pleasure. We just need to soak up joy in the ones we've already got. Unfortunately, our daily demands sometimes block our ability to savor moments already present in our day-to-day. To increase it, try practicing mindfulness, gratitude, and/or sharing joyful experiences with friends and family.

**7. Eating well.** Healthy eating can counteract the impacts of stress on the body. Good nutrition can help at times of stress, but that's exactly when lots of us tend to eat less well. According to a recent survey nearly half of Americans overeat or eat unhealthy food to cope with stress. This can be especially challenging when financial constraints make it challenging to eat well, [so check out these resources](#) which may help.

**8. Taking care of your spirit and connecting with your deepest self.** With all the time we spend plugging in, tuning in or online, it's easy to disconnect from our inner selves. Try to find some time each day to think about who you are and who you want to be in the world. Figuring out what's important to you can make daily irritants and stresses feel like less of a burden and ground you in why you're staying the course.

**9. Dealing better with challenging times.** During challenging times, having strong coping strategies can make an enormous difference. If you're dealing with a stressful situation, stewing, or pointing blame can make you feel less powerful. Instead, try journaling, shift your thinking, problem-solve, list possible solutions or alternatives, and accept good solutions. Do not be afraid to get support or ask for help or advice.

**10. Getting professional help if you need it.** If the problems in your life are stopping you from functioning well or feeling good, professional help can make a significant difference. You are not alone: 1 in 4 adults in this country have a mental health problem in any given year.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or chat [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org).

## Practicing Self-Compassion

**An essential part of building resilience is self-compassion.** How would you treat a close friend going through a challenging moment in their life? Self-compassion is turning that compassion you would have towards yourself. According to the Harvard Stress & Development Lab, it contains three main elements: mindfulness (vs. over-identification), common humanity (vs. isolation), and self-kindness (vs. self-judgment). Having self-compassion means that you honor and accept your humanness – as you are encountering frustrations, loss, mistakes, the realization of your limitations and shortfalls. Know that this is a human condition shared universally.



Sources: [Dr. Kristin Neff and Harvard Stress & Development Lab](#)

An important question to ask yourself is “What do I need right now to help alleviate my suffering?” or “What do I need to hear right now to express kindness to myself?” There are several resources to strengthen your self-compassion including a [self-assessment scale](#), [guided breathing and grounding exercises](#) and [self-compassion exercises](#).

## Self-care during direct advocacy work

[Mental Health America](#) states that during times of devastation (war and conflict, community violence, discrimination, and identity-based hate), many people find that helping others can be one of the best ways to support their own mental health. Negative emotions are there as a guide to protect us and shouldn't be ignored. Your ability to make a difference is affected by your mental health, so if you are feeling discouraged: make time for self-care, make space for gratitude, and acknowledge negative emotions without dwelling on them. The desire to make the world a better place says something positive about who you are.

**Contact us for additional support!** Know that RESULTS staff and fellow volunteers are here to support you to navigate the stress and challenges that may arise in advocacy. Don't hesitate to reach out to your volunteer group leaders, Regional Coordinators, or RESULTS support staff ([grassroots@results.org](mailto:grassroots@results.org)) for more support and resources.