



You Can Do This Hard Thing – Increasing Your Resilience



What can you do when you are between a rock and a hard place? Put on your rock climbing shoes, attach your harness, grab a rope, and start climbing! You can do this!

Unless we have lived in a war zone, dealt with chronic illness, or suffered another ongoing trauma, most of us have never navigated a situation like the one presented by COVID-19. Nothing in our recent history has affected our collective lives to this extent.

At first, we thought it would be just a two-week shutdown. Then it was four weeks. Then two months. And now, eight months later, we are looking at a year or more of this shut-down. Emotionally, we simply weren't ready for this challenging situation to go on and on, and now it's a marathon—not a sprint!

So many things in our work and personal lives are out of our control right now. Some things seem utterly impossible—like a full day of teaching on Zoom. The full court press is on. The reality is here. This is really hard. REALLY HARD.

So this is a pep talk. The only thing you can do in a situation like this, is find a way to live with it. Resisting the current reality will deplete your valuable energy. We know this uncertain situation won't last forever—but until it ends, we have to change our thinking and free up our energy to problem-solve and be resilient.

You can do this

Humans can do things that feel impossible. Experts who study trauma tell us that after a disaster, people are more resilient and resourceful. Communities are stronger. Adversity causes us to grow. Granted, the disaster we find ourselves in today is unique, and it is not impacting all people equally. Still, there is a way through this for everyone. Even if you don't think you are a resilient person, resiliency is something you can develop. You have the tools within you. And when you start learning and using these tools, you'll start to feel better.

1. Pay attention to your thoughts

To improve your resilience, listen to how you're talking to yourself. Check for negative or catastrophic thoughts like this: This is just horrible. I can't handle this. I'll never make it. I'm failing.

2. Change the narrative

Draw a vertical line down the center of a page. On one side, write down three or four things you don't like. On the other side, write the opposite: something you desire.

I'm letting the kids down → I am showing up for the kids

I am so stressed → I feel calm and relaxed

I can't handle this → I can handle this



3. Let go of blame

Acknowledge the things you can't control. Then stop giving those things power to control you.

4. Get support

It is very hard to handle this situation alone. Find a counselor or a coach to support you on a regular basis. Get a resilience buddy—someone you can text at the end of the day: "I did 20 minutes of yoga today. Stopped my negative thoughts." Or schedule regular weekly appointments with a family member or a friend who knows the best in you and wants the best for you. If it isn't scheduled, you won't do it.

5. Make it Fun

Give yourself a fun phrase like "Just keep swimming, just keep swimming." Or the Nike theme "Just do it."

There's not a mountain on earth that humans haven't climbed. We can get over any mountain with the right tools and the right support.

You can do it!

"You can do this hard thing.
You can do this hard thing.
It's not easy, I know,
but I believe that it's so."

Lyrics from the chorus of **"You Can Do this Hard Thing"** by Carrie Newcomer

*Share this song with your kids and teens too.

