

ANY QUESTIONS PODCAST
EPISODE 1: RESILIENCE

(INTRO MUSIC)

Caroline: Hi, everyone. I'm Caroline and I use she/her pronouns and I was originally a stress management and mental health peer educator.

Carson: My name is Carson. I use he/him pronouns and I was originally a power-based violence peer educator.

Caroline: We want to officially welcome you to "Any Questions."

Carson: We're really excited to cover some topics that we've been discussing and gotten some questions about. This podcast has been over a year in the making. So, let's get right to it.

Caroline: Our first topic is resilience.

(SEGMENT MUSIC)

Carson: Let's start with a pretty basic question. What is resilience? What does that mean?

Caroline: So, I've heard of resilience before and I always thought of it as the ability to bounce back. But, I wanted a little more information so I started where all great research starts, which is obviously a TED Talk.

Carson: Sure.

Caroline: The one I watched had Charles Hunt, who had gone through many personal struggles growing up. His talk was entertaining and inspiring but the piece that stuck out to me was his definition of resilience. So, he defined it as the "capacity to adapt to negative change." I really liked that definition because it was pretty broad but also kind of specific at the same time. I personally liked that he specified negative change because usually positive change isn't as hard to adapt to as a negative one.

So we did a little more research on what other universities are doing to help students build resilience. We'll get back to that a little later but we found another pretty relatable definition. Cornell referred to resilience as "thriving and not just surviving." The word thriving really struck me. I feel like so often I'm engrossed in my daily routine of going to class, eating, taking an occasional nap and staying up way too late doing homework, that I'm just in survival mode for a college student.

So, what does thriving even look like? Obviously it looks different for everyone, but for me, it's when I've finished all my survival activities and can do something that I enjoy. Whether that's catching up with a friend I haven't seen in a while, watching something I like on Netflix, or taking an extra-long shower.

Carson: I like thinking about it that way. Resiliency is just taking care of yourself after or during a hardship and getting back to your best self.

Caroline: Yeah, exactly.

Carson: Caroline, what has the Health Center done in the past related to resilience?

Caroline: At the Health Center we've offered programs that get at the basic principles of resiliency but we also know there's still a lot to be done. So a few examples. There was Sober Slam a few years ago, which was using storytelling to talk about someone's journey to sobriety and how storytelling can be really powerful in the recovery process.

We also had Move for Your Mood where we partnered with RecWell that basically said that any type of movement was good for your mental health. So, even if you're just working on homework and you run down the hallway, that's still something that will rejuvenate you a little bit.

We also offer stress management consultations through the health promotion and wellness services. It's a free appointment with a health educator and you can just talk about whatever is stressing you out and they'll help maybe either get to the core of what's stressing you out, if you really don't know what it is, or help you talk about new ways to deal with your stress.

The last is probably the most common that I've done, which is self-care presentation. We usually give that to freshman students or any organization that requests it. It's a presentation giving info about stress management, specifically on our campus and looking at different ways to practice self-care.

Just a disclaimer. This podcast is not the end all, be all for resilience on our campus; but we are going to provide some tips and tricks to build skills that help with resilience.

So, we decided that to dive a little deeper into resilience and what that might mean to different people. So we talked to Dante McGuire who is a Senior Education and Training Specialist in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. And basically the gist of his interview was that our identity really plays into the resilience that we have or the places that we have to be resilient. He said a lot of good stuff so I'm going to let Carson dive into that a little bit.

Carson: Yeah, so, one of the things he brought up was that for certain groups it takes resilience just to enter a space. If you're in a position of privilege relative to that space, you might not even recognize it. He said, just showing up, being in certain spaces can demonstrate resilience. But it's important to recognize when you should leave.

Resilience doesn't require putting yourself in unsafe or unhealthy situations unnecessarily. Resilience just means that when you're in those situations, you can cope. And to help foster resilience, I really liked -- had a good discussion about this. He said you can recognize or anticipate when someone around you might feel uncomfortable and proactively take steps to welcome them or allow them space to express themselves and just be OK with that.

Caroline: Right. And recognizing that, like, your experience in the space isn't the same as everyone else's experience in the space is really important just because you might feel comfortable in a space doesn't mean that everyone in that same space feels the same way that you do.

Carson: Yeah.

Caroline: So part of being an ally or an advocate for someone with a marginalized in a space, it -- you know, coming from a place of privilege, it's really important to give the person that space to talk about what they want from you. And, so, what does being a good advocate or ally for you look like? So, really important from Dante was giving the space for constructive criticism, so, saying, I want to be the best that I can be for you. What can I do better?

And really being open to that constructive criticism. I think a lot of times people interpret criticism as something bad. But when you're really trying to be the best that you can be, there's nothing wrong with saying, "Oh, I messed up in this area and I could improve here."

Carson: Lastly, we did some research with y'all with some more tips about how to build and practice resilience. So, we did some research on what some other colleges are doing to help students build resilience and one big thing that we saw was just changing people's approach to failure. That's what a lot of colleges are trying to do. So, for a lot of people, failure is seen as a negative thing and this is kind of perpetuated by the fact that we don't talk about it.

There was one example at Stanford that we really liked. So, Stanford is trying to change people's opinions about failure by normalizing it. A video that we both really liked called, "Stanford, I Screwed Up" that shows students, professors and other faculty talking about times that they failed at something, which I think is really important to just talk about openly and honestly because everyone can relate to that.

Caroline: Definitely, right.

Carson: Changing your approach to failure is hard. In fact, we could probably do a whole episode on this. But if you think this would work for you, I suggest reaching out to us or just doing some more research on your own about it. To get started with this, just having a conversation with anyone, I think, is a great place to start.

Caroline: So, for people like me, I don't really think that changing my approach to failure would be the best thing. So another kind of tips that other colleges are suggesting are really similar to things that I've seen in the self-care presentations that I've given.

So, part of building resilience is also practicing self-care. I'm just going to break down. We use the words "building" and "practicing" when we're talking about resilience or self-care because it is a skill that does take time to build up and you do have to practice it to find something that really works for you. Going off of that, self-care, in my mind is just whatever you do for yourself that takes your mind away from things or gives you a little break that you might need.

It is a conscious effort to take that break but in the long run, it really does help. So, maybe taking five minutes to meditate every day or 20 minutes to watch something on Netflix, which is what I like to do, or maybe it's something that you only do, like, once a week but it's something that you really -- you're treating yourself for. But it's taking that time to realize, like, this is what I need to do for me. And that's completely OK to do.

So, again, it does take practice to realize what works for you. So, maybe you try something and it doesn't work and that's OK. I tried meditating for a little bit, I probably should have tried a little

harder. But, I did try it. And it just didn't work for me. So I went back to the drawing board and now my thing is I'll be in the middle of studying, can't really focus, need a little break. So, you know, set the 20 minute timer on my phone and it's just enough time to watch a little, short funny comedy series on Netflix or whatever I'm watching.

So, I really use that as, like, my me time and recognizing that during this time, I'm not going to think about my homework or whatever is going on in my personal life. I'm going to really try and disconnect.

So, Carson, what do you think about the relationship between self-care and resilience?

Carson: I think self-care is foundational for resilience. I know when I'm feeling particularly stressed out, I'll try to think back on whether I've just been sitting at my desk, working, getting stressed out, or whether I've gotten some exercise recently, whether I've gotten a full night's sleep, at last in the last couple of days. And if I've just been, like, eating Cheetos all day long or if I've eaten something else. Not that there's anything wrong with Cheetos; Cheetos are fine. It's just that I know, personally, I need to eat something other than Cheetos every once in a while.

For me, paying attention to what I'm eating, whether I'm sleeping and whether I've gotten any kind of physical activity recently -- paying attention to those things puts me in a good frame of mind to think about how I can bounce back.

Caroline: Yeah. I really liked how you emphasized reflecting on what's stressing you out and being mindful of what you've done to take care of yourself. I think that it's important to recognize that that's not going to magically make all of your worries disappear or take all of your stress away, but it is a way to really think about what's stressing you out and what you can do about it.

You know, self-care and resilience kind of go hand in hand but they're not the same thing because, you know, self-care is what you do on any old day and resilience is more what you do when you're having a hardship. If you have a self-care routine for every day, so let's say, for example, you meditate for five minutes, which, again, isn't what I do. But if you meditate for five minutes every morning and you're anticipating a hard test that day or something, you might take an extra five minutes to meditate on top of your regular five minutes, just because you know your day is going to be a little more stressful than usual.

Also, if you unexpectedly have a bad day, like, maybe you get sick or something, you get home and take an extra five minutes in the afternoon to meditate and take care of yourself in that way. I think, you know, it doesn't -- again, it doesn't stop whatever is going to happen and it doesn't make everything disappear, but it does help you, you know, kind of ground yourself and get a little more centered.

So, in conclusion, take care of yourself, take care of your friends and thank you so much for listening.

(EXIT MUSIC)

Narrator: April is Sexual Assault Awareness month so tune in next month when Carson and Caroline discuss consent and communication.

Carson: Of course we get and receive consent every day. For example, you wouldn't take money out of someone's wallet or borrow their car without consent or permission.

Caroline: That whole, "No means no" didn't account for that response. So now --

Carson: It implied the absence of a no was, like a yes.

Caroline: Was a yes, right.

Narrator: Join us on April 13 for another episode of "Any Questions."

(EXIT MUSIC CONTINUED)

END