About the Author

Susan Fee is a professional clinical counselor in Cleveland, OH. She speaks nationally on topics related to mental health, parenting, relationships, professional communication, and conflict resolution. Her advice has appeared in several publications including the Wall Street Journal, Dear Abby, Family Fun, Good Housekeeping, and Real Simple.

Ms. Fee is the author of Dealing With Difficult People, Building Resiliency, Dealing With Mean Girls, Positive First Impressions, Secrets for Successful Presentations, and the college survival guide, My Roommate Is Driving Me Crazy! Learn more about her personal coaching, counseling, workshops, and other products by visiting www.susanfee.com.
INTRODUCTION

Life can be hard sometimes. It’s supposed to be. How could we know the meaning of light without having experienced darkness? Adversity offers a life perspective that we cannot gain any other way. Some say they can appreciate their life without having to struggle so much. They can use their imagination or observe other people’s struggles to get the idea, but it’s not the same. We don’t honestly appreciate what we have, or need to learn, until we’re at risk of losing it all.

Right now, you may perceive your circumstances as a painful loss or absence. Life is not the way you think it’s supposed to be! Perhaps you wish you could turn back the clock to the way things were before. This program is designed to help you think differently because there is no going back, only forward in a new way. Our challenges are valuable because they offer lessons, insights, and opportunities to practice resiliency. Resilient people do more than rely on positive thinking and luck. They experience just as many challenges as everyone else, sometimes more. Yet, they’ve developed effective coping skills that allow them to survive and thrive during adversity. This program will teach you how to develop this skill set for yourself by challenging inflexible thinking, asking solution-oriented questions, and responding proactively.

Here’s What We’ll Cover in the Audio Program

• Define resiliency
• Shifting from a victim mentality
• Exploring how you tell your life story
• Acting on controllable factors
• Discovering your personal strengths
• Differences between symptoms of stress and depression
• Developing coping strategies

This workbook is designed as a supplement to the audio program and offers additional resources. You will also find questions at the end of each page to help you reflect on the material and how it applies to you.
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DEFINE RESILIENCY

What is resiliency?
• Choosing to positively respond to adversity
• Skill to be practiced
• Willingness to accept different

Get Ready to Play Ball

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bouncing Back</th>
<th>No Bounce</th>
<th>Bouncing Forward</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wants things the way they used to be, denial</td>
<td>Learned helplessness</td>
<td>Acceptance of new normal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to “normal”</td>
<td>Numb</td>
<td>Emotional strength training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wishes events had never happened</td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>Looks for lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistant to change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wants to forget</td>
<td></td>
<td>Never forgets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels life is unfair</td>
<td></td>
<td>Add-versity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions for Reflection:
What’s your automatic response to adversity?

Are you willing to accept life as “different” so you can create a “new normal?”
EXPLANATORY STYLE

What’s Your Story?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Optimistic</th>
<th>Pessimistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transient</td>
<td>Permanent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolated</td>
<td>Global</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused on controllable</td>
<td>Uncontrollable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Facts of My Story

____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

Protecting Your Inner Thought Cycle

Questions for Reflection:

Is your explanatory style optimistic or pessimistic?

What parts of your story do you need to start telling differently in order to move forward?
DETERMINE CONTROLLABLE FACTORS

Draw a Mindmap

- In the center of the page, write down a question or topic you’d like to explore and circle it.
- Without editing, write down any idea that comes to mind on that topic by creating stems. As more thoughts flow, keep adding stems.
- If a new topic comes to mind, write it down and circle it.

Example:

```
What stresses me?

college fund
paperwork
need new car
overwhelming

work
overworked

late hours

childcare
no time

kids

no connection

guilt

backtalk

house

chores

fix broken door

no money

old

guilty

denial

aging soon
```
Your Mindmap:

Reflection Questions:

What have you been trying to control that you now are willing to give up?

What's something you have control over that you can focus on instead?
IDENTIFY PERSONAL STRENGTHS

Write down three words to describe yourself:
1. ________________________________
2. ________________________________
3. ________________________________

Internal versus External Descriptions

Internal: stable, reliable, and predictable
- Natural abilities
- Skills
- Interests
- Hobbies, passions

External: unstable, unreliable, and unpredictable
- Appearance
- Labels, titles
- Possessions
- Opinions of others

Briefly describe your peak moment here:
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

Questions for Reflection:

List the internal characteristics you used in the example above that made it a peak moment.

How can you apply these same characteristics to help you in your current situation?
STRESS VERSUS DEPRESSION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptoms of Stress</th>
<th>Symptoms of Depression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disrupted sleep cycle</td>
<td>Experienced for at least two weeks or longer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disrupted eating patterns</td>
<td>Persistent, sad, anxious, empty mood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical ailments</td>
<td>Feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness, guilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of memory/hair</td>
<td>Loss of interest in things that used to be fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme behavior</td>
<td>Disrupted sleep/eating cycles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative impact on relationships</td>
<td>Lack of concentration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thoughts of suicide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Facts About Depression

- According to the National Institute of Mental Health, major depressive disorder affects approximately 14.8 million American adults, or about 6.7 percent of the U.S. population age 18 and older in a given year.
- Highly treatable with professional help
- Take the National Mental Health Association’s online depression screening at http://www.depression-screening.org

Managing Stress

- Define your values and support them with behavior
- Focus on controllable factors
- Exercise aerobically at least three times per week
- Eat nutritionally
- Engage in hobbies
- Turn off technology
- Reflect quietly each morning

Questions for Reflection:

How do you typically manage your stress? Is it healthy or unhealthy?

Are your values and actions aligned? If not, what do you need to do differently?
DEVELOP COPING STRATEGIES

Ask What, not Why
What can you start doing for yourself today that will improve your situation?
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

Recall Past Triumphs
What other challenges have you overcome in your life? How did you do it?
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

Build Social Connections
Identify someone you need to reconnect with or a new person you would like to add to your social network:
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

Focus on Internal Strengths
List your internal strengths that are stable, reliable, and predictable. How can you use them right now?
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

Retell the Story
Describe your circumstances from a hero’s point of view instead of a victim.
____________________________________________________________________________________________

Questions for Reflection:
After hearing the poem, “Autobiography in Five Chapters,” what street do you need to stop walking down?

What new street will you choose?
REFERENCES


Digh, P. *Life is a Verb: 37 Days to Wake Up, Be Mindful, and Live Intentionally*. Guilford, CT: skirt!, 2008.


