Get Gritty 14-Day Challenge Recap

The Get Gritty challenge was designed to help individuals improve resiliency and develop ways to better manage stress over fourteen consecutive days.

What is resiliency?

Resilience or resiliency is the process of adapting in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress... it means bouncing back from difficult experiences. Some tenets of resiliency include:

B Bad times don’t last, and things get better.
O Other people can only help if you share with them.
U Unhelpful thinking only makes you feel worse.
N Nobody is perfect – not you, not your friends, not your family.
C Concentrate on the good things in life, no matter how small.
E Everybody suffers, feels pain and has setbacks; they are a normal part of life.

B Blame fairly. Negative events are often a combination of things you did, others did, and plain bad luck.
A Accept what you can’t change and try to change what you can.
C Catastrophizing makes things worse. Don’t assume the worst.
K Keep things in perspective. Even the worst moment is but one moment in life.

Being resilient doesn’t mean that you don’t experience difficulty or stress. It means you are better equipped to adapt and overcome difficulty or stress.
Day 1: Practice Gratitude

“Gratitude is an attitude and way of living that has been shown to have many benefits in terms of health, happiness, satisfaction with life, and the way we relate to others. It goes hand in hand with mindfulness in its focus on the present and appreciation for what we have now, rather than wanting more and more. Feeling and expressing gratitude turns our mental focus to the positive, which compensates for our brain's natural tendency to focus on threats, worries, and negative aspects of life. As such, gratitude creates positive emotions, like joy, love, and contentment, which research shows can undo the grip of negative emotions, like anxiety. Fostering gratitude can also broaden your thinking and create positive cycles of thinking and behaving in healthy, positive ways.” Taken from Psychology Today

Day 1 Activity:

Take five minutes to complete the following prompts:

- List three things that you are grateful for.
- List five people that you are thankful for.
- In a few sentences, describe the best part of your day.
- List three challenges you are currently facing. Then explain how you can learn and grow from each.

Day 2: Develop a Growth Mindset

Adopting a growth mindset is a cornerstone to building resiliency. Those with a growth mindset view challenges as an opportunity for learning and growth, and therefore willingly challenge themselves to overcome obstacles and face stress head on. Those with a fixed mindset shy away from adversity with the fear that trying will mean failure and failure is something to avoid.
**Day 2 Activity:**

Growth mindset is a hot topic in the world of early childhood development, but the tools and activities can easily be translated to adults. Print and post this chart of probing growth mindset questions to ask yourself next time you are faced with a challenge or stressful situation.

---

**Day 3: Make Stress Your Friend**

Most of us have been conditioned to believe that stress is bad and should be avoided at all costs. However, new research suggests that our mindset on stress, whether we perceive it to be ‘bad’ or ‘good,’ may be more impactful on our health and happiness than the stress itself.

**Day 3 Activity:**

Watch Kelly McGonigal’s 15-minute TED talk, “How to make stress your friend.” Then recap with the bullet points below.

What we can learn from this:

- We can choose to view stress as positive: stress is okay, it’s part of life, challenges can be good, I’ll learn from this and get stronger
- Or we can choose to view stress as negative: stress is terrible, this stress is bringing me down, I’m not strong enough to handle this, why me
- People may experience the same amount of stress, but that doesn’t mean that they are affected by stress to the same degree
- People who view stress as negative experience more of the negative effects of stress (increased risk of blood pressure, heart disease, mental illness, etc.)
- People who view stress as positive experience less of the negative effects of stress and can even learn to thrive in stressful situations
- Your perceptions of your stress matter more than the stress itself

Develop a ‘stress is positive’ mindset. Next time you are stressed, challenge yourself to see the situation in a positive light. You are stressed because something you care about is at stake. First, acknowledge and appreciate that thing you care about. Then, ask yourself how you can learn or grow from this stressful situation.

---

**Day 4: Get Moving**

When your body encounters stress, it starts a cascade of chemical reactions that are designed to help you deal with that stress. You are essentially primed for action. This is the fight or flight response. Exercise can help your body return to a normal level by taking advantage of this action-ready state.

**Day 4 Activity:**
Move more today! Pick any activity, pick any location, pick any duration. Just move more than you did yesterday. In fact, if you are able, go for a 10-minute walk right now!

**Day 5: Restructure Negative Thoughts**

When we face stress or adversity, the way we think about the situation can either exacerbate it or minimize it. When we restructure our thoughts and alter our perceptions, we can actually change our body’s physiological response to stress. As a result, we can relieve significant amounts of stress and create a happier life without actually making any changes in our circumstances (which are often outside of our power to change). This process, commonly referred to as cognitive restructuring, involves four steps:

1. Learn about thinking patterns with these two articles on [negative thought patterns](#) and [negative explanatory styles](#)
2. Notice your thoughts
3. Challenge your thinking
4. Replace your negative thoughts with more positive thoughts

**Day 5 Activity:**

Think about a certain event that has caused you significant stress over the past few weeks. Use this worksheet to navigate through the following prompts:

- What is my negative or unhelpful thought towards this event?
- How does this thought make me feel?
- What does this thought make me want to do?
- What would I tell my best friend if they had this thought?
- What is a more positive or helpful thought towards this event?

Reframing negative thoughts isn’t a natural instinct, so shifting to more positive thought patterns will take time. Use the handout above on a regular basis, especially through times of hardship, to strengthen your positive thought muscles!

**Day 6: Sleep**

Poor sleep habits can leave you physically and mentally drained and less able to cope with the obstacles that life throws your way.

**Day 6 Activity:**

Complete this 10-minute ‘beditation’ video tonight while lying in bed to soothe your mind and body to sleep. (Send this link to yourself and set a reminder on your phone so you’ll remember).

If your sleep habits could really use some work, consider completing the 14-Day Sleep Challenge on your own to improve your sleep! Learn more [here](#).
**Day 7: Accept What You Can’t Change**

We often spin our wheels worrying incessantly about things we can’t control. Instead, focus your energy on managing what you can control: your thoughts, feelings, actions and responses to those stress-inducing things.

**Day 7 Activity:**

Think about a situation that is currently causing you stress or frustration. Take five minutes to complete the following prompts:

- List the elements of this situation that are outside of your control.
- List the elements of this situation that are within your control.
- Cross through each element that is outside of your control. As you cross through each item, tell yourself, “I cannot control you, therefore I will not worry about you.”
- Reread your list of things you can control. Although you cannot control the situation or many elements of the situation, you can control how you think, feel and respond to the situation and that is powerful stuff! Will you let it get the best of your mind today? Or will you let it roll off your back and move forward with your day?
- Given the things you can control about this situation, pick two things to work on now. Spend the remainder of your five minutes completing the first step, no matter how big or small, on each of the two things that you decided to work on.

**Day 8: Cultivate Optimism**

Optimism is one of the foundations of resiliency. Unfortunately, our brains are designed to pick up on the negative in life. This evolutionary ‘threat searching’ radar has historically helped us protect ourselves from danger. Nowadays, it just helps us highlight the bad in a situation...

This next exercise, the Three Ways Exercise, can be used to guide your thoughts when you feel down, stressed or worried. It will challenge you to think about three ways a situation can be worse. It may seem counterintuitive to imagine things being worse (how could this possibly help you cultivate optimism?), but thinking through these three ways can actually remind you of what you already have and instill gratitude for the good things in your life.

**Day 8 Activity:**

Think about a recent stressful situation. Take a minute to write a description of the situation. Then write down three ways in which that situation could be worse. Imagine each scenario. This part is important so don’t skip out on it! Think about what you would see, hear, and physically feel in each situation. Finally, wrap up your time by coming back to your original situation. Acknowledge that it could be worse and express gratitude that it isn’t!
Day 9: Mindful Glitter Jar

Mindfulness means slowing down and paying attention to the present moment. It’s about not getting lost in the future or stuck in the past, but being here, right now, in this moment. Glitter jars are a great introduction to the practice of mindfulness. So what is a glitter jar and why should you care? Read on!

Day 9 Activity:

Use this one-minute video to direct your attention to the present moment.

We often go through our entire days with a shaken jar, constantly in motion, struggling to see the big picture through clouds of thoughts, feelings and worries. But when we sit still, when we allow the thoughts to settle, the mind becomes clear again. Did your mind have an opportunity to clear during this exercise? If you liked this activity, learn how to make your own glitter jar here. This is a great activity to do with children!

Day 10: Self Compassion Break

“Self-compassion is a willingness to look at your own mistakes and shortcomings with kindness and understanding—it’s embracing the fact that to err is indeed human. When you are self-compassionate in the face of difficulty, you neither judge yourself harshly, nor feel the need to defensively focus on all your awesome qualities to protect your ego. It’s not surprising that self-compassion leads, as many studies show, to higher levels of personal well-being, optimism and happiness, and to less anxiety and depression.”

Taken from project-resiliency.org

Day 10 Activity:

Start by thinking about a situation that is currently causing you stress or pain. How does this situation make you feel physically and emotionally? Try to immerse yourself in those feelings for the next few moments.

Then, say the following things to yourself:

“This is a moment of suffering.” This acknowledgment is a form of mindfulness—of simply noticing what is going on for you emotionally in the present moment, without judging that experience as good or bad. You can also say to yourself, “This hurts,” or, “This is stress.” Use whatever statement feels most natural to you.

“Suffering is a part of life.” Saying this helps you realize that you have this in common with all other human beings on the planet—suffering is an unavoidable part of life. Other options for this statement include “Other people feel this way,” “I am not alone,” or “We all struggle.”

“May I be kind to myself.” This is an expression of self-kindness, treating yourself the same as a friend or family member who is suffering. Other options for this statement include “May I accept myself as I am,” “May I forgive myself,” “May I be patient,” or “May I be strong.”
**Day 11: The Power of Belly Breathing**

Breathing is essential to our existence, but not all breaths are the same. In times of stress, we often take shorter, shallower breaths, which can exacerbate the stress response in our body. Belly breathing, or diaphragmatic breathing, is an intentional way of breathing that allows air to move all the way in to the depths of the lungs. Because this is not a natural, normal way of breathing, belly breathing forces us to slow down and turn our focus inward, which activates the relaxation response.

**Day 11 Activity:**

Try belly breathing:

- Relax your shoulders.
- Breathe in a small breath to the count of 4 through the nose, expanding only the belly (not the chest).
- Hold the breath for 4 counts.
- Breathe out through the mouth, counting to 7 slowly, while relaxing the belly.
- Repeat this for 3-4 belly breaths.

With practice, belly breathing becomes easier and more automatic!

---

**Day 12: Smile File**

A smile file is a collection of videos, pictures, quotes and anything else that makes you laugh or smile! Building a smile file and referencing it regularly can promote gratitude and resiliency by reminding us of the beautiful pieces of life. Start building a smile file now so it’s ready for the next time you feel stressed, frustrated or down.

**Day 12 Activity:**

Get inspiration from some of our smile file images below. When finished, start your own smile file. This can be a box that you keep under your desk or a folder on your computer or phone. Get in the habit of storing things in your smile file regularly. Next time you feel stressed, frustrated or down, hit up your smile file for a quick happiness boost.
Day 13: Nourish

Stress can upset the normal functions of your body. When your body is in a stressed state, your nutrition can exacerbate or improve the situation. Making poor nutrition choices, like choosing processed foods over fresh foods, adds an extra layer of work on your body, which is already working overtime. And yet,

**Day 13 Activity:**
Today, aim to add in something beneficial to your diet. Approach this from the perspective of, “how can I best prepare my body to handle today’s stress?” Can you add a serving of fruits or vegetables to your next meal? An extra glass of H2O? A serving of healthy fats?

**Day 14: What Matters Most?**

Stress can occur when we feel like we aren’t giving enough time and attention to the things that matter most. When was the last time you stopped to think about what matters most? If it’s been a while, it may be time to tune back in and reevaluate. Then determine if you’re spending enough time and energy on those things.

**Day 14 Activity:**

Take three minutes to bullet out the things you value most in life. Once your list is complete, think about how much time you currently spend on each of those things. Rank each item 1 to 5, 1 being not nearly enough time and 5 being you are happy with the amount of time you are currently giving to this item.

Evaluate anything that scored a 3 or less. Pick two of these items to work on. Wrap up this activity by scheduling time to devote to those two items in the next week.

**Wrap Up**

Resilience isn’t built overnight… or even in fourteen days. Developing resilience, becoming more resilient, requires regular and routine nudges in your daily thoughts and actions. You did this in fourteen different ways during the Get Gritty challenge! Let’s recap:

- Day 1: Practice gratitude
- Day 2: Develop a growth mindset
- Day 3: Adopt a new stress mindset
- Day 4: Get moving
- Day 5: Restructure negative thoughts
- Day 6: Sleep
- Day 7: Accept what you can’t change
- Day 8: Cultivate optimism
- Day 9: Practice mindfulness (perhaps by watching a jar full of glitter)
- Day 10: Take a self compassion break
- Day 11: Try belly breathing
- Day 12: Build a smile file
- Day 13: Nourish
- Day 14: Realign with what matters most

Becoming resilient requires optimism that even if things can’t get better, some things are already good. It’s knowing that while you may not be able to change the situation, you can change your thoughts about
the situation. And you choose positivity and growth! It requires a sense of gratitude for what you have, an acceptance of stress as part of life and a peace of mind knowing that you can handle, or will handle, whatever comes your way. It requires an acceptance of yourself, your strengths and your weaknesses. It requires that you take time to move, sleep, nourish and breathe because you know it makes you physically better equipped to handle the storms. And when the storms hit, resilience means, in the face of those winds, you know how to bend, not break.

**What now?**

Continue to incorporate the activities from the last fourteen days into your regular routine. Use this compilation of all fourteen activities as a guide. Remember that resilience is a journey of regular and routine nudges in your thoughts and actions and that journey doesn’t end here!