

Living here, mastering resilience



THE DOCTOR IS IN
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Living in Israel has to be one of the most wonderful and amazing experiences one could ever hope to have in a lifetime. One of the greatest detours of our life was coming on aliyah.”

These words are excerpted from my book (see below) and are as true now as they were when I first wrote them.

As we have coped with wars, here and away, with resurgent terrorism, tragedies such as at Meron last year, a seemingly never-ending pandemic, and have experienced the difficult transition from Remembrance Day to Independence Day, we are reminded at every turn that life isn't always easy.

Nonetheless, it is ours, and we have fought the battles, have the scars to prove it, and for the most part feel blessed to have what we have. We have been through a lot, and in the many ups and downs, we have so much to be thankful for.

Over the last several years, just in case we didn't know it before, we have learned that absolutely nothing can be taken for granted, and to appreciate even the smallest things in life. Life has meaning here, and it is passionately embraced in every sense of the word. We live very much for today because we never know if there will be a tomorrow. Some days are easier than others, and we believe that having something very special is well worth struggling for.

So, while who knows what threats may lie ahead, and just how tired and “lightly injured” we all feel right now, and although we each may jump when hearing a loud noise, it's our incredible resilience that will take us on the next steps of our journey.

Though we have all coped amazingly with our challenges and have shown our ability to adapt and even bounce back amazingly over time, and even have grown in the process, for many it has not been without some cost. As I look back at our Seder (which in some ways already feels forever ago), with our children and most especially our small grandchildren, I'm reminded of how much our behavior can influence our friends, our family and, most importantly, our future generations.

Here are a few suggestions for how to lighten your load, be more resilient and, in turn, be a good role model to others.

1. *Ask yourself whether you like the new or most recent version of you, and whether you'd choose to be friends with “yourself” if you met on the street.* Note what you like and what qualities in yourself you find less appealing. What can you live with, and what needs to change, and are you working on it? Are you a perfectionist? Are your expectations for yourself reasonable or over the top, and would you demand the same from your best friend? Probably not. Remember, being a perfectionist will likely increase your anxiety.

2. *Make the choice to see the cup as half full instead of half empty.* See each drop put in as a blessing. Always be happy with yourself for what you have, and do not dwell on what you don't have. Being rich is in the eye of the beholder. I am rich because when I see the world, I see all that I have.

3. *Let go of the past and things you cannot change.* You will be amazed at how much lighter you will feel when you forgive and move on.

4. *While you may have a hard time changing the situation, just take a look back in time.* You have often reframed the narrative with respect to how you dealt with issues and worked to be more positive, calm or accepting in the future, right? Remind yourself of these examples. Smile. If outwardly you can be happy, then your inside



SMILE: IF outwardly you can be happy, your insides will begin to radiate with joy as well. (Caju Gomes/Unsplash)

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how you plan to achieve them. Make your steps small and manageable, and your success along the way will strengthen your mission.

9. *Maintain a state of calm that enables logical thinking and the strength to handle any challenge.* Mindfulness and breath work are simple gifts for reducing stress, if you learn to use them properly.

10. *Have fun.* One of the best resilience builders is ensuring that you make time to create an environment that fills you with joy. Be it a craft, a sport, listening to music or watching kids play, the goal is to increase the “feel good” hormones. Catch yourself smiling or laughing, and you'll discover that you have given yourself and others a real bonus. Passing on good values is very important. Letting future generations see you as enjoying what you do sends a very important message about not just what you say, but how you spend your time and what you prioritize.

11. *Look after the basics.* Proper sleep, nutrition and exercise provide a sense of balance in all that you do and pave the way for strengthening you at more difficult times. It's easy to let these lapse and let other things get in the way.

Life has thrown you many curveballs over the recent years, and you have likely adapted much better than you may think. As you review your personal coping strategies and the suggestions above, now it's time for the new and improved you to find the strength to feel empowered as you look and move forward! ■

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will begin to radiate with joy as well. Smiles are contagious, and those around you will want to be with you and experience your joy.

5. *We have so much to be grateful for.* What things are on your list and what do you like about living here? After 22 years, there is still so much that excites me. Just absorb Israel's natural beauty and you'll be amazed. The birds, the flowers, the trees, the water, the sand, the topography. Walk with a three-year-old to appreciate what's important. Don't wait to appreciate things. Grab the moment. It might not come again. Appreciate all that nature has given you for free. Say thank you for even the smallest things and see how your world can change as a result. Never think that what you were given was not enough and look for more. Be grateful for everything you have.

6. *Reach out to others and you'll be astounded at what you receive in exchange.* Ask your neighbor how they are doing. How have the past two years affected their world, and what struggles might you help them with? A colleague mentioned the anxiety she experienced in lowering her mask – which, by the way, had left her feeling broken out and vulnerable. Another “let herself go” and does not know how to deal with the gray hair, weight gain and lack of joy. She stays at home and has no interest in socializing. Your kindness may be just what others need to take that step forward.

Take note, too, of your own social discomfort in these challenging times and reach out if you need to. We all need social connectedness.

7. *Address your fear of fear.* I was surprised to watch a family member recently approach a podium and spontaneously and self-assuredly speak to a group of strangers – something I could not do! Your fears may not be those of others. What can you learn from each other?

8. *Many people are complaining of fatigue and lack momentum.* Write down your goals and