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## Emotional Habits

7 Things Resilient People Do Differently (And How They Can Help You Succeed in Business and Life)

Akash Karia • CreateSpace © 2016 • 130 pages

### Take-Aways

- Everyone has to deal with negative emotions or experiences.
- You can't choose what happens to you, but you can choose how you respond.
- Taking control of negative emotions isn't the same as suppressing them.
- "Emotionally resilient" people accept their emotions and take ownership of their actions. They use questions to develop better self-awareness.
- They adopt "power postures" or poses to help strengthen them and defuse negativity.
- Instead of reacting to a stimulus, they change their focus to shift the meaning of the stimulus to indicate a better outcome.
- Emotionally resilient people change or mold their beliefs to control their emotions.
- They ask challenging questions to improve themselves.
- They learn to modify their "self-talk and inner movies" by adjusting the controls.
- They rewire bad habits by modifying the "antecedent, behavior" and "consequence" (ABC) loop of events in their lives.

## Recommendation

Peak performance coach Akash Karia discusses the seven major habits of “emotionally resilient” people and explains how to integrate these behaviors into your life. Experts claim that the most successful people aren’t necessarily the most intelligent or best educated; they’re the most emotionally resilient. They don’t let negative emotions cloud their judgment. Instead, they acknowledge such feelings as being inevitable and take responsibility for their actions. They can step back from a situation and not allow their emotions to take over. Karia provides tips for handling negativity, including adopting power poses, changing focus, using questions to develop greater self-awareness, and more. His easy-to-read manual contains valuable advice backed up by research. *getAbstract* recommends Karia’s useful method to anyone dealing with sadness, anger, frustration or other negative emotions.

## Summary

### Processing Negative Emotions

Say something negative happens in your life. It could be a fight with your spouse, a divorce, losing a promotion at work, a co-worker gossiping about you or failing a class at school. You might feel so hurt, angry or afraid that these negative emotions take over your life. Everybody responds to stress and negativity differently. Some may isolate themselves from friends and eat too much ice cream. Others may lash out by screaming. But successful people are “emotionally resilient,” and they can confront their negative emotions without being overwhelmed.

*“Many experts believe that emotional resilience is the #1 key to success – not education and not conventional intelligence.”*

Taking control of your negative emotions isn’t the same thing as suppressing them. Suppression is harmful because negative emotions are part of life. Instead of stifling your emotions, develop awareness of them. Learn to “mind the gap” between a stimulus – what just happened – and how you respond to it. People who are emotionally resilient take control of that gap.

*“Much of your ability to control your emotions depends on your ability to be aware of all of the complex things going on inside your head.”*

Emotionally resilient people have seven basic habits that help give them control over their feelings. To master your emotions, understand and implement these habits:

### Habit 1: Respect Your Emotions

Resilient people “acknowledge their emotions, accept responsibility for them and learn to interpret the positive intentions of their emotions.” Wherever you are and whatever you’re feeling, take time out to honor this moment in time. Apply that sensibility to a real-life example. If someone says something mean to you, you might feel hurt or angry. How you respond to those words will depend on factors such as what

the person said, your past experiences, your personality, and more. You may get angry and yell instead of acknowledging that you're hurting.

*"Suppressing thoughts and feelings can actually backfire."*

In 2007, the British journal *Behaviour Research and Therapy* published a study written by Richard Bryant and Fiona Taylor reporting on the effects of "thought suppression" on sleeping dream states. They asked 100 participants to think of an unwanted thought, memory or image from the past. They asked 50 of the participant group to try to suppress that negative thought for five minutes before going to sleep. After examining the participants' dream journals, the researchers discovered that those who suppressed their thoughts were more likely to dream about the negative experience they were trying to hold back.

*"People who are emotionally resilient...use this to their advantage by looking for the positive intention behind the negative emotion they're feeling."*

You are responsible for your emotions. You can blame other factors, like the heavy traffic during your Monday morning commute, but you alone are responsible for feeling rushed and angry. How you respond to something potentially upsetting is up to you. Recognizing that you're angry or sad is the first step. Once you're aware of your negative emotion, look for the "positive intention" that accompanies it. For example, you might become aggressive to protect yourself. Emotionally resilient people find the positive intentions behind their negative emotions.

*"While it is possible to use [the power of our beliefs] to our benefit, not all of our beliefs are productive. In fact, we each have certain beliefs that are quite disempowering."*

One of the most powerful examples of emotional resilience comes from Viktor Frankl (1905–1997). In September 1942, Germans took Frankl to a concentration camp. He and millions of other Jewish people suffered cruel treatment at the hands of Nazis. Frankl survived because he knew he couldn't control or change his circumstances, only his response to them. As he wrote in *Man's Search for Meaning*, Frankl realized that his pain and suffering could be teachers. After gaining his freedom, he gave back to others and became a psychiatrist and neurologist.

## **Habit 2: Adopt "Power Postures"**

Your body language reflects what you're feeling inside. If you're sad, your posture will be slumped and droopy; you might frown with your lips curved down or cry. If you're happy or proud, your shoulders are square and held high as you laugh or smile with your lips curved up.

*"Beliefs...which put conditions on your desired emotional states (happiness, excitement, fulfillment, joy)...limit the amount of time you are able to experience that emotion."*

Power postures or poses occur when you take up a lot of space physically, stand or sit up straight with your shoulders back and your feet shoulder-width apart, and breathe deeply for two minutes. Within two minutes of adopting power postures, your testosterone levels increase by 20% and your cortisol levels decrease by

25%. Testosterone is a hormone found in both genders that increases confidence. Cortisol is the hormone that causes stress.

*“We actually can choose how we feel, but we can’t do that until we stop letting others control us and accept responsibility for our own emotions.”*

Use this physical technique to change your mental outlook. It’s hard to feel sad when you’re smiling. Even if you’re not happy, the small physical change of smiling produces positive effects. Practicing breathing can help you become calmer. Changing your physiology is a lifelong habit that will help you process negative emotions and become more resilient.

### **Habit 3: Build Your Ability to Focus**

You react the way you do because your brain finds meaning in each stimulus response. If you change the meanings you find, you can change your responses – which will produce a different and possibly more positive emotion. Say two people both get fired. One proclaims that his life is over and he can’t possibly find another job as great. The other processes her pain differently. She sees it as a “blessing in disguise” and gives herself permission to try something new, such as switching careers or going back to school.

*“Experiment with [your internal] movie controls – brightness, color, focus, association, space and size – and see what reduces and what increases the emotional intensity of the experience.”*

What you pay attention to becomes your focus. To assign positive meaning to external events, adjust your focus. Control what you focus on. What you pay the most attention to represents whatever will come into your life. By this logic, if you focus on how great things are, you’ll think life is swell and you’ll notice more positive developments. The reverse is also true. Your focus is “a kind of lens through which you view your life.”

### **Habit 4: Change Your Beliefs**

Resilient people can change or mold their beliefs and they respond to external stimuli in different ways. Your beliefs are so powerful that they affect you physically. For example, take the well-known placebo effect. Patients who take a placebo – a fake or ineffective pill or treatment – often feel better simply because they expect the pill or treatment to make them feel better. Your beliefs can become self-fulfilling prophecies. If you’re fearful or anxious, you may feel physically sick. If you’re content or happy, you will feel better.

*“Less educated, less intelligent people who have mastered the ability to use their emotions rather than being used by them often achieve far more.”*

Replace a limiting belief with an empowering one. For example, “I am just a shy person” becomes “I have been confident in the past, which means I’m capable of being confident. I can do so at will as long as I learn how.” Repeat the new belief when the old belief tries to show up. Keep reinforcing your new belief until it becomes automatic. Once you’ve mastered those steps, you will be better equipped to control your emotions.

## Habit 5: Use the “Hidden Power of Questions”

Emotionally resilient people understand how to use questions to improve themselves. Be aware that loaded questions set you up for a negative response. These include such questions as, “Why does my boss never respect me? What did I do to deserve this?” and “Why is life so unfair?” Even if these assumptions aren’t true, your brain will seek a response that fits. If you find yourself asking a question with a negative presupposition, make the conscious decision to challenge it.

*“When it comes to emotions, your body language tends to reflect the way you’re feeling on the inside.”*

Alternative questions include “What can I learn from this?” and “How can I use those lessons to be successful at my new goals?” These alternatives encourage positive thinking and forward momentum rather than self-pity and depression. Developing greater self-awareness leads to greater mastery of your emotions.

## Habit 6: Develop Positive “Self-Talk and Inner Movies”

Think back to childhood. Perhaps some pleasant memories come to mind, such as remembering home-cooked meals and good times with friends. Others may be more painful. Some memories may be vivid because you remember them through all five senses: seeing, tasting, smelling, hearing and touching. Emotionally resilient people don’t try to suppress or erase their memories.

*“Your emotional response – anger, hurt, fear – holds more control over you than you would like.”*

Emotionally, your brain recreates memories through three senses: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. For example, if you’re angry, your brain will see an image in your head associated with that feeling. Your brain also will hear irate phrases that you may internally repeat to yourself. You may possibly sense anger in other people through a feeling, almost like physical touch. Try practicing what your brain sees, hears and touches. If you experiment with your “movie controls,” you can diminish the impact of negative events.

*“Allow yourself to acknowledge rather than suppress the emotions that come your way so that you can identify them accurately, learn more about them and eventually even learn to manage them.”*

Think of something negative – but not too negative, since this is your first practice exercise. Is your picture in black-and-white or color? Try switching to the opposite format to see if that dampens your emotions. Try adjusting the brightness up or down. Look at the space around the memory. Is it happening near you or far away? Can you push it farther away if it’s too close? What happens if you make the size larger or smaller? Try to manipulate your association with the memory. Pretend it’s on a movie theater screen to gain some distance. Manipulate the focus by making it clearer or blurrier. See how that affects your memory.

*“Climb back into the driver’s seat, and put some of these strategies and habits to the test.”*

In addition to manipulating images visually, you can learn to manipulate auditory cues. Think about the words you're hearing. Instead of thinking to yourself, "I'm such an idiot for failing," use more positive words such as, "I'm glad I made that mistake, because now I'll never make it again." You can substitute silly phrases or ideas that make you smile to take the steam out of negative phrases. Try to change the tone of what you hear. Accepting negative messages is harder if they're spoken in a rude or condescending tone of voice. Practice changing the volume of the negativity. Pretend there's a mute button, and hit it.

Physical and emotional memories have a kinesthetic aspect. As in the strategies above, you can adjust your kinesthetic memories by changing the "intensity, pressure" and "location" of any sensation. If your memories are intense, think of an imaginary dial you can turn to lower the intensity of negative recollections or to strengthen your view of positive memories. If you feel the pressure or weight of a situation, imagine having a balloon that could relieve the pressure. Examine the location of your memories. Can you move them to a different location either inside of or outside of your body?

## Habit 7: Controlling the "ABC Loop"

Resilient people are better able to control their ABC loop. The *A* stands for antecedent or stimulus; *B* stands for behavior and *C* stands for consequence. To see the ABC loop in action, consider author Akash Karia's experience. As a teenager, he had problems managing his anger and would end up in physical fights at least once a week. The fight would start with some other boy making fun of the size of his nose or saying something that embarrassed him, which made him angry. That was the antecedent. His behavior was to hit the other boy. The consequence was that his teachers would punish him after his anger dissipated. Karia credits pediatric neurosurgeon and US cabinet member Ben Carson's book *Gifted Hands* with helping him overcome his anger.

Can you change anger's antecedent? For example, if you're dieting, removing chocolate from your house makes sense. If anger management is a problem, instead of clenching your fists, strike an alternative pose or relax your hands and breathe slowly to release tension. If you change the antecedent (stimulus) or actions, you can change and control the emotional consequence.

"Future pacing" is a technique for controlling emotional reactions that involves "stepping into the future and visualizing a new ABC pattern." The strategy lets your brain create different neural pathways that will help you handle the "offending antecedent" more effectively if and when it arises again. Many athletes mentally visualize themselves succeeding before they perform physical tasks. For example, boxing legend Muhammad Ali would see himself as victorious before he even stepped into the ring.

Angie LeVan, a resilience coach who worked with the US Army, researched the brain patterns of weight lifters. She discovered that "mental practices" can have the same uplifting power as physical activities and that the two combined are more effective than either on its own.

## About the Author

**Akash Karia** is a speaker and peak performance coach who specializes in resilience training. He has trained more than 80,000 people around the world.



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