

UNDERSTANDING OURSELVES

Resilience is the ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change. We all have needed resiliency, but with everything changing in the last two years we need to develop a resiliency more now than before. What has changed: more environmental concerns with extreme weather of forest fires, more severe flooding, more extreme heat across the nation; the Coronavirus Pandemic and issues related to it; the unrest in the Middle East and its direct effect on our country; and possibly many other changes. What misfortune have you suffered: the loss of loved ones; decline in health issues; broken relationships; economic loss and possibly many other misfortunes. **So how do we develop resiliency?**

Mary Pipher's book entitled "*Women Rowing North, Navigating Life's Currents and Flourishing as We Age*" is primarily directed to women being 65 or older. However, many of the concepts can be generalized to other ages and to men. Mary Pipher is a psychologist and has written several *New York Times* best sellers. (1)

To develop travel skills we need to understand ourselves because the more we understand ourselves, the more skilled we will be at distinguishing between acting on impulse and listening to the nurturing voice deep inside us that says, "This is important to you." **The more self-knowledge we have the more likely it is that we will be able to act in accordance with our truest selves.**

To grow into our largest best selves, we must be able to claim our own lives. We need to sort out what we truly desire and then go for it. **Our culture educates us to be responsible, nurturing, and available to others. We must learn on our own to take care of ourselves.**

One powerful skill is learning to make **position statements. These are statements about what we will and will not do.** When we first do this, it feels like we are breaking a taboo. However, afterward, we experience a rush of newfound freedom.

First, **we need to know our own needs, and then be assertive enough to say what they are,** even when they may inconvenience others. It is challenging to say, "I want this, and I am going to make it happen."

We can grant ourselves the power to walk out of any room we don't want to be in. There can be times when we are badly treated – yelled at, berated, not included, deeply embarrassed and ashamed. In such cases we need the strength and courage to walk out of the room. When we discover this new power, we do not have to stay in any situation where we are neglected, discounted, or disrespected. **We might not walk out, but knowing we have that option might make us feel safer.**

When we unblock dammed-up emotions, we allow a fresh stream of vitality to flow through us. Whether we are grieving the loss of a beloved or are upset about a daily event, we want to experience our emotions in our hearts, minds, and bodies.

Darkness experienced honestly and openly becomes less overwhelming. None of us do this perfectly or all the time. **What counts is the effort we make to know ourselves.**

One of our greatest challenges may be learning to deal with all the anger that we've carried for decades. We've lived in a deeply patriarchal culture all of our lives and we've been encouraged to bury our anger and smile our way through life. Often our anger turns inward toward depression or toward self-destructive behaviors that leave us enveloped in clouds of shame. **Anger, held onto across time, is resentment, and resentment is like swallowing poison and waiting for the other person to die. When we physically discharge our anger, we experience a cleansing, a catharsis.**

We can learn how to work with all our negative emotions and deal with relationships more skillfully. **We can be more accepting of ourselves and other people,** and we can be better at navigating life's constant challenges.

So we can develop a greater resiliency and in doing so have a more fully-functioning and satisfying life. **So let us all start or strengthen the process by understanding ourselves.**

(1) Mary Pipher. *Women Rowing North, Navigating Life's Currents and Flourishing as We Age.* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019) pp. 98 – 121.

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