

This I Believe

I believe in **Resilience**: Not as an abstraction but as that tangible something alive within each of us and in our relations with others. It is a quality as steady as the thumping of our hearts, and as near to us as a smile.

Resilience has many names. In the July 7th's suicide bombings in London, its name has been "resolve". From the survivors of the 2004 Tsunami disaster, resilience came in the form of "hope", even when there was nothing left for them **but** that. And though we do not know the stories of those who perished, I believe that many who died were resilient to the last.

We often make reference to the unshakable "faith" of people who bounce back from unimaginable adversity. Christopher Reeve personified this form of resiliency. Before he died, he learned to move again only through remarkable perseverance, unfailing optimism and an extraordinarily caring and resourceful social network.

Resilience also arises in concert with social purpose. Listen to the Greene's, a family with a 6-year old son with a brain silenced by a gun shot from would-be thieves on an Italian highway, tell us on NPR how they saved lives by donating his organs that were still alive and beginning an international donor group that has now extended the lives of thousands around the globe.

But resilience is not just for super heroes like Christopher Reeve, Lance Armstrong, or JK Rawlings, and it's not just for catastrophes like the London bombings. It is also an everyday miracle, there for all of us. Resilience is there when we put aside past hurts and reconnect with an old friend. Resilience is there for the one who still manages to smile even though in chronic pain, or who cleans up again for a disabled partner humming "Desperado." This everyday "nobility" that can put pride and pain aside is there both for those who give orders and also those who must carry those orders out: whether on the battlefield or in the everyday world of work. Surely there are people with little of this capacity, but they are the exceptions: resilience is the rule.

We need only to ask ourselves, "What is the Resilient Solution?" to see beyond the pain. There is another dimension to life. Once we know to look for it, I believe we can feel the rhythms of this natural restorative pulse ever present within us and in our relationships: Replenishing energy when we are exhausted, speeding recovery from hurt, and sustaining the best of our hopes for our families and ourselves during difficult times.

At the beach my youngest son stops at the waves: both excited and terrified, recalling how the surf thumped him the day before. That memory holds him back, but resilience keeps him there at the water's edge. His older brother comes up and with softness says, "Here is how, Bro." Later, hours of diving into and bobbing up with the waves, they show me that resilience has won again.

By Alex Zautra
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