



YOUR VOICE, YOUR HEALTH: A KIDNEY COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE KIDNEY PATIENT ADVISORY COUNCIL OF THE FORUM OF ESRD NETWORKS

RESILIENCY READY

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Miriam Webster's Dictionary defines resiliency as "the ability to recover from or adjust easily to adversity or change." The CKD patient knows this all too well.

Kidney disease patients are charged with a litany of tasks: doctors' appointments, blood work, medications, treatment options, kidney transplant evaluation, seeking a living donor, surgery, recovery, and

maybe even withdrawing from treatment. This is in addition to work, family, homeowning, pets, caregiving, and financial responsibilities. A resilient mindset can be critical to keeping all these plates spinning successfully.

So how does one "adjust easily" to one's new normal of life with kidney disease and the unknown that lies ahead? For starters, it's okay to acknowledge that kidney disease is not easy. In fact, it's lousy! This is usually one of the first things I say to patients. Whether they were just diagnosed with kidney disease or have begun dialysis treatment, I want people to give themselves permission to grieve the life they had before diagnosis and treatment. Stifling emotions doesn't help people move

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forward. Then, I encourage patients to start thinking about their support system. Dr. Robert Waldinger at Harvard Medical School encourages people to “never worry alone.” Reach out to the individuals, groups and communities that can offer comfort, support, and a good laugh. Friends and family want to support the people they love, so let them! Resiliency does not mean solitude.

Identifying what my co-worker Shannon calls the “tiny wins” is another key component to cultivating a resilient mindset

Kidney disease is a marathon, not a sprint. Gratitude journals are an excellent way to document those small, everyday successes. Maybe jot down 3 or 4 wins each night - a good meal, time with friends, an easy dialysis treatment, a beautiful sunset. When we start to look for the good rather than the bad, it can change our entire perspective on life.

So, remember: Honor your emotions. Reach out to your people. And, celebrate the good days.



Patients on Resilience

“My [37 years of] experience [with ESRD] shows that each medical setback must be met with flexibility, resilience, and a positive attitude. Trying to “tough your way” through new demands without making necessary changes can lead to quick, serious health repercussions.” - Evan C.

“Concentrate on what you can have, not what you can’t.” - Stephanie D.

“Resilience means working through the grief process of ESRD, getting the help and treatment you need to stay alive so you can fight for a lifesaving transplant.” - Jeff N.

“Never give up. Keep moving forward.” - Janice S.