

## **RESILIENCE by Yonas**

The benefit of resilience sounds great - it is being able to bounce back from disaster. And I've certainly benefited. But how have I made it work for me?

Over the years I have developed a mindset that gives positive emotions a chance. By nature, I've always been open-minded and appreciative of others and I see human kindness all around me. I sometimes feel distressed just like anyone else, but even in the darkest times I manage to buoy up my spirits with positive thoughts. The worst situations I've been through have often been mixed with feelings of relief and an outpouring of compassion.

Resilience can assert itself after torture and detention, as I have discovered. Despite having been tortured many times over the years, as a survivor I was able to show resilience. I had a couple of things in my favour: strong support from my family, a passion for writing which led to my joining the Write to Life group, and a strong connection to Freedom from Torture. In some ways, the torture simply reinforced my belief that I was on the right side.

Positive emotions are more just a short-term fix. I have found that feelings of love, gratitude, and relief can reverberate for many years after being tortured, even while suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). I try to exercise a little more to help manage my stress, and also to get some small concessions at work. If you have a better sense of your own control over your life, it is a powerful buffer. In difficult times, resilience can protect the body as well as the mind.

Resilience may even have helped to keep me alive, by enabling me to make connections with people and fostering close relationships with family and friends. Through Freedom from Torture's groups and services I can weather emotional storms better and stay involved with others: they include Survivors Speak Out, the Sing for Freedom choir, Write to Life, service user panels at FFT and the Peer Support group.

I'm moving towards my goals in life, even if I'm only making minor steps. I do one thing today that will help me move forward, rely on myself rather than criticising myself relentlessly, trust in my ability to solve problems and stay hopeful about what I want, rather than worry about what I fear.

Taking care of my body and mind, engaging in enjoyable, relaxing activities and getting regular exercise, I will be stronger and better able to face the future. Resilience is that feature of character that demonstrates an ability to bend, but not break.