

Elena Aguilar: Hello and welcome to the Bright Morning Podcast. I'm Elena Aguilar.

Hi friends. So for the next four episodes, I've got a mini-series for you, focusing on onward, and resilience, and coaching emotions. Onward, just in case some of you don't know, is my third book about emotional resilience in educators.

And if you're not familiar with it, then check out the show notes so that you can find the link to it. All right, so four episodes coming up. The first couple of episodes, I'm going to be sharing some resilience-booster strategies with you. In today's episode, I'm talking about the role of self-care for educators.

And then I've got a demonstration of a coaching emotions conversation. And that's going to be the third and fourth episode for you. So as this school year starts wrapping up, it is an ideal time for you to be checking in with the folks that you coach around their emotional state, their resilience, and employing some of these strategies. Sometimes you'll know it is necessary. And sometimes, as I said, it's just worth checking in on.

Okay, so in today's episode, I am going to be reminding you of what resilience is, and what it isn't. Or perhaps expanding that definition a little bit. I'm going to give you some suggestions on how you can advocate for resilience, and I'm going to share my current opinion on what self-care is for educators. So this is some framework, some thoughts that will help you locate the episodes that are coming up. I'm also, as always, going to give you some specific tips and suggestions.

Before I get into that, I do want to shout out a friend of the show, Diana T. Thank you for supporting this show. So folks, did you know that you can be a friend of the show, and you can support the Bright Morning Podcast?

I really want to keep this podcast ad-free, and it does require a lot of resources to create it. And so if you would be willing and able to support this podcast, please check out the show notes, because you'll find a link there to be able to do that. And to all of you friends of the show already, really, thank you. It really does help. Okay, let's get into this episode.

So I want to take a moment to back up, or perhaps pause and define or redefine the concept of resilience. Because lately I've been hearing some things that have made me want to come back to this. Like most concepts, the concept of resilience can be used to oppress.

I have heard messages that shift the burden of ending systemic injustice onto marginalized people. And I've heard these messages that kind of sound like, well, if you are more resilient than racism wouldn't really bother you. So the people who are wielding those kinds of messages have corrupted a powerful tool. And it's a tool, resilience, that educators in particular are really in need of.

When this happens, it can be tempting to abandon terms and concepts and to say, we're not going to use the word resilience anymore. But that wouldn't solve the problem. Because the problem isn't the word. It's not the word, resilience. The problem really is that as a society in general, many people don't want to deal with deep pain, and suffering. Or with historical and contemporary injustice and trauma.

Expanding on what the problem is, the problem is not the word resilience. Perhaps the problem is our inability to listen to each other, or the problem is our desire for a quick fix, or the problem is toxic positivity. The problem is not using the word resilience. The problem is the speed and the pace at which we live. It's our compulsion to distract ourselves from pain. The problem is not the word resilience.

The problem is consumerism and capitalism, and an economic reality that's increasingly difficult for the majority of people. Maybe the problem really is that we don't know how to respond to our own anger and fear, or to other people's anger and fear. The problem is not the word resilience. It's how we use words. It's our lack of definition of words.

So here are some suggestions for you. If you want to use the word resilience, which I think many of you probably do, here's some suggestions for the context in which to do that. Four things I want to encourage you to do.

First is when you use the word resilience, define it. So here's how I generally define resilience. I say resilience is our ability to emerge from a difficult experience stronger than we were before. Having learned something about ourselves, having strengthened connections with others, having more internal resources to respond to the inevitable challenges of life. Resilience is our ability to thrive and not just survive.

And resilience is cultivated through the things that we do, and the things that we think. Everyone is resilient, and everyone can become more resilient. That's the first suggestion for what to do if you want to keep using the word resilience in your lexicon. Define it.

Second is don't avoid the hard stuff. Make space for the pain and suffering. Ask about it. Honor the pain and suffering. And so what this means, when you are coaching teachers who are exhausted, at the end of their rope, you make space for it. Use strategies to help them acknowledge that pain and suffering, and perhaps to unpack it. But you acknowledge it.

The third thing to do if you want to keep using the word resilience is to acknowledge collective pain and suffering. Collective pain and suffering is a way to acknowledge, to remember that a lot of what people are going through that they think is individual, such as loneliness or fear, is not.

We are experiencing numerous social and global crises. Entire communities are suffering. So we need to be thinking about, and talking about, and building communal resilience. Resilience can be built by individuals, but the problems we're facing in the United States, in the world, are systemic. And they affect millions of people. So that's the third suggestion. If you want to keep talking about resilience, acknowledge collective pain and suffering.

Fourth, if you want to keep using the word resilience, advocate for social, political, and economic change. In my book, *Onward*, I write about the conversations we have to have when we're talking about resilience. And I say these conversations are about individual resilience, organizational conditions, and systemic conditions.

So this is what I write in the book on page six, "We must address the macro, political, and economic context of our education system. Teachers must be paid more, and they must be treated as people who can think, and who can learn."

"We must address the racism, classism, and sexism that exists in our institutions, including in our schools. We'll need to talk about testing, and publishing scores, and performance pay. Until we dig down into the structural and system roots of the dysfunctions in our education system, we'll still see high levels of teacher turnover."

"We'll need to talk about capitalism, and the legacy of colonialism, and property taxes, and who votes, and for whom we vote. We'll need to talk about patriarchy, and the dehumanization of some groups of people. We must have these conversations, however. Our resilience and our wellbeing are connected to them."

Okay, those are the four things to do if you want to continue using the word resilience. Don't avoid the hard stuff, acknowledge collective pain and suffering, and advocate for social, political, and economic change.

In all the time I've been talking about educator resilience, over a decade, I have never disconnected individual and social emotional needs from our broader sociopolitical context. Because doing so would personalize pain and suffering in a way that could lead the word resilience to be corrupted.

All of that is the context that I want to lay for this brief reflection on self-care for educators. Because self-care is another one of those things that has been trivialized, that has been reduced to bubble baths, and perhaps an annual spa weekend with the girlfriends. And it's superficial.

I think about self-care as anything that you do that helps you feel more like yourself, that helps you feel like the person you want to be. That helps you feel like you can respond to the challenges that arise.

Self-care is anything that helps you feel like you can thrive. And so that is different for everyone. When you are talking to teachers or whomever you coach, and you bring up the role of self-care, it's an opportunity for you to open up these broader conversations about how someone is doing, how they are feeling about their job, their life.

Really broadly, it's an opportunity for you to help them make connections between their individual struggles and collective pain and suffering, and the bigger changes that need to happen. In our individualistic society, we personalize the suffering that we're going through.

Nothing is personal. Everything is connected, and everything has repercussions and reverberations on the macro level. So when you start talking about self-care, it's an opportunity for you to explore someone's awareness of the bigger picture, and for you to help them figure out for them what is self-care.

Now let's just take for example, for some people, self-care might be having more time alone. Having an opportunity to spend an afternoon doing whatever they want, whether that is napping, or taking a walk, or reading a book. But being alone.

Now, we live in a culture and in a society which places a lot of value on being social, and being with other people. And perhaps this isn't as valid or as true as it was maybe 10 years ago. But this notion that we should be going out, and socializing more, and being with other people. And that if you want to spend an afternoon, or even a whole weekend alone, there's something wrong with you.

And I think this really doesn't even have anything to do with extroversion and introversion. Those are kind of interesting, and sometimes useful personality aspects to understand. I think it's more just about being able to honor and recognize that even the most social and extroverted of people also need and benefit from time alone.

And so when you open up this conversation about self-care, it's really an opportunity to help someone think about what is truly rejuvenating for them.

Okay, so it is almost the end of the school year when this episode is coming out. It's a great time for you to have a conversation with the folks you're coaching about reflecting on the year, how they feel like they've learned, they've grown, sort of their resilience reservoir. And for you to coach them around making plans for the summer, how they might be replenishing those resilience reserves if they're running low, and to talk broadly about self-care.

So I hope that this episode has helped you reground in what resilience is, in some ways to talk about it, and perhaps given you some insight into ways that you can talk with your coachees about resilience and self-care.

All right folks, so let me make one request of you as I'm signing off, which is to rate and review the podcast on Apple Podcasts. I read all of those, I go over there, it boosts me. It makes me so happy to read your reviews. And your reviews, help this podcast get out there. It's kind of one of the things that we need to do as podcast people over here in Bright Morning, is beg you over, and over, and over to rate and review the podcast.

And so thank you to all of you who have. Really, really, thank you so much. And if you haven't, it's so fast and it's so easy. All right, folks. Leslie Bigford is the podcast producer, and Stacy Goodman does the sound engineering. I'll see you next week.