Eggshell Skull Versus Steel Shell Skull: The 7 Secrets of Resilience

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In life, some people recover quickly from tragedy and trauma, becoming stronger and more resilient, while others suffer more, and become weaker. The Eggshell skull person is the person who becomes weaker with each challenge or trauma in life--they just can't get over their problems in life: their loss of self-esteem, setbacks in relationships, career, and health, victimization, and just plain bad luck. One problem leads to the next. On the other hand, the Steel Skull Person is the one who becomes more powerful from adversity--he or she can "turn lemons into lemonade," and learn from their experiences, so they become wiser, happier, and more successful.

Would you like to become a Steel Skull person who becomes stronger from adversity, challenges, and pain? Recent research has identified the 7 traits of the Steel Skull individual, also known as resilience--the ability to withstand and overcome stress, trauma, and catastrophe.

Here are the 7 secrets of the Steel Skull Individual.

Recent research literature has shed light on the characteristics and strengths of resilient people, i.e. "Steel-Skulled." These are the 7 Steel-Skulled factors often mentioned in the research:

HUMOR: People with a good sense of humor feel that they are bigger than the problem--they can "toy" or "play with their difficulties" if they desire. They say to themselves: "I don't have to let this scare me." For example, Gavrilovic, Lecic-Tosevski, Dimic, Pejovic-Milovancevic, Knezevic & Priebe (2003) found that the use of humor was one of the most effective coping strategies used by civilians subjected to bombing and air raids, and was related to lower levels of posttraumatic stress "intrusions" one year later.

COMPASSION AND EMPATHY: Putting oneself in another's shoes, feeling as that person feels, is a recipe for recovery and resilience-building after trauma. A Vietnam veteran who killed a 15-year-old soldier in Vietnam adopts an Asian child as his own, and begins to heal from the guilt of taking a life. A mother who lost her son in a brutal knife attack becomes a foster parent to take care of unwanted and abandoned children--thus healing her wounds from the murder of her son. Moreover, self-compassion can also benefit the trauma survivor--those who practice self-compassion engage in fewer avoidance strategies following trauma exposure (Thompson and Waltz, 2008).

MEANING: Viktor Frankl, and his Logotherapy, place a strong emphasis on finding the meaning in suffering or traumatic experiences. Those individuals who are able to find meaning from their trauma often recover faster and better. For example, a self-described “workaholic” who injured his back in a car accident finds himself unable to care for himself, and finally realizes how much his family means to him--thus, allowing him to place his injury in the larger context of helping to heal his family. Research also shows that those who suffered from a recent loss are able to recover faster, and have a stronger sense of meaning, when they are strongly committed to spiritual and religious goals (Emmons, Colby, Kaiser, Wong & Fry, 1998).

EMOTIONAL GRANULARITY: Individuals who can accurately identify and verbalize their emotions (emotional granularity) after traumatic events usually develop more resilience as a buffer against the psychological and physiological consequences related to the trauma (Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003; Schmidt & Andrykowski, 2004).

OPTIMISM: The optimistic person recovers more quickly from trauma. A study by Dennis Chearney, the Dean of Mount Sinai School of Medicine, examined 750 Vietnam War veterans who were held as prisoners of war for six to eight years. Tortured, and kept in solitary confinement, these 750 men were surprisingly resilient despite suffering from extreme stress. These survivors were different from their fellow veterans in that they didn’t develop PTSD or depression after they were released. The key, Chearney found, was that they maintained a strong sense of optimism--a firm hopefulness and confidence about the future, despite the circumstances.

GRATITUDE: The grateful person also tends to develop a thick skull. People with high levels of gratitude reverse their perspective from “poor me” to a larger universal perspective of shared goodness; thereby, reducing their pain. Emmons & McCullough (2003), for example, found that “counting one’s blessings” in a journal led to better functioning--both psychologically and physically.

SOCIAL SUPPORT: Research has consistently showed that social support is essential for recovering from trauma and developing resiliency. For example, Boscarino (1995), found that those Vietnam veterans who had high levels of social support were 180% less likely to develop PTSD when compared with veterans who didn’t have the same levels of social support.

In summary, if you want to be a steel-skulled person who is able to overcome stress, trauma, and conflicts to achieve success and happiness, learn to develop the 7 Traits of the Steel-Skulled person. You will come out on top in your quest for the good life.

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