

## The word resilience by Deron Jagdeo

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As a member of a family not from America and hearing about how hard life was to get here, there's a word that resonates deeply within our discourse, a term with plenty of significance to me "resilience." It's a term often bandied about in discussions. When you're down with everything against you, you refuse to go down and quit, you stand up and fight on. It's a complex fight with our own minds to achieve resilience being one of our traits.

My first encounter with "resilience" occurred when my grandfather came to America for the first time in 2016, his first time here, he thought so much of America was all positive and to put it into words it was the American dream. It was also his first time seeing snow which is kind of crazy going all those years seeing that must have been a mind-boggle. My mom would always tell me what a hard worker he was and it sucks that it took this long to get him to America for the first time considering my mom and aunt were there for 15-plus years at that point. My mom used to tell me all about the hard labor he put into his farm and seeing his hard work pay off to get his kids to America made me think of resilience.

Over time, however, my understanding of "resilience" has evolved. No longer merely a buzzword, it has become a cornerstone of our advocacy efforts, a rallying cry in our fight against discrimination and the higher-ups in America. It's not just about bouncing back from adversity but about harnessing our struggles to effect positive change, transforming pain into purpose.

Growing up I always thought my mom was resilient because she was able to take care of her kids and provide everything we wanted and needed even when we didn't have the money for some. She will always be my inspiration for a person to achieve, coming to America and walking into what seemed to be an unknown void of confusion and new faces and challenges or worry and learn about. There would almost be a new problem or challenge every week or so and she would never feel weak, I mean she would obviously complain about it but she adjusted and became an American.

Yet, the question remains, who has the right to wield this term, and who does not? While "resilience" is open to all who seek solace and support in our community, its meaning can be distorted when appropriated by those outside our discourse. For example to those who are in a losing battle in life or those not as fortunate as others but When used by policymakers or mainstream media, it risks being reduced to a feel-good slogan, separated from the harsh realities of mental illness and systemic inequities.

This brings us to the crux of the matter: why does "resilience" matter, and who needs to understand its true significance? The answer lies in its potential to challenge dominant narratives surrounding mental health, disrupt the status quo, and pave the way for meaningful change. By unpacking the complexities of "resilience," we invite others to engage with our community on a deeper level, fostering empathy and understanding in the process so we can all thrive and find our own personal happiness in life.

If I could publish this article anywhere, it would be in The New York Times, a publication known for its thought-provoking analysis and in-depth storytelling. Its audience, discerning and intellectually curious, would appreciate the nuanced exploration of mental health advocacy and the role of language within our discourse. By framing "resilience" as more than just a word but a window into our community's collective consciousness, I hope to spark meaningful dialogue and inspire action.

In crafting this essay, I draw inspiration from the works of Junot Diaz and Hanif Abdurraqib, who deftly navigate the complexities of language and identity in their respective writings. Like Diaz, I seek to infuse my prose with the cadence and rhythms of lived experience, weaving together English and specialized terminology to create a rich tapestry of meaning. Like Abdurraqib, I aim to use language as a tool for introspection and social critique, inviting readers to interrogate their assumptions and expand their horizons.

In conclusion, "resilience" is more than just a word, it's a lifeline, connecting individuals across boundaries of time, space, and experience. By delving into its multifaceted meanings and implications, we gain insight into the inner workings of the mental health advocacy community and the transformative power of language. As we continue our journey towards greater understanding and acceptance, let us embrace the true essence of "resilience" as a beacon of hope to continue our daily lives.