

RESILIENCE

by Bernice Maslan

I have been dismayed during this Covid time not to see as much resilience in myself as I might have imagined. I've realized, however, that resilience is a continuum, generally neither totally present or totally lacking, not just black or white. I thought it would be helpful to acknowledge ourselves for ways in which we are resilient. Here are some I thought of.

- 1) We are still here. We either didn't get sick, or if we got Covid, we recovered. We are survivors, at least so far. We're still breathing.
- 2) When possible, we are continuing to participate in activities like gardening or anything outdoors. For me in these environments, it is possible to forget about the state of the world for a while.
- 3) We are finding new satisfactions. Maybe this takes place on line with virtual dance or exercise classes, seeing far away friends and family online, or being out in the world enjoying relatively lighter traffic on the roads. In Bellingham WA, instead of holding their traditional 4th of July parade, they held a distributed chalk festival. Each family drew on their own front sidewalk and then there were musicians playing on their porches while people walked around the neighborhood social distancing. We are building new traditions!
- 4) Another aspect of resiliency is making the best of a bad situation. Changing our perspective by taking a mental step back can be all it takes to reframe a moment from bad to better. Resiliency of spirit and a positive attitude can help us to find the joy when it seems all is lost.
- 5) Even if we sink and fall down, we get up again. We put one foot in front of the other and keep going. I believe resilience includes giving ourselves time to grieve. It seems as if most everyone has had to give up something they really care about. Certainly for those involved in the arts such as dancers, musicians, and other performers, this has really been a time of sacrifice. It's okay to grieve. I have started to accept that the relatively carefree dance world we once lived in will not exist for some time, if ever again.
- 6) Another part of resilience is being able to acknowledge the world around us for what it is today. We have seen so much change over the decades, and astronomical changes this year so far. As well, much violence that has been hidden has come to light globally. We can only move forward from exactly where we are. Let's learn from the past, acknowledge the present, and go on from here.
- 7) For most of us, helping others is key to our own resilience. We thrive as connected communities. I

have seen instances of people doing truly heroic things, whether it is making good bread available to everyone from a backyard bakery, to making thousands of masks, to protesting injustice in the streets, and so much more! Volunteering in a safe way now can be very satisfying. Political action and calling to Get The Vote Out fits in here.

8) We can reach out to others for help in our drive toward resilience. This can be family, friends, professionals, even strangers! For example, Sherry Nevins, one of the leaders of the Seattle Contradance community, has sought out and received tremendous technical assistance from members of the Bay Area dance community in moving forward with Zoom, and making the technology for musicians and callers work so that distant musicians can still play together for dancers' enjoyment. As she says, she couldn't have done it without help.

Moving along the continuum toward resiliency, we find willingness and ability to re-create oneself when circumstances dramatically change. A great example of this is Canlis, the upscale restaurant in Seattle. Quoting from the Seattle Times: "Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the James Beard award-winning restaurant has already done stints serving burgers and fries as first a drive-through, then a drive-in movie theater. A dinner delivery service, instituted early on, continues now and into the foreseeable future. Fall may bring another project, yet to be determined." They have a new concept for a one price, one menu, minimal contact crab feed starting soon in their parking lot which involves temperature checks of staff and diners, reservations only. More power to them for creatively rolling with the punches.

Surviving is a crucially important first step, and as resiliency increases, sometimes one can go all the way to thriving. I asked a recent acquaintance about her vanity license plate: THRIVOR. She said she had had leukemia and wanted to be a lot more than a survivor. She's gone all the way to Thrivor.

Of course, we want to see dancing of all kinds survive and thrive again. In the interim, however, it has been encouraging to see there is resilience in dance communities as well. As ridiculous as it seems, dancing alone in my living room while watching others do the same thing has actually been curiously satisfying to me. Obviously, it's not at all the same, but it is something we can do now.

My wish for all of us is greater resilience in dealing with our current world and reinventing the things that matter. Let's keep on doing the things that bring us strength and joy and help ourselves and our communities build more resilience from that foundation!