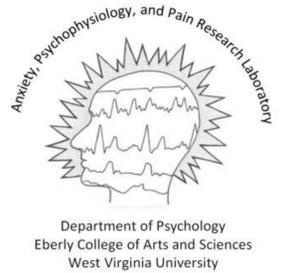


# Resolving emotional pain from trauma and loss: Impact of resilience

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## Introduction

- Psychological resilience is the ability of an individual to remain unaffected by or to successfully adapt to perturbation
- Individuals with great resilience experience more positive emotions, and report less chronic pain
- Similar brain pathways are activated in experiences of physical pain and emotional pain
- No research has explicitly addressed the potential relation between resilience and emotional pain; the purpose of this study is to examine that relation

## Hypotheses

- H1: People who write about resolving experiences will have higher resilience scores than those who do not write about resolution
- H2: People who write about resolving experiences will react less than those who do not write about resolution
- H3: People who write about resolving experiences will have higher PANAS Positive Affect scores than those who do not write about resolution

## Methods

- Participants ( $N = 100$ ) were randomly and equally assigned to write about a personal experience of emotional pain or trauma
  - Mostly women ( $n = 78$ )
  - Average age 20.3 years ( $SD = 3.1$  years)
- Resilience Scale
- Positive and Negative Affect Schedule
- Coding Manual
  - Resolution (Resolved, Unclear, Unresolved)
  - Response intensity (0-100)
  - Situational intensity (0-100)
  - Three independent raters trained to criterion

## Tables

Table 1

Comparison of Resolving Aversive Life Events

Variable	Resolution Group			F
	Unresolved (N = 23)	Unclear (N = 51)	Resolved (N = 26)	
Resilience Scores	129.04 <sub>a</sub> (20.19)	130.35 <sub>a</sub> (14.99)	140.15 <sub>b</sub> (16.36)	3.66*
PANAS Positive Affect	21.00 <sub>a</sub> (6.76)	20.14 <sub>a</sub> (7.39)	25.15 <sub>b</sub> (10.05)	3.56*
PANAS Negative Affect	33.78 <sub>a</sub> (6.11)	31.04 <sub>ab</sub> (7.34)	27.77 <sub>b</sub> (8.36)	4.11*
Situational Intensity	68.67 <sub>a</sub> (13.17)	64.82 <sub>a</sub> (13.94)	59.54 <sub>a</sub> (17.84)	2.35
Response Intensity	29.32 <sub>a</sub> (10.91)	24.77 <sub>a</sub> (10.21)	26.74 <sub>a</sub> (10.61)	1.52

Note. \* indicates a significant one-way ANOVA at the  $p < .05$  level. Means of differing subscripts significantly differ at the  $p < .05$  level.

Table 2

Correlations of Resilience, Situational Intensity, and Response Intensity Across Various Measures

Measure	Resilience Scale	BDI	PANAS Positive Affect	PANAS Negative Affect	PTCI	Situational Intensity
Resilience Scale	-					
BDI	-.57**	-				
PANAS Positive Affect	.33**	-.13	-			
PANAS Negative Affect	-.27**	.34**	-.13	-		
PTCI	-.48**	.66**	-.11	.25*	-	
Situational Intensity	.04	.25*	-.06	.12	.04	-
Response Intensity	-.14	.25*	-.06	.05	.31**	.15

Note. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

## Results and Discussion

- H1 supported
  - Those who indicated resolving aversive events tended to have higher resilience scores than those who wrote about not resolving stressors, or were unclear
- H2 not supported
  - No difference between response intensity and resolving life events
- H3 supported
  - Those who wrote about resolution tended to score higher on the PANAS positive affect scale than unclear and unresolved groups
- Inter-rater reliability for resolution coding was 75%, all discrepancies used a third-rater as a "tie breaker"
- Positively correlated with the PANAS positive affect subscale
- Limitations:
  - Poor interrater reliability for response intensity
  - Undergraduate sample limits emotionally painful and traumatic experiences
  - Resolution of trauma and emotional pain were regarded as equivalent
- Future studies should interview participants about emotionally painful events and utilize multiple measures of resolution

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