

Resilience

3 Key Takeaways



The Basics

- Resilience is about adapting to change, setbacks, and adversity by first acknowledging all the feelings that come with them, then looking for positive opportunities or learning moments.
- In sport, athletes regularly face losses, injuries, pressure, and disappointment, and these experiences can build resilience when they are supported, prepared for challenges, and encouraged to “lean into” failure as a chance to grow.
- Resilience grows over time as athletes repeatedly face and work through challenges, much like muscles strengthen through progressive overload in training.
- Resilience and grit are related but different: resilience focuses on adapting to change and finding opportunity, while grit is sustained effort toward long-term goals.
- A growth mindset helps athletes see mistakes and failures as feedback and “next steps,” rather than as proof that they aren’t good enough.
- Strong connections and support systems (teammates, coaches, and family) protect athletes from burnout and help them bounce back from setbacks in healthier ways.
- Both losing and winning can build resilience: losses create chances to reflect and adjust, while wins provide confidence and practice handling pressure.

“Build Resilience by Trusting the Process”

Team USA weightlifter Abby Raymond demonstrated resilience throughout her career, overcoming adversity including peer bullying and consecutive injury setbacks. At the age of 12, Abby achieved sudden stardom in the sport of weightlifting, setting two American records and placing first at the Youth USAW Nationals. As she set her sights on the training camps at the U.S. Olympic Training Center, she was bewildered to discover animosity toward her among her school peers. Rather than celebrating and supporting Abby’s journey, they instead jeered, body-shamed, and isolated her.

Abby found herself deeply depressed while searching for inspiration to train and compete. Luckily for her, she was surrounded by supporting family members, coaches, and friends. Abby’s ability to withstand this targeting and stereotyping by her peers, while also learning not to root her identity in the approval of others, exhibited rare resilience at a vulnerable age. A turning point for her was when she acknowledged her emotions, found a higher purpose, and changed schools. She saw this as an opportunity for growth and dedicated herself to the grueling regimen of weightlifting, a sport she enjoyed with passion and aspiration.



In high school, Abby continued her career as a member of Team USA, working her way toward an Olympic dream, until an injury resulted in another setback. After a successful snatch lift with the weight bar, moments later, Abby experienced a torn elbow ligament during her clean and jerk lift. Upon leaving the competition, the medical team recommended surgery with an 8-week recovery period.

Immediately after surgery, Abby experienced numbness in her arm and hand that was medically unexplained. A second surgery was performed. Still, there were no changes, and even worse, an infection caused intense swelling and redness in the arm. Two emergency surgeries were performed to combat the infection and atrophy, but it was not until a fifth surgery that Abby began to heal. Physical therapy was daunting, including intentional training that began with simple fingertip control, but Abby’s resilience had been sharpened, and she was up for the challenge.

Through it all, Abby was reminded that her self-identity was not rooted in the sport of weightlifting nor the competitions. She learned to detach from the outcome and trust the process. This practice helps to build resilience, as it allows individuals to stay positive and motivated in the face of setbacks and adversity. Abby’s fortitude and tenacity to overcome five surgeries within a year were remarkable. But even more remarkable was her resilience to not give up on her Olympic dreams. Currently a member of the 2025 USA National Team, Abby possesses all the ingredients of a champion, whether or not she reaches the Olympic podium.

AMBASSADOR STORY QUESTIONS

1. *Were you surprised to hear of Abby’s first setback with peer bullying? Why?*
2. *How might the adversity with bullying have prepared Abby for overcoming the five surgeries?*
3. *At what stage do you think Abby’s resilience test was at a pivotal point?*
4. *Explain how Abby’s growth mindset was instrumental in her success.*
5. *What advice would you offer a teammate or friend who is struggling with focusing on the outcome, rather than trusting the process?*