

## Katie's Resilience

1) Tell us a bit about yourself. Name (non-anonymous), School/Career, Hobbies/Interests, etc...

My name is Katie and I am a mom of two amazing boys. I currently work for my church as the children's program lead. During my spare time I attended school with the goal of having my teaching credential by June 2020 and my Masters in education by December 2020. I am a huge extrovert and love spending any extra time I have with my friends. I also love to read but refuse to read anything educational on my spare time. I love to go to concerts, and I dance at any opportunity I get.

2) What is your personal definition of Resilience?

My personal definition of resilience is being able to acknowledge hurdles in your life but choosing to jump over them. It's being knocked down so low you see your perception of bottom but choosing to climb your way up instead of succumbing to the low. Resilience is being able to make your own decision.

3) Can you remember a time in your life that was difficult? When you faced adversity that you couldn't overcome?

I actually can't remember a time when life wasn't difficult. To make a 35-year story short, I was born to a drug addict mother and an alcoholic father. I had a childhood where I witnessed violence, homelessness, and church food lines. I buried my mother at the age of 21 and my father at the age of 31. I raised my little brother, who is 9 years younger than me, starting when he was 11 and I was 20. I have watched my little brother drink his life away in a very slow undignified way. I have always struggled financially, and I have been clawing my way out of the bottom of the financial world for my whole adulthood. Just recently I have divorced from my high-school sweetheart and father of my children. We were married for 15 years and together for 18. We divorced because he had an affair with a woman 12 years younger than him and had a son out of that affair. Difficulty is unfortunately a place where I am familiar.

4) Were there individuals who encouraged your resilience?

The individuals who encouraged my resilience are my favorite part of my story. I truly have been blessed with the most amazing people in my life. My grandparents were my stability growing up. They also introduced me to my faith and taught me that as long as I believe in God there is always hope. My mom taught me self-worth. She taught me that I am more than the wrong in my life and that I deserve all the best life has to give. My mom met a few amazing friends during her time in rehab 24 years ago. These friends taught me loyalty and that true friends meet you where you are in life emotionally and see you for you. My ex-husband taught me vulnerability and humility. My boys teach me patience and joy like I have never felt. I really could go on and on about the lessons I have learned about resilience from the amazing people in my life.

5) Were there resources available for your recovery? Who/What were they?

My biggest resource has been therapy. I have been to many counselors and worked through many issues with them. My mom also became a drug and alcohol counselor once she cleaned up. This brought therapy into my home. I also think all of the many psychology classes that I have taken have helped me to understand myself better.

6) What decisions helped you get through this time?

The secret to resilience is choosing to move forward. Resilience is a choice that I make every day. I could succumb to being a victim. I could wake up every day and feel sorry for myself and those who know my story probably wouldn't blame me. Instead, I chose to be resilient. I chose to wake up each morning and move in a forward motion. I chose to see my blessing and I will often verbally remind myself about the life lesson I am learning from whatever hardship I am facing. I choose to be resilient.

7) Were there any habits that you formed while getting through this time?

I have picked up both positive and negative habits from my life journey. A positive example is that I work hard to make gratitude a habit. I know what it likes to be cold, so I am grateful each time I am warm. I try to find the lesson I have learned from each hard moment I have faced. I think that a negative habit I picked up to help me move through all these hard times is the need for control. I will attempt to control, and problem solve every negative situation in my life. Surrendering control will be my greatest life lesson.

8) When did you begin to feel like your life was balanced or somewhat normal after this time? Was there a specific moment you remember feeling better? If not, what is your hope for your future wellbeing?

If balance is a true achievable goal in life, I have yet to reach it. I wake up each day determining what aspects of my life get my priority and what aspects I am going to let the ball drop on. There has not been one moment where I have felt like everything is ok and that I am better. What I do find is the lessons that I learned from each event. I then remind myself that I went through that horrible event and I survived that I am still standing. That reminder brings me reassurance that I am going to be ok.

9) Have you met others with a similar experience? How did this effect your mental health?

I have met others who can relate to pieces of my story, no two walks in life are the same. However, I have found that although my story sounds large and hard, everyone has experienced hard in their life. Everyone has a mountain to climb, a bottom to their life. Our paths are custom to us, there is not carbon copy of what pain is. I always love it though, when I meet someone who can relate to even a piece of what I have been through. It's always a great feeling of validation.

10) What advice would you have for those who are facing similar issues in their life?

The advice that I would give to anyone who has found themselves in the storm of life is to choose to see the calm. It's easy to be negative and let the storm dominate you. It's easy to feel discouraged, sad, or bad for yourself. There is satisfaction in listing off all your hardship and giving that hardship permission to make you a miserable person. But God gave us the power of choice. So be powerful and choose to see the blessings even if you have to get a magnifying glass to find them. Choose to hear the lessons life is teaching you and choose to learn from them. Choose to be vulnerable, ask for help and take advice from others. Choose to wake up every day and be the best you can be. Resilience doesn't have a formula, it's not a one stop cure or a one-time lesson learned. Resilience is a moment to moment choice. You have to choose to be resilient.