

The Shift: From Confusion to Building Resilience

This is where our work becomes not only helpful, but essential. We teach people what they need to know to survive. Disasters can happen anywhere, at any time, to anyone, so everyone needs practical answers and preparation. History gives us abundant evidence of people who have lived through disasters and what worked, what failed, and how to prepare more effectively next time. If we listen, learn, and act, we can make a measurable difference in our own survival and in the survival of others.

Instead, we need to develop what is called “resilience in the face of ambiguity”—the capacity to hold uncertainty, to tolerate not knowing, to build a meaningful life despite unanswered questions, being open to more than one interpretation: inexactness.

Ambiguity can make us feel incompetent. It weakens our sense of mastery and challenges our belief that the world is fair, orderly, and manageable. To cope with uncertainty, we must accept that people can hold different views of the world, even when life feels less defined by ambiguity. If we are to move forward and live with uncertain losses, we must first temper our need for control. That is the paradox.

This shift from confusion to building resilience is the most important survival work you will ever do. It means accepting that:

- You may never fully understand why disasters happen to you.
- You may never know what the future holds for you, your life span!
- You may never get to tell your story to others if you do not survive.

And that is okay. But your survival depends on your knowledge and your actions. Your freedom from confusion requires your participation to learn new survival information.

The Path Forward: Resilience Without Resolution to Why?

Over the next few articles, we are going to dive deep into how to live well with ambiguous. We will explore:

The revolutionary idea of “both-and” thinking allows you to hold two truths at once: I am safe for now, and I can still acknowledge the uncertainty of what may happen next to me, to others, and to the world around us.

Six guidelines for building resilience:

1. Finding meaning in your experience
2. Tempering your need for control
3. Reconstructing your identity, how to survive disasters
4. Normalizing your ambivalent feelings
5. Discovering new hope

These are not steps to follow in order; they are principles to revisit as you move through the nonlinear journey of survival in all its forms.

Struggling with these ideas does not mean you are a broken person. Finding them difficult to learn does not mean you are weak. You are facing one of life's most stressful realities—survival—and doing so in a culture that often does not understand or fully support that struggle.

But you are not alone. Thousands of survivors have walked this path before you and found ways to live full, meaningful lives, without ever feeling completely safe.

You need only your own courage, your own compassion to honor yourself, and your own commitment to building a life of meaning despite survival ambiguity.

That is enough. You are enough.

I will, I can, and I am...a survivor who can thrive despite all the difficulties of life!