



## Resilience Beyond Recovery

By Kathy Marshall Emerson, Executive Director  
National Resilience Resource Center LLC

Even my quick visit last month to Venice, Italy, during high tide makes it clear ordinary human insights overcome life's challenges. As the ever certain high tide creeps into St. Mark's Square, shopkeepers make temporary sidewalks—risers of sorts—materialize to keep the tourists walking on water. A few visitors even pay hefty prices to tie on “plastic bag” wading boots, the brainchild of one entrepreneur.

In Dubrovnik, Croatia, I learned the 1991 bombing of the Old City by Serbs and Montenegrins destroyed roofs, burned buildings and upended daily life but did not overtake the residents. Now 20 years later the refurbished tourist city is thriving.

Physical recovery, so frequently portrayed in the media as ultimate resilience, is the easy part of resilience. Rebuilding something we know we have lost is one thing. We can recall how things were and then begin to reconstruct houses, redevelop entire cities, renew relationships, and restart an economy.

But how shall we proceed when given a terminal diagnosis, employment ends permanently, a treasured relationship severs, or depression looms? At some difficult times in personal life there literally is no template for putting things back together, fixing, or cleaning up. At such crossroads we have an opportunity to discover an inner resilience that most of us have never known. There is no personal history of experience, no pattern, no map, and no lamp to light the path. Yet somehow we can, if we are lucky enough to learn how we operate, know where to step next. Inner resilience is the spirit that powers our personal movement forward in such uncharted territory.

In retrospect I realize in my life at times like these, I have (with understanding of the principles for realizing health) found natural persistence and hope, then contentment and joy rather effortlessly. This inner resilience is *all* that I ever am and it does not dissolve. My security is not about health, wealth, or circumstances; I am grounded in more than these.

Syd Banks in *The Missing Link* says “the human mind always has access to its own spiritual roots....There is no end or limitation, nor are there boundaries, to the human mind...go inside and realize that which you seek has been there, within you, all along” (pp. 31, 35, 43).

The question is whether I will be willing to explore, consider, and trust I have this deeply rooted capacity. We know natural resilience when we experience it. We cannot intentionally think ourselves there. Banks writes, “In the silence beyond all things lies the divine knowledge that will help guide you through life” (p. 55).

Trust the quiet part of yourself to be able to land in this deep pool of wisdom. Once we have experienced this venture into natural capacity, life simply unfolds and we make healthful instinctive choices. The mental high tides and bombs of life don't do us in. The mystery of resilience is well beyond recovery and rebuilding. Spiritual internal resilience itself propels everything to higher new ground.

**©Kathy Marshall Emerson, St. Paul, MN, 2013.**

*Kathy Marshall Emerson is Executive Director of the private National Resilience Resources Center LLC and may be reached at [marsh008@umn.edu](mailto:marsh008@umn.edu). NRRC provides training and technical assistance. She retired from the University of Minnesota in the Twin Cities after 20 years and also continues to teach CSpH 5201, Spirituality and Resilience, as adjunct faculty spring and summer terms annually. The NRRC website is [nationalresilienceresource.com](http://nationalresilienceresource.com).*