

Description

How to use Resilience as a Supportive Concept, Not a Stick to Beat Yourself With

Ellie Durant – Midwife and Founder of Midwife Diaries

Published in The Student Midwife Journal Volume 2 Issue 4



One of my most viewed blog posts is ‘Should midwives have tattoos?’ I’ve debated this concept and I’ve decided I’ll get around to it one day.

I’ll get a subtle, block capital white-ink stamp on my wrist saying ‘RESILIENCE’.

This has been my tattoo plan for a while, but it might face criticism.

Mavis Kirkham's insightful Association of Radical Midwives article, 'Resilience: a concept of limited use for midwives' argues that staff resilience isn't a fix for NHS organisational problems. I agree. We need more midwives, not a guilt-trip.

It suggests resilience means 'toughening up' and losing sensitivity.

I can't help wonder, is this resilience in midwifery?

To me, cultivating human spirit is different from just putting up with things. Resilience means having practical tools that strengthen your emotional core as a midwife. And I love the concept.

So, I'll share my resilience practices with you. Take anything that works – but don't feel you have to do any of it.

1. In midwifery we take pride in being physically and mentally tough. But this attitude shouldn't reach into your personal life.

When you've been shutting down your needs for 12-14 hour stretches, indulgence is a gateway to self-care.

For me, this means having a coffee grinder and killer beans, ensuring the % cocoa in my chosen chocolate makes me really happy (75%) and having mercy on myself, i.e. the boy makes dinner, or we have frozen pizza and salad.

If I've done this kind of self-care then I'm more inclined to meditate/exercise.

Going to the gym between long days is insane but ten minutes of kettlebells in front of Queer Eye does it for me. Then I'm entitled to pursue my peanut butter addiction.

As a midwife on active service, anything that gives you pleasure that doesn't have long term poor consequences is worth pursuing.

2. We all have anxious days.

To combat this, put all of your attention on the women/birthing people; imagine shining the light of your focus out on to her not you. Turns out the best way of performing is by focussing on the moment; this visualisation is surprisingly effective.

3. Find a midwifery cause and get energy and lift from being part of it.

Apathy takes more energy than making a difference.

4. The trick is sticking with it even when it feels like you're not getting anywhere.

Know every experience is shaping you into a respected, inspirational midwife.

5. Over my career I took notes that would end up in my midwifery novel.

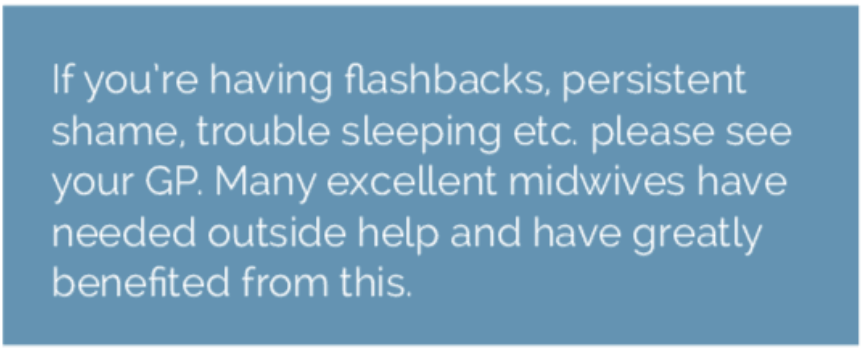
Turns out, if you do just three sessions of twenty minutes free flow writing about a traumatic event, six months later you're profoundly better off for it. I was writing my way to a healthier brain.

6. If you can make art out of our profession, do it.

If you're a student, you'll have a freshness to your work that's especially interesting for experienced midwives to see.

And the evidence is clear that it'll help you too.

Resilience is still one of my favourite words. Might go and book myself in for that appointment now. **TSM**



Category

1. Exclusive Series
2. Nurture
3. Nurture You
4. The Student Midwife
5. TSM Articles

Tags

1. 2019
2. human spirit
3. resilience
4. self-care

Date Created
11th October 2019