



Resilience Is a Practice, Not a Trait

Written by Cam Yenokida ©2025



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Resilience isn't something you have. It's something you build — through daily practice, honest awareness, and a plan for when doubt arrives.

Resilience Is a Practice, Not a Trait

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit."
— Aristotle

A few years ago, I asked myself a simple question: Can I truly see myself doing this for the next ten years?

The answer was a clear no.

What came next wasn't a carefully planned transition. It was a decision — to leave a guaranteed path to retirement, high income, and stability, and step into something I couldn't fully see. Massive uncertainty. No roadmap.

The reason was straightforward: I craved autonomy. I wanted to build something grounded in my values and the things I've experienced to be true and important — that people need space to think out loud without consequence. To have trusted connections that can offer perspective, challenge their thinking, encourage them, and at times, hold them accountable to making choices that will build a better future.

What I didn't anticipate was how much that choice would teach me about resilience.

Resilience is often talked about as if it's a personality trait — something the "tough" people have. Language like "she's so resilient" treats it as a fixed attribute, the way we might describe someone as naturally strong or naturally optimistic. That framing, however well-intentioned, quietly puts resilience out of reach.

What I've come to understand is that resilience isn't a trait. It's a practice — a set of deliberate choices, repeated consistently, that determine your capacity to move through difficulty without losing yourself.

I still carry uncertainty. The doubt still visits. But over the years, I've learned to practice resilience with the same intention I bring to my work. And that distinction — between having resilience and practicing it — changes everything.

When I think about resilience, I think about three separate lenses.

The Routine That Unlocks Energy

For most of my career, I thought of morning routines as just something you did before you went to work. And exercise as a way to manage stress.

I've since reframed that completely — and the reframe matters.

My perfect morning begins the same way: I read before I touch my phone. I journal. I meditate. Then coffee — often with someone, just to talk about life. Three to four times a week, I exercise, even if only for thirty minutes. And I make time for in-person connection — three to five one-on-one conversations each week, an occasional walk with a friend or colleague.

I end my days the same way: no phone before bed, and breathing exercises to relax my mind.

I won't pretend every morning — or every evening — unfolds perfectly. But the intention is consistent. And consistency is the practice.

These aren't tools for managing stress. They are fuel — for creativity, for presence, for the quality of my thinking and the way I show up for the people in front of me. The distinction matters because stress management is reactive. Fuel is proactive. One you reach for when things go wrong. The other you build before things go wrong — so you have something to draw from when they do.

“Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response.”
– Viktor Frankl

Reflection and Presence Throughout the Day

The second bucket is less structured, but equally important: paying close attention to my energy throughout the day.

I've learned to notice when my energy is high and when it's low — because low energy is where doubt, frustration, and reactivity tend to live for me. When I'm not paying attention, those states can quietly run the show. When I'm present to them, I have a choice.

What does noticing actually look like? For me, it sometimes shows up as shortness of breath or an uptick in my heart rate for no apparent reason. A general foggy feeling in my thinking. A thought loop I can't exit, or shorter patience with people. When I notice any of those signals, I name them. Not to fix them. Just to acknowledge: I'm in a low-energy state right now. This is a signal about my state, not necessarily about the situation.

That act of naming — noticing without judgment — is often enough to interrupt the pattern before it takes hold. It creates space between the trigger and the response. And space is where choice lives.

“In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer.”
– Albert Camus

A Reset Sequence for When Doubt Arrives

The third bucket is a deliberate response for when doubt moves in.

The goal is not to dismiss those thoughts or push through them. Doubt is worth honoring. It often carries useful information. The practice is to honor it and then respond.

My sequence: breathing exercises first. Then movement — getting outside, even briefly. Then journaling, reading, meditation, or reaching out to someone and scheduling time to connect.

These aren't random choices. They're the practices I know return me to clarity and creativity. Having the sequence ready before I need it means I'm not improvising in the middle of difficulty. I'm executing a plan I've already made for my best self, on behalf of the self that's currently struggling.

What I've noticed is that these practices don't just serve my professional life. They determine how present I am with the people I love most — my family, my close friends. Resilience as a practice is ultimately about showing up fully for what matters. When the routine is intact, when I'm aware of my energy, when I know what to do when doubt arrives — I'm a better coach, a better partner, and a better person in the room.

If you're in a season of uncertainty right now — between what was and what's next — you may be waiting for a moment when things feel settled. When the path becomes clear. When you finally feel ready. That moment may not arrive the way you expect. What I've found is that clarity rarely precedes the practice. More often, it emerges from it. You don't build resilience and then start your next chapter. You build it as you're writing it.

***"You may encounter many defeats,
but you must not be defeated."
– Maya Angelou***

Final Reflection

Where in your life are you treating resilience as something you either have or don't? And what would it look like to treat it as a practice instead — something you build, one deliberate choice at a time?

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