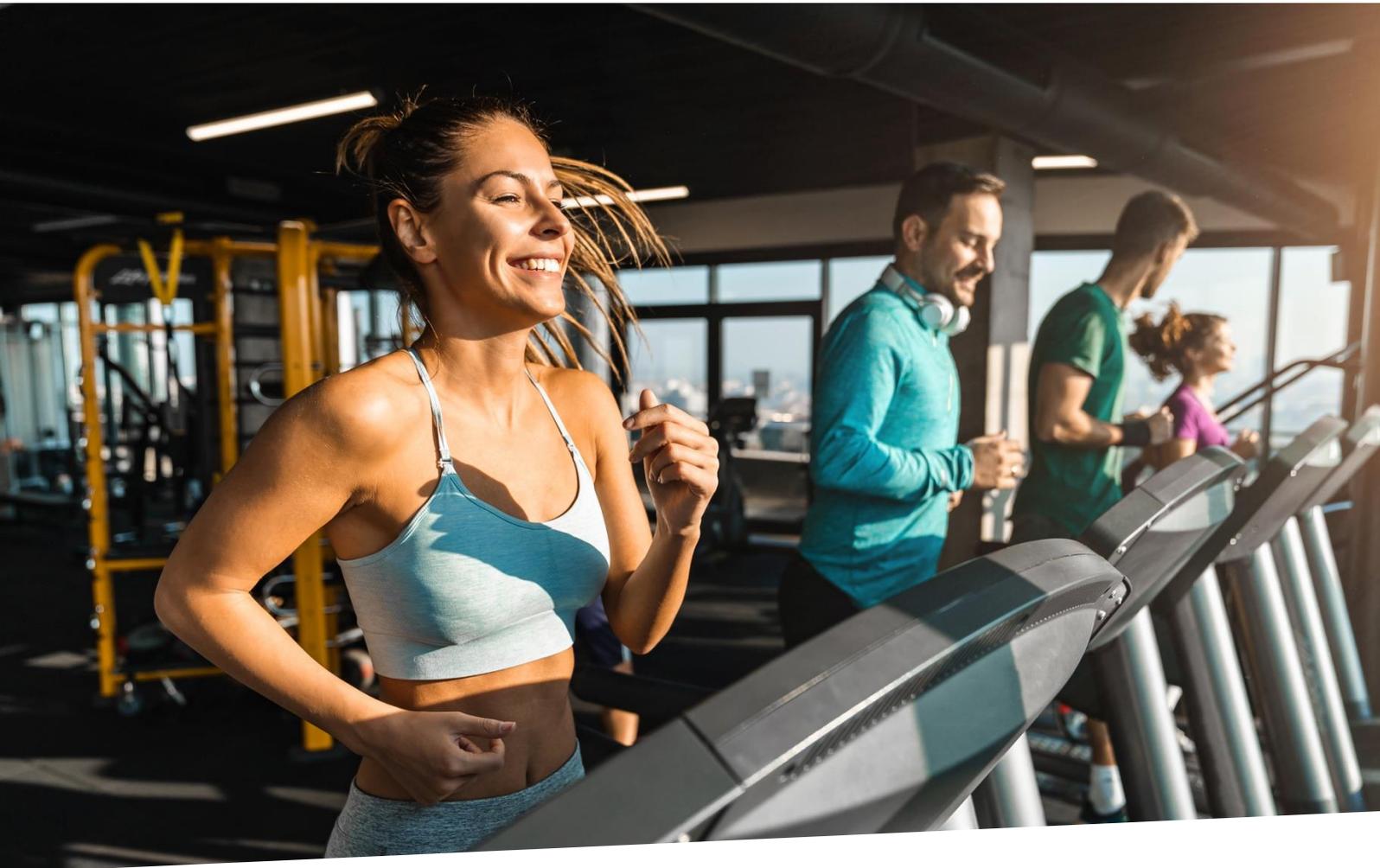




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# SEARCH PROJECT

## IN – DEPTH SEMINAR

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# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AS A TOOL OF RESILIENCE

In Sinetesi I deal with studying the various facets of resilience. When I started these studies, the word resilience was unknown to many while today it has become almost in common use. However, I leave the floor to you for the various questions.

**Q 1: Can we define resilience as the ability to self-repair after trauma? So to rearrange your life after difficult situations?**

Partly yes and partly no. The research on resilience began in the 70s and in that first period the studies carried out were focused on the definition of the word, on understanding what it was. A first aspect to consider is that the word resilience was born within the materials sciences. It is the property of a material, in physics there is a specific instrument used "the CHARPY pendulum" which is used to measure how resilient a material is, that is, how much it can withstand a shock. So in this science resilience is defined as the property of something static. Studies begun in the 1970s then shifted the concept of resilience into the social sciences. Many scholars have begun to investigate why many people, for example veterans from concentration camps, who have experienced very strong physical and mental situations, have then recovered in a positive way, have reorganized their lives in a positive way. So the answer to your question is yes and no. Because the studies on resilience have evolved in recent years and we have tried to understand what are the elements that can support this process. So it is true that it is a mode of recovery, but it is not a simple resist, it is not a property but a process of positive reorganization that comes very close to learning processes, as it is a re-



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elaboration of a negative experience from which people they learn and discover that they have new resources that in situations of tranquility they would not have thought they had.

**Q 2: So this is a quality that should never be lacking in each of us and that we should all put into practice?**

So if we define it as quality we go back to the previous definition, that is property of a material. The wrong thing in this definition is that we risk infecting the resilient from non-resilient people. This division is not ethically correct; studies tell us that we all have potential for resilience, we just need to find a process that helps bring out our resilience.

In fact, what the studies have revealed is that we develop resilience with the support of an external factor that can be environmental, relational or mentoring. In my recent studies I have focused on the "mentoring" factor, that is, it is not just a relational figure of a coach but it is a factor that changes over time, that is, I can get to know more people who at various moments in life assume the role of mentor and bring out this resilience. Having said that, we must see resilience as a process that exists but does not necessarily mean that it is always present and active. So I would say that resilience is a process that can have many manifestations over the course of a lifetime.

**Q 3: Let's shift the focus to the resilience - sport combination. How important is resilience in sport and are there disciplines where it is more widespread?**

With this question we focus on another aspect in the definition of resilience, that is, we see it as the ability to get up from a dark moment and therefore as a mere cognitive ability, in reality resilience is strongly rooted in the body.

Before becoming a cognitive process, resilience is a fiscal process; for example young children develop resilience to meet their own needs: they cry, scream ect .. by doing this they learn to



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manage these stressful situations. So resilience, from a neurological point of view, is very ingrained in our body. Another example is humor in children; the transition from motor to cognitive humor also occurs thanks to resilience which is initially a body and subsequently is a capacity that we learn to manage and articulate.

Sport is one of the first contexts in which we started talking about resilience. There are many sportsmen, especially para-Olympic athletes, who are cited as role models for resilience, for example BEBE VIO. Their stories are success stories, they have been able to turn their negative event into a success but in reality it is not just that. When we talk about resilience we must talk about all sportsmen who find the way to resilience not so much in success but in the daily practice of that single sport, because it is that daily practice that gives meaning to their history. So there is no resilient super hero but there is a person who in everyday life manages to face daily challenges by finding strategies, for example recognizing one's talent or practicing activities to feel good.

#### **Q 4: Could I summarize by saying "Get better after losing?"**

Yes, in the sense that the characteristic element of resilience is a bit like this, that is to learn something new about yourself and therefore a learning that I can use in other situations. To improve, yes, but without going to extremes; as mentioned, resilience is a time-consuming and complex process. It is thanks to this that the studies have brought to light the importance of mentoring, that is, a support without which, perhaps, our resilience does not come out. An example valid for everyone and to better understand what I say is the story of PRIMO LEVI, who went through the experience of the concentration camps and which he overcame with writing, telling his story about him. Telling it allowed him to positively rework that event. But we know that he then committed suicide, so we wonder: Was Primo Levi resilient or not? In



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reality this is not the case, so we need to see resilience as a resource that needs to be nurtured and supported over time.

**Q 5: Can we say that resilience is also linked to self-esteem?**

Yes, even if it is not the main element. Thinking about the SEARCH project, I would focus on the theme of the body and how, through the body, young people face and re-elaborate many situations. Especially in adolescence they face situations based on the sensations they receive on a physical level. So with adolescents, instead of using cognitive techniques, it is very important to work on the body with sport because it allows you to manage various aspects that influence resilience, that is: to face the trauma, to understand the limit to which it can be reached and finally it is linked to the risk. In fact, resilience is linked to "risk competence" which is a competence that allows you to take risks in a protected context. Unfortunately, this in our urban and protected environments is increasingly difficult due to the protective environments and educational methods that do not allow the child to have even negative experiences and therefore begin to face reality.

This is also the cause of psychosocial disorders as children are not prepared to face small risks and their consequences.

**Q 6: Can this be linked to a correct lifestyle?**

Certainly, lifestyles should be intertwined and in this intertwining resilience is learning to manage a balance on our health.

**Q 7: Don't you think that the use of technologies is detrimental to the use and perception of one's own body?**



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There is an area of research called digital resilience which seeks to investigate two aspects namely the positive aspect and the negative aspect of the use of technology.

The studies try to understand how to manage the use of technology even in younger children, what programs we need from an educational point of view, precisely to educate young people to manage digital and therefore become resilient to digital in a positive way.

Digital is to be considered a resource if managed positively to take advantage. Therefore digital resilience is the ability to resist digital or even digital that becomes a resource for resilience.

On this last point, I give you an example. During the first wave of the pandemic, nurses say that thanks to mobile phones, all the patients found comfort and therefore it was a "lifesaver" for them.

**Q 8: So is resilience crucial to success in life? if you have it you will do it otherwise won't you?**

But I would turn the question over, that is, to bring out resilience what are the activities and behaviors that can help? A healthy lifestyle, proper nutrition and sports are aspects that we should work on before an event and therefore bring the resilience not only as a response to a trauma but also as a prevention.

Organizing contexts in which young people can have these experiences are fundamental elements to build that resilient process that maybe everyone can use in the future.

**Q 9: By saying so do we go back to the importance of mentoring?**

There is a metaphor of Boris Cyrulnik, who was one of the first psychiatrists to deal with resilience:

“Resilience is a texture like the one made by knitting” . There are 2 threads that intertwine give life to resilience; one thread are the internal resources of people and the other are



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external resources, such as a brother, a teacher, a coach who in some moments of life help to intertwine these two threads and thus build the texture of resilience.

### **Q 10: By mentoring can we also mean events and situations?**

Yes, it could also be a book. In fact, we talk about the "mentoring factor" as it can be not only people but also events. The mentoring factor are figures or events that we load with meaning and therefore give us the support we are looking for.

### **Q 11: What is the correct attitude of a coach to develop resilience?**

It is above all a presence and a listening. What the literature brings out is that only after years the coaches are recognized as such, it is not an immediate thing.

There is a novel called "The Goldfinch" released a few years ago. Talk about a very traumatic situation, a boy after a traumatic event begins to receive a series of advice on how to deal with it but that in reality did not support him. The support to activate the resilience process came from being welcomed into a family that provided for their basic needs, such as eating, having a bed ... shortly afterwards the support also came from an old restorer who welcomed him in his shop and involved him in all his activities.

This is to say that we must ensure our students and our children only our presence without activating any strategy.

If, on the other hand, we talk about resilience from a preventive point of view, there are key elements on which to act: knowing how to play down some situations, involving, knowing how to stay together, knowing how to play and learn to lose.

Sport has the ability to support many useful elements for the future. One thing I could suggest is the ability to reflect on what is happening around us and also on what is called "negative



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capacity" which is the ability to stop and understand what is happening around us. Stopping and observing can be a good skill for developing resilience.

**Q 12: In this historical moment, that is in the middle of the pandemic, the pupils have unwittingly put into practice this negative ability, that is, to stop. I have the feeling that they no longer want to do anything, can it be dangerous?**

Yes I guess it's a typical teenagers problem. Then during the pandemic some problems were amplified and this stopping can be caused by many factors such as: the inability to relate, to go out normally. Furthermore, the lack of planning can lead to stopping. Now more than ever your role is crucial, you have a duty to re-involve them in school activities and make sense of what's going on. What can be done? on some elements we have little ability to control, we cannot in fact change their homes or families. What we can do is help them in the school context to build a project, recognize their talent and also the personalization of teaching activities can be a way to create projects in them and then activate them.

**Q 13: I would like to close this webinar with a fairly topical question. Compared to covid - 19 what scenarios do you foresee for the future?**

But at this moment the word resilience is used too much and not always adequately and above all, erroneously, we think that we all have to bring out our resilience otherwise we are considered as not capable of facing situations.

Instead, I believe that the important thing is to create resources around us, able to support people to bring out their resilience, a bit like you are doing with the SEARCH project. Giving opportunities to have control over one's lifestyle, over one's body, over having educational experiences, which for children can be that of physical activity, while for adults to find a better



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job, improve their talent. We have to imagine and build a post-pandemic context in which people are not left alone and therefore, perhaps, also able to bring out their resilience.