
The Resilience of the Human Spirit

It can be very hard at times for children to be resilient to the traumas that they experience in life. When they are resilient they react to these traumas in healthy ways, moving past them after some time and allowing their lives to return to normal. They may experience symptoms of stress due to the trauma, but resilient children are able to get through these, and realize that the trauma does not define their life. However many children are unable to healthily recover from traumatic experiences, and many times this lack of resilience is because of a weak support system from their parents or caregivers.

One person who truly embodies resilience to me, is Jaycee Dugard. Jaycee was eleven years old when she was kidnapped while walking to her bus stop one morning. She was taken by Phillip and Nancy Garrido, who hid her in a shed located in a secret extension of their backyard for 18 years. During that time Jaycee was raped by Phillip countless times, and mothered two children because of it, the first when she was only 14 years old. Jaycee didn't attend school, and very often was stuck inside the shed for days on end, only able to eat when the Garrido's brought her food. She remembers during her first weeks there falling asleep to the sound of jewelry being sold on QVC, the only channel that a small tv located in her shed could pick up. She was just thankful for the sound of another human's voice. Jaycee had to live in these conditions for 18 years, until finally, she was rescued when Garrido was brought in for questioning after violating his parole from a crime he committed years before.

Although Jaycee Dugard was forced to live in unthinkable and traumatic situations, she somehow was able to remain strong. When her daughters were born, while Jaycee was still just a child herself, she took care of them on her own, with no help from doctors. She taught her two daughters how to read and write, setting up a type of school for them in the shed. She made sure that Phillip never harmed the two of them, and that they were given enough food to grow healthily. Jaycee had been without good parenting examples for multiple years, and had no one to teach her or help her learn, but she knew that it was necessary for the survival of her babies that she step up to the plate and help them. Another thing Jaycee did during her time in captivity that exemplifies resilience, was make a list of her dreams, the things she wanted to accomplish if she ever made it out of the backyard. On the list were things like "See Mom" "Fly in a Hot Air Balloon" and "Ride Horses on the Beach". Even when she had been in captivity for 14 years, Jaycee was able to remember and hope for a different life.

Directly after their rescue, Jaycee and her two daughters began therapy. Their lives had been very traumatic, the past 18 years for Jaycee and the entire lives of her daughters. For so long living under the control of a kidnapper and rapist was all they had known. But they are

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flourishing well. One thing Jaycee is very proud of and associates a lot with her freedom, was that at age 30 she was able to learn how to drive and can now go places on her own. While she admits that it can be nerve-wracking, it was definitely something she wanted and felt that she needed to do. Her daughters are both in school, and they speak with their mother often about what their lives used to be like, and the fact that the man who had held them captive is their father. "I would hope they wouldn't want to, but as long as he's behind bars, and they're safe, then I wouldn't hinder their ability to make that choice," Jaycee said when asked about Phillip Garrido. The quote from Jaycee that exemplifies resilience the most to me is about moving on with her life. "I didn't want to give one more minute to Phillip and Nancy they took 18 years of my life," Jaycee said. And that's why she is doing everything she can to be resilient, and help her daughters along the same path.

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