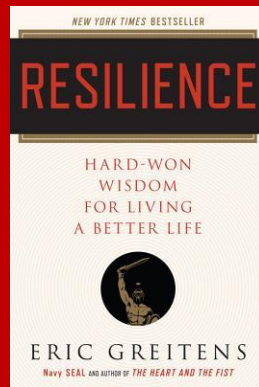


Marine Leadership Perspective

In *Resilience: Hard-won Wisdom for Living a Better Life*, Eric Greitens discusses resilience from a unique perspective, in several ways.



First, unlike many books on the topic, his comes from his experience as a Navy SEAL. His counsel assumes that individuals have the capacity and inner strength to make life choices that build resilience. He offers challenges more often than sympathy and heavily emphasizes personal responsibility. Second, the book is presented as a series of topical letters to his friend and SEAL veteran “Walker”, who has fallen on hard times and struggles with alcoholism and other personal issues. This stylistic device serves to deliver advice that is more personal and applicable. Third, the book provides wide-ranging meditations on philosophy, poetry, history, spirituality, and insights from human performance and psychology, mixed with the wisdom of the warrior ethos. The effect is profound, and reads more like a work of philosophical reflection than psychology.

Resilience is broken into 23 short chapters on topics (“Why Resilience? Beginning. Happiness. Models. Identity. Habits. Responsibility. Vocation. Philosophy. Pain. Friends. Mentors. Leadership. Story.” etc.) Although not strictly a logical progression, there is a certain flow to the topics and they build on each other. Each chapter is broken into short numbered reflections, making the book ideal for use in a discussion group.

Marine Leader Small Group Discussion Questions

- 1) The Marine Corps values courage. How do you work through fear and build courage for challenges in life? (p 4)
- 2) Greitens writes “There are a few things human beings need to live well: breathe, sleep, drink, eat, and love. To this list I’d add: struggle” (p 16). Why do we need struggles? How do struggles help us grow?
- 3) “You are not responsible for everything that happens to you. You are responsible for how you deal with what happens to you” (p 25-26). How does taking responsibility in the face of hardship make us resilient?
- 4) “When we accept what we cannot change – that some pain cannot be avoided...we are liberated to direct our energy toward work that we can actually do” (p 37). How does acceptance of our suffering and pain free us? Do you know of a firsthand story of someone who exhibited this attribute that you can share with the group?
- 5) “Every time we make a choice to move through suffering, our character evolves and we become stronger” (p 39). How does our response to difficult circumstances shape us? What kinds of decisions cause a person to become weaker when they encounter suffering?
- 6) Greitens defines “happiness” as “flourishing” (p 50). What does it mean to flourish? What term would you use to describe that attribute of a Marine? Is it a feeling or a set of conditions? He writes of three kinds of happiness (p 55). What are they and which can we have while going through suffering?
- 7) Greitens states “The best mentors must know two things: the challenge that’s being faced and the person facing it. A mentor who knows one but not the other may be good, but is rarely great” (p 224). Do you have a personal mentor to help you grow as a person? Why would this be helpful?
- 8) We train so that we can perform our jobs smoothly under pressure. How can you apply this principle in your personal life so that you respond well to personal stress?
- 9) He started every day with a purpose, and a mission that mattered to those around him (p 61). How can we find a sense of purpose before, during, and after the military, that keeps us fully engaged and productive?