

# Resilience vs Vulnerability: Which Makes Us Stronger?



Advanced (C1-C2)

## WARM UP

**Part 1. Read the quote below and then discuss the questions.**

***“Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars.”***

— Kahlil Gibran

1. Do you agree that strength is built through suffering?
2. Can sharing vulnerability also be a sign of strength?
3. Which trait do you value more in others – resilience or openness?
4. Should schools and workplaces teach resilience, or encourage vulnerability?

**Resilience (noun):** the ability to be happy, successful, etc. again after something difficult or bad has happened

**Vulnerability (noun):** the quality or state of being exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally



## READING TEXT

### Part 1. Read the following text.

#### Resilience vs Vulnerability: Which Makes Us Stronger?

Resilience is often praised as the ability to withstand hardship and “bounce back” from adversity. Psychologists highlight its links to perseverance, mental toughness, and long-term success. Yet critics argue that the focus on resilience can become a burden, implying that individuals must endure silently while systems remain unchanged.

Vulnerability presents a different view of strength. Popularised by researchers such as Brené Brown, vulnerability means acknowledging fear, uncertainty, and emotional exposure. Advocates suggest that it builds trust, fosters empathy, and deepens human connection. Critics, however, caution that overemphasis on vulnerability may encourage fragility or oversharing in contexts where boundaries are essential.

The central question is whether resilience or vulnerability better equips us to face life’s challenges – or whether true strength lies in balancing both.

### Part 2. Discuss the questions below based on the text.

1. How is resilience described in the text?
2. What criticisms are made of resilience as a concept?
3. What benefits are associated with vulnerability?
4. What risks might come from emphasising vulnerability?
5. How does the text frame the relationship between resilience and vulnerability?



## DEBATE

### Part 1. Match the terms to their meanings.

Emotional exposure

Coping mechanism

Psychological toughness

Empathy building

Oversharing culture

Systemic responsibility

Human connection

Adaptive capacity

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The ability to adjust effectively to stress or change.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ A method or strategy used to manage stress or adversity.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ The quality of facing risk, fear, or uncertainty openly.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Developing compassion and understanding through shared experiences.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ A tendency to disclose excessively, often in inappropriate settings.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ The strength of mind and character that enables persistence under stress.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ The belief that organisations, not only individuals, share responsibility for wellbeing.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ The sense of closeness and trust developed through relationships.

### Part 2. Complete the sentences with the correct terms.

1. Journaling can serve as a healthy \_\_\_\_\_ during stressful periods.
2. Soldiers are often trained to cultivate \_\_\_\_\_ under extreme conditions.
3. Advocates argue that resilience training shifts attention away from \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Friendships thrive on openness and \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Sharing stories of failure requires \_\_\_\_\_ and honesty.
6. Genuine leadership often depends on \_\_\_\_\_ rather than authority alone.
7. Social media has been criticised for promoting an \_\_\_\_\_ that blurs healthy boundaries.
8. Resilient individuals demonstrate strong \_\_\_\_\_ in times of crisis.

**Part 3. Look at the useful expressions. Rewrite the sentences using these expressions to make them sound more formal and persuasive for a debate.**

**Framing the issue:** The key question is whether... / We might reframe this as...

**Hedging:** It could be argued that... / To some extent, I agree, although...

**Challenging assumptions:** Doesn't that overlook the fact that...? / Are we assuming that...?

**Weighing trade-offs:** We must balance X with Y... / The benefits are clear, but we must also consider...

**Conceding then pivoting:** That's a fair point; however... / I agree up to a point, but...

1. Resilience is always more important than vulnerability. ->

2. Vulnerability makes people weak. ->

3. People talk too much about their feelings these days. ->

4. If you are strong, you don't need to show weakness. ->

**Part 4. Take part in a structured debate with your teacher/partner. Use the vocabulary and debate expressions from this lesson. Speak fluently, challenge ideas politely, and support your opinions with clear reasons and examples.**

Emotional exposure

Coping mechanism

Psychological toughness

Empathy building

Oversharing culture

Systemic responsibility

Human connection

Adaptive capacity

**Round 1:** Argue that resilience is the key to strength.

**Round 2:** Argue that vulnerability makes us stronger.

**Round 3:** Free debate — propose whether true strength lies in balancing both.



## REFLECTION

### Part 1. Discuss the following questions.

1. Which plays a bigger role in your own life: resilience or vulnerability?
2. Can you think of a time when showing vulnerability actually made you stronger?
3. What practical steps can help balance toughness with openness?

## WRAP-UP TASK (OPTIONAL HOMEWORK)

PWrite an opinion article (180–220 words) on:

***“Which makes us stronger: resilience or vulnerability?”***

- Use at least 4 vocabulary items (e.g., psychological toughness, empathy building, systemic responsibility, emotional exposure).
- Use at least 2 debate expressions.
- Present one counterargument and refute it.

