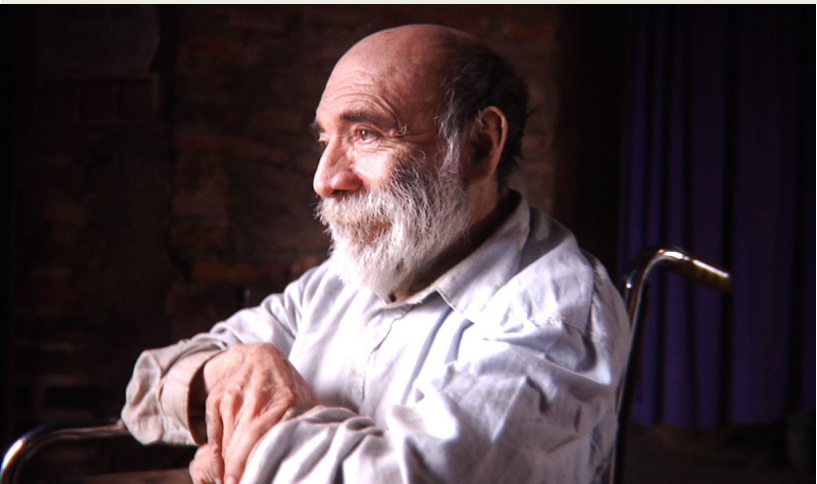




LESSON PLAN

# What Does it Mean to Be Resilient?



RELATED FILM

**Everything is Incredible**

BY TYLER BASTIAN



## What Does it Mean to Be Resilient?

### Key Idea

Everyone faces adversity in life. But imagination and creativity support resilience, helping individuals transform life's most challenging obstacles into opportunities for self-awareness and self-expression.

### Background

The short film, *Everything is Incredible* by Tyler Bastian, tells the story of Agustin, a Honduran man born into poverty and living with the debilitating effects of polio in the small mountain town of Siguatepeque. While vaccines have largely eliminated polio worldwide, the lingering impacts of polio, which can include pain, paralysis, and death, remain in those who contracted the disease prior to eradication.

Despite his disabilities, Agustin worked as a shoemaker much of his life, and since 1958, he has been building a helicopter from miscellaneous materials, including bicycle parts, rebar, and wood. Agustin's project is admired by some members of his community and scoffed at by others, but his imagination, creativity, and perseverance help him transcend the judgments of others as well as his own physical disabilities.

What is it that helps some individuals, families, and communities bounce back after a hardship or disaster while others struggle? Psychologists and sociologists have long tried to understand the keys to resilience. According to some researchers, imagination and creativity have a role to play in rebounding from hard times. Dr. Sybil Wolin and Dr. Steve Wolin, authors of "The Resilient Self," identify creativity as a key quality that can help individuals overcome adversity.\* While there is no guarantee that creativity or imagination can help one succeed in life, these inner resources can play a supportive role.

\*\*Steven J. Wolin, M.D. and Sybil Wolin PhD., *The Resilient Self: How Survivors of Troubled Families Rise Above Adversity* (New York: Random House, 1993).



**Film:** 10 minutes

**Class:** 60 minutes

### SUBJECT AREAS

#### HIGH SCHOOL

- English Language Arts
- Modern World Studies

#### COLLEGE

- Art
- History
- Sociology

### THEMES

- Facing adversity
- Despair versus hope
- Imagination and resilience

### MATERIALS

- Online access to the film
- Equipment for showing film

### PREPARATION

- None



## What Does it Mean to Be Resilient?

### Connections to National Standards

Common Core English Language Arts. SL.11-12.1.c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

Common Core English Language Arts. W.9-10.3 and W.11-12.3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards. D2.Geo.4.9-12. Analyze relationships and interactions within and between human and physical systems to explain reciprocal influences that occur among them.

### Lesson

#### SETTING THE STAGE

Ask students to define the word resilience. What does resilience mean to them? Share this Merriam Webster dictionary definition of resilience with students: “the ability to become strong, healthy, or successful again after something bad happens.” Ask students to name some synonyms for resilience. Some include, strong, tough, hardy, irrepensible, and buoyant.

Historical figures who have embodied resilience include Anne Frank, who kept a positive spirit while hiding from German soldiers during World War II, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela, all of whom overcame great obstacles and personal suffering to become global leaders. Fictional heroes in literature and film who have exhibited resilience include Captain Ahab in *Moby Dick*, *Jane Eyre*, *Rocky*, *Little Orphan Annie*, Katniss from *The Hunger Games*, and Mark Watney, the astronaut abandoned on Mars, from *The Martian*.

Ask students to think of their favorite character—either fictional or real—who fought against the odds to overcome obstacles. What motivated them to keep going? What inspires students to persevere through their own difficulties?



## What Does it Mean to Be Resilient?

### ENGAGING WITH THE STORY

Introduce the film by telling students that they will be watching a film about a disabled man living in a small mountain town in Honduras. The film, *Everything is Incredible*, is a story about a man who has faced serious challenges in his life, including being born into poverty and becoming paralyzed from polio. Since 1958, Agustin has dedicated his life to building a helicopter out of used materials. His aim, as he says, is to “prove to the world that I’m not crazy.”

Ask students to watch the film while making note of specific aspects of Agustin’s everyday life that they would find challenging. What keeps Agustin motivated for the future? What emotions, attitudes, or words reflect his resilience?

### Delving Deeper

After viewing the film, lead a discussion with such questions as:

- How many years has Agustin been working on his helicopter?
- What is the helicopter made from? Where does Agustin get the parts for his helicopter?
- Agustin said, “The whole world thinks I’m just crazy.” What are the various opinions about Agustin’s work as expressed by community members? Why might people have different reactions to his work? Do you think he is “crazy”? Why or why not?
- The film depicts Agustin’s commitment towards building the helicopter. The priest in the film suggests that Agustin has paid a price. What are your thoughts about Agustin’s commitment to his helicopter? What might the helicopter provide Agustin, and what might it cost him?
- What could be some character traits, or internal attitudes, which have helped Agustin remain positive and forward-looking despite his obstacles of poverty and illness? Does creativity play a role in Agustin’s resilience? If so, how?
- One community member interviewed in the film described that working on the helicopter could have kept Agustin alive all these years. What do you think this person means?



## What Does it Mean to Be Resilient?

- What might the helicopter symbolize for Agustin?

### Reflecting and Projecting

Give students one of the following reflective writing prompts to demonstrate their understanding of the story. (Note for teachers: Just as quotes from a book or text are used to prove an analytical thought, students use the film to justify their reasoning.)

1. The title of the film is taken from Agustin’s statement, “The problem is that everything is incredible and people don’t accept it.” What do you think Agustin means by this statement? Write a paragraph responding to the following questions: How does this statement relate to Agustin’s life, his disability, and his efforts to build a helicopter and fly? Why might the filmmaker have chosen this statement as the film’s title? (CCSS.ELA.SL.11-12.1.c)
2. The great American novelist, Ernest Hemingway, once wrote, “The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places.” How might one’s character strengthen after being broken by the world? Describe a real person, or fictional character from a book or film, who endured obstacles and became stronger. What strengths were gained? Do you notice any similarities between this character and Agustin? If so, what? (C3.D2.Geo.4.9-12)
3. [In an interview](#), Tyler Bastian, filmmaker of *Everything is Incredible*, explains, “Agustin is an obscure man that lives in a remote part of Honduras. If I had not ran into him and taken the time to look, his story would have always remained untold. Everyday we run into individuals that are just as amazing as Agustin, in their own way. We merely have to be looking. I am inspired by these obscure amazing stories.” Write a paragraph describing an individual—either real or imagined—that you think is “amazing” or “obscure.” Describe this person’s characteristics. What makes him/her different? What do you find amazing about this person? Why? (CCSS.ELA.W.9-10.3 and W.11-12.3)



## What Does it Mean to Be Resilient?

### Resources

[“CDC Global Health: Polio.”](#) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[“Honduras.”](#) World Vision.

William Kamkwamba, [“William Kamkwamba: How I Built a Windmill.”](#)  
TED Talk, June 2007.

(Interview) [“‘Art is mankind,’ says Tyler Bastian.”](#) The Wonder, November 20, 2012.

William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*  
(New York: HarperCollins, 2009).