



Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

Episode 141: 5 Keys to Resilience

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Brian Miller: I'm Brian Miller, Strategic Director for Coach Approach Ministries, CAM for short, and I'm joined here today by Joel Cocklin. He has a doctorate in Pastoral Resilience. That's not all, though. I was just looking through this list. Joel pastored for ten years in Pennsylvania, entered the Army chaplaincy in '82, served in the Army for 27 years, specialized in family marriage therapy. Spent quite some time particularly at Fort Riley doing clinical settings, seeing couples and families with ... I think about the problems soldiers have. We're hearing more and more about that today. I'm sure it's not a new thing.

Brian Miller: You were the command chaplain with the US Southern Command, a great privilege to be the chaplain and work with four-star general, four-star admiral. You worked with lots of different religious leaders from many, many countries. This is big, big stuff here. Joel retired as a full bird colonel, and then spent nine years as the director of leadership and then as academic dean of Winebrenner Theological Seminary, where I met you.

Brian Miller: Joel, welcome to the podcast. With all this experience and knowledge, we are blessed to have you today.

Joel Cocklin: Well, thank you. Thank you for asking me to do it.

Brian Miller: Oh, happy to. So let's just drive right in because there's so much we could talk about with your experience, but this idea of resilience ... And I think the way I want to think about this ... We have a lot of coaches listening to this. Whether they're coaching leaders or whether they're doing life coaching, this issue of resilience is gonna be a big deal to them, isn't it?

Joel Cocklin: Absolutely. Absolutely. It's a big deal because it really defines the major portion of life, quality of life, how one spends one's life. It is a big deal, and of course

like any category or any phrase, any word such as "grace" or "mercy" or "love," it's overused so oftentimes, and misused. It's amazing to me.

Joel Cocklin: I hear "resiliency" used all the time, particularly around sporting events or something. A player makes a tremendous play, a great play, and they say, "Oh, he was so resilient." That's really kind of a very loose usage of the word "resilience." It's deeper, and it's much more to it than just simply a momentary highlight of one's life.

Brian Miller: Yeah. I've always felt like I was pretty resilient. I still feel pretty resilient. I definitely burned out in my 40s, what I would call burnt out. I didn't know I was burnt out, but I'm less resilient since then. Still resilient, but less so. Does burn out feed into resilience in some way?

Joel Cocklin: Oh, absolutely. It certainly does, but it certainly is not all that is involved in resilience. Burn out is certainly one of the indicators that certain adjustments, certain changes, certain things need to take place. It's the body and your life's way of saying ... It's kind of like the fever of the body saying, "Hey, sit up, and pay attention. Something's happening here."

Joel Cocklin: Like you say, most people, if it is honest, genuine burn out, they're probably not aware of it until they're really into it. The structure is falling down around them pretty much. The fire has consumed their entire life, and then it's always the question of "What do I do? How do I get out of this? How do I restore? How do I make the best of it?" Burn out is certainly a piece of evidence that resilience needs to happen.

Brian Miller: I heard somewhere the other day, where it was talking about maybe in your 20s, maybe your early 30s, you need to push and find out where your limits are, but then, and it doesn't surprise me, what I hadn't thought about is in your 30s and 40s you need to know where your limits are and make sure there's some margin between. I think a lot of people I know at least continue to push hard 30s and 40s. That's why they find themselves burnt out. They don't leave enough margin for resilience to have a healthy resilience.

Joel Cocklin: Absolutely, yeah. You hit the key. The key is the amount of margin and being able to set boundaries, keep boundaries in all relationships so that you can know your limitations, know your boundaries, know yourself. Becoming more and more aware of self-awareness so that you can have more control of life circumstances. That you can respond with a degree of control-ness when life throws those curves at you.

Brian Miller: Well, I know from our conversations you've identified five ingredients that are required for resilience. There are a few more, but there are five, not only to learn through your studies, but also you've observed through all the counseling and human interaction that you've had, your experience. What's the first of the

five? Maybe coaches can kind of take this as a list to bring some awareness, bring some distinction into these conversations of resilience.

Joel Cocklin:

Well, I would say the first, and because I'm not going necessarily in order of preference or importance, but the first one I would say is probably the most important when it comes to what the literature says about resiliency and what causes resiliency, what is able to help maintain resiliency. It's this whole matter of positivity, being positive. Your interpretation of events, how you understand events that are going on around you, and the positiveness that comes into that interpretation. It's not the things that happen to us in life. It's our interpretation of them.

Brian Miller:

I heard my partner the other day, Chad Hall. He said, "We are either cultivating resentment or we're cultivating gratefulness, and it's our choice."

Joel Cocklin:

Yeah. Doesn't seem to be much in between. Yeah. That's it. The literature would show, and my life experience has been that we human beings we seem to have a tendency to lean more toward the negative, to pick up on the negative. Now, there's some. There's been a lot of studies done. This has to do with this leaning toward negativity, and some studies have even separated to say up to 80% of our thoughts are negative thoughts, leaving only 20% that are positive. The studies seem to tie it in with a sense of self defense or self survival. Kind of survival techniques that we learned early on in life, and so we focus on the negativity. We don't focus on the positive.

Joel Cocklin:

Much of the literature get really serious about the study in resiliency. You read a 3:1 ratio for every negative event in your life or the life of somebody else that you're coaching ... For every negative event, emotionally, physically, whatever it might be, spiritual ... negative event, there ought to be three positives to counteract, counterbalance, to keep this more accurate view of life and on a healthier view of what's going on around you so that you don't succumb to all this negativity because, again for whatever reason, it's all around us. We seem to emphasize it. We seem to focus on it.

Joel Cocklin:

There's a deliberateness that we have to have and develop and cultivate within ourself. A deliberateness to say, "Okay, now to counteract this I need a 3:1 ratio of the positive outnumbering the negative experiences."

Brian Miller:

So do we need to generate those positives or just simply identify them?

Joel Cocklin:

I think no. Again, you get kinda into trouble when you start talking about generating positive because you could manufacture something that's not true. It's not reality. It's not realistic. I think to identify them and for them to truly be positive and not make something up and tell yourself something.

Joel Cocklin: A good rule of thumb that I have found is a three-point litmus test of positive or is something good, positive, or is it negative self talk. One is, is it logical? Does it make sense? The other one is, is it reasonable? Looking at all the circumstances, is it reasonable to believe something like this or about this? The third one which is usually the catch. Usually this is the kicker. This is the one, and they have to pass all three litmus tests. The paper has to change color on all three of them. The third one is, is it reality?

Joel Cocklin: So is it logical? Is it reasonable? Most things we can say, "Well, yeah, that kinda is." It makes sense. It looks like yeah, and this happens to people, but the kicker to make it something that is healthy and really good resiliency material, essence is, is it reality. Is it true? Is it ... Can I defend it in court? Do I have exhibit A? Do I have exhibit B that proves the reality of this? You just can't make stuff up, and that does help. That litmus test does help to kind of keep the boundary set on what is positive and what is negative. We can convince ourselves, and people live in negative self-talk because they are sure that, that's their reality. It really doesn't have to be, and it doesn't need to be. It is so destructive if that becomes the fulcrum from which they operate, in which the seesaw teeters one way or the other.

Brian Miller: That's great because we're all gonna make mistakes. We're all gonna get attacked at some point if we're leading. There's gonna be times where the negative event is going to occur, if you're at any kind of high level. That's why they hire high level people because it's hard, because it's difficult. So positivity is one. What's a second one that you just feel like really pulls resilience?

Joel Cocklin: Resourcefulness, I would say is another one that you'll read an awful lot about. Being resourceful ... I'm showing my age, and I don't know how many people can relate. Maybe should not use this illustration, but hopefully listeners, people will remember MacGyver, the show on TV, MacGyver.

Brian Miller: Yeah. It's still on. They remade it.

Joel Cocklin: Yeah. Is that right?

Brian Miller: Yeah.

Joel Cocklin: I'm sure it's syndicated, and you can find it on some-

Brian Miller: [crosstalk 00:13:42] No, they remade it. They remade it.

Joel Cocklin: ... 1,001 channel number something, you know. MacGyver, I always think when I think of resiliency and resourcefulness as an element, that key component of being resilient. MacGyver could do anything with a book of matches and a chewing gum wrapper.

Brian Miller: It he had a chewing gum wrapper, you were dead. He was gonna win.

Joel Cocklin: Yeah. It's that ... Of course that was Hollywood, and that was extreme, but there are some real good truth there. To the resourcefulness, not becoming defeated, no time did MacGyver say, "Oh, this one's too tough. I'm trapped. I'm caught. I'm doomed." In all those negative things, it was always how can I take what I have. What is at my disposal? I've read some things in regards to resiliency, resourcefulness does not mean just monetary treasures and have enough money to buy your way out or soothe yourself with a Caribbean vacation.

Brian Miller: Right, right.

Joel Cocklin: That's not what really is meant by resourcefulness, having all the money at your disposal. It's recognizing, "Okay, given the circumstances that I'm in, given where I am in life, given what has been dealt to me, I am trying to work my way through these issues, these problems, what's going on in my life." It's a matter of, "What's at my disposal?" It'll always amaze you when you approach it that way. You have a lot of stuff.

Brian Miller: Creativity would be resource. A network of friends would be-

Joel Cocklin: Absolutely.

Brian Miller: ... a resource. Just YouTube, at this point, is a resource. I find when I wanna be creative, if I listen to a podcast on almost anything interesting. That's a resource, not just that it gives me something, but it causes my mind to make up new things.

Joel Cocklin: [crosstalk 00:16:09] brings up the whole internet. The amount of information we have at our disposal. We have to be selective, I believe, because there is so much information, and what is it that you are feeding. The resources are just unbelievable as to how we couldn't face and look at this. I would add of course there's always the scriptural and the biblical and the spiritual kind of resources that often times are ... One of the phrases that I don't like to hear people say, and that is, "Well, we've done everything. Now we'll just have to pray about it." Prayer is just not a last resort. Prayer is just not, "Ah, everything else's exhausted." I think prayer, I think the spiritual interpretation, biblical support, holy scriptures looking at can help really make a person more resilient. That falls into this whole area of resourcefulness as well.

Brian Miller: Yeah. God's a resource for us. One of my favorite scriptures is the rich young ruler comes to Jesus, and he says, "What do I need to do?" And Jesus says, "Have you kept the Commandments?" or "What are the Commandments?" He says, "I've kept those." My favorite part of the scripture is it says Jesus looked at him and loved him. Now, he was about to really challenge the kid, but the fact ... I don't think Jesus stopped looking at him and loving him, even as he was

walking away saying that's too much for me to do. I think Jesus still looked at him and loved him.

Brian Miller: That's us in our complete humanness making the dumbest mistake or whatever it is. I think that's the ... Like you said negativity abounds, even in the church. God's just waiting for you to mess up, so he can hurt you. I think he's just always saying, "Yeah, that's my kid, though."

Brian Miller: That's a resource that keeps me resilient, keep coming back.

Joel Cocklin: Right, absolutely. There's many different facets of resourcefulness and resourceful kinds of things that if we just kind of look for. What is it that I need to get through this road that I'm traveling? Whatever it might be, whatever presenting problem is, whatever it seems to appear to us and our interpretation of it. What do I need to do? How can I be resourceful to work through this with what is at my disposal?

Brian Miller: That's a great coaching topic. The coach can ask, "What do you have? What do you need? Where can you find it?" All kinds of questions to think about resourcefulness. So positivity, resourcefulness, what's a third one, Joel?

Joel Cocklin: I would say a strong sense of self. People that I have worked with, this often times is very weak in lots of people. I'm just not talking about low self-image, but this sense of ... And I'm not talking about to the other end of the scale. The sense of self confidence and ... Brian, you were saying I think of myself as a pretty positive person. Made that comment kind of ... That's a strong sense of self. That's a healthful kind of thing. I'm thinking would even pass the litmus test. It probably is reality. It definitely is logical and reasonable, but you are a positive person.

Joel Cocklin: This sense of self and this self-confidence, there's a thin line. I have run into this many ... Between confidence and cockiness. Sometimes, wow. It can get really murky as you look at, "Oh." The person who is coming off this way, most of my therapeutic experience has been people really are down on themselves or blaming themselves or feeling guilty, all of those kinds of things. Shame and all of this stuff gets into it.

Joel Cocklin: There is a tie-in. There's correlation with resiliency and the sense of self, the strong sense of who I am and what I have and what I bring to the table.

Brian Miller: I like that.

Joel Cocklin: When you are surrounded my people that are constantly pushing you down and nullifying any sense of confidence you may have, any sense of self, of who I am, it just weakens your immune system, so to speak, of being resilient.

Brian Miller: To be resilient, you have to have something in your mind that says, "I belong here. I can play at this level. We're better off that I'm here than if I wasn't."

Joel Cocklin: Right, yeah.

Brian Miller: I mean I [crosstalk 00:22:20] I may be a detriment-

Joel Cocklin: All of those things. Exactly right-

Brian Miller: ... but we're still better off with me here. That has to come from you. You can get a little of that from other people.

Joel Cocklin: Right.

Brian Miller: Joel, I'm curious even from a clinical counseling point of view, many successful people I've heard talk about this. They both have a tremendous confidence in themselves and a tremendous self-doubt. Both at the same time.

Joel Cocklin: Yeah. I think that's a good mixture. Yeah. That is-

Brian Miller: I'm okay with that. I'm one of them.

Joel Cocklin: That is a good mixture. Again, I think the cockiness is the person who has gone over the fence, over to the extreme side of "I'm invincible. I've got all the right answers. I'm always right. You wanna know how to do it, look at me." That's obnoxious.

Brian Miller: Yes.

Joel Cocklin: As we always say, with the exception of one, no one can claim to be perfect. They are just deceiving themselves or fooling themselves. That balance of saying, "Yeah, I have confidence in who I am and what I am, but on the other hand, I make mistakes sometimes." This counter check of keeping you from becoming so obnoxious that people can't stand to be around you.

Brian Miller: Yeah. So it can be a good mix.

Joel Cocklin: Yeah. It has to be.

Brian Miller: So, due to time, let's get to number four here. We've got three: positivity, resourcefulness, a strong sense of self. That's a great piece. I certainly think that's something that can be coached around, too. Who are you? That's a real deep ... It's more of an identity coaching than anything else, but it's definitely a good aspect for coaching. What would be number four for you?

Joel Cocklin: Number four for me would be self-discipline. It really ties in to a lot of what we're saying. The sense of self, if you don't have the discipline to be able to say, "Okay, yeah, here's my strengths and here's what I excel at. Here's my weaknesses." That takes discipline. It takes discipline and positivity. Like I say, our natural tendency is to lean toward the negative.

Joel Cocklin: You've gotta be disciplined. "Wait a minute, no." There's more ways to look at this than what is immediate, what comes to mind first. My first interpretation is "Ain't it awful? This is horrible. The whole world's just falling apart." No. What's a better position? What is a better take? That takes discipline to say, "No, that was my first initial ..."

Joel Cocklin: What I always told clients and talked a lot ... That's my first reaction being on cruise control. I've gotta knock the cruise control off and take the controls manually. That's the kind of discipline that I'm talking about.

Brian Miller: So something goes wrong, my discipline has to be, "Okay, what did I just learn?"

Joel Cocklin: Yeah. Lessons learned. What did this teach me? What would I do different if it happened again? Okay, I'm stuck in this situation. What do I need to do now? Some of the answers I may not like. The discipline of saying, "Yeah, I may have to take hard knocks, whatever they are. I'll have to take the punishment. I'll have to take the hard knocks on this thing." That takes discipline, but it certainly is again very much part of this whole resilient piece.

Brian Miller: I'm not gonna like this aspect of it, but I've gotta be self-disciplined enough to do something I don't like even to be resilient. So we've got just enough time for a fifth one, which I think you said there were five, Joel.

Joel Cocklin: Well, yeah. Again, it ties in so much what's being said. They kind of go together, but the fifth one ... In all of this there needs to be an element of flexibility. Resilient people are not rigid people. That is proven over and over and over again.

Brian Miller: Wow.

Joel Cocklin: Resiliency mandates, I would say, a sense of flexibility.

Brian Miller: How do you create some flexibility if you find yourself to be a rigid person? Because it seems like it's a ... I know there's some psychological testing for rigidity, in fact.

Joel Cocklin: What I have always tried to do with people I've worked with in this area and myself ... Being a very visual, and most of us are, visual creatures. I think if you find yourself in a situation there is no other way than to on paper physically or at the computer on the screen list all your options. I think what happens with



people being non-flexible or inflexible is that they only are able to see certain options. They say, "Oh, I've got three options." Whether it may be 33 ...

Brian Miller: Well there are 33, in fact.

Joel Cocklin: To list, and it may take ... You're not gonna do this in one sitting. Over a period of days, physically list what are your option. Then the other things again, the positivity, the resourcefulness ... Can you even accomplish it with what you have? Bringing all these other elements that we've talking about and this sense of self. It really expands your ability to be resilient in a healthy way because your flexibility is expanded, and you're not limiting your thoughts. You're not limiting. Well, this is my only choice. How many times I've heard clients say that. "This is the only-"

Brian Miller: Yeah. That's right. Of course it's not.

Joel Cocklin: "This is the only thing that makes sense to me." Well, how many things have you looked at?

Brian Miller: Yeah. My experience in coaching is that they've looked at very little.

Joel Cocklin: Yes.

Brian Miller: Coaches are great at generating options. Joel, just due to time here, I just wanna stop and say thank you for ... This has just been so much good stuff. I mean every line of this has just been fantastic. Resilience is such a major issue in all areas of life, let alone leadership, let alone families. No matter what. Pastors have just a hard time with burn out and not being able to finish well.

Brian Miller: Also, let me just also say because it's just crucial that we continue to do this, thanks for your service. Twenty-seven years of service in the military supporting through many, I know, wars. The soldiers we've had going through that, and you've been right there with them on the lines. We appreciate that. So thank you so much, Joel.

Joel Cocklin: Thank you for saying that.

Brian Miller: Thanks for those listening to this week's podcast. Coach Approach Ministries is a non-profit coach training school with over 15 years of experience training more than 2,000 coaches. Let us know how we can help you start or further your coaching career by visiting us at [coachapproachministries.org](http://coachapproachministries.org), or email me at [bmiller@ca-ministries.com](mailto:bmiller@ca-ministries.com). We'll see you next week.