

PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY FOR COAS

Resilience and Aging

What Philosophy Can Teach Us About Adapting to Change

Aging is, among other things, a long course in change. Bodies change, roles change, friends and family come and go, and what once felt central can quietly recede. It is easy to talk about resilience as if it were a personal trait — some people have it, some don't. Philosophy offers a different picture: resilience as a practice, something we do, not just something we are.

The ancient Stoics described life as a river — you cannot step into the same one twice, because both you and the water are always moving. They did not see this as tragic. They saw it as the basic shape of being alive. Resisting change is exhausting because it is a fight against the nature of things. Adapting to change is hard, but it is at least the right kind of work.

The 20th-century philosopher Hannah Arendt added a useful piece: even at the end of a long life, we retain the capacity to begin again. A new conversation. A new way of seeing an old relationship. A new small project. Beginning is not reserved for the young. It is reserved for the willing.

Discussion Questions

1. What is one change in your life that felt like a loss at the time but turned into something else?
2. Is there a difference between accepting change and giving up?
3. What is something new — however small — you might be ready to begin?

TRY THIS WEEK

Write down two short lines on a single piece of paper: one thing that has changed in the past year, and one small thing you've started, are starting, or might start. The pairing is the point. Change rarely travels alone — and naming the new beginning alongside the loss is itself a form of resilience.

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Andrew, Felix & Sean
Founders, OMNIA Philosophy

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