

# RESILIENCE RX™

A free resource

## HUG THERAPY

*How a sincere  
embrace can  
help us relax*

*Easy ways to  
hug it out*



# RESILIENCE RX

## Self-care techniques

The science behind why they work and  
how to implement them in everyday life

BY

LYNDA CHELDELIN FELL



This free resource is designed to provide self-care techniques to support the bereaved with the understanding that the International Grief Institute is not engaged to render any type of psychological, legal, or any other kind of professional advice.



INTERNATIONAL GRIEF INSTITUTE, LLC

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## Hug Therapy

“ We need 4 hugs a day for survival. We need 8 hugs a day for maintenance. We need 12 hugs a day for growth.

VIRGINIA SATIR, psychotherapist

### Benefits of hug therapy:

The average length of a hug between two people is 3 seconds. Research shows that a hug lasting at least 20 seconds has a therapeutic effect on the body and mind.

A sincere embrace produces the love hormone [oxytocin](#) which helps us feel relaxed, feel safe, and calms fears and anxiety.

This substance has many benefits in our physical and mental health. A natural tranquilizer, it helps us to relax, to feel safe and calm our fears and anxiety. And it's free every time we hug, cradle a child, cherish a dog or cat, slow dance, or simply hold the shoulders of a friend.

### PHYSICAL BENEFITS

#### Stimulates oxytocin

Oxytocin is a neurotransmitter that acts on the limbic system, the brain's emotional center:

- promotes contentment
- reduces anxiety and stress
- it's known to make mammals monogamous
- Released during childbirth, helping mothers forget about the labor they endured and fall immediately in love with their newborn
- Lowers our heart rate
- Lowers our cortisol level (the hormone responsible for stress)

### Prevents disease

Affection also has a direct response on the reduction of stress which prevents many diseases. Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami School of Medicine has carried out more than 100 studies on the power of touch, and discovered evidence of improved immune system, reduced pain, lower glucose levels, and faster growth in premature babies.

### Stimulates thymus gland

Hugs apply gentle pressure on the sternum which stimulates the thymus gland, which regulates and balances the production of white blood cells, which keep you healthy and disease free.

### Stimulates dopamine

Everything everyone does involves protecting and triggering dopamine flow. Low dopamine levels play a role in neurodegenerative diseases and mood disorders such as depression. Dopamine is responsible for giving us that feel-good feeling, and it's also responsible for motivation.

Hugs stimulate brains to release dopamine, the pleasure hormone.

### Stimulates serotonin

Hugging releases endorphins and serotonin into the blood vessels which cause pleasure and negate pain and sadness. It also reduces the risk of heart problems, helps fight excess weight, and prolongs life. Hugging raises our serotonin levels, elevating mood and creating happiness.

### Parasympathetic balance

Hugs balance out the nervous system. Skin contains a network of tiny pressure centers that can sense touch and notify the brain through the vagus nerve. The galvanic skin response of someone receiving and giving a hug shows a change in skin conductance which suggests a more balanced state in the parasympathetic nervous system.

## EMOTIONAL BENEFITS

### Fosters connections

Connections are fostered when people take the time to appreciate and acknowledge one another, and a hug is a free, easy, and—at 20 seconds—is a quick way to show love and appreciation.

Giving is good for the giver in that a hug benefits ourselves and others.

### No words needed

Almost 70 percent of communication is nonverbal. Hugging is an excellent method of expressing yourself nonverbally to another human being or animal. Not only can they feel the love and care in your embrace, but they can actually be receptive enough to pay it forward to others.

### Boosts self-esteem

Hugging boosts self-esteem, especially in children. From the time we're born our family's touch shows us that we're loved and special. The associations of self-worth and tactile sensations from our early years become imbedded in our nervous system as we grow into adults. They become imprinted at a cellular level, and therefore connect us to our ability to self love.



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## A word about resilience



Life doesn't get easier or more forgiving,  
we get stronger and more resilient.

JAMAIS CASCIO

### What is resilience?

Resilience is the ability to adapt to life difficulties—including loss of a loved one. When waves of sadness threaten to break us, building resilience through strategies that support the brain, body and emotions by triggering positive hormones can help during critical times, and reduce the damaging effects profound stress can have on our body over time.

### The goal

The goal of Resilience Rx™ is to offer self-help techniques that trigger positive hormones to help during waves of grief, and support you as you learn to move forward with your loved one in your heart.

### How do you strengthen resilience?

The first step is to take good care of yourself. We can't always predict the waves of grief, but we are in control of how we care for ourselves physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

There are multiple ways to trigger positive hormones, and we offer you choices through Resilience Rx™. Use this resources as one of your tools in your toolbox of self care while mourning the loss of someone you love to help lift your spirits and soothe your heart.



## Bonus tips

“ Every day is a bonus.

GEOFFREY BOYCOTT

### More self-help techniques to help with grief:

- Chew gum
- Stomp on bubble sheets
- Meditate
- Pray
- Change the channel
- Take up a craft that requires repetitive hand motions such as beading, knitting, clay modeling, chocolate making, woodworking
- Yoga
- Deep breathing
- Kiss
- Acupressure
- Listen to music
- Watch a viral video
- Paint the walls
- Plant flowers
- Weed
- Deadhead the roses
- Dry skin brushing
- Buy a plant
- Get a pet

ABOUT

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## LYNDA CHELDELIN FELL

Lynda Cheldelin Fell is founding partner of the International Grief Institute, creator of Resilience Rx™, and bestselling author of over 35 books including the award-winning Grief Diaries series.

Critical incident stress management certified, she is a national educator who has curated the largest published collection of grief experiences in the world.



Dedicated to supporting resilience through best practice strategies, Lynda has earned five national literary awards and five national advocacy award nominations for her work. Learn more at [www.LyndaFell.com](http://www.LyndaFell.com).

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