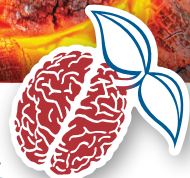


# Our newsletter

## Making change happen

A newsletter for coaching and well-being practitioners

Detox and Grow!  
by Chantal Vander Vorst



## Open letter to Charles Darwin The Art of Resilience



By Chantal Vander Vorst  
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Dear Mr. Darwin,  
Dear Charles,

### We need to talk.

I hope you enjoyed my first letter about *"the delicate issue of power"*.

In my nightly reflections and multiple cogitations, I have been pondering the notion of Resilience. This is also a question of power, and more specifically of our inner power. Resilience, that wonderful ability to bounce back and find new balance no matter what. Yes, no matter what.

And this raises many questions:

- Is Resilience innate, acquired, epigenetic or a bit of all three?
- Is Resilience an art, a science or a little of both?
- What are the ways to reveal and/or develop it?

### Here we are in the middle of a vast debate.

Resilience seems to me to be partly innate: we have many healing and

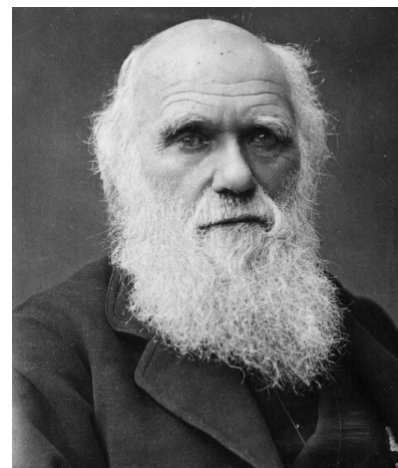
recovery mechanisms: the body is not fixed, it is a living process. Let's take the example of the brain and its magnificent plasticity, which allows us to recreate new neuronal connections when it is altered or destroyed. Isn't this an impressive process of resilience?

Let's also consider the healing of a bone after a fracture: the bone regenerates itself to maintain Life.

With a bit of common sense, and maybe some simplification: if we were not Resilient, we would not be here anymore, or we would be strongly marked physically and psychically by all the shocks we have encountered in our Lives.

As for me, I have had 8 surgeries, and if it wasn't for Resilience, I wouldn't be able to walk, wouldn't be able to do karate, and in fact I wouldn't even be here to write this article.

A new discipline of scientific research has emerged: epigenetics. I'm sure you would have loved to be involved. Just as impressive as neural plasticity, epigenetics sheds



### Charles Darwin

Charles Darwin, British naturalist and palaeontologist whose work on the evolution of living species revolutionized biology with his book: *"On the Origin of Species"* published in 1859.

He was born on February 12, 1809 in Shrewsbury, Shropshire and died on April 19, 1882 in Downe, Kent.

light on our own ability to promote the expression or non-expression of our genes. Joël de Rosnay (scientist, futurist, lecturer and writer) has highlighted 5 factors that have an influence on epigenetics:

- Learning to manage stress and regulate emotions
- Developing pleasure in Life
- Taking care of what we eat

心  
核  
体

Shin Gi Tai  
Unification of  
mind, technique  
and body



- Fostering harmonious relationships
- Moving and setting our body in motion

The good news is that we can do something about each of these factors. We could therefore conclude that these factors have a beneficial effect on the resilience... of our genes! Let's tone up our genes, for more well-being and fulfilment.

### Let's continue our journey.

In my opinion, Resilience is also a skill that can be developed. Like muscle stretching, this will require training, clarity, rigor and discipline.

Boris Cyrulnik (author, neurologist, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst) knows about Resilience, he is an incarnation of it, having overcome the trauma of having spent part of his childhood in the concentration camps during the

Second World War. In his latest book, he discusses the question of choice:

- Opting for the position of victim throughout life;
- Or gradually letting go of this status by setting out on a journey and accepting stages of agonizing freedom.

Let's get this straight: we are sometimes true victims of painful and traumatic events. Sometimes it will be extremely difficult to move forwards, and the question of choice may arise after a long journey.

Why do we sometimes manage to find balance in traumatic events, and get stressed out over small everyday worries?

The answer may come from the black box called: the Brain.

A sudden and brutal shock most often activates the adaptive part of our brain, the prefrontal neocortex or meta-consciousness, which allows us to choose the least

bad or the best strategy to preserve Life.

The more automatic, limbic part of our brain is like a library filled with knowledge, beliefs and experiences. It is quite reactive to the unexpected and the unknown, and it has a habit of holding back the negative (to protect us from it, I think). But the negative aspects can be so ingrained in our brains that we will tend to continue to experience the shock and trauma even years later.

The path to Resilience will therefore involve a re-questioning of conditioned tendencies, mental and emotional habits. Moving forward will often require a reconsideration of the event, an acceptance of what is – however ugly the reality – and an abandonment of implicit loyalties.

In this triple hypothesis: innate, acquired and epigenetic resilience, what advice can we give?



**Here are some tips:**

1. Trust yourself, you will be able to free the necessary resources to walk the path of appeasement;
2. Welcome the emotions as they come, with open arms, empathy and self-care;
3. When anxiety arrives, breathe deeply, anchor yourself in the ground like a tree with its roots and relax your muscles to ease your mind;
4. Strengthen relationships with people who are genuinely empathetic, calm and give you space to express yourself without overwhelming you with their own emotions, opinions, advice, misunderstandings and projections;
5. If necessary, isolate and protect yourself;
6. Give back to the people who have hurt you what really or symbolically belongs to them;
7. Trust your instinct and your intuition, center yourself deep inside in search of your real needs and your inner calm;

« Moving forward will often require a reconsideration of the event, an acceptance of what is – however ugly the reality – and an abandonment of implicit loyalties. »

8. Opt for moments of pleasure, of rejuvenation, and congratulate yourself for a long time for being who you are;
9. Let go of what you cannot control or influence;
10. Go back in a virtuous circle, step by step, a little bit every day;
11. If necessary, get help;
12. When the time comes, make the choice to leave the status of victim, and say yes to liberation.

Dear Mr. Darwin,  
Dear Charles,

Anti-resilience poisons are also present in us. By “poisons”, I mean our great capacity to “loop”, to go in circles and to ruminate. They also seem to have been selected by our species!

Like any poison, it is the dose and duration of ingestion that will make it a toxic agent. This toxicity is present in ourselves and it is not a fatality! I think that we would agree that Resilience and Adaptability have already been selected by our species to counter our own demons. Good news!

I will conclude with this: Resilience is an Art, a dance of Life made of twists and surprises. It is also a largely logical and predictable Science.

And the mixture of all this makes a magnificent alchemy!

See you soon Charles!

**Chantal Vander Vorst**

**→ Detox&Grow!**

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