

Who Will Bounce Back?

DIRECTIONS: When some people suffer a setback, they are able to bounce back. When other people suffer a setback, it seems to defeat them. The ability to bounce back is called *resilience*. In this unit, we're going to examine the question "What makes people resilient?" We're starting our investigation of that question by considering the scenes below.

Please read each scenario and then *rank them from the person most likely to be able to bounce back* (1) to the person least likely to be able to bounce back (4). Then, write a short paragraph in which you explain your top pick.

_____ **1.** Everything seemed to be going great for Tiara. That is, everything was going great until the injury. Star basketball player. Straight A student. Things had always come pretty easily to Tiara. Sure, things were a little rough at home. Tiara really didn't get along with her mom. Tiara's mom was really religious. It seemed to Tiara that all her mom cared about was the church. She'd come home from basketball practice tired and hungry, and there'd be no dinner, just a note saying her mom was at services and she should find something to eat. But that was okay because basketball made everything worthwhile. Tiara was all-city as a sophomore. College recruiters from UConn, Duke, and Stanford had already been to see her. Now, Tiara lay in a hospital bed recovering from microfracture surgery, the same surgery that had ended the careers of Penny Hardaway, Chris Webber, and Tracy McGrady, three NBA superstars. The other girls on the team had all texted her pledging that they would help in whatever way they could. Her coach had already stopped by and told her that she'd help in whatever way she could in rehabbing the injury. The coach told Tiara that she'd always have her brains to fall back on if her body let her down. Tiara knew it was a joke, but she wondered why she should try at anything if it could be so easily taken away. And her mom said the injury was a sign from God that Tiara should be spending less time at practice and more time at church. "I'll show her," Tiara thought. But she wondered if she really would.

_____ **2.** Whatever happened, Matias knew, his grandmother would always be there for him. Matias's mom and dad both worked two jobs trying to save money for his and his sister's college funds. He knows they love him, but they have never been around much. But his grandmom—his grandmom was his rock. She watched out for him. He'll never forget the time when she chased away some gang members from the playground in order to protect him. Or all the time she spent reading to him. Or how she came to every single soccer game he ever played, from peewee leagues to high school. Matias was a good student. Not straight As, but he always did his best. He'd never risk disappointing his grandmother. That's why when he heard that she had pancreatic cancer it hit him so hard. Pancreatic cancer, the fastest cancer there is. He'd barely have enough time to say a proper good bye. He didn't know how he'd be able to continue without her. "Why me?" Matias thought. He didn't have any friends close enough to share his pain. His parents tried to comfort him, but he found it hard to talk with them. He found himself having trouble sleeping, and his attention drifted away in class. Mr. Nelson, his English teacher, noticed, and tried to talk with him. But Matias started crying in their after-school meeting, and now he's embarrassed to go back and see him again. Matias knows the kind of life his grandmother would want for him, but he's not sure he can get there without her.

_____ **3.** Juliet loved working at the family body shop. Ever since she was a little girl, she'd go and watch her dad and now her brothers make miracles out of wrecks of cars. Every detail was always perfect. Little wonder the shop was so successful. Juliet and her mom would take care of the books, while her dad and her brothers worked. In fact, Juliet had become something of a whiz in math. She was great

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at the calculations, and that got her interested in higher math as well. Her dad said he wanted her to be the first in the family to go to college. And not just any college. He wanted her to shoot for MIT, maybe the best college in the country for someone who wanted to be an engineer, the job Juliet had wanted since she was a tiny girl building with Legos. She had the grades and the scores to make it, and the family had put away enough money that they could swing tuition if she didn't get a scholarship. But all that changed in a flash. One of the cars they worked on was in another accident right after it left the shop. The driver was seriously injured and claimed that it was because of faulty repairs. And despite lots of evidence to the contrary, the jury agreed. Of course, the shop had insurance, but not enough to cover the loss. Juliet's college fund had to go to pay the settlement, and they'd be paying off the remainder with their profits for the next 10 years. MIT was now just a dream. She got accepted, but didn't get close to enough money to make it affordable. It would be hard enough to pay community college tuition, especially since word of the lawsuit slowed business way down. Juliet still loved going to the shop to be with her family, and she still loved to see the work—when there was any. But she could see that the problems with the business were eating away at her dad. He'd started drinking and his eyes didn't have that same brightness anymore. She could understand why. She heard whispers that some people thought her family had gotten what they deserved, that they had become too big for their own britches, as the saying goes. That was hard to take and Juliet wondered if the people she thought were friends felt that way. And what's worse, Juliet had to face the fact that she'd have to give up her dream. Being a bookkeeper wasn't such a bad thing. But it wasn't the same as being an engineer. Not by a long shot.

____ 4. Growing up in his neighborhood, Malik didn't have many encounters with White people. Not many good ones anyway. The teachers in his charter school were mostly Black or Latinx, and all the kids were as well. So it was quite a shock when they moved to the suburbs, supposedly for a better education. For the first time in his life, Malik knew what it felt like to be in the minority. Only about 10% of the students were of color and almost none of the teachers were. Malik and his family moved to get a better education, but it wasn't better for Malik. Nothing he did was good enough. Nothing he said was correct enough. For the first time in his life, Malik was on academic probation. And it wasn't his fault, he thought. When he tried to talk about his situation at home, his mom and dad weren't very sympathetic. His dad just got promoted at work by his White boss, and his mom was a nurse who had always worked for a White doctor. His dad would say that Malik was just using the race issue as an excuse and would harp on him about working harder so that he would be above reproach. Sometimes Malik would think about giving it a try. But then there'd be the news of Michael Brown, or Tamir Rice. Walter Scott was the last straw. His murder really sent Malik into a tailspin. His grades got worse and worse. But, Malik thought, what difference did it make? The cards were stacked against him, so why even try?