# Playful People Proved More Resilient During Covid – They Excelled at 'Lemonading'

Adults with high levels of playfulness showed strong resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to less playful individuals, new research shows.

The Oregon State University study is important because playfulness is a vital but under-appreciated resource for building resilience and maintaining well-being during difficult periods such as the pandemic—and it's a resource that individuals can cultivate.

"Highly playful people were just as realistic about COVID-19 risks and challenges as others, but they excelled at '**lemonading'** – creatively imagining and pursuing the positive, as well as discovering ways to create moments of joy even in difficult circumstances," she said.

"This is particularly relevant as we face increasing global challenges that require both realistic assessment and creative adaptation."

Factors like the pandemic, economic uncertainty, and social issues can heighten chronic stress, which is a significant public health concern in the US linked to heart disease and diabetes, as well as depression.

Sharon Shen and co-researcher Zoe Crawley broke a study group of more than 500 American adults into two subgroups: those with low

levels of playfulness as measured by the Adult Playfulness Trait Scale, and those with higher levels.

Perhaps most revealing factor was that while the highly playful didn't necessarily do different activities or do them more often than less playful people, they experienced the activities with higher quality – greater immersion, activeness. and positive affect.

"This is essentially making lemonade from lemons, and it's connected intimately with resilience," she said.

Shen emphasizes that playful people don't view the world through "rose-colored glasses" but rather with the ability to see the upside, while maintaining "clear-eyed realism."

"Playfulness doesn't distort reality – it enhances it," Shen said. "And while our study focused on measuring rather than developing playfulness, research suggests several approaches to cultivate this quality."

**Those approaches include:**

- Engaging in activities that spark joy and curiosity.
- Being open to new experiences, including experimenting with new ways of doing routine activities.
- Creating opportunities for spontaneous, unstructured exploration.
- Hanging out with people who make you laugh and inspire you to play.
- Embracing moments of silliness and humor when appropriate.