

Rising Through Resilience: Tim Carlisle On The Five Things You Can Do To Become More Resilient During Turbulent Times

An Interview With Savio P. Clemente



[Savio P. Clemente](#)

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Grace. Grace is an act of kindness, courtesy, or clemency and can be freely given from one person to another, or one's self. Giving someone some grace allows them the space to either back out from a previous position or land in a different one, which helps them immensely.

Resilience has been described as the ability to withstand adversity and bounce back from difficult life events. Times are not easy now. How do we develop greater resilience to withstand the challenges that keep being thrown at us? In this interview series, we are talking to mental health experts, authors, resilience experts, coaches, and business leaders who can talk about how we can develop greater resilience to improve our lives.

As a part of this series, I had the pleasure of interviewing Timothy Carlisle, CISSP, PMP, DTM, PDD who has a very diverse leadership background.

Tim spent 20 years in the Submarine Service, where he served on four different submarines, rising to the level of Chief Petty Officer. He co-wrote many instructions for protecting data and computers in sensitive installations and, at one point, saved the Navy \$23 million in today's dollars by writing a manual describing the detailed operation of a highly classified system.

Tim has worked as a project director and cybersecurity expert in the public sector and as a consultant. His consulting engagements included eBay, Starbucks, Sutter Health, and other large organizations. He is certified as a CISSP and PMP, both gold-standard certifications in Cybersecurity and Project Management.

He has earned 4 degrees: two Bachelor's — in Technology and Operations Management from Excelsior College; a Master's Certificate in IT Project Management from George Washington University, and a Master's Degree in Technology Management (Information Security with Distinction) from Capella University.

In his volunteer work, Tim is the Chief Technology Officer and Western District Five Commander for U.S. Submarine Veterans Inc., Toastmasters Past District 4 Director (San Francisco and Palo Alto, CA). He is an Event Leader in Landmark Worldwide.

He has received a number of awards, including a Jefferson Award for Public Service, the Joe Negri Award (highest award for leadership), and two Robert Link National Commander's Award from the U.S. Submarine Veterans Inc., the Excelsior College C. Wayne Williams Award for Public Service and Community Involvement, a California Legislature Proclamation for feeding homeless and needy children, and California's first National PTA award for the academic program he led at Mare Island Elementary School. He has also earned two Distinguished Toastmasters designations.

The opinions given here are his own.

Thank you so much for joining us! Our readers would love to get to know you a bit better. Can you tell us a bit about your backstory?

I began my career serving in the U.S. Navy. After two years of training, I was on three consecutive nuclear fast attack submarines for the next eleven years. As my friend Brian says, “There is no electronics parts store to visit; you will need to figure it out.”

Qualifying in submarines is like taking a four-year college degree, shortening it to 12–18 months, learning all kinds of things outside of your chosen career specialty, and being examined for three hours by four individuals who know about ten times more than you to see if you meet the minimum required to earn your submarine dolphins. Oh, and by the way, after you receive your dolphins, the real learning begins.

Many fine Chief Petty Officers (CPOs) aided in my development — a CPO is like a middle-level manager in the corporate world, plus life coaching skills in many unique ways.



Tim's Boot Camp Picture (Recruit Chief Petty Officer)

Many times, in my Navy career, we were asked to do the impossible, yet our team rose to the challenges presented each time. I served with some real heroes — men who went far beyond what was asked of them. Many went on to do great things in the Navy. Over 50% of my Commanding Officers became Navy Admirals — so I learned from the best!

After completing twenty years of service and sailing the seven seas, I made my way back to the Bay Area, where I taught college for a year and became the IT Project Manager for several elected county officials. This was an education money couldn't buy. While I occasionally met Congressmen and Senators in the Navy, at the local level, I got to see how the elected officials did things up close and personal. It was indeed an eye-opening experience.

Can you share with us the most interesting story from your career? Can you tell us what lessons or 'takeaways' you learned from that?

I was asked about the most challenging computer problem I had ever fixed during a job interview — this is what I said. Needless to say, I got the job!

I was on deployment under the Arctic ice. Due to the error of three people, the power had been turned off to our computer systems that ran our sonar and our fire control, which helps us track ships, submarines, etc. When power was restored, our computers were not working at all, and everything was down.

I was the only technician on my team who had been thoroughly trained in repairing these systems — my colleague missed the deployment to attend several schools — so it was up to me.

I started working and ran some of our diagnostic programs. Several different problems were happening — in the first 3–4 hours, I solved 2–3 of them. My Chief stopped by and asked me how things were going. I gave him a brief explanation. At 8 hours, my division officer came by — I repeated where we were. At 12 hours, my department head — received more of the same. At 16 hours, our Executive Officer came by; at 18 hours, it was the Captain.

While I had solved several challenging issues, the system still would not operate properly. I had been catching 30-minute cat naps tops — but sleep was optional. The breakthrough came when I remembered I had made a copy of a utility package program. We were supposed to give up all copies to our contractor — out of an abundance of caution, I had made an extra copy and kept it. This wound up being our salvation. After spending some serious time reading, and receiving a little help via radio message, I realized I could write a little program

with this utility package to test specific circuits from a strength perspective, and the circuit cards that passed were able to solve the problem.



Surfaced Through the Ice with Santa Claus at the

North Pole!

By the time everything was fixed, it had been 5–6 days without sleep. The Captain told me I did a great job and ordered me to sleep or do whatever I wanted for the next 72 hours. I happily complied with this order.

My takeaways were that with enough time, effort, and thoughtfulness, I can solve any issue, with or without assistance.

What do you think makes your company stand out? Can you share a story?

In my work with the U.S. Submarine Veterans Inc., there is a camaraderie that is unlike any civilian career because of how powerful shared experiences are. We might be from different generations, from World War II to today, yet we can all relate to each other because we have all done the same types of things. We are an organization with no debt, unlike any other veteran group I am aware of, and we have outstanding cash reserves, assets, and a well-funded Charitable Foundation.

None of us are able to achieve success without some help along the way. Is there a particular person who you are

grateful towards who helped get you to where you are? Can you share a story?

When I was Toastmasters District 4 Director (San Francisco and Palo Alto), three past District Directors, Rita, Katherine, and Aubrey, provided me with a great deal of perspective and ideas on how to handle some of the challenges of the job.

Rita gave me a great deal of understanding and knowledge about navigating not only the district nuances but also the people and personalities, as well as working with World Headquarters. She was very direct and to the point, which is precisely what I needed.

Katherine was always positive, helped me avoid serious mistakes, and provided great constructive feedback on the myriad of tasks required in the high-impact leadership role. Even when things looked grim, I knew I had an excellent listening ear.

Aubrey was a sounding board for me throughout my Toastmasters leadership journey. For years, on average, we met for lunch one weekend a month, and I spoke about what I was experiencing, how I handled different issues, and what I could do better.

All these remarkable women made a significant contribution to my training and development as an executive leader. In each and every case, they provided timely, well-developed insights, each in their own

unique way, which was a tremendous addition to my leadership experience.

Okay, thank you for all that. Now, let's shift to the main focus of this interview. We would like to explore and flesh out the trait of resilience. How would you define resilience? What do you believe are the characteristics or traits of resilient people?

I define resilience as the ability to bounce back from the difficulties that life throws at you at home, work, or play.

1. **To be bold and powerful without dominating.** This is being willing to take a chance on something that is not guaranteed to work. You don't need to be overbearing, but you must be willing to put yourself out there and make it happen.
2. **Grit.** [Angela Duckworth's book Grit](#) defines grit quite well. I define grit as courage and the strength of your character. There is a [grit scale](#) that provides insights into your grit level. I am 5/5.
3. **Compassion.** I define this as the ability to take action to improve someone's situation (or even your own). This can have the impact of creating change in something that

provides benefit to the person, and benefits are what people buy.

4. **Understanding.** Putting yourself in someone else's shoes requires curiosity, excellent listening skills, and asking questions to drill down further, seeking to understand their perspective.
5. **Grace.** Grace is an act of kindness, courtesy, or clemency and can be freely given from one person to another, or one's self. Giving someone some grace allows them the space to either back out from a previous position or land in a different one, which helps them immensely.

Courage is often likened to resilience. In your opinion, how is courage both similar and different from resilience?

Courage is the willingness to face your fears and push through pain despite risks or difficulties.

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from the difficulties that life throws at you at home, work, or play.

Courage and resilience are similar when pushing through something that is uncomfortable.

Courage is different from resilience because you may be strong, brave, or audacious, which is not necessarily needed to be resilient.

**When you think of resilience, which person comes to mind?
Can you explain why you chose that person?**

Kristina D'Amore is a close friend for whom I have tremendous respect. She recently wrote a book, [Domestic Silence — My Story from Survival to Self-Love](#), which describes her life experiences and struggles to succeed and provide for her family. I was privileged to witness her fantastic growth over the past several years. Although younger than I am, she sets a great example of what is possible in overcoming unbelievable challenges.

Has there ever been a time that someone told you something was impossible, but you did it anyway? Can you share the story with us?

Our USSVI database and website were constructed by one person about 20 years prior and was extraordinarily complex, with seven different databases and 726 old-school database connections. After this person passed away in 2013, things started breaking. Our organization had engaged three different website design companies to develop the new database and website, but none could solve the problem in 8 years. By the time I was engaged, the site was almost impossible to access.

In March of 2022, our National President called me and asked if I knew a good web developer. His goal was to have a functioning website prior to the National Convention in late August 2022. I told him he needed a technical team. He asked me if I was volunteering to lead the committee. After some discussion, I accepted. Many of my colleagues and friends told me not to take this on. They felt it was impossible. I was told I could not lead the project because I was not a database or website developer. I was given every reason why I or my team could never get this done.

I believed this was doable and learned that the biggest challenge was that we would need to combine the seven databases into one. I knew I didn't have all the skills needed to accomplish this — but I also knew the most important thing was to find the people with those skills within the organization. One national leader found our database expert. Another close colleague found a coder/website developer. We also found a researcher/trainer. With this team, we started to work on the impossible.

The first impossible challenge was combining the seven databases. We discovered that there were multiple primary keys or fields that tied all the databases together, adding to the complexity. This was where our database expert, Bill, rose to the occasion. Working far more than a full-time job, he somehow made the time to study the data, figure out the structure, and handed me a single database backup — all in the first

six weeks. I knew that we would be successful when this extraordinary feat was accomplished.

The second impossible challenge was backing up the old database and website and rehosting it. Because it was on a rickety old server on its last legs, we had been given a drop-dead date of June 30th. We had to open these databases, convert them to SQL 2019 (from SQL 2000), and then change all 726 database connections, which needed to be changed because they were too dangerous to use on the web. Gerry, our coding expert, had used the website's language in the past and was able to get this done in the next six weeks. We ran off this system, which saved us a great deal of pain until our new site was ready.

Finally, the third impossible challenge was to build and populate hundreds of web pages full of data, documents, and links. I began work on this aspect on the July 4th weekend and continued to work 16 hours a day on weekends and almost all my free time before and after my regular job on weekdays for the next two months. I knew without this effort it would be impossible to meet the goal set by the National President.

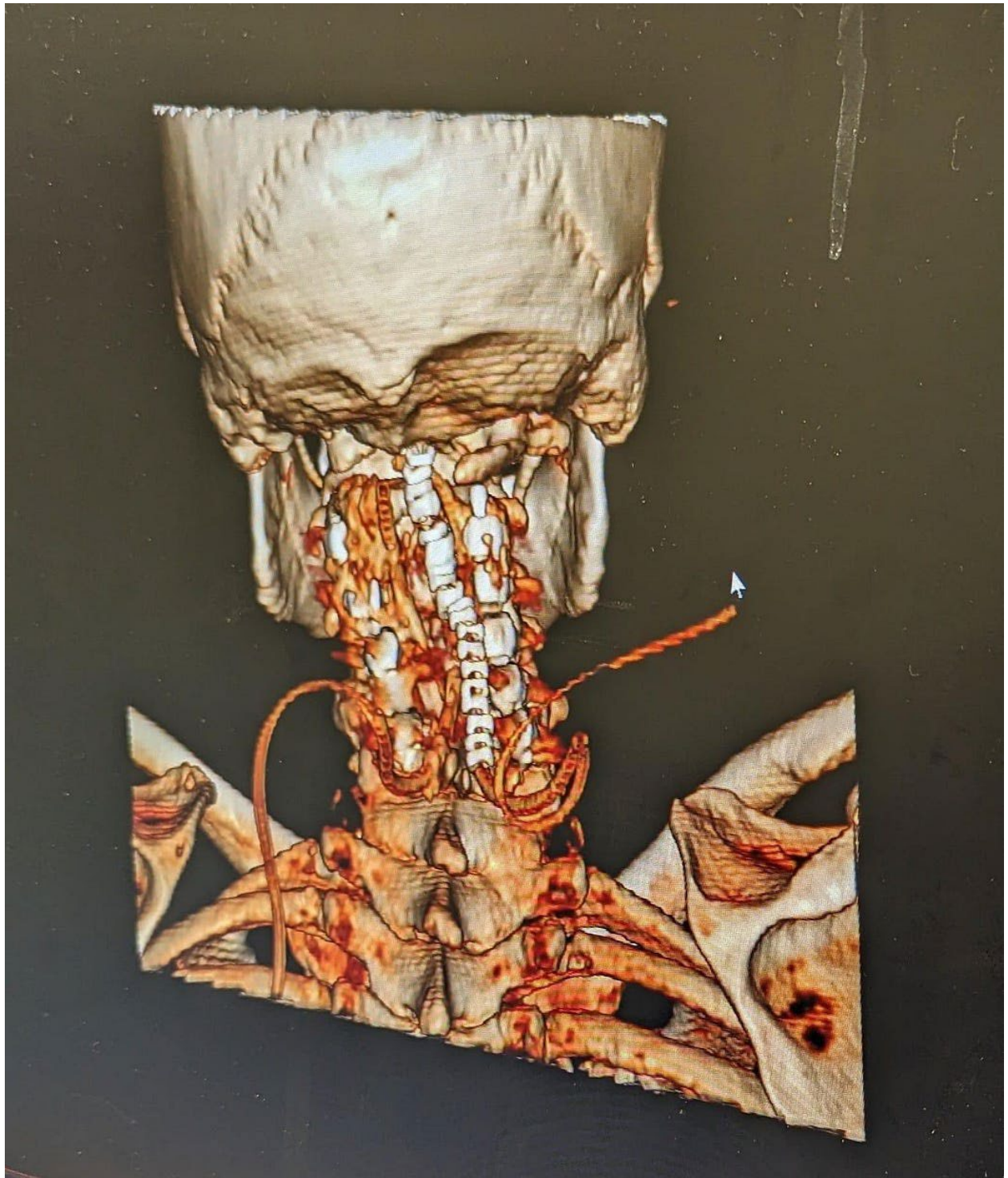
At the airport, just about 15 minutes before boarding the plane to take me to our National Convention in Buffalo, I was able to send the launch email to all our 12,000 members announcing our unveiling of the new website and database. As I was walking down the jetway, our

National President called me and told me, “Bravo Zulu” (Navy speak for a job well done).

We had accomplished what three companies, eight years, and a lot of money couldn't do — all in the space of 5 months, completing two impossible things that our national leadership had been told for years couldn't be done. This was a game-changer for our organization, and our National President presented each team member with the Robert Link Award (our organization's second-highest award for leadership).

Did you have a time in your life when you had one of your greatest setbacks, but you bounced back from it stronger than ever? Can you share that story with us?

In February 2023, I had a workplace accident where I face-planted on carpet-covered concrete with velocity. I broke my nose, my glasses, got a black eye and a forehead gash. The paramedics came and put me on a spine board, a neck collar, pumped me full of drugs and sent me to Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital, where they had to do emergency spine surgery, cutting a piece out of the C2 through C6 cervical vertebrae, moving my spinal cord over gently, cleaning up arthritis and bone spurs, then fusing all five vertebrae together with three titanium chains. I told the younger people I work with in various organizations my hip-hop name is Three Chains since Two Chains is taken!





3D of my Neck and 3 Chains

Neck Scar Post-Surgery

I created the possibility and rehabilitation goal of being better than before the accident. Then I started getting that done. I was in inpatient rehab for three months, then went home and attended six appointments per week, plus daily gym visits for 2 hours. While I am still working towards that goal, I am far better than most folks who have had this surgery, according to my doctors and different therapists.

When I was injured, members from all the organizations I belong to stepped up and took over my duties so I could focus on getting healthy. I am grateful beyond words.

How have you cultivated resilience throughout your life? Did you have any experiences growing up that have contributed to building your resiliency? Can you share a story?

As a child, I dealt with childhood trauma and extreme bullying. Through attending a weekend seminar at Landmark, I was able to eliminate the power that those stories held over me. I found that being able to be authentic in relationships with people completely changed my worldview and trajectory for the better.

Because so much time had elapsed since my childhood, it was similar to peeling back layers of the onion, and I certainly was not all sweetness and light during the discovery and progression.

My friends, Stuart and Vlad, were on the receiving end of much of this challenging experience, and I am grateful to both for their encouragement and gentle guidance. The change was a complete 180 degrees from where I had been.

Resilience is like a muscle that can be strengthened. In your opinion, what are 5 steps that someone can take to become more resilient? Please share a story or an example for each.

1. **Choosing to take risks.** Without taking risks, nothing much will be accomplished. Taking on the USSVI website and database project was a massive risk from the perspective of many people. I had to trust our national leaders to support the efforts, that my team had the necessary skill sets to do the job, and that we could together find a way to succeed in a time-compressed situation.
2. **Out-of-the-box thinking.** Looking at solving a challenge through a different lens is helpful. While still new in Toastmasters, I attended five training sessions to learn more in my new role at the club level, where most people attend one every six months. My reasoning was I would

learn from 5 different people and five times as much. This was different from what most people did. I was able to master this role quickly, which was required.

3. **Not giving up, no matter the circumstances.** There is always a way to win — you just have to find it. My experience is that when things look the darkest, it is just before the solution manifests itself. When we were building the USSVI website and database project, we had a great deal of difficulty changing out the 726 old-school database connections, which were too dangerous to continue using. Fortunately, our coder extraordinaire, Gerry, and one of his friends, Paul, were able to solve this problem.
4. **Having thick skin.** The three years as part of the District Trio in Toastmasters were extremely challenging and confronting for me. My goal for running for election was to serve our members. Some of my teammates ran for different reasons, for which I can only speculate. There was quite a bit of negative disruption in our organization, and we had moved our entire organization from in-person to online virtually overnight during the pandemic. If there was a silver lining to this difficult situation — this experience has provided me the ability to rise above the difficult people and personalities in my current roles. I greatly improved my decision-making abilities and ways to work with people with whom I disagreed.

5. Doing whatever it takes and not being

stopped. Working 16 hours on weekend days and 6 hours after work for two months was not my idea of fun, but if the goal is big enough, it is often worth the effort. This was the time I spent working on fleshing out the USSVI website and database. The results were what mattered to our members.

You are a person of great influence. If you could inspire a movement that would bring the most amount of good to the most amount of people, what would that be? You never know what your idea can trigger. :-)

I am committed to creating a world that works for everyone and empowers people to be their best selves, no matter their circumstances. I also am for improving communication and leadership in the world.

Perhaps a leadership program for people who have dealt with trauma. I have seen many people who have past traumas are not the leaders they could be, and some of the smartest and most creative people I know shy away from leadership because of their lack of confidence that comes from past traumas.

Having a program to help those people get past their trauma and discover their power and leadership, I believe, would benefit not only the person but all the people they would impact for the rest of their lives. They would also become the leaders of the nation, which would

have a massive impact on how our country operates and the future of our world.

We are blessed that some very prominent leaders read this column. Is there a person in the world or in the US with whom you would love to have a private breakfast or lunch with, and why? He or she might just see this, especially if we tag them :-)

Tim Grover — Tim was Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant's trainer and has authored several books, which I learned from greatly.

How can our readers further follow your work online?

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/timothycarlisle/>

<https://timothywcarlisle.com>

This was very inspiring. Thank you so much for joining us!

I had a great time! Thanks for having me!

Wellness

<https://medium.com/authority-magazine/rising-through-resilience-tim-carlisle-on-the-five-things-you-can-do-to-become-more-resilient-ef4344ea5e0d>