

BOOST YOUR RESILIENCE

SURVIVAL GUIDE



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Resilience is...

*“adaptation in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or stress: family/relationship problems, health problems or workplace/money issues”
~ American Psychological Association*

Resilience is about how adaptable and flexible you are (mentally, physically, spiritually and emotionally) when faced with change, setbacks or adverse events. Many people think that resilience is just about bouncing back. But who wants to be in the same place again in the future?

Regardless of the size of the setback, Authentic resilience is when you engage your resilience muscle and bounce forward to a new place and space.

Resilience and Psychological Capital

How can we survive in this environment and become resilient, empowered individuals with the capacity to thrive and flourish? We need to build high levels of psychological capital incorporating the principles of Hope, Efficacy, Resilience and Optimism.

- Hope is defined as ‘the perceived ability to produce pathways to achieve desired goals and to motivate oneself to use those pathways’ (Rand, K., & Cheavens, J. (2009). *Hope Theory*. In S. J. Lopez & C. R. Snyder (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology (2nd ed.)*). Identifying and working towards positive future oriented outcomes.
- Efficacy is stated as confidence in one’s ability that they can achieve a specific goal within a certain situation.
- Resilience is about having the ability to adapt and bounce forward (not just back) from adversity or set-backs.
- Optimism is belief that we can change our attitudes and behaviours to determine a positive outcome (Seligman, M. E. P. (2012). *Flourish*. North Sydney, N.S.W. : William Heinemann Australia).

Resilience is...

*“like a muscle. We can train it, grow it and strengthen it
– there is always a way!”*

Create space to notice:

To be resilient you must have space in your top six inches to be able to create a change in focus to be adaptable and flexible.

If your thoughts and brain is full (overloaded, stressed out, emotionally unstable), then there is no room for adapting, changing, being flexible or cultivating a pathway through.

We must first take the time to pause and check-in

When you have paused, ask yourself, what am I noticing...

1. Physically? (What is happening in my body?)
2. Emotionally? (What am I feeling?)
3. Mentally? (What am I thinking?)

“I can only control the controllables!”

When we become aware of and notice what is happening, we can then allow space in our head to be able to create change.

How do I create space and build my resilience muscle?

Call the situation As-Is, set aside the emotions to find clarity. An objective view of the event. Identify how you are responding. Are your emotions flaring up? Is your physical body reacting harshly? What is happening to your breathing?

We cannot control the situation, the adversity, or the trauma that may come our way, but we CAN control our response to it.

People often react on autopilot without understanding what or how they are responding. They stay stuck in the turmoil of the moment and allow the unconscious responses to take over. This can escalate until they feel overwhelmed.

What is the story you keep telling yourself? The story that holds you back? It might be; “I’m not good under pressure; I can’t cope with these things; I don’t know how to ask for help; I’ve always done it this way and it’s not working; I don’t know how to...”

When we repeat these stories (either consciously or unconsciously) we are not allowing the space to occur in our head or body, to view things from another perspective. We need to approach adversity with optimism and the opportunity to learn, grown, stretch, and respond in a different way.

Ask yourself...

How am I approaching this situation?

Is it with a growth mindset (*Dweck, C. S. (2006). Mindset: The new psychology of success. New York: Ballantine Books*) where all obstacles and challenges are seen as opportunities? Or from a fixed mindset where we accept the situation as fate, that we are powerless over anything within it and that we are unable to change a thing?

Replace the fixed mindset with curiosity and openness. Ask yourself:

- What can I do to shift this spin?
- How can I get out of the negative self-talk and rise above the heaviness of the situation?
- What would it take for me to feel more empowered in this moment?
- How can I strengthen my hope that there is a way forward and the future WILL be brighter?
- How can I find joy in this moment?

One of the key principles of maintaining an optimistic view is to identify that all situations are temporary, local and changeable. These are termed by Martin Seligman, Professor of Psychology at Pennsylvania University from his extensive research in positive psychology and the science of happiness and wellbeing.

Temporary: This exact same feeling, space and response, is temporary and will not last at this magnitude forever.

Local: This response is localised to a specific area in my life. Identify what hasn't changed.

Changeable: You are unable to change the situation but you ARE able to change the way you think about it, talk about and feel about it.

*“When you call it ‘as-is’,
YOU are taking back control!”*

Develop Your Strategies

“What we focus on, is what we get more of!”

If we are constantly thinking of all the negative sides of the situation, and wallow in the emotions of stress, fear, worry, and anger, then we will get more of this.

Here’s how to turn around your negative thoughts and gain a positive outcome!

Do the simple things:

- Self-nurture: (not self-care) This is purposefully nurturing yourself with things that ‘fill up your cup’ so that you have higher levels of energy, strength and ultimately resilience to bounce forward.
- Physically slowing down - walk slower, talk slower, eat slower
- Drink more water - when we are hydrated we are able to think more clearly
- Allow for silence and stillness - sit in stillness for 5 minutes every day
- Do a 10 minute mindfulness activity or guided meditation
- Be in a green space, not talking/ moving - just being
- Dance to your favourite song - shakes out the stuckness
- Eat something wholesome that replenishes you physically
- Allow yourself the space and moments to just ‘be’
- Surround yourself with positive forward thinking people.

These actions allow the pace of your thoughts to slow down and create space between your thoughts. This in turn allows for more measured breathing and gives you permission to just BE.

To BE in stillness.

*“Putting yourself **FIRST** is **NEVER** selfish,
this is how you can then give to others!”*



**“Stillness allows your thoughts,
feelings, and true self to show up!”
~ Christine Burns, WALT Institute**

Refueling physically

“Our bodies are made for movement even at times of responding to adversity.”

What can I do specifically for my physical body to enhance my resilience?

Do the simple things...

- Nurture your body (physically as well as mentally and spiritually)
- Do the things that allow your physical machine to refuel, re-energise and replenish. Its not about pumping iron, or running flat tack, or draining your finely tuned muscular machine of the energy it needs to recover and rebuild. Its about moving, stretching, being active and listening to what your body needs in these times.
- Move with continuous flowing movement. Stretch and expand
- Move in a green space - this releases happy chemicals to be released and opens up the brain’s capacity to think more clearly
- Consume nourishing food and fluids.

Responding to emotions

What can I do for myself emotionally?

- Make sure you maintain connection with others
- Be around people who lift you up and support you in the tough times - see more of them
- Spend less time with the people who drain you or demand from you
- Recognise your emotions that you are feeling and keep telling yourself - emotions cant hurt me! They cant! It is only that we attribute meaning to them and then they appear to be hurting us.
- Do something for someone else. When we are at our lowest, the quickest way of turning this around is to do something for someone else - even in the toughest of times. Doing a random act of kindness for someone else without any expectation in return, is magic. It increases your endorphins, your serotonin and the connection chemical - oxytocin.

When we can look past our own troubles (even for a few minutes) and focus on meaning beyond ourselves, we are building our resilience muscle. We will shift ourselves forward, one tiny step at a time!

“Emotions do not hurt us, they are just feedback!”

Set boundaries in place

How can I set boundaries at home and work?

Often when we face a setback, we allow the emotions to pervade every area of our lives and fail to set effective boundaries for ourselves. This can be as simple as stating - I will get back to you about that tomorrow before lunch - rather than feeling the need to “urgently respond” to someone else’s demand.

Say ‘no’. If the requests or demands on you are draining you at this time, say no. Put some boundaries in place that allow you to nurture your own wellbeing and instigate helpful habits so that you can rebuild your energy and bounce forward.

It may be that you allow yourself to work or perform at 50 - 65% of your usual capacity. It takes energy to work through adverse situations and build your resilience muscle.

It may mean that you prioritise setting aside 30 minutes a day for YOU! For self nurture, to be still, to recover from the adversity or setback in a purposeful way.

When you put yourself first during this time (without ego, without intentionally hurting other people) then you are setting yourself up to recover and bounce forward with strength.

Keep a check on your self-talk

What are the messages you keep saying to yourself?

Our thoughts and words can either trip us up (failure), or support us (success).

Your choice!

When becoming aware of words or phrases that are not supporting your resolve, your confidence or your self worth, recognise these and gently let them go. Do not blame or judge yourself harshly. Replace them with phrases and mantras that boost your confidence, ignite the flame in your belly, and move you towards more of an optimistic and growth mindset.

Use words like - I am learning to...; I get to...; How can I...; What would it take for me to... Use objective and technical words not emotional or blaming words.

*“The mind is the most powerful thing in the world.
The mind has capabilities that are so unknown,
and being able to tap into that is on the other side of suffering.”
~ David Goggins*

Set yourself up for successful resilience

When you commit to making a change in your actions, the most effective way is to link it to something you already do.

Plan: Identify what strategies you are going to put in place - start with one or two ONLY and celebrate the tastes of success before moving onto the next strategy.

Cue: Cue yourself into the changed behaviour by working out the specifics. E.g. if you want to be more physically active, identify the day, time and mode of activity that you will engage in - make it achievable at this stage.

Trigger: Set yourself a trigger that will remind you of your commitment. May be an alarm on a phone, or a visual cue e.g. training shoes by the door when you come home from work, swimming gear at the end of the bed for the morning swim.

Do: Just do it - Agency is the capacity that we have within us to take action and see something through to the end. We can do this - it is within each and every one of us. Do not let any excuses or other resistance get in your way. We need to tap into our inner driving force and take action.

Celebrate your successes

It is important to take time to celebrate your achievements, the changed behaviours and the ongoing growing of your resilience muscle.

When we take the moment to congratulate ourselves, pat ourselves on the back, share a win with a friend, we are reinforcing the progress that we are making.

Celebration is vital to ongoing growth and development of resilience.

Build your long-term resilience:

Resilience (like any muscle) cannot attend the gym just one, cannot have a 6-week program and then be left to go its own.

For resilience to be strong and become adaptable and flexible, we need to enlist these strategies every single day.

Regardless of the size or impact of the setback, fill up your cup, believe you are worth it, and keep developing your mental toughness.

YOU CAN DO THIS!

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