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RESILIENCE TOOLKIT



THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING RESILIENT

Resilience is “the ability to cope with life’s challenges and to adapt to adversity”. According to the Journal of the American Medical Association, stress is as harmful to your heart as smoking and high cholesterol.

All of us will face times of stress, loss, failure or trauma in our lives. The way in which we respond to these events will have an impact on our wellbeing and ability to cope. By identifying how we respond in times of adversity we can determine our attitude to what happens and alter those responses in similar future situations. It’s not easy to do, but it can be learnt.

This toolkit will provide you with an insight into five key areas that we can develop to enhance our resilience:

ENERGY

Investing time and energy in exercise, healthy living and wellbeing practices enables you to be more resilient. This section will provide you with some hints and tips on how to enhance the quality of your sleep, increase your exercise and evaluate your diet.

FOCUS AND PURPOSE

Knowing what you want to achieve will help you stay motivated to find solutions to everyday issues and, in turn, cope with bigger life challenges as they arise. This section provides you with tools to help you define your values, and purpose, and set goals to help you achieve what you want.

INNER DRIVE

This section helps you understand your body’s biochemistry so you can maintain positive mental energy when life becomes challenging. Here, you will find a variety of tips and techniques for thinking positively.

FLEXIBLE THINKING

The ability to mentally flex is important to help you quickly and efficiently deal with the unexpected. This section will provide you with insight into how to get new perspectives and focus on things within your control.

TRUSTED RELATIONSHIPS

Resilient people have strong support networks which gives them the power to reach out for help to think differently and cope in challenging situations. This section will give you frameworks and tools to develop your network and build trusted relationships.



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ENERGY

Scientific studies have shown that investing time and energy in exercise, healthy living and wellbeing practices help you become more resilient. They give you greater clarity, and you'll have a stronger body and mind to cope when faced with adversity.



HOW TO DEVELOP ENERGY

SLEEP TIPS KEEP YOUR BEDROOM

- **Tech free:** Your brain associates blue light technology, like smart phones and tablets, with stress and excitement even if they are turned off. This is because the light tricks the brain into thinking it's still daytime and not time to sleep. Keep your devices away from your bed and invest in a traditional alarm clock.
- **Heat free:** If your bedroom is cool your core body temperature will drop; this helps you to fall asleep and stay there
- **Work free:** It's important to relax and wind down before going to sleep to help reduce stress. Don't work in your bedroom - keep it for relaxation and rest.
- **Snooze free:** The brain prefers to wake up naturally; using more than one alarm forces the brain to do this multiple times. One alarm helps you get a longer bout of consolidated sleep without interruptions. Head to bed early to get deeper and more restorative sleep rather than sleeping in late.

EXERCISE TIPS

Your body is designed to be active, yet you will often find yourself spending a lot of time sat at your desk, sat on your commute home (if you're lucky to find a seat on the train!) or at home in front of the TV, on your phone or at the PC.

Research shows that regular physical activity has great potential for health and resilience with benefits like:

- Decreased risk of coronary heart disease, colon cancer and high blood pressure
- Increased cognitive capacity
- Improved mental and bone health
- Maintenance of your strength, balance and co-ordination
- Helps you with weight control and sleep more soundly

TO KEEP ACTIVE TRY

- **Increasing your exercise at home:** Walk or cycle to the shops, park further away from your destination, walk a dog for an hour, dance during the adverts, do more housework or gardening, run up the stairs, wash your car, take up a new activity or sport
- **Increasing your exercise at work:** Get off the bus or train one stop early, walk to work, use the stairs rather than the lift, take a power walk at lunch or walk around while you're on your phone
- **Using an app or smart watch:** To track your activity and remind you of your goals



NUTRITION TIPS

"People with good nutrition report a 28% better stress management score indicating that those with balanced diet and healthy eating are better able to cope with stress."

Colling, Jessica, Footprint Forum: Food and Mood, vielife (2012)

Your blood sugar levels have a big impact on your energy, health, wellbeing and resilience. If they are too low you can feel tired, faint, hungry and irritable. If they're too high you can feel agitated, aggressive and/or stressed. Having constant highs and lows in blood sugar levels means your energy levels are not stable and your body gets exhausted trying to adapt and re-balance. Keeping your blood sugar levels even during the day will keep your energy levels balanced, reduce fatigue, decrease your stress hormones, help you avoid mood swings, annihilate sugar cravings, and help you stay fuller and satisfied for longer.



Foods that help you maintain your blood sugar levels include:

- Wholemeal bread or Rye, pasta or rice
- Porridge
- Rye bread
- Berries, apples, pears
- Green vegetables
- Salads
- Lean Meat and Fish
- Eggs
- Nuts and Seeds
- Beans and pulses
- Dark chocolate (70% cocoa solids)



Foods that cause spikes in your blood sugar levels include:

- White bread, pasta and rice
- Dried fruit, grapes, and other high sugar fruits
- Potatoes, chips and crisps
- Cake, biscuits and confectionary
- Flavoured yoghurts
- Ice cream
- Fizzy drinks, smoothies and cordials
- Tea, coffee and alcohol

Remember to eat breakfast – if not, your body will release adrenalin to speed up the release of sugar stores as it doesn't have the right fuel.

Adrenalin is a stress hormone which changes your bio-chemistry and therefore can lower your resilience. For the same reasons, try to eat a meal or snack every 3 hours.

Keep a food and mood diary for the next week to determine how your current lifestyle is affecting your energy and resilience. We've created one for you on the next page.



FOOD AND MOOD DIARY

MOUNTAIN SUMMIT	Foods that help maintain blood sugar levels	Foods that cause spikes in blood sugar level	Wellbeing (exercise, number of hours' sleep, other)	My Energy Levels for the day (1 = low, 10 = high)
MONDAY				
TUESDAY				
WEDNESDAY				
THURSDAY				
FRIDAY				
SATURDAY				
SUNDAY				

Please use the guidance in this chapter to identify changes you can make

What food and drink will I stop or reduce?	
What food and drink will I start consuming?	
Which foods and drinks will I continue consuming?	
How can I become more active each day?	
How can I enhance my sleep each night?	



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FOCUS AND PURPOSE



Having focus and purpose will keep you motivated to find solutions to daily problems and increase your ability to cope with major life challenges. If you know what you want from life you can set goals to achieve them. This gives you focus when faced with everyday hurdles and pushes you on to overcome them and be successful.

HOW TO DEVELOP FOCUS AND PURPOSE

DEFINE YOUR VALUES:

- Identify what gives you purpose and meaning in life
- Narrow down your list to the top three things which you value most
- Note down why these are your top three and what you value most about each one
- From this list, identify your top three values
- Think about where you currently are and live them to the full and where you might be compromising them
- Determine goals aligned to your values to keep you motivated, energised and more able to deal with whatever comes your way

Three most important things in my life	What I value most about them?	My top three values	Where do I live them to the full?	Where do I compromise them?

Set personal and professional goals with realistic timeframes, aligned to your values. Consider the following questions to help you do this:

- What is your purpose?
- What one thing can you concentrate on to help you focus more on your purpose?
- What one thing could you stop doing to help you focus more on your purpose?
- Use the values exercises above to determine what's most important to you and how your work fits with those values.



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Create milestones for your goals to keep you focused and motivated. Capture your goals and milestones on paper (visually or written) to help you clarify what you want and make them more tangible.

MY SMART GOAL:

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REALISTIC MILESTONES:

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I KNOW I WILL HAVE ACHIEVED MY GOAL BECAUSE:

What will be different in my life?

What will I see, feel and do differently?

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INNER DRIVE



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Research by Barbara Fredrickson, PhD, in her book *Positivity*, suggests that, at minimum we need a 3:1 ratio of positive to negative experiences to build resilience, thrive, be optimally productive and enjoy our lives. For every negative emotional experience you endure, you have to experience three heartfelt positive emotional experiences that uplift you. This is about having self-belief, motivation and confidence which in turn, gives you the enthusiasm and positive mental energy you need to face whatever is being thrown at you. Your ability to remain positive and happy when life becomes challenging will help you cope, keep things in perspective and remain engaged. You are largely in control of how you feel, so if you sometimes feel lacking in energy and unhappy with life, you are able to alter your biochemistry to balance the emotions that contribute to these feelings.

HOW TO DEVELOP INNER DRIVE

POSITIVE THINKING

Remember that much of what you worry about doesn't happen; each moment you spend being stressed or worried reduces your capacity to stay positive and optimistic. Instead make more time for the things that drive and motivate you; those that will help you focus on thinking positively.

Relaxation, rest and recovery are also vital to ensure your emotions remain well-balanced and you are better able to evaluate information, problem solve and plan. There are many techniques that are proven to help us regulate our emotions including focussed breathing, guided meditation and tracking your positivity ratio (details of each are included in the additional resources below).

One way to balance your emotions is to adjust the way you think about things. Positive thinking will affect your body's biochemistry so that your para-sympathetic nervous system is triggered. It releases DHEA, serotonin, dopamine and endorphins into the bloodstream and makes you feel great, highly productive, efficient, creative and more able to solve problems. In contrast, negative thoughts trigger your sympathetic nervous system which means that cortisol and adrenalin surge into the bloodstream and make you feel stressed or exhausted.

Two ways to become more positive are changing your internal dialogue and altering your physiology so you are calmer and can be more objective.

HERE ARE TWO EXERCISES TO HELP YOU THINK MORE POSITIVELY.

1. CHANGING YOUR INTERNAL DIALOGUE

Ask yourself why you are feeling the way you are about an event; it is not the event that makes us stressed, rather our response to it.

Once you have identified your feelings and emotions you can start to rationalise why you had those responses and choose how you would like to respond should a similar situation arise. The more often you go through this process you will be able to identify feelings and emotions more quickly, enabling you to practice resilience in the moment. An example of how to do this is listed on the next page.



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My feelings and emotions:	What actually happened:	The likely outcome is:	How can I deal with the situation:
I'm rubbish at presenting; that presentation was awful, my boss could have given me more notice, I had no time to prepare and now everyone thinks I'm useless	The presentation was not as good as it could have been as I didn't have as much time to prepare as I would have liked. Although I mentioned the key points I was not as succinct as I could have been.	People understood the key points and are clear on what they have to do going forward. They did not know what happened prior to me presenting and were grateful for any information on the topic given its importance in the business.	Next time I will make sure I make it clear to my boss that I will need to stop all other work to prepare if I am given late notice. I will take my notes with me to the presentation and also practise the night before to make sure I memorise the key points.

2. THINKING MORE POSITIVELY

A group of people including the psychologist Martin Seligman has created a simple technique to direct our brain to focus less on what might go wrong and more on what goes well. It's as simple as identifying what has gone well and why it has gone well at the end of your day. It can be small significant events. By doing this at the end of your day you'll be able to go to sleep in a more positive frame of mind. If you continue doing this regularly, thinking more positively will become a habit.

	What went well today?	Why?
EVENT 1		
EVENT 2		
EVENT 3		



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FLEXIBLE THINKING



Resilience requires an ability to think openly about situations and people. Over time we have trained our brains to work in specific ways; it's easier for us to access the same neural pathways time and again which means that we have ingrained thoughts, feelings and behaviours. This leads us to create habits and make the same assumptions.

If you access different neural pathways, over time you can re-train your brain to work in different ways, enabling you to flex your thinking to consider alternative options, see things from different perspectives, embrace change and think both creatively and laterally to solve problems.

If you want to enhance your resilience this ability to mentally flex is important. It'll help you to quickly and efficiently deal with the unexpected. In this volatile and uncertain world, it enables you to remain positive, adapt to the new requirements and find new ways to achieve success.

HOW TO DEVELOP FLEXIBLE THINKING:

Once you have identified the responses to events that get you stressed, you are in a better position to work out how to adapt your thinking when similar situations trigger those responses. Listed below are some tips and techniques for flexing your thinking.

Getting out of your comfort zone might help you flex your thinking and change your perspective. Try the following to see if it impacts your current thinking patterns:

- **Change your physical location, e.g. meet outside if the weather is nice**
- **Take a walk**
- **Alter your route to work**
- **Try sitting in a different part of the meeting room and notice how your perspective changes**
- **Speak to someone you trust about your perspective on an event that might trigger unwelcome responses. Listen to their perspective, identify what could happen and jointly agree ways in which you could deal with each situation you have identified.**



WORK ON WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

Think about what you can and can't control in any situation. Try not to dwell on those things over which you have no control or influence. This will help you move on with things you can change and affect. Make a list of anything that is currently causing you concern. When you have exhausted all items, note down which items on your list are things over which you have total or a lot of control. Then note down those which are things you can influence even if you don't control them. Then identify those which you cannot control or influence. If you are spending time worrying over those which you can't control or influence it's time to stop thinking about them or choose an appropriate response for when it next happens.

To help you do this, try writing an action plan for what you can do to control the reminder of your list.

Cause of concern	Can I control or influence it?	If yes, what will I do going forward?	If no, what is a better response next time it happens?



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TRUSTED RELATIONSHIP



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Your network in and out of work can be a key contributing factor to your resilience levels. One 2006 study of nearly 3,000 nurses with breast cancer found that those with 10 or more friends were four times more likely to survive the disease than those without close friends*.

Scientific research shows that most resilient people have strong relationships and support networks; having the ability to ask for and offer help will enable you to flex your thinking and come up with multiple solutions for those situations which you require to be at your most resilient.

HOW TO DEVELOP TRUSTED RELATIONSHIPS

To build trusted relationships you need empathy, trust and mutual respect. This enables you to effectively communicate, give and receive advice and gain new perspectives. Below are some ways in which you can build trusted relationships and so enhance your resilience:

- Listen actively and empathically to others by giving them 100% of your attention; it's not enough to hear what people are saying, you need to understand why they have shared the information with you and what they need from you
- Make time for people; find that half an hour to catch up with them and network. This will help you develop a large set of relationships where you can help each other through difficult times
- Put yourself in others' shoes; identify what's going on for them and what they want and need
- Ask three people from your network for positive and constructive feedback on how you act when things don't go to plan or get tough. Ask them for suggestions on what you should continue doing or could do differently
- Use the network mapping tool below to identify the people you currently have in your network and how they support you. Think about if you get the support you need and, if not, identify where you could get that support

ENHANCE YOUR LISTENING SKILLS

Next time you have an important work meeting or someone in your network asks to meet you for a coffee focus on doing the following:

- Stop what you are doing, banish your internal dialogue and give the person your full attention
- Listen to what they are saying before thinking about what you need to say next
- Count to five once they have finished speaking to make sure they have come to the end so that you don't interrupt or second guess them

*Relative Risk of Mortality by Category of Social Networks Prior to Diagnosis Among 2,835 Women With Breast Cancer From the Nurses' Health Study, 2006



NETWORK MAPPING TOOL

WHAT TO DO:

1. List all the people in your network, putting each one on a small post-it note
2. Create a post-it note that represents you
3. Arrange each post-it on a large piece of flip chart. Put yourself in the middle of the page and place the post-it's in relationship to you. People that you are most frequently in contact with should be closer to you post-it note than those with whom you interact less.
4. Identify who you go for support, advice or friendship in different areas of your life, e.g.
 - a. Work related issues
 - b. Family related issues
 - c. Personal issues
 - d. Relationship issues
 - e. Sharing new ideas
 - f. Introduce you to new people and interests
 - g. To make you enjoy life
 - h. To encourage you to get fit and healthy
 - i. For support in a crisis
5. Identify how you offer support to each of them, e.g.
 - a. How much time with them?
 - b. What type of support do you offer them?
 - c. Do they consider you to be part of their key support network?
6. Observe what the network map is telling you: Where are you confident that you give and receive the support you need? Where might you need to build relationships?
7. Create an action plan by identifying the most important people from your network and think of one way in which you can make each one feel more special to show your appreciation for their support