

BUILDING RESILIENCE



"It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all"
- J.K Rowling



"I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work"
- Thomas Edison, American inventor with over 1,000 patents



"A man can stand a lot, as long as he can stand himself"
- Axel Munthe, Physician & Writer

What do these quotes tell you about resilience?

- We're going to have setbacks and fail from time to time: it's an inevitable part of living that we make mistakes and occasionally fall flat on our faces
- The only way to avoid this is to live a sheltered, meagre existence, never trying anything new or taking a risk. Few of us want or have a life like that
- We should have the courage to go after our dreams, despite the risk that we'll fail in some way or other. Being resilient means that when we do fail, we have the strength to learn the lessons we need to learn, and we can move on and grow as a result



The Paradox of resilience

At our *worst* times we can become our *best*.
Resilience is forged *through* adversity, not *despite* it.

This statement is seemingly contradictory, yet we can all appreciate the truth in it about the paradox of resilience; we experience loss and gain, grief and gratitude, vulnerability and strength.

Resilience is often referred to as 'bounce-back-ability'; as if we are a boxer's punch ball that returns to exactly the same state after a punch, yet this is also misleading. Recent research studies tell us that adversity offers the potential for transformational growth, or to 'bounce-forward'. For example, a study (Pietrzal et al) in 2010 of 300 US veterans from the Afghan & Iraqi conflicts found that 72% reported some form of 'post traumatic growth', with the most common examples being 'changing priorities about what was important in life' and 'a greater ability to handle difficulties in life'

Reflective Practice

Recall a time of adversity from your own life (not current), and reflect on:

- What personal strengths you called upon
- How some relationships improved as a result
- What new doors opened
- How you appreciated your life better/ how your life was strengthened from this experience

The role of optimism in building resilience

The study

A leading psychologist, Dr Martin Seligman, was part of the research team that revealed 'learned helplessness' and 'learned optimism', which means that we learn how to explain our setbacks and victories *to ourselves* in different ways.

This "explanatory style" is made up of three main elements:

- **Permanence** – do we see our setbacks/ victories as temporary or permanent?
- **Pervasiveness** – do we allow setbacks/ victories to affect other, unrelated areas of our lives?
- **Personalisation** – do we blame ourselves, other people or circumstances as the cause for our setbacks/ victories?

Watch him explain it here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=8-rMuJW-UKg

Coaching activity

Consider a setback or victory that are you experiencing currently where your thinking is pessimistic/ mixed (as the table opposite)

Describe this to someone and ask them to respond to you using an optimist thinking style.

How has this discussion altered your thinking?

To build resilience and growth, use an optimistic thinking style

	How we perceive setbacks/ adversity	How we perceive victories/ good times
Optimistic Thinking Style <i>"There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so"</i> <i>'With mirth & laughter let old wrinkles come'</i> -Shakespeare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary • Specific/ not pervasive to other areas of life • Not personalised (considers circumstances beyond own control) <i>'It's just this one situation that's a setback, it won't last forever, I can influence what I am able to, I'll be ok'</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent • Generalised/ pervasive to whole life • Personalised <i>'This will stay with me forever, it'll help me in other areas of my life too and I made it happen'</i>
Pessimistic Thinking Style <i>"How is it that the clouds still hang on you?"</i> - Shakespeare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent • Generalised/ pervasive to whole life • Personalised <i>'This will never go away, it undermines everything in my life, I'm helpless to change it and/ or it's all my fault'</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary • Specific to situation • Not personalised <i>'This is just one-time, a one-off event, it wasn't only me who made it happen, it was just fluke/ good luck'</i>

A bit more on 'Personalisation'... My business, Your business, 'God's' business

Byron Katie came up with the idea that everything in life falls into one of the 3 categories above and we need to distinguish whose business we are 'in' (mentally) as much of our stress comes from being in others business, or 'God's' business e.g. worrying about earthquakes, illness, when we will die, things that no-one has control or influence over.

For example, if I spend the majority of my time thinking, "You need to get a job, I want you to be happy, you should be on time, you need to take better care of yourself," I am in your business. If you are living your life and I am *also* mentally living your life, who is living mine? Being mentally in your business prevents me from being in my business and from thinking about what I am able to control and influence.

Byron Katie is not promoting selfishness, by any stretch. This doesn't mean that we give up caring for others or looking out for the well-being of others; rather, we adopt an attitude of loving-kindness and let go of the things we cannot control by asking ourselves, 'Whose business am I in?'

And paradoxically, the more we grow and look after our self, the more we can grow and look after others.

BUILDING RESILIENCE cont.

A bit more on permanence... Having a sense of purpose & taking the long term perspective

A study by Roffey Park concluded that resilience can be built by taking a long term perspective to current events. Resilient people think through, 'Is this event ultimately important for my life's purpose and for my values? Will this matter a year from now? If so, how can I grow from this event towards fulfilling my life's purpose?'

So the key question to consider is, do you know your life's purpose and values?

Reflective Practice (optional) – detecting your purpose

If you have not thought about your life's purpose, then consider this:

- What would you want your 90th birthday speech (by your family, friends and colleagues) to say about you and what you've achieved in your life?

Visualise the speeches and write down what you 'hear'. This will give you a sense of what is important for you to achieve in your life.

Reflective Practice (optional) – defining your values

Watch the late comedian's Rik Mayall's 5 'mantras' for life, values that he lived by as he imparts these to graduating students at Exeter University

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mM8ZwW9pdc8>

- What are your own, personal 'mantras' for your life?
- How do they/ could they help you through adversity?

Building connections - how do you respond to others?

US Army 'Master Resilience Training' for leaders focuses on responding to others in an **active, constructive** way as this communication style has been proven to deepen and improve relationships. Having strong relationships builds our resilience as we develop a support network to call on when we need to.



Coaching Activity

- What stops us responding in an active, constructive way?
- Which of your relationships may benefit from more active, constructive responses?
- How will you do this?
- What steps will you take?

Building physical strength

As well as building resilience psychologically, many research studies prove that we're better able to cope with adversity when we take care of our body.

This means getting **quality & frequent...** ...Rest (sleep/switching off) ...Movement (exercise/activity) ...Fuel (eating/drinking)

Score yourself 1 -10 for each, in terms of quality & frequency:

What 1 habit will you commit to changing over the next month to improve your score?

Bringing it all together for you personally...Coaching activity

Complete the Robertsoncooper.com i-resilience questionnaire (link here: [i-resilience](#)) and then reflect on these questions with a coach:

Which of the 6 situational factors do you find tests your resilience most?

Which of your 'likely positives' do you feel work particularly well for you?

Which could you make more use of to enhance your resilience?

What are the 2-3 areas that you should prioritise to further enhance your resilience?

MAKE A COMMITMENT TO YOUR COACH:

'YOU HAVE MY WORD THAT BY THE NEXT TIME WE SPEAK (agree timescales), I WILL HAVE...'

