

Video 2 transcript

Tools and strategies for personal resilience

Hi there, welcome to Video 2 in this series of five videos that have been recorded for Museum of Development North. This video is all about tools and strategies for personal resilience. My name is Sarah Oswald and I'm from The Authentic Spark.

Let's have a little recap from video one where you were focusing on understanding resilience. So we explored in that video the definitions of resilience. And you were able to look at how you can define your own resilience through an example of a past experience. And I invited you to complete the sentence bringing your own example to bear to it. Where we looked at even though I experienced an adversity or a challenge in the past. I can still achieve a better than expected outcome. And what helps me is the key factors, the things you did, the things you noticed that were around you to support you in being resilient.

We looked at the three dimensions of resilience, three different ways in which we can experience being resilient, and how that might affect us, how it might either be about returning to the state we were in before, supporting us so we don't dip too deeply, or else it might be an experience of transformation and moving forward to something new.

We also looked at the relationship between our own capacity, and the scale of a challenge, in order to see how that affects where we sit, whether we are within a zone of challenge, that is our comfort zone, an area where we can build our resilience, but where we don't stretch or learn or grow. What it's like to therefore then be in our growth zone, our stretch zone, where the scale of our capacity or the scale of the challenge might be a little bit greater, but that's a point where we can actually develop and learn. And when we might find ourselves within our red zone, our zone of overwhelm, when the extent of the challenge or the limits on our capacity mean that we have taken on too much that we are no longer able to sustain our resilience. And what that means for us in terms of where we need to be at any given time.

We also talked about how our growth mindset is something that we can cultivate in order for us to support our resilience. Recognising that resilience isn't something you either have or have not. But it's actually something that you can develop and you can build on. And finally, I invited you to explore the factors that actually affect your levels of resilience. What is it that supports your gives buoyancy to your resilience? And what is it that tends to weigh you down? Or push down your sense of feeling resilient? And those factors are things that I want to encourage you to bring forward now into this video and use to help build up your resilience prescription.

This is something that Dr. Chris Johnson talks about. The idea of how you can have a resilience prescription or a toolbox of things that you can draw on to support you in times of challenge. He talks about the idea of that prescription being made up of, strategies, so practical things that you do, strengths, so the strengths and the qualities you have within you that you actually draw on and you make more of in order to support yourself.

He also says that it includes resources, so things that you can turn to for inspiration or support, or maybe it's people that you can turn to for inspiration, support and guidance. And then also having insights, having perspectives, having ideas, having things that you can look at to help you see where you are and see things differently.

Psychologists have actually identified that some of the things that are important to make a person resilient are having a positive attitude, optimism, your ability to regulate emotion. And also how you can take failure and see it as a form of helpful feedback has an opportunity to grow rather than classing as failure and using it as a way to be stuck. All of this feeds into that growth mindset that we've talked about before. So what I'm going to share with you are some strategies, some tools, some resources that you might want to explore to help you build up this Resilience Toolbox.

It's helpful to think about in the context of this model that Dr. Lucy Ryan has created for personal resilience. She identifies five elements that need to be within our lives and we need to work on in order to support our resilience. We need to pay attention to our physical well-being and you might have seen that in some of the factors that you already noticed. Things like having a healthy diet, good sleep, exercise, all contribute.

We need to pay attention to our mental elements, so focusing on developing that growth mindset, maintaining and supporting optimistic thinking. We also have an emotional element to our resilience. That's where we work on our self awareness so that we recognise and understand our own emotions. We can recognise emotions in others. And the mindful communication videos that you will hopefully be looking at shortly are all about that. And we also understand how we can control and regulate our emotions.

We need the social element, so making sure we maintain our connections to at least five people, and know where we fit within a team, within a family, understanding our importance and our role. And we need a sense of purpose to feel resilient and to be resilient. So what we are doing allows us to draw and play to our strengths. It means we are doing things that fit with our own personal values. And all of these as a make-up of what we do helps to support our sense of being resilient.

And it ties to very much a, biological aspect in terms of we need these four different happiness chemicals to help support us in our day-to-day lives and, and in feeling resilient. And there are things we can do to feed into those to increase our experience of these. So, we need things that help us to feel rewarded, that give us that dopamine hit. And the

healthy ways of doing that are things like achieving goals, eating food, that's healthy food, and getting enough sleep. So, feeding into that physical side of resilience.

We need socialising, we need to help others, engage with other people to feel that love hormone, that oxytocin, which supports our resilience. We also need to do things that boost our mood through engaging and connecting our serotonin, so walking, mindfulness, being out in the fresh air, it's all part of that.

And also things that bring our endorphins into play so that we don't feel those pains, we don't feel that stress pain. And if we can build into our lives simple activities that contribute to these happiness chemicals, we are adding to our personal resilience.

So let's talk about strengths for resilience. When we face a challenge, we will naturally start to draw on and use strengths of love, kindness, and gratitude. These are things that we bring out and start to develop and use when we are hit with a challenge. But they are harder to sustain and their impact on our resilience lasts for a short period of time, about six months. But positive psychology studies have shown that gratitude is one that we can really work on and sustain. And we also need to add to that the strengths of optimism and hope, perspective and curiosity to help support our resilience. And the exercises and strategies I'm going to share with you all feed into this idea of curiosity, having perspective and building our optimism.

One thing we can do is just make some very small changes to our lives. Niyc Pigeon, who writes in the book *One More Day* talks about the idea of applying tiny tools to support us in feeling resilient. These are all things that feed into those different aspects. They help to connect with those and engage those happiness hormones, and they fulfill a number of elements of that model that Dr. Lucy Ryan talks about. The idea of physical activity, like having a cold plunge and going for a walk. Things that allow us to have that social connection, like sending a gratitude text to someone, finding accountability partners, someone who will support you.

These are all things that can help just make a slight change in our lives and boost our resilience factors, and they don't require a lot of time. They don't require significant effort, but they do, with consistent use, make a difference to how optimistic we are feeling, how easy it is for us to feel grateful and to have that kind of sense of where we are going, have a sense of purpose in our lives.

Moments of awe, again, a really simple tool and technique to connect with that and activate oxytocin. So that happiness hormone that we need, to give us a greater sense of meaning and purpose, because we start to understand our place in the world through just noticing what's special around us. It lowers our heart rate so that contributes to reducing stress. And when we share awe or when we notice what's around us, it connects us with people so it brings that social connection in.

So one thing to just ask yourself is where is the awe in my everyday? When you're walking to work, when you're on your commute, when you're just looking out of the window, what do you notice? What do you spot that makes you stop and think, wow. That's awesome. And that short moment of mindfulness really helps to tick into that resilience, to just keep boosting your resilience factors.

You can really work on gratitude. Our minds are, tend to be connected to that negative bias. We tend to look for the things that aren't going well, as opposed to the things that are going well. And we need about three to five positives to help counteract every negative that we perceive. So practicing gratitude or practicing the positives helps us to reduce our sense of stress and anxiety. It supports our focus. Again, gratitude is something we can share, and so that fosters a sense of community and connection with others. And if you make this a consistent habit, it increases your optimism over time. So it's working on that strength and really boosting that strength.

And all you need to do is every day take note of three good things. Or three things you're grateful for. And you can do that anytime of day and you might do it in whatever way you like that works for you. You might write it in a journal at the end of the day. You might start to blog or share stuff on social media. Or you might look at keeping a gratitude jar. Something on your desk where you note on a piece of paper every time you have a grateful thought. When there's something you feel positive about. Put each piece of paper in the jar and when you are feeling like your resilience is low. Pick a piece out. Share that with somebody else. Look at it and notice what you feel by connecting with that gratitude and that positive. And it's a simple practice that can really boost that and take away the anxiety that you're feeling at that point.

This is a slightly longer exercise and I'm going to share it with you now but you might want to either pause the video to do it or watch the whole video and then come back to this afterwards. It's called finding the silver lining and this is focused on helping you to change your perspective about a challenge or an issue from the past and to see it as an opportunity for growth. So it's feeding into that growth mindset and it's allowing you to have a better sense of what you can do as opposed to what you can't do.

I want you to think of a time when you felt challenged and with the loose blank piece of paper, set a timer and write down for five minutes everything that comes into your head about that experience. Don't filter anything that you write, just keep letting it flow. Once you've done that, rip up that piece of paper and throw it away.

You're now gonna rewrite the story that you've told yourself about that experience. Take a new piece of paper and note down three good things that came out of that experience. Think about what is it that you learned from that experience. What did you gain from it? And identify what you can feel thankful for about that experience.

By doing this exercise, you're shifting your perspective, you're shifting your view of something. And that, as we know, is a way to boost our resilience, because we recognise that even though we face a challenge, we actually gain good things from it. We have a learning opportunity, it is not a failure.

And if that was an exercise in looking back at challenge, what I'm gonna invite you to do now is re-frame your perspective by looking at a challenge that you're anticipating. So we can boost our resilience in dealing with future challenges by doing this. Think of a challenge that you're anticipating that's coming up in the next few weeks. Write down that challenge and then explore what's the best that could happen. Write down your answer to that. Then consider what's the worst that could happen. And note down your thoughts on that. And lastly, consider what's most likely to happen. What's most realistically going to happen when you face that challenge?

Have a look back and reflect on what you've written. What you will probably notice is that you have ways of influencing and making things happen closer to the best than the worst. This is about inviting you to practice active hope to increase your optimism. And by doing that, you are better able to take action and take steps that make the best more likely. So it's putting things into your control and changing your perspective and using your strength to be resilient.

So what can you do next? Well, I want to invite you to take some time to use the activities to build up your resilience prescription further. Add to what you identified out of video one and think about what of these things that you've learned now you might add to, How might you boost your happiness chemicals? And I really encourage you to try both the find the silver lining and reframe your perspective exercises to see how you can both reflect on the past and also deal with challenges coming up in the future.