

Video 2 workbook

Tools and strategies for personal resilience

This resource book supports Video 2 on tools and strategies for personal resilience, part of a series of five videos created for Museum Development North.

In sharing these resources with you, I am sharing the understanding I have gained and lessons I have learnt from others as well as my own experience. The video and this resource draw in particular on the work of:

- Dr Chris Johnstone and Miriam Aktar, Positive Psychology Training
- Dr Martin Seligman, Penn Positive Psychology Centre
- Joanna Taylor, School of Clinical and Neuro-Linguistic Hypnotherapy
- Dr Lucy Ryan, Mindspring
- Niyce Pidgeon, Positive Psychology Coach Academy

Many thanks to everyone who has inspired me.

These materials and the video have their basis in Positive Psychology. It was developed in 2000 by Martin Seligman who identified that there was a need for more positive psychology work that focused on strengths and virtues instead of disorder, which is what psychology tended to focus on. Positive Psychology explores what helps us live good lives and finds evidence for exercises, tools and activity that can increase our well-being

Research shows that Positive Psychology can have a ripple effect. So by taking action on your own resilience and utilising these Positive Psychology tools you have the potential to also benefit others around you – your teams and colleagues, friends and family.

Disclaimer: This resource is for educational use and references models from external sources, all of which are acknowledged in the bibliography. Rights remain with the original authors.

Developing your resilience prescription

Now you are more aware of your existing resilience factors. How can you cultivate your growth mindset and begin to develop your resilience?

“Psychologists have identified some of the factors that make a person resilient, such as a positive attitude, optimism, the ability to regulate emotions, and the ability to see failure as a form of helpful feedback.”

Psychology Today

You are in charge of creating your own ‘resilience prescription’ which will contain:

- **Strategies** – practical things that you do
- **Strengths** – recognising, appreciating and drawing on the strengths within yourself
- **Resources** – who or what you can turn to for nourishment, guidance, inspiration or support
- **Insights** – ideas, perspectives or sayings you find useful

Dr Chris Johnstone describes these as our **SSRI** toolkit. The initials SSRI are more usually associated with anti-depressants (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors).

You can fit your buoyancy resilience factors into these categories. In video 2 and this resource we are focusing on tools for strategies and resources, and also on enhancing your insights.

Exercise: My Resilience Prescription includes....

Use this space to make a list of any of the resilience factors you identified from the previous video and resource book that you want to take forward in your resilience prescription. You can revisit this and continue to add any other strategies, resources and insights you discover to support you in your resilience.

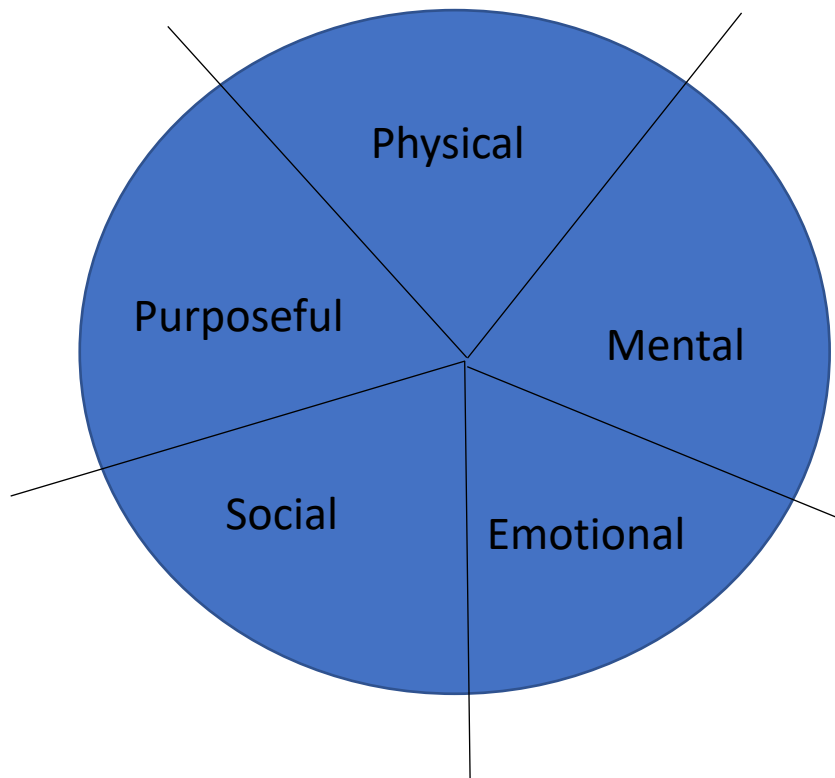
Don’t feel you have to do them all at once, especially if you are adding a new tool or strategy to your life. Maybe start with the one thing from your resilience pledge and build the habit.

Living resiliently

Dr Lucy Ryan offers a model of resilience, for living in a resilient way, that has 5 elements to it:

- Physical – pay attention to physical wellbeing
- Mental – optimistic thinking, growth mindset
- Emotional – recognise own and others' emotions, can control our emotional impulses
- Social – prioritise deep connecting to 5 or fewer people, importance of team
- Purposeful – align values with life practices, play to strengths, know what matters

Think about how your resilience prescription can encompass activity within all five areas to maximise your resilience.



Look to build things into your resilience prescription that activate your **happiness chemicals**. This cocktail of happy hormones helps to combat the stress hormone cortisol.

Dopamine: linked to our drive, when this is low we experience self doubt, a lack of enthusiasm and motivation. Be aware that we can get stuck in a rewarding feedback loop when we scroll on our phones as this activity releases small hits of dopamine which lead to dependency. Tech today was designed to do this!

Oxytocin: responsible for empathy and trust. Low levels lead to a sense of loneliness and isolation. We need interaction with others to support oxytocin levels

Serotonin: governs our sleep, our appetite and the balance of our mood.

Endorphin: enables emotional response regulation. Low levels mean we feel lethargic and notice aches and pains, we're less interested in fun.



Strengths for resilience

There are 24 character strengths that have been identified. We all have these strengths to a greater or lesser degree. Most people have 5 or 6 signature strengths, which they will tend to use the most. **BUT** we can actually use our lower strengths and develop them to support us in times of adversity and to build our resilience.

There are three strengths that we tend to draw on or that rise up in times of adversity:

- Love and being loved
- Kindness
- Gratitude

Science has shown that these tend to be sustained for about 6 months (unless they are already your signature strengths).

Gratitude can be maintained and used to sustain you through working on appreciative reflection, and can be used to help steady your emotions.

The strengths you need to draw on and work with to give sustainability in resilience are:

- Optimism / hope – this is the strongest for sustainable resilience
- Perspective – being able to consider if it matters, seeing the bigger picture
- Curiosity – asking questions, seeking to learn, utilising a growth mindset

The strategies or ‘life hacks’ that follow can help you to cultivate these valuable strengths to build resilience. They will help you to work on and use:

- Gratitude
- Optimism
- Perspective
- Curiosity

Tiny tools

Make small changes to your day to day life. You might choose one of these 'Tiny Tools' proposed by Niyc Pidgeon in her One More Day framework¹. These and the rest of her list are all small positive actions that can become resilience factors.

- Go for a walk
- Ask about good things
- Drink more water
- Send a gratitude text
- Read 10 pages of a book
- Journal for three minutes
- Enjoy a hot drink
- Water the plants
- Have a cold plunge / splash your face with cold water
- Make your bed
- Find an accountability partner
- Do a breath work exercise

¹ Trigger warning: Niyc Pidgeon's book is written in the context of suicide prevention. Please be aware of this should you choose to explore her work further.

Moments of awe

Taking time to notice moments of awe can:

- increase oxytocin
- give a greater sense of meaning (purpose)
- lower your heart rate
- help you to connect with others

This simple activity can actually benefit several of the elements needed for personal resilience. Experiences of awe shift your focus outwards, they let us stop and gain perspective, we become less focused on self and are more receptive to others.²

Moments of awe don't need to be big adventures in far-flung places. There are moments of awe in the everyday, in nature, in shared experiences, in art, in human stories.

Take time to notice the small moments of awe in the everyday. Some ways to discover awe could be:

- Taking a photo every day of something you find beautiful. Take 5 minutes at the end of the week to look back at them and appreciate the awe in your week
- Stand for 5 minutes in nature - what do you see, hear, smell? how do you feel?
- Take a slow walk on your lunch break - what do you notice that you have never seen before?

Could you deploy The Thinking Museum's Slow Looking tools to see your workplace differently and find the awe in your everyday?

<https://thinkingmuseum.com/2020/11/19/what-is-slow-looking-and-how-can-i-get-started/>

Exercise: Noticing moments of awe

Take a moment to reflect on and capture the moments of awe you have noticed today. What was it? Where was it? How did you feel?

How do you feel now as you reconnect with it?

² <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/400-friends-but-who-can-i-call/202405/the-power-of-sharing-moments-of-awe>

Practice the positive

You can build your resilience by practicing optimism and positivity.

We are naturally wired to see the negative in things. It is our negativity bias, part of our evolution designed to try and keep us safe. It means we fixate on the bad stuff and tend to make it bigger.

Research tells us that it takes 3 to 5 positive things to outweigh every negative. By working on building our positivity 'muscle', or our ability to be grateful, we are better able to 'find the silver lining'. Recognising the positives through gratitude can counteract the negativity bias. Gratitude is one of the 24 character strengths that can sustain your optimism and resilience.

Every day take note of three good things or three things you are grateful for.

You could:

- Write them in a journal
- Blog
- Share on social media
- Collect them in a jar to read again. Pick one a day to give you a boost

You may even want to do this with your family, or with your team at work, and encourage each other to notice, share and celebrate the positive. Research has shown that gratitude is stronger if it is shared, it has more impact.

Niyc Pidgeon has a list of Tiny Tools to help promote hope (part of her One More Day framework for finding strength and resilience). They include:

- Sending a gratitude text – text someone with one thing you are grateful for about them, try to do this daily
- Gratitude connection ritual – write down three things you are grateful for about another person, share that with them via text
- Go on a gratitude rampage – start a text or message flow between you and another person where you take it in turns to share one thing you are grateful for. Keep the rampage going

Exercise: what are you grateful for?

Exercise your positivity by reflecting now on three things you are grateful for or three positive things you have noticed today.

Find the silver lining

This exercise encouraged you to find the learning and growth in adversity. It encourages you to put the experience into your amber, Growth Edge zone, as something you have gained learning from.

The practice helps you to gain perspective on an event in your past, to exercise curiosity and practice gratitude.

You will need a loose piece of paper rather than this booklet for this activity

Exercise: Find the silver lining

Think of a time when you have felt challenged or experienced stress.

Set a timer and for 5 minutes write down everything that comes into your head about that experience.

Now rip up that piece of paper.

Take a fresh sheet and take 5 minutes to rewrite your story of that experience.

Read over what you have written in this second 'story':

- Write down three good things that came out of it
- What did you learn?
- What are you thankful for?

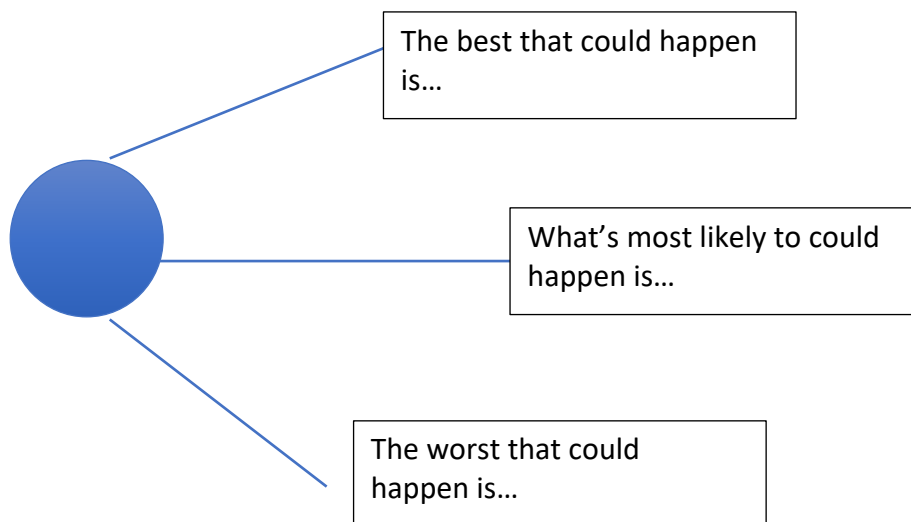
Reframe your perspective

This activity supports you in anticipating a challenge and in drawing on your resilience to be able to prepare and manage future events.

Exercise: Reframe your perspective

Think of a challenge that you are anticipating in the next few weeks. Describe the challenge then consider and make notes on the following, in this order:

- what's the best that could happen?
- what's the worst that could happen
- what is most likely to happen?



Through curiosity about what could happen and what is most likely to happen you can practice active hope to increase your optimism. This means that you now take steps that make the best more likely to happen. Your perspective on the anticipated challenge is shifted.

What next?

Put your resilience prescription into practice. Start with one habit or activity and build it into your day to day.

To support you in your ability to be reflective, you might like to explore video 5 and its associated resources.

If you are encountering challenging conversations in your workplace, whether with members of the public or with others in your organisation, explore videos 3 and 4 and their associated workbooks. These videos focus on mindful communication principles and how to put these into practice to achieve an outcome from a conversation that meets both parties' needs.

More on character strengths

If you are interested in finding out more about strengths you may like to visit The VIA Institute <https://www.viacharacter.org> where you can take an online survey to understand your signature strengths and learn more about using strengths in different aspects of your life.

Free survey <https://www.viacharacter.org/account/register>

Strengths topics resources (includes strengths basics, career building, achieving goals, stress, relationships and more <https://www.viacharacter.org/topics>)