

Resilience Tools List

Orienting (The Resilience Toolkit)

Use anytime, especially blue and high red

Engage your senses to connect to your external environment. Look around, being sure to turn your neck. Notice sounds, smells, and taste. Feel sensation and temperature on your skin.

Butterfly Hug (The Resilience Toolkit)

Use anytime, especially blue and high red

Lift both hands with palms facing you and thumbs out side to side. Cross the hands and link the thumbs. Place the hands on your chest with the fingers parallel to and just under your collarbones. Tap one hand gently against the chest and then the other. Continue alternate tapping.

Grounding (The Resilience Toolkit)

Bring your awareness to your entire physical state (sensations) in the present moment without judging or attempting to change the experience. Then, bring your awareness to your emotional state (feelings) in the same way. Now, bring awareness to your mental state (thoughts), just noticing what is. If you're in a group or with someone, you might also want to bring awareness to your social state, the quality of your connection with the person(s) sharing your collective nervous system.

Settling Breath (The Resilience Toolkit)

Use anytime, esp for medium red and blue

Notice your breathing. Gradually and gently increase the length of the exhale until it is twice the length of the inhale (e.x. Inhale for 3, exhale for 6). Let the breath be easy, and explore breathing through the nose if comfortable. Repeat several times.

Resourcing (The Resilience Toolkit)

Use anytime, esp blue or high red

Scan your body for the most comfortable sensation and focus your attention there. Note as many qualities of the sensation as possible (location, depth, type of sensation, etc).

Tracking (The Resilience Toolkit) [renamed "Body Solidarity" by Mala Badi]

Use anytime, esp red or purple

Focus your attention on an area of discomfort without judging or attempting to change the sensations. Note as many qualities of the sensation as possible (location, depth, type of sensation, motion, etc). Also note if the sensation changes in any way as you focus on it.

Arm sweeps & Leg sweeps (The Resilience Toolkit)

Use anytime, especially red and purple

Take the right hand across the body to rest on the left shoulder. Slowly sweep the hand down the left arm, all the way to the fingertips. Repeat 2-3 times, experimenting with levels of speed, pressure to see what feels best. Then, drop the right hand back to the right side of the body, and take the left hand across to rest on the right shoulder. Repeat the sweeping motion, now down the right arm.

For **leg sweeps**, start either seated or standing. Cross the arms, taking right hand to rest at the left hip, and left hand to rest at the right hip. Keeping the arms cross, sweep the hands down opposite legs, stopping at the knees or taking the sweeping motion all the way down the legs if that feels easily accessible. Avoid straining or stretching with the sweeping motion. Straightening the torso back up after each sweeping motion, keep the arms crossed and repeat.

Knee Tapping (The Resilience Toolkit)

Use anytime, especially blue, purple, and high red

Seated, cross the arms to place the right palm on the left thigh just above the knee. Then, place the left palm on the right thigh above the knee. Tap/pat the right hand, then the left. Continue alternate tapping. Experiment with the speed, pressure of the tapping to see what feels most supportive.

Humming (Resmaa Menakem)

Use anytime, esp blue and medium red, purple

Find a quiet, comfortable place. Place one hand on your belly, and start humming. Not from your throat or chest, but from the bottom of your belly. Hum strong and steady. Push the air out of your belly firmly. Stop to breathe in, but return to the hum for each exhale. Experience the hum in your belly. Then, sense it in the rest of your belly. When you're done, reach your arms upwards. Then, slowly, let your hands rest onto your head and lightly skim the outline of the shoulders, arms, etc.

Voo sound (Peter Levine & Somatic Experiencing)

Use anytime, esp red states and purple states

Take a full, deeper cycle of breath. On the next inhale, prepare for a longer exhale. As you exhale, take the lips together for the "Vvv" sound. Let a slow, long sound of "vooooo" move through the body for the full length of the exhale. Feel the vibrating deep in the belly, psoas, chest. Can repeat 2-3 times. For added impact, take one hand cupped to the back of the neck while making the "voo" sound.

Buzzing sound (Dave Berger & Somatic Experiencing)

Esp. helpful for moving out of bluer states

Take a full, deeper cycle of breath. On the next inhale, prepare for a longer exhale. As you

exhale, take the lips together for the “bzzzzz” sound. Let a slow, long sound of “bzzzzz” move through the body for the full length of the exhale. You can imagine a bee moving through the air, and let the buzzing sound vary in pitch or volume. Feel the vibrating deep in the chest and throat. Can repeat 2-3 times. For added impact, take one or both hands very lightly to the chest and/or throat while buzzing.

Head hug

Use anytime, esp red states

Take your right hand to the back of the neck, cupping the base of the head right at the hairline. Take your left hand to cup the forehead. Then, gently let the head lean slightly forward into the front hand, feeling the support against the forehead. After a breath or two, alternate back, leaning the head into the right hand, resting back. Alternate as many times as feels good, coming back to center before letting the hands go.

Reverse Chair

Use anytime, especially red and purple states

Find a chair (or low table or bed) and lie down on the floor facing it. Swing the legs up onto the chair so that the calves and feet are resting where the hips usually sit. Let the whole back body, back of the head, relax into the support of the floor. Invite the front body muscles, from face to belly, to widen and soften into the support of the back body. Watch for any settling signs, and deepen the impact by introducing another tool while in this position.

Reverse Binoculars

Use especially for red and purple states. When something feels “too big” or “too close”

This is a visualization tool that can be practiced completely imaginally or can be practiced with the hands as physiological support. The practice is to focus mentally on the person, topic, or situation that is feeling overwhelming, as if you’re looking through binoculars. As soon as it’s in focus, zoom out from that person, topic, or situation as if you were scrolling out the focus through binoculars. Put distance between you and the object in focus, and do it slowly enough that you can notice any settling signs. Your settling signs will let you know when you’ve create enough distance, and you can now reach for other tools to help you return to green or re-engage with more resilience.

Downward Line

Use especially for red and purple states. When something feels “too big” or “too close”

This tool is particularly useful when you find your neck tensed and your gaze/face focused **above you** while engaging a situation (either in memory/thought or in actuality). Notice the direction of the head and eyes, and pause there briefly. Then, engaging the neck, face, and eye muscles, slowly draw an imaginary line down from that point all the way down to the ground or floor. As if you were tracing a downward path. Move slowly and gently. Once the gaze has landed on the ground/floor, pause and notice any nervous system shifts. See if neck, face, and eye muscles can relax. Now that you’ve allowed the body to sense a shift in threat, introduce another tool to move you towards your desired nervous system color.

Melting (vs Mirroring)

Use when interacting with difficult red or blue in others' nervous systems

Carefully notice the somatic experience (either demonstrated or described) of the person(s) you're relating to. Notice your body's impulse to mirror or react (either reflecting the activation or reacting to it). Then, get curious about what it would be like to gently "melt" the activation instead of mirroring it in your body. For example, if the person(s) are clenching fists, could you slowly and carefully open and upturn your palms? If the person(s) are forgetting to breathe, could you move a generous cycle of breath through your own body? If their eyes are narrowed, could you slowly relax the muscles of your forehead and eyes?

Boundary Circles

Use anytime, especially to access supportive/protective red

Start with the hands up on by the chest, close together and palms angled slightly outward so that the outside of the thumbs are resting under the collarbones. Before moving, feel the muscles of the arms, shoulders, shoulder blades, and back. Then, slowly but firmly, press both palms outward until arms are extended, and then around to the sides of the body, creating a semicircle motion. For added benefit, add a strong exhale that vibrates the lips while pressing the hands out and around. Alternatively, pair this movement with the "bzzz" tool. Pause and notice the body before continuing, this is a strong practice.

Twists

Use anytime, especially deep blue

Either standing or seated, gently take the chin and head over one shoulder. Notice the stretch along the neck, shoulders, etc. Repeat on the other side. Then, increase the twist by taking the left hand to the right leg, hip, or knee. Turn to the right, leading with the right shoulder and following with the gaze, ribcage, etc. Exhale returning to center. Repeat on the left side, noticing any settling signs. Repeat 2-3, paying attention to the depth of twist that feels good and energizing, but not painful.

Straw Breath

Use anytime, especially red, high red, and purple states

Take one conscious cycle of breath, noticing the quality. After your next inhale, purse the lips together as if sipping through a straw. Use belly muscles to move the exhale slowly through the "straw" lips, feeling the resistance and hearing the sound of the breath moving out. For added benefit, gently move the head and neck to "draw" an infinity symbol with the breath as you exhale.