



STAYWELL DERBY

Resilience Tools

3 Exercises

Using these tools

This booklet contains 3 different resilience tools. Each tool is structured in the same way, consisting of a background section, a goal description, and advice for using the exercises and the exercise itself.

Doors Closed Doors Open

“The only thing that is constant is change” is a famous quote by the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus. Indeed, life is constantly changing and evolving.

This means that from time to time, things just stop existing. Losing a job, ending a marriage or moving to another place are examples of changes that many people have experienced.

We lose out on something important, a big plan collapses, or we are rejected by someone. Another way of expressing this feeling of loss is that a door is being closed. However, the end of one thing is always the beginning of something new.

We have the option to stay focused on what is not here anymore (the doors that have been closed), or become aware of the new avenues that unfold. Optimism is about the latter option. It is about also seeing the doors that are being opened. It is about holding a favourable view about the future, taking closing doors into consideration and turning them into something beneficial.

Goal

The goal of this exercise is twofold. First, the exercise can make you aware that the end of something is also the beginning of something new. The end of something positive is not only negative, but can also create room for something positive again. The exercise can help you to become aware that this requires a shift in perspective from focusing on what is not there anymore, to seeing the potential of the future.

Second, the exercise can help you to become aware of what currently prevents them from adopting a more optimistic outlook when doors close. This insight can be used to develop a more positive outlook for future "closing door events".

Using Values to Build Resilience

“He who has a why to live can bear almost any how.” - Friedrich Nietzsche

Past research findings suggest that connecting to personal values can help people be more resilient in the face of stress.

Participants completed either a value-affirmation task or a control task prior to participating in a laboratory stress challenge.

Participants who affirmed their values had significantly lower cortisol responses to stress, compared with control participants. These findings suggest that reflecting on personal values can keep responses to stress at low levels.

The findings suggest that even relatively short writing exercises seem to have quite long-lasting and dramatic effects.

For example, a fifteen-minute values affirmation exercise continued to reduce relationship insecurity for four weeks after the initial exercise. In terms of possible mechanisms, connecting to personal values may be a way for people to motivate themselves to actively deal with challenging life events.

Values provide a reason to keep going, especially when life events make it hard or impossible to live in line with personal values.

For example, after becoming unemployed, a father with two young kids may be very motivated to bounce back and find a new job, so that his kids will have sufficient resources to grow up as happy adults.

Driven by his values “love” and “care”, he may find the strength to actively deal with the stressful life event in order to continue living in line with these values. In this tool, values affirmation is used to build resilience during stressful life events.

Exercise Resilience

Goal

The goal of this exercise is to motivate you to actively deal with a challenging event by helping to get in touch with your personal values. Simply put, this exercise is about managing stress by knowing what you value.

Advice

Use creativity in this step to help create your values reminder.

Here are some options:

1. Use pen and paper to make drawings.
2. Use photographs.
3. Use scissors to cut pictures and texts from hardcopy magazines and glue them together on a piece of paper.
4. Use apps, like Bloom or Corkulous.
5. Anything else that you might feel is a creative expression of important values.

The purpose of your values reminder is not to focus on specific outcomes that one hopes to achieve. Instead, the current reminder should represent general values that are considered to be important in life.

Unlike goals, which represent what we want to achieve, values are ways of living that can never be obtained like an object, and can only be realized from moment to moment. In sum, the focus is on what is important to you, rather than on what you want to achieve.

Questions to think about after completing the values reminder.

1. How was it to create this values reminder?
2. What did you experience while making it?
3. What did you learn from this exercise?
4. Often during stressful times, your focus is mostly on dealing with negative things. This exercise helps you to shift from a focus on what is wrong, to a focus on what makes life worth living.

Using Values to Build Resilience

The goal of this exercise is to help you manage a challenging life event by connecting to what is important to you. That is, connecting to your values.

Step #1 Describe the challenging life event

Take a moment to consider a challenging event that is currently taking place. For example, you may have recently lost your job. Briefly describe the stressful event below:

Step #2 Identify reasons to get through the challenge

Consider why it is worth it to you to persevere and get through this challenging life situation. For example, getting through the challenge of losing a job and finding a new one may be worth it to you because you want to be there for your family, you want to be a role model, and you want to contribute to the world. Come up with as many reasons as you can, and list them in the space below.

Step #3 Identify values

Your values are the things that you consider to be important in life, such as honesty, kindness, care, autonomy, helping others, and financial independence.

With consideration to the reasons you listed in step 2, think of values that capture the essence of each of these reasons.

For example, if you listed that you want to be there for your family, the value could be “caring”. Note, finding the perfect value for each reason is not so important; what matters is if the value makes sense to you personally. It should also be noted that there may be more than one value per reason. A list of common values is displayed later on.

The values that make persevering through the challenge worth it to me:

A large, empty light blue rectangular area intended for the user to write their values.

Step #4 Staying in touch with values

When stressful life events occur, it can be difficult to stay connected to our values. The stress that results from stressful events can absorb so much of our attention that we lose track of what is truly important to us. And yet, values can serve as a light in the darkness of stressful times, reminding us why is it worth fighting for something, to keep going and to take responsibility.

This step involves creating a visual reminder of the values you specified in step 3. Using a blank piece of paper (either an individual sheet of paper or a page in a journal), represent your values visually in a way that you chose.

You might like to use illustrations, photographs, or words (or a combination of these). You may also consider creating a digital representation of your values, for example by using PowerPoint. Allow yourself to be as creative as you like here, ensuring that however you choose to represent your values resonates with you personally.

After you have completed your visual values reminder, you can put it somewhere where you can see it every day (e.g., on the refrigerator or office desk). In this way, it can help you to stay in touch with what makes your struggle worth going through.



List of Values

Acceptance	Excitement	Meaningful Work	Spirituality
Achievement	Experiment	Ministering	Stability
Advancement & Promotion	Expertise	Money	Status
Adventure	Exhilaration	Morality	Success
Affection	Fairness	Mystery	Teaching
Altruism	Fame	Nature	Tenderness
Arts	Family	Openness	Thrill
Awareness	Fast Pace	Originality	Unity
Beauty	Freedom	Order	Variety
Challenge	Friendship	Passion	Wealth
Change	Fun	Peace	Winning
Community	Grace	Personal Development	Wisdom
Compassion	Growth	Personal Expression	
Competence	Happiness	Planning	
Completion	Harmony	Play	
Connectedness	Health	Pleasure	
Cooperation	Helping Others	Power	
Collaboration	Helping Society	Privacy	
Country	Honesty	Purity	
Creativity	Humour	Quality	
Decisiveness	Imagination	Radiance	
Democracy	Improvement	Recognition	
Design	Independence	Relationships	
Discovery	Influencing	Religion	
Diversity	Inner Harmony	Reputation	
Environmental Awareness	Inspiration	Responsibility	
Economic Security	Integrity	Risk Safety & Security	
Education	Intellect	Self-Respect	
Effectiveness	Involvement	Sensibility	
Efficiency	Knowledge	Sensuality	
Elegance	Leadership	Serenity	
Entertainment	Learning	Service	
Enlightenment	Loyalty	Sexuality	
Equality	Magnificence	Sophistication	
Ethics	Making a Difference	Spark	
Excellence	Mastery	Speculation	

The Resilience Plan (the four S's)

How do people overcome challenging life events and experiences, like the death of a loved one, losing a job, or being diagnosed with a serious illness?

Most people react to such circumstances with a surge of negative affect and a sense of uneasiness; yet over time, they somehow adjust and adapt.

People are able to “bounce back” from adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress, because of their inherent resilience: “the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging circumstances,” (Garmezy and Masten).

Resilience is associated with inner strength, competence, optimism, flexibility, and the ability to cope effectively when faced with adversity; and, minimizing the impact of risk factors, such as stressful life events, and enhancing the protective factors, such as optimism, social support, and active coping that increase people’s ability to deal with life’s challenges.

Resilience is not a trait that people either have or do not have. It involves behaviours, thoughts, and actions that can be learned and developed.

One way to develop resilience is to draw on one’s learning from similar challenges in the past, to remember what you already know, but may have forgotten. What was it exactly that enabled a person to get through a period of illness, or a divorce, or being laid off at work?

That is, which supports did you call on, what strategies did you use, what sagacity (which is the wisdom and insight that we hold onto) did you hold onto, and what solutions did you find. These resilience resources are also known as the 4 S’s.

Goal

The goal of this tool is to help clients devise a personal resilience plan based on their existing resources (that is, what has helped them bounce back from difficulties in the past).

Advice

The beauty of this tool is that it builds trust in your resilience plan, given many if not all of the resources have worked for you in the past.

No matter how ridiculous it may seem to another person to listen to a particular pop song over and over again, or to buy a bar of particularly expensive chocolate, or to re-read a children's book, whatever you have done in the past, you know you find it helpful.

Due to this, these resilience plans are highly individualized and thus personally meaningful and useful, your resilience plan may not work for others, but the important point is it works for you.

Remember resilience is the ability to cope with whatever life throws at you, and bounce back stronger and more steadfast than before. Resilient people work through life challenges using personal resources, including social support, coping strategies, sagacity (which is the wisdom and insight that we hold onto), and solution seeking. This exercise helps you draw on your resilience resources to build a personal resilience plan, which you can use to help you combat any future challenges.

Part 1: My Past Sources of Resilience

Step 1. Recall a recent example of resilience

Think about a time recently when you overcome a challenge or set back in your life. Perhaps you injured yourself, or received some negative feedback at work, or had an argument with a friend or family member. Briefly describe this difficulty below.

Step 2. Identify supportive people

What 'supportive people' in your life kept you standing when it would have been easier to fall down? For instance, did you call an old friend, or ask a colleague for advice, or perhaps a parent or grandparent gave you a pep talk. Write down who you called on for support in the top right cell of the table in Appendix A.

Step 3. Identify strategies

What 'strategies' did you use to help yourself cope with any negative thoughts and feelings that showed up in response to the difficulty? For example, did you meditate, or write in a gratitude journal, or go for a walk, or listen to a particular song or type of music, or have a massage to release tension. Write down the strategies you used in the bottom left cell of the table in Appendix A.

Step 4. Identify sagacity

What 'sagacity' helped you bounce back from this difficulty? Sagacity is the wisdom and insight that you hold onto. It can come from song lyrics, novels, poetry, spiritual writings, quotes from the famous, the sayings of one's grandparent, or learning from one's own experience. Write down your sagacity in the bottom right cell of the table in Appendix A.

Step 5. Identify solution-seeking behaviours

What solution-seeking behaviours did you display to help you actively deal with the problem? For example, did you problem-solve, or seek out new information, or plan ahead, or negotiate, or speak up and voice your opinion, or ask others for help. Write down the solution-seeking behaviours you displayed in the top left cell of the table in Appendix A.

Part 2: My Resilience Plan

Step 6. Describe a current difficulty

In the space below, describe a current difficulty or challenge that you are facing.

Step 7. Apply the resilience plan to the current difficulty

Given the social supports, strategies, sagacity, and solution-seeking behaviours that helped you last time, let us look at how you could use the same or similar resources to help you bounce back from this current difficulty you are facing (identified in the previous step).

Read through your completed plan (Appendix A) and write down the skills, supports, strategies, and sagacity that could work again for you in the blank resilience plan template in Appendix B.

Allow some flexibility here in the sense that the same type of social support/ strategy/ sagacity/ solution-seeking behaviour could be tweaked according to your current situation, for instance going to your manager rather than a parent for support in the face of a work-related problem. An example of a completed resilience plan is shown in Appendix C.

Step 8. Carry out your resilience plan

The next step is to put your resilience plan into action. To do this, consider the order in which to use your different supports, strategies, sagacity, and solution-seeking behaviours: which resource is most feasible to start with?

Often the most feasible resource is the smallest step that you can take, such as calling your partner. On your resilience plan (Appendix B), place the number 1 next to the first resource you will use. Then, continue to number your different resources in the order in which you would feasibly use them.

Then, go ahead an action your first resource, and continue to work through your resilience plan (in order) until you have overcome this difficulty.

Once you have come through the other side, please move on to the next step.

Part 3: Evaluation

Step 9. Evaluate your resilience plan

Discuss the following:

1. How was it for you to carry out your resilience plan?
2. Did it help you bounce back from this difficulty?
3. What resources (specific skills/supports/strategies/sagacity) were most helpful to you? Why?
4. What resources (specific skills/supports/strategies/sagacity) were least helpful to you? Why?
5. Did you not use any resources, and if so, why?
6. Is there anything you would like to add to your resilience plan?
7. In what other areas of your life could you use your resilience plan? How might things improve for you?

Appendix A: My Past Sources of Resilience

Supports
that kept you upright

Strategies
that kept you moving

Sagacity
that gave you comfort and hope

Solution-seeking
behaviours you showed

Appendix B: My Resilience Plan

Supports
that kept you upright

Strategies
that kept you moving

Sagacity
that gave you comfort and hope

Solution-seeking
behaviours you showed

Appendix C: Example of a Resilience Plan

Difficult situation: Got nervous at a job interview and did not get the job

<p style="text-align: center;">Supports that kept you upright</p> <p>called my partner Joe - 0432182074 called my Mum - 0409867222 Booked an apt with my GP</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Strategies that kept you moving</p> <p>Went for a walk Smiling Mind meditation calming breathing technique Played with my dog Did some gardening Wrote in my gratitude journal Expressive writing</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Sagacity that gave you comfort and hope</p> <p>Remembered that growth comes from mistakes "This too shall pass" - sticky note on the fridge Thought about what I could do differently next time and wrote down on paper</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Solution-seeking behaviours you showed</p> <p>Asked for feedback from job interviewers Applied for 3x new jobs Sought professional coaching for job interviewing Joined a job club</p>