



HOW TO BUILD PERSONAL RESILIENCE

The key to thriving during
challenge and change



Over the last few years, we have seen a paradigm shift in the way we live and work. After a slew of lockdowns, furloughs, societal upheavals, existential crises, and loved ones being both lost and put at risk, it's safe to say we have all been impacted by world events.

The challenges we have faced have been truly global and universal. We have all been caught up in the same storm, even though the metaphorical boats vary significantly in size and some parts of the sea were more dangerous than others. Consequently, we have all been on unique journeys, and navigating these uncharted waters has required us all to expend a lot of energy and psychological resources.

Over the next decade we will continue to move through the cycles of survival, adaptation, and recovery. However, we can use these experiences to prepare us to thrive. This guide will provide useful information to understand the resources you have at your disposal and strategies you can deploy to help build your personal resilience and overcome future challenges and changes.

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PART 1

THE THREE FOUNDATIONS OF DEVELOPING RESILIENCE

There is more challenge and change ahead, so build resilience now.

Despite the abundant amount of transformation experienced as a result of the pandemic, significant change is not a unique phenomenon. If you look across human existence, we have experienced many hardships and times of uncertainty. However, with advances in technology, the speed of change is only going to increase even more significantly. The following are some of the challenges and changes organizations are facing now:

- **Remote/hybrid work:** McKinsey (2021) predicts there will be four to five times more remote work in advanced economies than there was before the pandemic.
- **Burnout:** According to a 2022 study by the World Health Organization, the pandemic has triggered a 25% increase in the prevalence of anxiety and depression globally.
- **Skills shortage for the future world of work:** According to a 2021 McKinsey survey, 87% of companies across the globe were either already facing a skills shortage or expect to experience one within the next few years.

In many ways, our unstable environment has crafted the human species to be very effective at adapting to change. We possess a range of characteristics that enable us to adapt in response to changing situations, which are related to our physical and mental capabilities. However, arguably the most important are our psychological resources, as any action in the physical world requires an initial thought and the electrical impulse of our neurons firing.

Over the last 50 years, the psychological and neurobiological literature has been particularly focused on understanding what those characteristics are and how we can develop them further. These psychological resources have been given many names, but the term most commonly used to convey our capacity to overcome and learn from challenges is **resilience**.





What is resilience?

Resilience has been defined in many different ways by researchers. Our definition is that it is 'an individual's capacity to adapt positively to pressure, setbacks, challenges, and change in order to optimize performance and maintain well-being.'

Key aspects of this definition highlight some important characteristics of resilience:

- It is a capacity, so it can be developed with concerted effort.
- It is about positive adaptation, rather than changing in ways that can be maladaptive.
- It is not just about significant adversity, but also typical pressures, setbacks, and changes.
- It is about maintaining our well-being and ensuring we are able to perform effectively in the moment so we can survive, adapt, recover, and hopefully thrive.

Resilience is both a resource that can be utilized and a set of strategies that you can deploy in the face of adversity. However, despite these psychological resources and skills being validated, available for us to use, and supported by evidence, it is hard to choose to deploy them when you are dealing with a crisis.

The reality is dealing with events like a pandemic is truly unprecedented, so these are difficult seas to navigate, especially when the compass for it has yet to be invented. It is okay to be struggling, it is okay to find it hard, it is okay to need help. Nevertheless, if we can deploy some of these well-researched resilience strategies, it may help us steer forward through the storm.

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How do we build resilience?

When dealing with such complicated issues as overcoming challenge, change, and adversity, there isn't an easy answer to the question, "How do I develop my resilience?"

Developing resilience requires a holistic understanding of who you are and how you are resilient, your physical state, and what you are motivated to change. It is also impacted by your experiences, situation, and the type of challenges you are facing. Nevertheless, there are some strategies that can be used to help us build up and improve our resilience.

These strategies need to be applied regularly to facilitate sustainable change. While challenge and change can facilitate and elicit neuroplasticity, the key is to make sure the change is for the positive. These strategies we term as 'psychological resources' which can be used in the moment, after the moment, and even to prepare for another moment. Despite our psychological resources being the most important foundation of developing resilience, there are actually a total of three that we think are essential to foster a resilient mindset.

The three foundations of developing a resilience mindset

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Understanding your psychological resources: how are you resilient?

Our experiences shape us. However, how we interpret and understand these experiences vary. This is determined by our psychological resources – the way we think, feel, and behave. Our psychological resources can help us:

- reframe our experiences
- persevere through challenges
- be agile in the face of change
- enable us to relate to ourselves and others.

To understand how to develop your resilience, you need to know yourself, your strengths, and your motivations. If you can understand yourself, your psychological resources, and how you are resilient, you can create the best roadmap for your own development. Understanding your personal resilience profile, which is determined by your psychological resources, will help you uncover the techniques and strategies that will have the biggest impact on your development.



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2 Understand your physiological resources: how can you enhance your physical well-being?

Our consciousness and experiences are ultimately filtered through the amazing and sophisticated mechanisms of our mind and body. Understanding our nervous system and how it interacts with the rest of our physiology gives us greater insight regarding the origins of our emotions and how we regulate them and our bodies.

By learning about our physiology and the connection between mind and body, we can better understand how we experience the world as biological entities and the mechanisms that enhance our subjective experience. The knowledge and understanding in this area are constantly growing, which highlights the importance of sleep, light, exercise, food, and breathing when it comes to our physical well-being and our ability to navigate challenge and change.

3 Understanding the importance of renewal: how you can find balance?

If you just keep sailing while your leaking boat fills with water, you're not being resilient, you're just surviving. The water needs to be emptied out and the cracks need to be repaired to avoid sinking. Even when you think you do not have the time to do it, make the time, as renewal is essential for both survival and growth. Renewal is needed to help us rebuild both our psychological and physiological resources and put us back on track.

Recognize how you are feeling and find ways to help you renew, which can be as simple as taking breaks, going for walks, or listening to music. The key is that you need to actively pursue renewal so that you can bring yourself some form of balance. None of us can keep going without renewal, so make sure you do this before you burn out.

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PART 2

RESILIENCE IN THE MOMENT: UNDERSTANDING STRESS

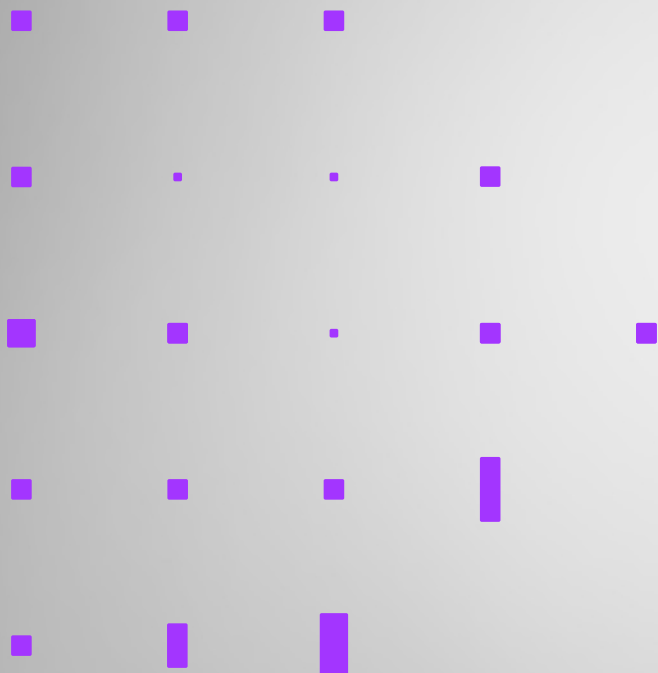
As important as building and enhancing our resilience is, this typically happens after we have experienced a very challenging moment or when things are more under control. However, what do we do when we are actually in the midst of a crisis or a significant change? What we do during this time can be especially critical, as our decisions in these moments can potentially have a significant impact.

Our ability to think clearly enables us to achieve the positive outcome we are looking for and maintain our well-being. So how do we navigate challenge and change in the moment? Is there anything we can do to address this? The starting point is understanding one of the key outcomes of anyone experiencing pressure, setbacks, challenge, and change, and that is **stress**.

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What is stress?

In recent years, discussions about stress and well-being at work have become more open and transparent.

The experience of lockdowns, economic uncertainty, isolation, home schooling, ill-health, and grief have all been significant sources of stress, with many of us trying our best to navigate these situations while dealing with increased responsibilities at work.

Stress was a term originally coined in physics in the 1800s. Since the 1930s, biologists have used the terminology to explain how potentially threatening external circumstances can elicit both a physiological and psychological reaction in us. Like any topic in science, there are many views of how stress is defined and experienced, but at a fundamental level, most believe it to be a dynamic process that is experienced when the environmental demands exceed the capacity of an individual.

Our personal experience of being stressed is typically not positive, characterized by a state of fear, concern, and anxiety. Despite this, stress is useful for our survival and is very helpful in the short term. Once we appraise a situation and identify a stressor in our environment, our central nervous system prepares our body to overcome challenge and change. The body releases adrenaline, which regulates many of our physiological processes and puts our minds and bodies in a focused state, enabling us to better navigate crisis, challenge, and change. Therefore, the core goal of stress is to help us perform better when we really need to.

However, extended periods of stress are ultimately a significant issue for both individuals and organizations, as it takes its toll and depletes our resources. On a physiological level, repetitive and prolonged stress leads to a range of negative health outcomes. On a psychological level, academic research has shown that stress is related to lower job performance in a range of contexts (banking, healthcare, hospitality, and education are a few industries in which academic research studies have been conducted on the subject). Prolonged and excessive stress can lead to burnout, an issue that can have a long-term impact on our physical and psychological well-being.

Resilience, stress, and the survival state

Higher levels of resilience have been shown to be related to lower levels of experienced stress in a variety of contexts and situations.

It has also been shown to act as a buffer against stress and to help moderate the relationship with performance. Therefore, our resilience can provide some answers around how we overcome excessive levels of stress and ensure that we can overcome challenges in the moment.

The challenge with needing to be resilient in the moment is we do not have the benefit of time. As a consequence, we cannot reflect and think as clearly, which are key techniques to help build our resilience. Typically, the stress response sends us into a 'survival state.' This prepares us for action, but can limit our ability to deploy our executive functioning which is responsible for our more rationale thinking.

In this survival state we are more likely to advocate action that supports short-term success rather than long-term. This may include being more judgmental of yourself and others, more defensive, more rigid, and more likely to blame others. Therefore, our tendency to use more automatic thinking – rather than deliberate thinking – enables us to think more quickly, but also means we are more susceptible to using shortcuts and making decisions based on assumptions.

This type of automatic thinking has been very useful for ensuring our survival throughout history. However, in the new paradigm of the workplace, these instincts may be less helpful, and in some cases may have a significantly negative impact on our well-being. Therefore, in addition to us needing to overcome a challenging situation in our environment, we also need to overcome some of our own physiological mechanics that can impact our ability to deliver a successful outcome.

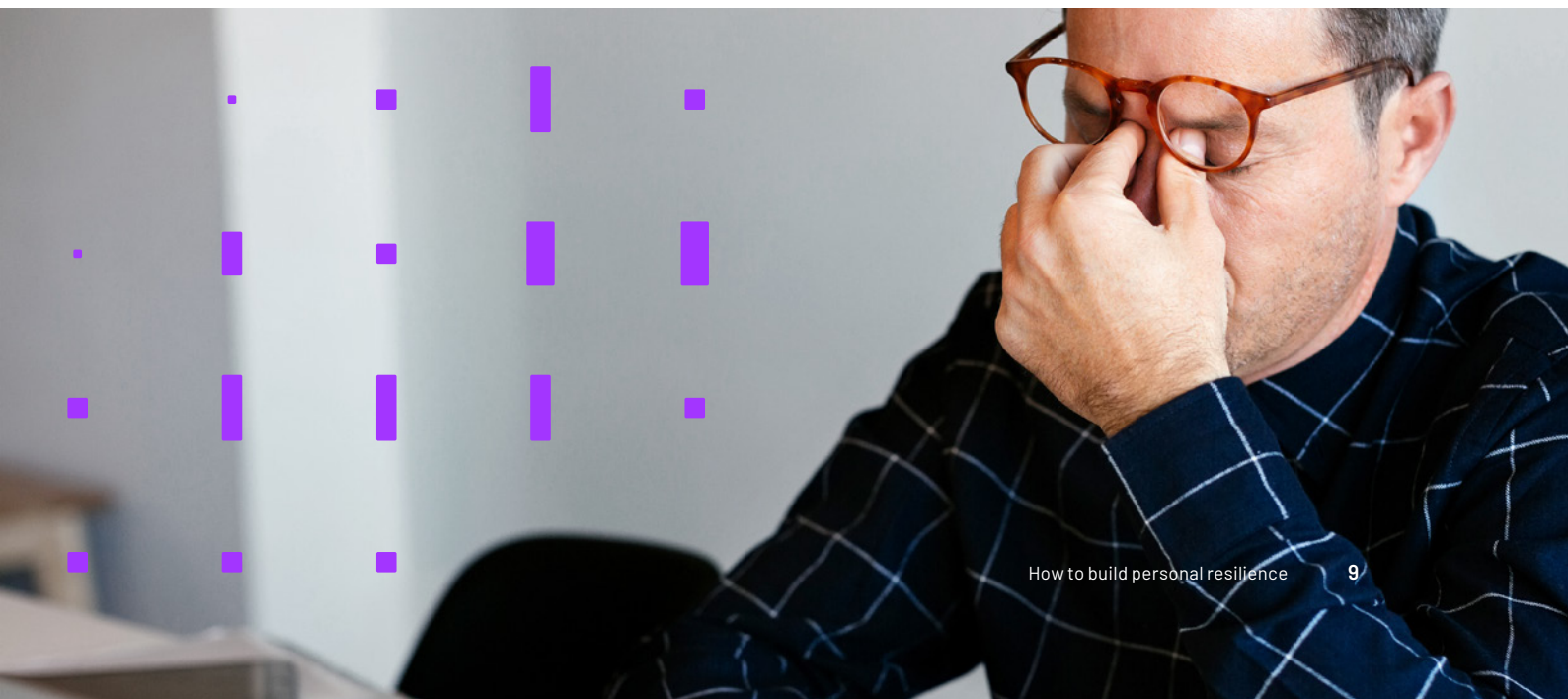
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What can help you in a stressful moment?

Step 1: understand the mechanics of stress and how it impacts your feelings

Understanding the mechanisms by which stress manifests itself can provide us greater awareness of how we process information and its impact on how we feel. Accessing this information has never been easier and there is a growing body of research showing the direct link between our physiology and our psychology.

Being mindful of when we are experiencing stress enables us to both acknowledge it and then proactively reduce it. Stress is easily observable (increased heart rate, faster breathing, and high blood pressure), and since it has a very direct impact on how we behave, it provides a very noticeable and important mechanism to understand.

Step 2: employ the power of breathing

Modifying our breathing exercises have been shown to have a huge impact on our physiology and feelings. The use of 'breathing instructions' has been commonly recommended to both individuals with ordinary levels of stress and patients with anxiety disorders. Typically breathing exercises are used as part of cognitive behavioral treatments, meditative approaches, or somatic therapies.

Fundamentally, breathing is a very easily accessible tool that can help us regulate our emotions and how we are feeling in a very direct manner. Once we are consciously aware of feeling stressed, we can use deep breathing or other breathing techniques/ methodologies to help us in moments of stress and enable us to think more clearly when needed.



Step 3: utilize the right narrative

Typically, in moments of significant stress it is hard to reframe your thinking without extensive practice. However, in the moment, after you have become aware of the stress and used breathing to calm yourself down, the use of narratives can help you overcome the challenge. These can be unique to the individual and the situation that they are facing, or it can be as simple as reminding yourself of the following three statements:

- **"I can get through this; I have gotten through situations like this before."**
- **"Challenge and change only help me learn and grow."**
- **"Everything will be okay in the end; I just need to get through it."**

There are many other ways we can navigate challenge and change in the moment and techniques that can maintain our well-being. These three simple steps provide a very quick and intuitive means of helping us calm ourselves down and give us the clear thinking needed to overcome a crisis. By doing so you will be on your way to building not only long-term resilience, but also the ability to train yourself to be resilient.



PART 3

ENHANCING YOUR PSYCHOLOGICAL RESOURCES: FAILURE IS A GIFT

After we experience a challenge in the moment, we may overcome this challenge and experience a sense of success. However, life does not always work out that way and we may feel like we have failed.

While not a feeling we naturally covet, failure is not something we should avoid thinking about. It can be something we accept, embrace, and use as fuel for growth. Our brains quite literally are wired to create new connections based on certain experiences, failure being one of them. More on that to come.

An ecosystem for challenge, change, and comparison

When we define what resilience truly is, it isn't just surviving through the difficult times; resilience is our ability to face challenges, changes, and setbacks and use them to grow and learn from those moments.

In addition, resilience is not defined by constant victory and success. This sometimes gets lost in our wondrous world of social media, where we have access to the curated lives of the wealthiest, most symmetrical, and most successful people on the planet.

We are constantly bombarded by stories of unmitigated success, so our perceptions of the commonplace failures and setbacks everyone experiences are both skewed and diluted. Even when people choose to be vulnerable by sharing their foibles, imperfections, and anxieties, it is still a filtered view, as no picture or text fully communicates what a person has truly experienced.

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When we compare ourselves to these surface level victories, we assume that only success, achievement, and happiness are valuable. We may spend our time wondering why everyone else seems to get it right and make it look easy with swan-like poise while we stumble gracelessly through the catwalk of life.

The truth is, there are times we may rise to the occasion and many others we feel like we failed or could have done significantly better. Many of us can relate to feeling overwhelmed at times by the amount of challenge and change catapulted in our direction. The reality is that while the potentially negative feelings that these failures elicit may not be enjoyable, they provide the most fertile ground for growth.

Negative emotions should be embraced

In a world where we are bombarded by surface level success, sometimes it feels that negative emotions need to be avoided, ignored, or disavowed. However, these emotions are valuable and healthy, and we need to learn to manage them without denial.

Emotions aren't necessarily good or bad, they are just states and signals that allow us to pay more attention to the events that create them. Negative emotions may not always be pleasant to experience. However, they are there to alert us that something needs to change and will hopefully motivate us to act.

Therefore, when we fail, these emotions need to be managed rather than ignored so we can use them as fuel for learning. By acknowledging them, we can avoid a sense of failure evolving into a sense of shame.



Shame versus guilt

When it comes to failure, we may use the terms shame and guilt interchangeably to describe our feelings. However, there's a big difference between the two in terms of both definition and outcome.

- Guilt can help you understand how your actions impact others and how you can improve.
- Shame, on the other hand, is an inward-facing emotion that reflects how you feel about yourself.

A meta-analysis by Leach and Cidam in 2015 showed that guilt typically leads to pro-social and constructive behavior, as the failures were ultimately seen as repairable, so they elicited positive action. Shame focused the failure on who you are, rather than the situation and your actions. Therefore, despite being thought of as similar, shame led to less pro-social behavior, as the source of the issue was perceived as irreparable and pervasive.

Therefore, it is important that any failure is perceived as a reaction to the context, situation, and what we did rather than who we are. Consequently, failure should be seen as transient, as we all can make the wrong decisions. Our response is what is most important, as we need to use these events as an opportunity to learn and grow.

Failure, the fuel for activation of learning

What we commonly call 'learning,' when defined in neurobiological terms, is the result of triggering a state of plasticity within our brains. Neuroplasticity is the physiological act of our brain growing new connections in both our nervous system and neuronal networks. It is a state that children can tap into very easily, hence their ability to develop, learn, and grow at such astonishing levels.

For those above the age of 25, this state of plasticity can still exist, but is typically much harder to tap into. In fact, research by neurobiologists show that failure is one of the few things that inspires this state of plasticity. Therefore, effective learning is created by a chemical urgency that requires the right mix of chemicals to create a learning cocktail.

These physiological systems confirm why failure is so important for our growth. Our brains are so primed for survival that their ability to build new connections is not only facilitated by, but also dependent on us failing.

What does this all mean?

Be compassionate to yourself. If you have ever felt like you have failed, not been at your best, or simply struggled, give yourself grace. Everyone fails. It is part of being human and is the very foundation of learning. We can grow through these experiences. However, the key for feelings of failure to be useful is not to avoid or disavow these feelings, but to manage and accept them.

Failure is useful. The research shows that failure not only inspires growth but is the perfect chemical ecosystem for our brains to learn. Take the opportunity to use these experiences to strengthen yourself. If you are comparing yourself to others, try to be fair and set yourself realistic expectations. Overall experience is the best way for us to develop. If we fear failure, we will deny ourselves the opportunity to truly grow and flourish.

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PART 4

ENHANCING YOUR PSYCHOLOGICAL RESOURCES: THE POWER OF REFLECTION

Why is reflection important?

Our experiences are the building blocks for who we are and how we grow. As discussed previously, failure is not something we should avoid but rather something we use to inspire learning. However, the question remains, “How do we effectively learn from these experiences, be it positive or negative?”

Reflection plays a significant, central role in a range of activities related to self-improvement and enhancing our psychological resources. Its importance has been implicit dating back to the earliest writings in both the psychological and philosophical disciplines, with the Socratic method of questioning being the basis of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.

In our always-on, tech-enabled world, we are bombarded with information from people, technology, and our environment. Consequently, having the time available to reflect is a privilege, as we are typically rushing through life, multitasking and focusing on what needs to be done next.

How often do you constructively reflect on your experiences? While it may be difficult to carve out this time, it can be the driver of growth. There are three psychological models that are particularly helpful in highlighting the importance of reflection and how it can be used to convert challenges, setbacks, or changes that we experience into learning.

Three ways to embed reflection

Model one: system 1 versus system 2 thinking

When we are busy or dealing with challenges, we sometimes get lost in what Daniel Kahneman terms as 'system 1 thinking' – our more automatic, unconscious type of thinking. This type of thinking can lead us to believe that environments and events directly impact the way we feel rather than acknowledging our involvement in the process.

A foundation of reflection teaches us to appreciate that our feelings and thoughts are not *caused* by these events, but by our *interpretation* of them. Therefore, we need to appreciate that whatever we feel is overlaid by our conscious and unconscious reactions, which are not always as objective as we like to believe.

When reflecting, we need to use what Kahneman would term as our 'system 2 thinking' – our more conscious, deliberate thinking style. When experiencing challenges, it is not always easy to deploy this type of thinking, as automatic and action-oriented behavior is typically more useful in those situations. In order to learn from these challenges, it's important to make time after you experience them to evaluate them and better test any assumptions.

Model two: the ABCs of experience

Albert Ellis developed a cognitive approach called Rational Emotive Therapy which has been successful in helping people dispute their irrational beliefs that can lead them to feeling depressed. Ellis argues that we create personal stress by consciously or unconsciously holding these irrational beliefs about ourselves, other people, and the world.

Despite the model being used predominantly for in-depth therapeutic treatment, it can also be helpful when reviewing our experiences as it makes explicit our inner voice and its impact on how we feel. The model breaks down our reaction to external events into three broad steps: adversity, belief, and consequences.

- Adversities are events that precipitate a reaction. They can be big (like losing a job, ending a relationship, or the death of a loved one) or they can be relatively small (like missing a deadline, arguing with a friend, or being late for a meeting).
- Beliefs are the thoughts we have and the way in which we interpret the event. They drive how we feel and what we do.
- Consequences are the product of the event and the beliefs we hold about it. They are the way we feel and what we do in the moment of adversity or challenge.

The ABC model may not be as easily deployed without facilitation, but it highlights the importance of reviewing our experiences objectively. The reflection we do can uncover deeper insights into what beliefs may be impacting our behavior and whether we hold any that are limiting us.

Model three: the learning cycle

David Kolb, Peter Honey, and Alan Mumford have long discussed the value of different learning styles and the power of experiential learning. Kolb's experiential learning cycle refers to the process by which individuals, teams, and organizations attend to and understand experiences, and consequently modify their behaviors.

The learning cycle is based on the idea that the more often we reflect on a task, the more often we have the opportunity to modify and refine our efforts. The experiential learning cycle is a four-step learning process that is applied multiple times in every interaction: **experience, reflect, think, and act.**

It's a learning process that includes:

- 1 a concrete experience that initiates this learning process
- 2 reflection, review, and perspective about the experience
- 3 abstract thinking to reach conclusions and conceptualize the meaning of the experience
- 4 a decision to act by engaging in active experimentation or trying out what you've learned.

Takeaways to improve self-reflection

How can we use these theories practically to enhance our resilience?

- **Recognize the need to reflect after you have experienced any challenge, setback, or change.** Ensure it is soon after the event so that you can review the experience in detail, but also ensure enough time has passed so you can think it through clearly. Try your best to overcome any assumptions or automatic thinking.
- **Ensure you appreciate that the consequences of adversity are influenced by your beliefs.** Use the time to reflect and understand these beliefs more clearly and determine if they are helping you.
- **When reviewing experiences consider what happened, what worked well, and what you could have done differently.** Try to put anything that you learn into action and see what the impact is. Ensure that this is a cyclical process, so you can modify your behavior and improve your ability to navigate challenges in the future as well.

PART 5

ENHANCING YOUR PSYCHOLOGICAL RESOURCES: GRATITUDE

Despite the world being full of amazing kindness and beauty, we are also aware that our lives are fragile and the world around us is volatile.

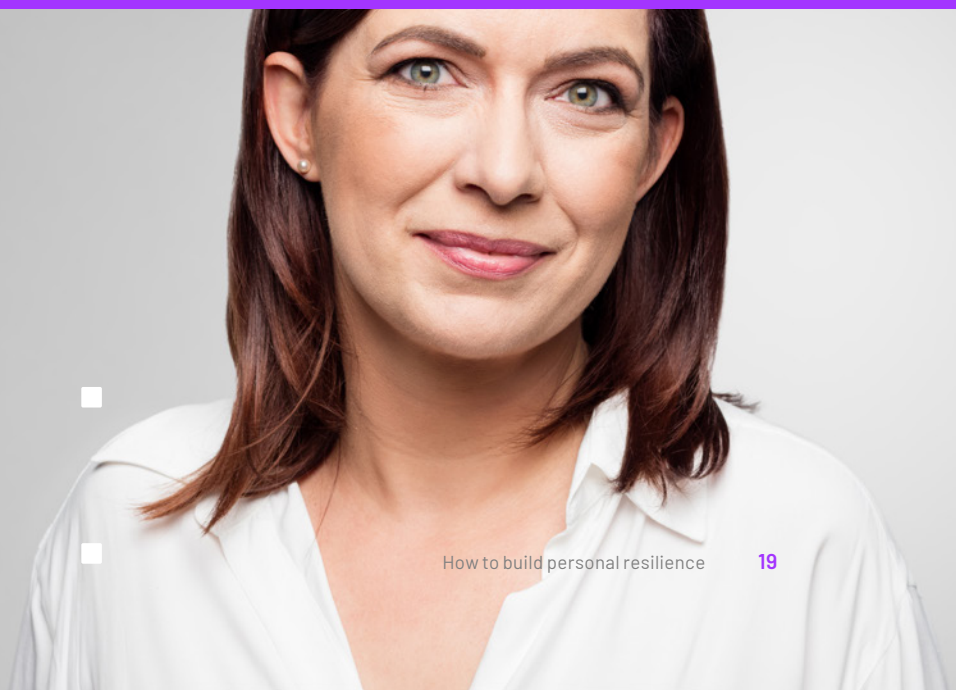
Between the challenges of the pandemic and ongoing world events, it is obvious that uncertainty is not a unique circumstance; it is a constant that we need to be ready to overcome. One way to manage current and future negative events is to focus on the concept of gratitude and a recognition of all the positive things that make up our lives.

Change, challenge, and crisis, are not unique

Highlighting that challenge and change are part of our lives is not a profound insight, as the evidence for this is right in front of us. Even the most surface level examination of human history and the natural world demonstrates that life is fraught with volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. Despite our best efforts to avoid it, the reality is that challenge and change are the default setting for the world around us.

These sorts of statements may be perceived as potentially negative, but that is not the goal – the goal is to help us put things in context, manage our expectations, and be mindful of our environment. If you take a macro view and put our existence in the context of history and the vastness of the universe, it is clear the chances of us just simply existing as conscious entities are so infinitely small. Ultimately, if we are living, breathing, healthy, and safe, we are truly lucky. However, it is sometimes hard to look at things with that outlook, as we are focused on navigating daily life.

By putting things in perspective, we can hopefully overcome feelings of uncertainty and enable ourselves to feel gratitude in the face of world events that sometimes feel overwhelming.



What is gratitude?

Expressing and experiencing gratitude plays an important role in forming and maintaining social relationships and our mental health. It is comprised of two key elements:

- 1 **Perspective**, which is the way we view things and the awareness that everyone sees the world slightly differently.
- 2 **Control**, which is about accepting that we don't have control over every situation and that things will arise that we didn't expect or ask for.

Understanding both elements can enable us to recognize that despite the volatility of the world around us, we always have control over ourselves, our thinking, feelings, and actions. Consequently, gratitude can help our self-control and cognitive reappraisal.

Facilitating a 'gratitude practice' may not work for everyone, but it is a great way to shape how we look at the world, both when things are good and when things are not so good.

What are some benefits of practicing gratitude?

The term gratitude could potentially inspire a negative reaction, especially if its wonders are hoisted upon you by someone else or communicated in an aggressive manner (i.e., people telling you that you should be grateful). Trying to force gratitude on others will not be as impactful.

However, if you own the process yourself, and you have personally chosen to take an active role in facilitating it, research has shown that gratitude can have many benefits such as:

- Increased life satisfaction
- Boosted immune system
- Improved protection of cardiovascular health
- Increased effortful acts of kindness



How does gratitude help build resilience?

Practicing gratitude is shown to be positively related to emotional coping in the aftermath of challenging events. A huge body of research shows that gratitude is important for developing resilience and coping strategies in a range of populations (Kong et al, 2021, McGuire et al, 2021).

Gratitude helps build resilience, as it helps reframe past traumas, and can act as a buffer for the negative events that an individual has experienced. Gratitude has also been shown to have a lasting effect that is psychologically protective and can buffer against future traumas that may be encountered later in life.

On a physiological level, gratitude causes the release of neuromodulators dopamine and serotonin, which improve emotion regulation and self-motivation. Gratitude has also been found to modulate functional connectivity in the amygdala, which is associated with the threat response, anxiety, and depression. It also reduces the threat response, so this combination of physiological impacts can lead people to improve themselves via increases in connectedness, elevation, and humility.

What underpins an effective gratitude practice?

Many gratitude interventions have been developed and applied in clinical and empirical research. Common to these is the focus on counting and listing what we should be grateful for. Interventions that involve expressing gratitude have yielded positive results and are found to be closely associated with improvements in mood and subjective well-being (Deng et al, 2018).

Evidence suggests key elements for an effective gratitude practice include:

- **Make it a habit** – practice it regularly, as only with persistence can you facilitate change.
- **Have the right intention** – it must be genuine; you need to focus on what you are truly grateful for.
- **Make it brief** – gratitude practices have shown to be very effective even when it is as short as five minutes.
- **Make it engaging** – be sure you ground it in a story or narrative where it is likely going to have a stronger impact.
- **Recall both giving and receiving** – consider reflecting both on when you have received gratitude as well as expressed gratitude.
- **Integrate with mindfulness** – you can build it around neuropsychological processes that underpin gratitude (i.e. mediation) to engage relevant brain regions.

A gratitude practice may not be for you. Even if you don't want to make it a regular activity, I would consider having a go and taking a moment to bask in whatever you appreciate. Alternatively, take a moment to tell someone that you appreciate them.

In this uncertain world, we don't know what is ahead of us, but we do know that our connections and relationships matter.

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One of three foundations of developing your resilience is by looking after your physiological resources. As important as the way we **think** and **feel** is, these psychological resources are housed within a physiological ecosystem. Therefore, it is **important** we don't just look after our **mind**, but also our **body**.

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Understanding your physiological resources:

TOP TIPS TO ENHANCE YOUR PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

Behavioral change research shows that forming healthy habits is the most sustainable way to enhance both our psychological resources and physiological resources. The key to forming lasting habits is making them small and embedding them in our existing routines. Here we outline ten steps that are inspired by research to help you enhance your physical well-being, which will in turn hopefully enhance your capacity for resilience.

1 Start the day with a walk

Aim to walk outside so that you get exposure to sunlight – which activates the areas of the brain responsible for alertness – for 10-30 minutes.

2 Stay hydrated

Try to drink one to two cups of water before beginning any work to improve overall health and productivity.

3 Delay caffeine consumption

If you can, wait for at least 90 minutes after you wake up before having any caffeine to minimize the effect that it has on receptors that induce sleepiness.

4 Posture is important

Check that you are sitting upright and that your screen is positioned at eye level or slightly higher which is shown to improve attention and cognitive performance.

5 Work in 90-minute cycles

The body naturally follows ultradian rhythms of 90 minutes during wakefulness. Alertness is heightened in the first part of the cycle and gradually starts to decline until the body craves a period of rest.

6 Try listening to white noise

Try listening to low intensity white noise without headphones while you are working to engage your brain's dopamine neurones and regulate the function of motivation and learning.

7 Reduce food intake at lunch

Eating until you are 80% full can help to maintain alertness by reducing blood insulin levels and measures of inflammation that are linked to impaired cognitive performance.

8 Reset the mind and body with meditation

Try a 10-minute meditation after lunch to start the afternoon in a relaxed and focused state. Meditation helps to restore cognitive control by balancing the autonomic nervous system and regulating heart rate.

9 Look after your eyes

Try the 20-20-20 rule to reduce eye strain by taking a 20 second break every 20 minutes to look at least 20 feet away from your screen.

10 Support healthy sleep habits

To help achieve better sleep, nature may be your secret weapon. Viewing natural light, particularly in the late afternoon, can lower retina sensitivity. This in turn reduces the impact of bright light on sleep onset due to regulating the melatonin rhythm responsible for inducing sleepiness. Use this as an excuse to take an afternoon walk or a 10-minute meditation break outside (see number eight above) to take advantage of this light.



