

**Greater Manchester
Healthcare Academy**



Building Resilience

TRAINING RESOURCE

GM Healthcare Academy
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Building resilience

We all face trauma, adversity and other stresses in our daily lives. The aim of this training is to help you build resilience and therefore adapt better to life-changing situations.

Learning objectives

- Know what resilience is
- Understand why resilience is important
- Understand how to practically improve and build resilience,





What is resilience?

Psychologists define resilience as “the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress, such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors”. As much as resilience involves “bouncing back” from these difficult experiences, it can also involve profound personal growth.

Life does not come with a guide map, but we all experience twists and turns on the road, from everyday challenges, at home and at work; to traumatic events with more longer lasting impact, like the death of a loved one, a life-altering accident, or a serious illness or even a pandemic. Change affects everyone in a different way, and we all experience strong emotions, negative thoughts and uncertainty. Yet people generally adapt well over time to life -changing and stressful situations, in part due to their resilience.

While adverse events are certainly painful, difficult and destabilise, they don't have to determine the outcome. There are many aspects of life you can control, modify, and grow with. That's where your flexibility and resilience have a role to play. Becoming more resilient not only helps you get through difficult times, it also enables you to grow and even improve your life along the way.

Of course, being resilient doesn't mean that you will never feel the pressure or stress of a particular situation or event, but it does mean that you will be in a better position and have effective ways of dealing with it. People who have suffered major hardship or trauma in their lives commonly experience emotional pain and stress.

While some individuals are more resilient than others due to certain life factors such as supportive parents or financial stability, resilience isn't necessarily a personality trait that only some people possess. On the contrary, resilience involves behaviours, thoughts, and actions that anyone can learn and develop.

In the same way that a physically healthy person has a better chance of recovering from injury or illness, someone who is mentally healthy will be better placed to recover from difficult, stressful and traumatic situations and this is in essence, is resilience.

Building resilience can be compared to building muscle, increasing your resilience takes time and purpose.

Resilience focusses on these core components:



- relationship building
- mental and physical wellbeing
- positive thinking and
- purpose

which will enable you to endure and learn from difficult and traumatic experiences. Use these four to increase your capacity for resilience to enable you to confront, and grow from the difficulties life may present to you.

Build relationships

Prioritise relationships. By building healthy relationships with empathetic and understanding people such as family, friends and work colleagues, who remind you that you're not alone. Concentrate on finding trustworthy and compassionate individuals who understand your feelings, this will support you in building your resilience.

The pain of traumatic events can lead some people to isolate themselves, but it's important to accept help and support from those who care about you. Whether you plan a lunch out with a friend or a mini break with your spouse, try to give priority to genuinely connecting with people who care about you.

Along with one-on-one relationships, some people find that being active in groups, faith-based communities, or other local organisations provides social support and can help you reclaim hope, therefore join a group or social club. Research groups in your area that could offer you support and a sense of purpose or happiness when you feel you need it. There are resources at the end of this training that you can access to support you in this. Even a virtual group can help in these unprecedented times. Connecting with people is key.

Boost your wellbeing

Take care of your body. Self-care may be a popular word, but it's also a legitimate practice for mental health and building resilience. That's because stress is just as much physical as it is emotional. Promoting positive lifestyle factors like a healthy diet, ample sleep, hydration, and regular exercise can strengthen your body to adapt to stress and reduce the toll of emotions like anxiety or depression.




Try to practise mindfulness..

Mindfulness, yoga, and other practices like prayer or meditation can also help people build connections and restore

hope, which can empower you to deal with situations that require resilience. These practices have been shown to reduce stress and anxiety. They may also help improve mental health and increase emotion regulation as well as self-control.

Practice self-compassion. So that you become more attuned to supporting yourself through the difficulties of life rather than harming ourselves and making situations more unmanageable than they need to be. For example, do not be so hard on yourself when you make a mistake, learn from it or do not feel responsible for things that are outside of your control, be accepting of your limitations. Research has shown that people who have self-



compassion: can cope better with adversities, take more personal initiative and responsibility, are less fearful of making mistakes and being rejected, are more emotionally intelligent, happier and more optimistic and take better care of themselves physically and emotionally.

Avoid negative habits. It may be tempting to mask your pain or feelings with alcohol, drugs, or other substances, but that's not tackling the issue. Concentrate instead on giving your body resources to manage the stress, rather than seeking to eliminate the feeling of stress altogether.

Rest. We are all aware of the importance of sleep and rest for our physical and mental health. Good quality sleep improves our mental cognition, concentration, productivity and performance, it maximises problem solving skills and improves memory.

Rest isn't just about sleep. Around every 90 minutes take a 5-minute mental break as not taking breaks may lead to confusion, increased pressure and eventually stress. Taking mental breaks will help you stay focussed, retain information and generally be more productive.

Find a purpose

Help others. Whether you volunteer with a local homeless shelter or simply support a friend in their own time of need, you can gain a sense of purpose by being there for others; foster self-worth and connect with other people, all of which will allow you to grow in resilience.

Be proactive. It's helpful to acknowledge and accept your emotions during difficult times, but it's also important to help you nurture self-discovery by asking yourself, "What can I do about this problem in my life?" If the problem seems too big to tackle, break it down into manageable pieces. Ask for help if you need it.

Move toward your goals. Develop some realistic goals and do something about it regularly, even if it seems like a small achievement, this will enable you to move toward the things you want to accomplish.

Instead of focusing on tasks that seem unachievable, ask yourself, "What's one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?" Being able to notice and celebrate productive moments of the day and recognise our good qualities is an essential part of managing and achieving a balance in difficult times.




Look for opportunities for self-discovery. People often find that they have grown in some respect as a result of a struggle. For example, after a tragedy or hardship, people have reported better relationships and a greater sense of strength, even while feeling vulnerable. That can increase their sense of self-worth and increase their appreciation for life.

Develop a positive mindset

We all have a tendency towards negativity. So ask yourself how you might improve things if you adopt a different interpretation or perspective on the situation or issue at hand.

Keep things in perspective. How you think can play a significant part in how you feel and how resilient you are when faced with certain challenges that life may bring. Try to identify areas of irrational thinking, such as a tendency to exaggerate difficulties and adopt a more balanced, pragmatic and realistic thinking pattern. For instance, if you feel overwhelmed by a challenge, remind yourself that what happened isn't an indicator of how the future will go, and that you're not helpless. You may not be able to change a highly stressful event, but you can change how you interpret and respond to it. Evaluate your situation and ask yourself:



“Could there be another way of looking at this? Do I need more information? How will I or we benefit from the way I am thinking/feeling?”

Accept change. Accept that change is a part of life. Certain goals or ideals may no longer be attainable as a result of adverse situations in your life. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can.

Maintain a positive outlook. It’s hard to be positive when life isn’t going your way. An optimistic outlook allows you to expect that good things will happen to you. Try visualising what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear. Along the way, take note of any subtle ways in which you start to feel better as you deal with difficult situations. Keep a diary and write down the things you have achieved, that have gone well for you that day or week. The more we reflect on the positive, the more positive we become. In this diary reflect on and write about feelings, reflect on the positive aspects of your life and recall the things you’re grateful for, even during difficult work or personal times.

Learn from your past. By looking back at who or what was helpful in previous times of distress, you may discover how you can react better to new difficult situations. Remind yourself of where you found the strength and motivation and ask yourself what you’ve learned from those experiences.

Seek help when you need it

It is a sign of strength to know when you need help and to be able to ask for it. Getting help when you need it is crucial in building your resilience.

For many people, using their own resources may be enough to build their resilience. However, sometimes that is not enough and you may need to seek professional help.

A mental health professional can assist people in developing an appropriate plan for moving forward. It is important to get professional help if you feel like you are unable to function as well as you would like or perform basic activities of daily living as a result of a traumatic or other stressful life experience.

It is always important to remember that you are not, and should not, be alone on the journey to building your resilience. While you may not be able to control everything, you can grow by focusing on the aspects of life's challenges you can manage with the support of loved ones and professionals.



Every one of us can increase our resilience, all you need is to be prepared to try. Things won't change overnight, but with determination and practice you can develop a new healthier way of thinking and behaving, increasing your resilience and improving your chances of remaining mentally healthy and staying calm and confident in difficult times.

Remember that resilient people treat mistakes as experiences they can learn from and opportunities for growth rather than seeing themselves as having failed.

Summary

Below are 10 top tips to developing resilience

Remember that resilience is a trait which can be developed.

1. Develop a positive self-image

Everything starts in the mind, resilient people think highly of themselves and see themselves in a positive way. Learn to trust your instincts and grow confidence in our own capabilities.

2. Focus on building and maintaining relationships

Resilient people tend to have strong social networks. Family, friends and work colleagues are a great source of support when difficult situations or issues arise.

3. Show self-appreciation

Being able to focus on the good things in your life and not dwell on problems will keep you in a positive mindset and help you to be more effective. The more you think positively, the more it will come naturally to you.

4. See the good

Resilient people tend to see stressful events as temporary or even as opportunities to learn and grow, rather than as unbearable.

5. Be proactive

Resilient people take responsibility and take effective measures to change things.

6. Accept circumstances are out of your control and cannot be changed

Some things simply cannot be altered and resilient people accept this, not wasting time and energy on trying to do the impossible. Focus on what you can, rather than what you cannot change.

7. Develop goals and take appropriate action to achieve them

Having a sense of where you are going is important. Hiccups and delays are inevitable, but resilient people keep the destination in mind.

8. Take a long-term view and keep in mind a broader context

When seen from a different perspective, problems tend to become less important.

9. Be optimistic

Resilient people maintain a hopeful outlook, anticipating a positive outcome.

10. Keep learning

Resilient people are determined to learn from setbacks and problems. Looking at the past, we might realise that we learned the most from what seemed at the time, to be the most difficult of circumstances.



Resources

Whether you would like to develop your own or others' resilience, the resources we've put together should hopefully be of use to you or them.

Supporting your team

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/supporting-our-nhs-people/wellbeing-support-options/looking-after-your-team/>



Resilience Hubs

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/supporting-our-nhs-people/support-now/staff-mental-health-and-wellbeing-hubs/north-west-hubs/>



<https://www.england.nhs.uk/supporting-our-nhs-people/support-now/wellbeing-apps/headspace/>

Free wellbeing Apps

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/supporting-our-nhs-people/support-now/wellbeing-apps/>

NHS Supporting our people

[Our NHS People – Supporting our people: Helping you manage your own health and wellbeing whilst looking after others](#)

Support for leaders

<https://people.nhs.uk/support-for-leaders/>

<https://people.nhs.uk/executivesuite/>

<https://people.nhs.uk/executivesuite/support-in-difficult-times/>

<https://people.nhs.uk/projectm/>

<https://www.nwacademy.nhs.uk/discover/health-wellbeing>



Resilience and recovery video

<https://people.nhs.uk/uncategorized/resilience-and-recovery/>

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