



mind
matters

Resilience Toolkit

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What is Resilience?

Hard knocks, misfortune and adversity are things all humans have in common. We all are asked to cope with difficult times at some point in our life.

Resilience is defined as the ability to adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, loss or significant stress, bounce back from it and learn from it.

In other words, resilience is dealing with distress and difficulty in a healthy way, as well as rebuilding your life meaningfully after you have experienced hardship or tragedy. The result is often profound personal growth.

How to develop and increase resilience?

Resilience is a skill anyone can develop. It involves behaviours and thoughts that everyone can learn, all you need to do is to give it some time and energy. Like building muscle, the more you practice resilience, the more you will be able to withstand and learn from difficult situations and bounce back quickly.

1.Nurture emotional connections in your relationships

Social support is exceptionally critical to your mental health. It enhances your resilience to everyday and major life events stressors by reminding you that you are not alone in experiencing difficulties. The key is to connect with people that you feel you may trust and understand you.

Too often, we tend to isolate ourselves when experiencing pain. However, the best thing to do is to accept the support, comfort and sympathetic ear from those who care about us.

Some ways to nurture emotional connections are:

- Going out for lunch or coffee with a friend or loved one
- Calling a friend or loved one when feeling blue
- Accepting help from a friend or loved one
- Joining a support group with people going through a similar challenge

3. Embrace healthy thoughts with self-compassion

How you think can play a significant part in how you feel and how resilient you are when faced with adversity. Having compassion for yourself means honoring and accepting your human condition - a reality shared by all of us.

Rather than being critical of yourself, holding your mistakes over your head or blaming you for what happened, try being kind and understanding with yourself - like you would for a friend. Recognizing that pain, trauma and recovery are shared human experiences instead of thinking that it happens to you alone and that nothing will change for the better will help you feel more hopeful in face of adversity.

Some ways to practice self-compassion are:

- Complete the « How Would You Treat a Friend ? » exercise from Dr. Kristin Neff
- Have a « Self-Compassion Break », another exercise from Dr. Kristin Neff
- Complete the Self-Compassion Scale to better understand your self-compassion strengths and areas of development.
- Practice mindfulness, especially regarding your self-critical thoughts and feelings.
- Replace your self-critical thoughts by compassionate thoughts.
- Focus on the things you can change and let go of those you can't.

2. Practice (a lot of) self-care

Self-care is essential for overcoming adversity. It is the practice of giving your body and mind the resources it needs to manage stress rather than seeking to numb the feeling of stress.

Engaging in healthy lifestyle habits like eating well, exercising and sleeping an adequate amount of time strengthen your immunity to stress, anxiety and depression.

When facing difficulties, we may be tempted to indulge in unhealthy behaviours that make us feel good in the short run, but end up sabotaging our well-being.

Some examples are masking pain with alcohol or drugs, binge eating or staying up late. Resilient people constantly ask themselves if their behaviour is helping them or harming them, and steer away from those habits that may harm them.

Some ways to practice self-care are:

- Cooking a balanced meal
- Eating regularly
- Taking a nap
- Spending time in the presence of Mother Nature
- Taking a long shower or bath
- Limiting your screen time
- Limiting your consumption of coffee and alcohol
- Design your own personalised self-care plan

4. Find meaning and purpose

When many of us look back on our life, hardship results in opportunities of growth and learning. For some, it even was a defining moment to start living their life differently and more coherently with their values and aspirations.

After recovering from a difficult situation, people often report feeling stronger as a result of experiencing vulnerability.

As much as adversity is an opportunity for self-discovery, helping others going through similar difficulties may empower you in your recovery.

Volunteering and feeling like you are tangibly having a positive impact on others will give purpose to the hardships encountered across your life.

Some ways to find meaning and purpose are:

- Reflect on how that experience may help others.
- Ask yourself how adversity has made you a better person in the long run.
- Work toward launching an initiative to support others in need.

3 Resilience Exercises

To support you in your journey, we have curated a set of three exercises that are especially designed to help you develop and strengthen resilience.

We hope that these tools inspire you to increase your resilience and those of others around you.

Exercise 1: Build a self-care plan

Goal: To curate a personalised plan of self-care rituals inspiring you to pause and recharge.

Instructions:

Step 1. Reflect on your current self-care strategies and needs

Using the table on the next page, list the different self-care strategies you use to support your wellbeing on a regular basis. What are their impacts on your overall wellbeing?

Are there any areas in which you engage in more self-care activities than others?

Self-care strategy	Frequency	Self-care area	Impact on well being
	<input type="checkbox"/> Daily <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly <input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly <input type="checkbox"/> Annually <input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> Mental <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual <input type="checkbox"/> Social <input type="checkbox"/> Financial	Positive: Negative:
	<input type="checkbox"/> Daily <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly <input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly <input type="checkbox"/> Annually <input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> Psychological <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual <input type="checkbox"/> Social <input type="checkbox"/> Financial	Positive: Negative:
	<input type="checkbox"/> Daily <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly <input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly <input type="checkbox"/> Annually <input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> Psychological <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual <input type="checkbox"/> Social <input type="checkbox"/> Financial	Positive: Negative:
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Step 2. Identify past or new self-care strategies

Looking back on past difficult times, which strategies not listed above have also helped you to be resilient? How so?

Helpful self-care strategies used in the past	
Self-care strategy	Why was it helpful?

Are there any strategies used in the past that you feel ended up causing you more harm than good? How so?

Unhelpful self-care strategies used in the past	
Self-care strategy	Why was it unhelpful?

Are there any other strategies you have thought about trying before or wish you would like to try? If so, why?

Self-care strategies I could give a try	
Self-care strategy	How could it be helpful?

Step 3. Curate a self-care plan

Now that you've identified your needs and brainstormed strategies, it's time to write down your self-care plan.

You can use the template from the Black Dog Institute on the next page to build your plan, or simply write it somewhere that suits you better.



MY DAILY SELF-CARE PLAN

List your favourite practices for each category

BODY	MIND	SPIRIT	EMOTIONS	RELATIONSHIPS	WORK

MY TOP THREE POSITIVE COPING STRATEGIES

Record three strategies you want to get in the habit of using

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MY EMERGENCY SELF-CARE PLAN

HELPFUL TO-DO List your top five emergency practices	HARMFUL TO AVOID List five practices, people, places, or things to avoid during crisis or stress. This will serve as a helpful reminder to keep you on track.

Exercise 2: Replacing self-criticism with self-compassion

<https://self-compassion.org/exercise-5-changing-critical-self-talk/>

Exercise 3: Doors Closed Doors Open

<https://youngharrowfoundation.org/resources/harrow/doors-closed-doors-opened-worksheet/Handout-3-Doors-Closed-Doors-Open.pdf>

Additional Resources

- Kristin Neff (2015). Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself.
- Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant (2017). Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience, and Finding Joy.
- Brene Brown (2017). Rising Strong: How the Ability to Reset Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead.
- Victor Frankl (2006). Man's Search for Meaning.

Exercise workbooks

- Kristin Neff & Christopher Gerner (2018). The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook.
- Glenn R. Schiraldi (2017). The Resilience Workbook.
- Elaine Elliot-Moskwa (2022). The Growth Mindset Workbook.

Podcasts:

- How to Be a Better Human: How to cultivate resilience and get through tough times (with Lucy Hones).

Videos

Guy Winch (2014). Why we all need to practice emotional first aid first.

-> Practical strategies to build emotional resilience and why it is important to take care of emotional « injuries », such as experiencing failure, rejection and loneliness, like you would with physical injuries.

Additional resources (Teens)

https://www.amazon.com/Positivity-Workbook-Teens-Increase-Resilience/dp/168403602X/ref=sr_1_12?dchild=1&keywords=resilience+workbook&qid=1631576114&s=books&sr=1-12

https://www.amazon.com/Resilience-Workbook-Teens-Activities-Confidence/dp/168403292X/ref=sr_1_2?dchild=1&keywords=resilience+workbook&qid=1631576114&s=books&sr=1-2

Additional resources (kids)

https://www.amazon.com/Grit-Workbook-Kids-Cultivate-Resilience/dp/1684035988/ref=sr_1_15?dchild=1&keywords=resilience+workbook&qid=1631576114&s=books&sr=1-15

https://www.amazon.com/CBT-Doodling-Kids-Illustrated-Confidence/dp/1785925377/ref=sr_1_11?dchild=1&keywords=resilience+workbook&qid=1631576114&s=books&sr=1-11

