



What is resilience?

Resilience refers to our ability to effectively deal with difficult or highly stressful situations. Resilience can be characterised as the ability to utilise our skills, strengths, and resources to cope with and recover from challenges. Resilient people are often able to:

- Keep going in the face of difficulty
- Spring back following adversity
- Adapt to changing or challenging circumstances
- Use successful stress management techniques
- Thrive, even when times are tough

Characteristics of resilient people

- Strong social connection with others
- Acceptance of the uncontrollable
- Humour and empathy
- Optimism
- Self-awareness
- Future focused decision making
- Commitment to self-care
- Ability to identify and use own strengths
- Positive anticipation of coping with challenges
- View mistakes as learning experiences
- Finding good in others

What is stress?

Our ability to manage stress is key part in building resilience. Stress occurs when our perceived level of pressure is greater than our perceived ability to cope.

During highly stressful situations, the fight, flight or freeze response is activated. This causes increased levels of adrenaline and cortisol, and the impact of these hormones create signs and symptoms of stress.

Signs of stress:

EMOTIONAL

- Irritable
- Anxious
- Feeling low
- Overwhelmed
- Critical
- Mood swings
- Angry

THOUGHTS

- Indecisive
- Negative
- Confused
- Lack perspective
- Irrational
- Self-blame
- Pre-occupied with small things
- Personalising situations

BEHAVIOURAL

- Less motivation
- Bad eating habits
- Emotional outbursts
- Reliance on substances
- Withdrawing
- Reduced performance

PHYSICAL

- Increased heart rate
- Blurred vision
- Change in appetite
- Tiredness
- General aches
- Irritable stomach
- Skin rash
- Sweating
- Grinding teeth
- Clench fist or jaw
- Getting sick

WORK

- Hyper reactivity
- Memory issues
- Difficulty concentrating
- Loss of interest or becoming disengaged at work
- Failure to meet expectations
- Change in personality or behaviour
- Increased conflict with others in the team
- Increased time off work

How to build resilience

The good news is that building resilience is a process which we can develop over time by learning and using helpful techniques. Here are three to try:

Boost positive emotions

Positive emotions are essential for happiness, wellbeing and success.

Positive emotions such as contentment, love, hope, interest, inspiration, serenity, pride, gratitude have been found to reduce cortisol and enable better problem-solving skills. They're contagious and can encourage others to feel positive too!

Make the time to recognise the positives every day. You can do this by practicing mindfulness, gratitude and focussing on the elements in your life which you can control.

Avoid thinking traps

Be aware of unhelpful thoughts, as these can undermine resilience. Examples of unhelpful thoughts or thinking traps are:

- Overgeneralising
- Filtering out the good
- Catastrophising

- Predicting the worst case scenario
- Personalising
- Rigid thinking
- Rumination
- Jumping to conclusions

Use the Stop Light Strategy

When experiencing stress, we are more likely to behave impulsively and say or do things that we wouldn't otherwise say or do. Apply the Stoplight Strategy by using these three steps to help you make effective decisions under pressure.

1 Stop and name the emotion you are experiencing

2 Take perspective and consider your best options or course of action

3 Proceed mindfully

Resilience development plan

Formulating a plan can help you target specific areas that you would like to become more aware of and improve upon when building your resilience. Regularly review and modify your plan to reflect your progress and notice any positive changes in your ability to respond to difficult or stressful situations.

Use the categories below to set some realistic and achievable goals, while also recognising some of the barriers you may need to consider and overcome in order to achieve them. Feel free to use the relevant examples in the table below, or create your own!

AREAS OF FOCUS	MY PERSONAL GOALS	MY PERSONAL BARRIERS
BODY For example: Exercising more, eating healthy, developing healthy sleep habits, breathing exercises etc.		
MIND For example: practicing mindfulness or slowing down, boosting positive emotions, noticing 3 good things each day, managing thinking traps, seeing mistakes as learning opportunities, knowing your strengths and using them.		
PEOPLE For example: Listening with your eyes, ears and body, modelling compassion and empathy, expressing praise and gratitude, giving specific and constructive feedback, learning from mistakes.		
WORK For example: Helping others to find 3 good things each day, using the stop light strategy, taking breaks to move and stretch, serial monotasking – protect your attention, making use of your Best You program.		