

What is resilience, and why is it important?

“the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness” – Apple Dictionary, 2014

“Resilience is the process of continual development of personal competence while navigating and negotiating with available resources in the face of adversity.” – Worsley, 2010

“Psychological resilience is defined as an individual’s ability to properly adapt to stress and adversity. Stress and adversity can come in the shape of family or relationship problems, health problems, or workplace and financial stressors, among others. Individuals demonstrate resilience when they can face difficult experiences and rise above them with ease. Resilience is not a rare ability; in reality, it is found in the average individual and it can be learned and developed by virtually anyone. Resilience should be considered a process, rather than a trait to be had. There is a common misconception that people who are resilient experience no negative emotions or thoughts and display optimism in all situations. Contrary to this misconception, the reality remains that resiliency is demonstrated within individuals who can effectively and relatively easily navigate their way around crises and utilize effective methods of coping. In other words, people who demonstrate resilience are people with positive emotionality; they are keen to effectively balance negative emotions with positive ones.” – Wikipedia, 2014 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological\\_resilience](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological_resilience)

We’ve broadly researched “resilience” and here are the areas we’ll be covering today.

(Different approaches and theories of resilience have different frameworks and areas of focus, so we have tried to include all of the main topics that we found!)

To increase our resilience, we want the following to be good, healthy & positive:

1. Support networks
2. World view
3. Self-concept
4. Self-efficacy
5. Self-regulation
6. Communication
7. Problem solving

For some of these, it’s been easier for us to include questions or little activities to assess and think about our skills in these areas. Other topics are harder to assess in a simple way, so we’ve included some basic questions to help you think about your skills.

Please note: These are all skills/areas we can learn, practice and improve upon.

## 1. Support networks

It’s important for our psychological resilience to have multiple good support networks, and have positive, mutually supportive relationships within these networks.

1. Have a think about all your networks, and on the next page, please draw circles for each of your networks.

These might include:

- immediate family
- extended family
- old friends e.g. school, uni, overseas
- current friends
- work colleagues
- meetup/spare-time activity groups
- other networks!

2. Think about these networks and whether there are any people in these networks with whom you have \*positive and mutually supportive\* relationships. Write down their names in the circles.
3. Think about who, if anyone, you would ask for help. If you needed a lift to the hospital, if you desperately needed \$500, if you had to ask someone for advice about something terrible that happened at work, etc... Who would you go to? Add them to your network sketch and put stars next to their names.
4. Based on all this, do you think ‘support networks’ is an area of improvement for you?

# Girls Club

Sketch your support networks

Having some (any!) sense of meaning or purpose is important as part of psychological resilience. Optimism and positivity are also very important.

1. Do you feel like life is meaningless, or do you think you have some sense of meaning or purpose?

2. Are you generally positive or negative, optimist or pessimist? Or are you not sure?

3. Three key ways of lifting your mood are: humour, music and exercise. Do you feel like you often laugh, listen to music, or exercise?

4. Based on all this, do you think 'world view' is an area of improvement for you?

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## 3. Self-concept

The next significant area is positive self-concept, which is "an idea of the self constructed from the beliefs one holds about oneself and the responses of others" – Apple Dictionary, 2014

1. Are you self-nurturing? – Can you answer, below: How do you treat yourself? Are you kind to yourself? Do you eat & sleep well? Do you spend money on good things for your mind and body? Do you spend time with yourself?

2. Do you have confidence in your strengths and abilities? – Can you answer, below: What are you good at? What are your skills? What are your strengths? Would you feel comfortable turning to the person next to you and answering these questions – in knowing what to say, and saying it comfortably?

3a. Let's try some affirmations to assess whether our self-talk is positive or negative. You might find these strange or cheesy, but give it a go! In the first box, copy the following five phrases:  
I am a fabulous person. I am worth knowing. I deserve to be treated well. I love myself. My future will be wonderful.

3b. In the second box, write down what you were thinking as you copied the affirmations. For example, if you thought, "this exercise is rubbish" or "ha, ha, as if..." – write those thoughts down.

3c. What do you notice about your self-comments?  
Are you surprised by this? \_\_\_\_\_

(Note: If you want to work on this as an exercise and practice improving your self-talk, there is a part 3d: Write down the affirmations again, and directly address and contradict your negative reactions. For example, if a negative thought for the first affirmation was "no, I'm a boring person" then you would write "I am a fabulous person, I'm not boring."

4. How strong are your self-limitations? – Are you more likely to think, a) "I can't do this" or "I'm not good at this" or b) "this is a challenge?"

5. Do you have an internal locus of control? – Do you think, if a series of bad things happen, that a) it's the universe/karma/fate, or b) you can change things?

6. If you see something about a lifestyle that you love or admire, like a story about a woman living in Paris, or a photo of an amazing dream home on Pinterest, do you ever think, "Why not me? I can have that."

7. How good is your sense of perspective? – When something bad might happen, do you think a) "The worst will happen" and feel crap, or b) "What's the worst case scenario?" and how you'll get through it?

8. If something bad happens, are you more likely to a) feel terrible for ages and take it personally, or b) separate how you feel/react from what happened?

9. Do you blame? – Which is more like you: a) I remember blaming someone or something for things going wrong, or b) I can't remember doing that.

10. Do you have a fixed or growth mindset? – When growing up, were you mostly told a) "You're smart" "You have such talent at..." "You're really good at..." or b) you were praised for hard work and effort?

11. Do you believe that: a) you have some natural talents or abilities, and those are the things you could be good at, or b) you could be good at anything, if you put in the effort?

12. Based on all this, do you think 'self-concept' is an area of improvement for you? \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. Self-efficacy

"Self-efficacy is the extent or strength of one's belief in one's own ability to complete tasks and reach goals." – Wikipedia, 2014

Self-efficacy is considered significant in regards to resilience, and it's also a key ingredient for confidence.

Be very honest with the following questions!

1. Are you very good with judging what you will get done in a day – and by the end of the day, you've completed it?

2. If you ever say to someone, "I'll get back to you tomorrow on this" or "you'll have this by Tuesday" (etc), how often does it take longer than expected?

3. Can you remember having any longer-term plan that had a series of goals, and you completed them, and you felt a sense of achievement?

4. Based on all this, do you think 'self-efficacy' is an area of improvement for you?

Self-regulation is the ability to manage strong impulses and feelings. This is important for both psychological resilience and is related to benefits in other areas, too. (E.g. “A gradient of childhood self-control predicts health, wealth, and public safety” – PNAS, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 2011 – [goo.gl/rbn8gR](http://goo.gl/rbn8gR))

1. Do you have any addictions? E.g. exercise, buying things, sugary foods, coffee, Facebook?

2. Do you get lost... in food, porn, gambling, internet use, anything? Do you ever binge on anything?

3. If someone makes you really angry or frustrated, is there a chance you might lash out at them, and shout (etc) or say something you might regret?

4. Based on all this, do you think 'self-regulation' is an area of improvement for you?

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## 6. Communication

“Communication skills” probably doesn’t need a definition. But it is worth saying that communication skills covers a huge range of sub-topics, and we can only touch on some here. Everything from emotional literacy, to assertiveness, to written communication, to verbal communication, to healthy confrontation... whew!, it’s a huge topic.

1. Do you feel like you’re shy or socially awkward? Do you get very nervous or anxious when communicating?

2. Is there anything at work/home that makes you angry or bitter or annoyed, and you haven’t managed to address it or change it? Do you avoid confrontation?

3. Can you remember the last time you felt: anger, frustration, bitterness, resentment, annoyance, disappointment, indignation, sulking, exasperation, revenge, blame, injustice?

4. Are you highly aware of when you’re being passive-aggressive?

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5. Based on all this, do you think 'communication' is an area of improvement for you?

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“Problem solving skills” is another huge topic, but let’s try assessing this slightly, anyway, for discussion’s sake. Here are some examples of ways to practice and improve problem solving skills:

- For any problem that comes up, brainstorm the problem and write down any ideas for addressing or dealing with it. (Have a brainstorm rule: There are no bad ideas!) The more you do this, the more you’ll get your mind to think of multiple and varied options, rather than trying to come up with a single or perfect solution.
- For any problem that comes up, define only the next tiny baby step that’s required to address or deal with that problem. For example, if you haven’t done your tax in 5 years, and you really need to do it now, the tiny-baby-step might be to pull boxes of receipts out of a cupboard. That’s all. One step.
- For any problem that comes up, think about the absolute worst case scenario. For example, if you screwed up a work project really badly, the worst case scenario might be that you’ll get fired – and what would that be like? You might have trouble paying the rent for a while, but you probably wouldn’t be eaten alive by feral cats.
- For any problem that comes up, think about a positive that can come from this negative. For example, if you did get fired, maybe you would finally take that leap and try living overseas for a while.

1. Do you use any of the four strategies above, or have similar strategies?

2. Do you feel like, when faced with big problems like stuffing up a work project, you fall apart, melt under stress & worry, and don’t know what to do?

3. Do you ask for help?

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4. Based on all this, do you think ‘problem solving’ is an area of improvement for you?

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### Resilience review

Reviewing the 7 skills/areas, which ones have room for improvement?

Needs some TLC

I think I have this sorted

#### Links

Develop an Internal Locus of Control – [goo.gl/qdPXXu](http://goo.gl/qdPXXu)

Reduce Stress and Improve Your Life with Positive Self-Talk – [goo.gl/u2YGLs](http://goo.gl/u2YGLs)

StandOut Strengths Test – [goo.gl/KxDxLZ](http://goo.gl/KxDxLZ) (the code is LEANIN00)

#### Upcoming Events

October	My Personality
November	Thank You Notes
Dec–Feb	[Closed]