

Developing Individual Resilience

What is resilience?

The process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress.

Being resilient doesn't mean that a person won't experience difficulty or distress. People who have suffered major adversity or trauma in their lives commonly experience emotional pain and stress. In fact, the road to resilience is likely to involve considerable emotional distress.



It is important to acknowledge that resilience can be a trait, capacity and a process.

- *Trait = A personality type, consistent across time and place. Something we are.*
- *Process = A transactional product of individual attributes and environmental contingencies.*

It is our ability to (trait and process):

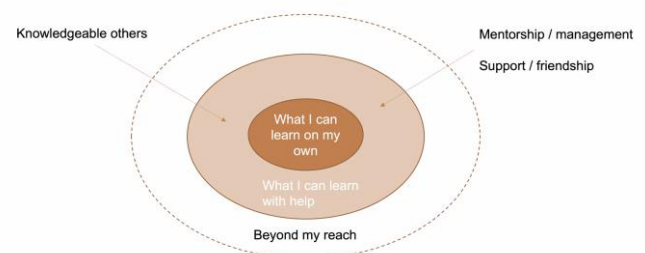
- Contact the present moment
- Open up to our true psychological experience in an environment where it is safe to do so
- So we can do what matters for ourselves, our goals or values or the people we care most for
- *Capacity = something that can be enhanced. A response to events in social environments – a function of demands.*

At a time when (capacity)....

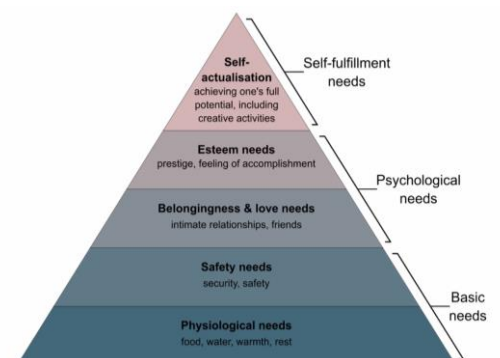
- Our capacity to do this is challenged by external events out of our control where the outcome is uncertain and may lead to distress

The Zone of Proximal Development and Hierarchy of Needs

As a result of COVID, many of us are unsure where our 'sweet spot' (zone of proximal development) is, for example because we are unsure of our confidence in our own abilities in unfamiliar situations.



COVID has also threatened all of our needs, causing threat and uncertainty. Our main focus in order to build resilience should be on our physiological, safety and belongingness/love needs – these are the gateway to the self-fulfilment needs.



What is uncertainty distress and how can we reduce it?

What is uncertainty distress? The subjective negative emotions experienced in response to the as yet unknown aspects of a given situation.

- ❖ **Threat** – In anxiety, there is an overestimation of threat relative to actual or real world state of threat
- ❖ **Perceived uncertainty** – The inability to determine the meaning of illness-related events, including lack of clarity about treatment options etc.
- ❖ **Intolerance of uncertainty** – The desire for predictability, and uncertainty paralysis – getting stuck when faced with uncertainty
- ❖ **A behavioural response** – what happens when we experience this state or situation

How can we reduce uncertainty distress, and increase resilience more generally?

If we struggle it means that we are human. **We can all build resilience, whilst acknowledging that our environment has a huge impact on our capacity to grow.**

Adjusting to change

It takes time to adjust to change, but even more so when the changes keep changing.

It is not you. It is COVID. Prevent changes where you can, and give yourself time you need to process the change that you cannot control.

Look for opportunities to 'top up'

Different things allow different people to re-charge their batteries. But it usually involves moving towards our values/ what matters to us, enjoyment and/or pleasure.

Allow more time

Productivity is likely to be reduced in a global pandemic. Be patient with yourself and others. Look for opportunities to acknowledge this as an individual and discuss with your team. .

Prioritise

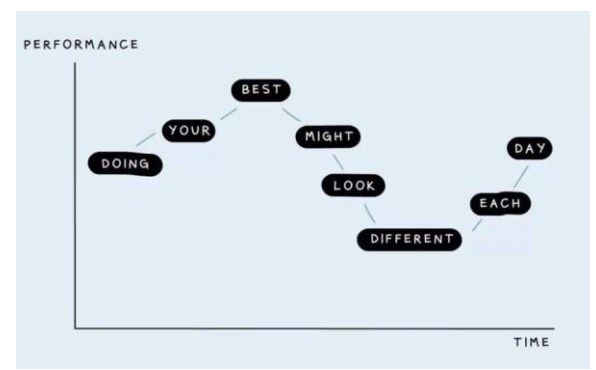
What can I achieve this week? Next week? This month? Don't go much further than that if possible, remain within certainty.

Practice and Learn

Try new things where it feels safe to do so and be an active participant in your own personal learning. It doesn't matter if it doesn't work – the important word here is 'try'

Recognise trait, capacity and process factors of resilience

We all have a degree of resilience but this can change by the minute, hour, day, week etc.



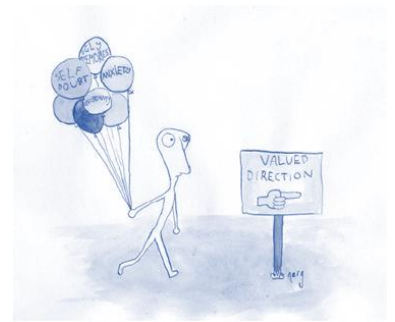
"We have a long way to go" sighed the boy.
"Yes but look how far we have come" said the horse.



Building team resilience can increase individual resilience also – see the building team resilience pdf for more information.

Implementing Psychological Flexibility

“The ability to fully contact the present moment and the thoughts, feelings, memories and physiological sensations it contains without needless defence or avoidance, and, depending upon what the situation affords, persisting or changing in behaviour in the pursuit of goals and values”



BE PRESENT

Scripted Mindfulness: apps, books, podcasts

‘Practical Mindfulness’: being more present in the everyday

Five senses experiencing: what are each of my senses experiencing right now?

Really connecting: actively listening and feeling, with an open and full heart

Committed Mindfulness: in that meeting today, I’m going to tell everyone how well we’re doing, and I’m going to pay real attention to their reactions

Psychological Safety: acknowledging what’s happening in our internal world and feeling safe to share it in the moment

OPEN UP

Speak to your internal and external experiences with trusted friends, family, colleagues etc. This may feel terrifying but be essential. Recognise that others may also be struggling. Take a perspective other than your own, see the situation from a different viewpoint.

DO WHAT MATTERS

This experience has divided our psychological experience

Deep sadness (seeing what is happening, loss, economic uncertainty)

Strange calm (less community, less pollution, more time with loved ones, and a greater appreciation of the simple things)

Whole myriad of emotions at once. COVID has both challenged what matters to us, but also given us space to connect with what matters to us.

Example of Implementing Psychological Flexibility during COVID-19

