Personal Resilience

Module Outline:

This module gives you 2 sets of different choices towards building personal resilience:

1. Mainstream Frameworks and Checklists
2. Less Expected and Counter-Intuitive Experiential Methods

Completing this module includes completing one or more options from each of the above sets and will take 2 to 4 weeks (the first time). You may wish to revisit and repeat elements of this module over time.

Please assume “one size never fits all”, there are no “silver bullet” solutions and your own personal, specific resilience process will be discovered by your experimenting and testing various methods over time. And then your process may change and fade to be less effective as your context changes and time passes.

As always, you will gain greater insight by completing this module in collaboration with a learning partner. Please consider:

- Who you will share this module with? Someone from your team who can give you day-to-day observation-based feedback and support? Or a partner from outside work who can debrief your experiences with fresh eyes and external perceptions?

- Who you would invite to share in the experiences of deliberately building a performance relationship. And increasing your shared levels of support, feedback and challenge as you help each other build personal resilience?

The Latin root of the word is ‘resilire’ meaning to spring back, or to return to the original form.

Personal resilience:

- the ability to bounce back following stressful or traumatic events.
- the capacity to rise above adversity and forge personal strengths in the struggle.
- the ability to successfully navigate high levels of challenge and change.

Resilience is considered both a trait and a process. A natural ability we have and something we can do and build.
Mainstream Approaches to Building Resilience

- select and complete at least 1 option from this box -

Checklists and Suggestions by Experts

Life Balance Exercises

Page 3

Experiential, Personal and Counter-Intuitive Approaches to Building Resilience

- select and complete at least 1 option from this box -

Transcending Frustration

Increasing Resilience by the Power of Choice

Page 9

Page 13

Collaborative Learning

After you have completed your selected module options, debrief your experiences and insights with a trusted partner and draft a few sentences reporting:

1. The resilience building methods I tested were ...

2. My two most significant new insights about resilience and resilience-building are ...

3. To sustain my own resilience over time I will ...

4. To help others build their own resilience I will ...
Checklists and Suggestions by Experts

The following pages of checklists and suggestions for building resilience are by:

Mary McGuiness, Australian personality typology researcher and author.

Paul Stoltz, author of the 1997 text “Adversity Quotient”.

Alexander M. Davis, author of ResilienceWorks.

To complete this module option:

1. review the lists and suggestions from these 3 experts

2. select 3 to 5 ideas you wish to use for yourself

3. draft a simple action plan to implement your selected ideas within the next 2 or 3 weeks

4. make yourself accountable by setting your own:
   
   • reward and celebrations for completing your action plans and/or
   
   • negative consequence for not completing your action plans (small tasks or donations) and/or
   
   • levels of visibility and telling trusted people what you plan to do and asking them to hold you to account for completing your action plans

5. debrief your experiences and insights with a trusted partner

If you wish for an optional reading extension to this subject, you will see many of the expert suggestions in-use within the article: Building Resilience in a Turbulent World by Gina Stepp (2008 for Vision Publishing) at http://www.vision.org/visionmedia/depression-trauma-resilience/5816.aspx
**Personality, Temperament and Building Resilience**

As we move through the developmental stages we add new skills that we can use to cope with adversity:

- The logical person becomes more comfortable with intimacy.
- The feeling person can be more assertive.
- The intuitive faces reality, and
- The practical person learns to trust their hunches.

We can help individuals become more resilient by helping them understand the process of development, encouraging the development of each of the (personality) functions and by giving people strategies to meet challenges as they move through stages of personality development.

Temperament theory gives insights into the basic needs that must be met in order for a person to be psychologically safe and able to cope with stress. Meeting these needs will help to build resilience.

- Sensing-Judging temperaments need belonging, responsibility, structure and sense of duty.
- Sensing-Perceiving temperaments need fun, freedom, action and to make an impression on others.
- Intuitive-Feeling temperaments need to find meaning, to be authentic and have a sense of their own unique identity.
- Intuitive-Thinking temperaments need to be competent, achieve mastery and achieve success.

*From a 2013 article by respected Australian researcher and author, Mary McGuiness, Founding Director of Institute for Type Development*

While you are drafting how to apply the above development steps suggested by Mary McGuiness in your day-to-day context, please also consider Joseph Campbell who encourages steps towards development and away from your comfort and said:

“The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek.”
4 Dimensions of Resilience

Paul Stoltz is author of the 1997 text “Adversity Quotient” and Founder/CEO of the Global Resilience Institute. Dr Stoltz explains your adversity quotient has 4 core dimensions:

**Control:**

The extent to which someone perceives they can influence whatever happens next. This determines their resilience, health and tenacity.

**Ownership:**

The likelihood someone will take personal initiatives to improve their situation. Even if it is not their job. This determines their accountability, responsibility, action and engagement.

**Reach:**

The extent to which someone perceives an adversity will reach into and affect other aspects of the situation or beyond. This determines their burden, stress, energy and effort; it tends to have a cumulative effect.

**Endurance:**

The length of time someone assumes the situation/adversity will last, or endure. This determines their hope, optimism and willingness to persevere.

“Resilience is not simply about bouncing back from adversity — it’s your capacity to be strengthened and improved by it.”

Paul G. Stoltz

The leaders I met, whatever walk of life they were from, whatever institutions they were presiding over, always referred back to the same failure - something that happened to them that was personally difficult, even traumatic, something that made them feel that desperate sense of hitting bottom - as something they thought was almost a necessity. It’s as if at that moment the iron entered their soul; that moment created the resilience that leaders need.

Warren Bennis
### Characteristics of Resilience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Resilience</th>
<th>High Resilience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A debilitating tension from being under constant stress</td>
<td>A sense of ease in dealing with life’s challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A feeling of being brittle and possibly close to breaking</td>
<td>A sense of feeling flexible and robust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A feeling of being stuck in some aspect(s) of your life</td>
<td>A sense of being in motion, going in the direction you want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A tendency to get upset easily, often over little things</td>
<td>Unflappable in the face of minor (and even major) upsets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty letting go of the things that have upset you</td>
<td>Able to move past upsets quickly and cleanly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling emotionally exhausted</td>
<td>Feeling emotionally hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack of self-esteem, self-confidence or worthiness</td>
<td>High self-esteem, high self-confidence and high worthiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carelessness in taking good care of yourself</td>
<td>Consistently careful to take good care of yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An aversion to exercising regularly</td>
<td>Highly regular in your exercise habits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A chronic lack of physical stamina and vitality</td>
<td>A sense of having great physical stamina and vitality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty being alone without constant external stimulation</td>
<td>At ease when alone and able to take pleasure in silence and stillness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An aversion to taking risks, even small ones</td>
<td>Willingness to take and enjoy intelligent risks, big and small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty tapping into your own creativity</td>
<td>Highly in tune with, and continually expressing, your creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance to all change, even positive change</td>
<td>Openness to change and able to take it in stride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty making decisions</td>
<td>Ease in making decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty following through</td>
<td>Reliable in your follow through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty honouring your agreements</td>
<td>Ease in honouring your agreements completely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty having fun</td>
<td>Able to create and have lots of fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A tendency to discount your successes, both big and small</td>
<td>Quick to celebrate your successes, both big and small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling deeply discouraged</td>
<td>Having great courage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling cynical, indifferent, and increasingly ineffective</td>
<td>Feeling positive, engaged and highly effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An abiding sense of pessimism</td>
<td>An abiding sense of optimism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty envisioning new and desirable possibilities</td>
<td>Ease in envisioning desirable new possibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A reluctance to act spontaneously and authentically</td>
<td>A passion for acting spontaneously and authentically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A fatalistic acceptance of your situation</td>
<td>A sense of being in control of your own life and destiny</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source - The Recipe for Resilience by Alexander M. Davis.
Life Balance Exercises

Resilience can be enhanced through balancing multiple elements of your life and therefore reducing the impact of adversity in just one element.


To complete this module option:


... in search of resilience building ideas that suit you in your context.
**Juggling With Life**

*Speech by Brian G. Dyson (CEO Coca-Cola Enterprises 1986 to 1991)*

at the Georgia Tech 172nd Commencement Address Sept. 6, 1996

Imagine life as a game in which you are juggling some five balls in the air.

You name them - Work - Family - Health - Friends - Spirit, and you’re keeping all of these in the air. You will soon understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four balls - family, health, friends and spirit are made of glass.

If you drop one of these, they will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged or even shattered. They will never be the same. You must understand that and strive for balance in your life. How?

1. Don’t undermine your worth by comparing yourself with others. It is because we are different that each of us is special.
2. Don’t set your goals by what other people deem important. Only you know what is best for you.
3. Don’t take for granted the things closest to your heart. Cling to them as you would your life, for without them, life is meaningless.
4. Don’t let your life slip through your fingers by living in the past or for the future. By living your life one day at a time, you live ALL the days of your life.
5. Don’t give up when you still have something to give. Nothing is really over until the moment you stop trying.
6. Don’t be afraid to admit that you are less than perfect. It is this fragile thread that binds us together.
7. Don’t be afraid to encounter risks. It is by taking chances that we learn how to be brave.
8. Don’t shut love out of your life by saying it’s impossible to find. The quickest way to receive love is to give; the fastest way to lose love is to hold it too tightly; and the best way to keep love is to give it wings.
9. Don’t run through life so fast that you forget not only where you’ve been, but also where you are going.
10. Don’t forget that a person’s greatest emotional need is to feel appreciated.
11. Don’t be afraid to learn. Knowledge is weightless, a treasure you can always carry easily.
12. Don’t use time or words carelessly. Neither can be retrieved.

Watch the 20 minute online video of “How to make work-life balance work” presented at TED-Sydney by Nigel Marsh at:

[http://www.ted.com/playlists/60/work_smarter.html](http://www.ted.com/playlists/60/work_smarter.html)

Watch the 23 minute video by Martin Seligman: The new era of positive psychology at:

[http://www.ted.com/talks/martin_seligman_on_the_state_of_psychology.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/martin_seligman_on_the_state_of_psychology.html)
Transcending Frustration

Frustration is a normal part of experiencing large organisations. There are too many people and stimuli for things to be otherwise. Hence, large organisations are inherently (partly) dysfunctional.

To sustain a positive influence, leaders must be able to operate beyond frustration and continue to share their gifts. It is largely your own emotional and motivational resilience that will enable you to enroll people over the longer term. Especially when things are not perfect, not fair, not rewarding or not yet fulfilling.

Humans are normally equipped to pay conscious simultaneous attention to \((7 \pm 2)\) up to 9 variable stimuli.

5 is linked to the natural limits on the short term memory.

15 comes from anthropology and relates to natural levels of deep trust for social groups.

150 is the number of identities that you can maintain in your head with some degree of recognition of acquaintance (I have seen/known this person before).

Most large organisations exceed these natural quotas: 5, 15, 150. It is, therefore, predictable and reasonable that these organisations and communities are inherently less than perfect and partly dysfunctional.

Expecting organisations to be more perfect sets us up for disappointment and frustration. And, when we do not get our own way and/or our expectations are not met, our ability to continue to function and our peace of mind generally, are the direct result of our ability to transcend these frustrations.

“The meaning of life is to find your gift.
The purpose of life is to give it away.”
Pablo Picasso

David Snowden, founder of Cognitive Edge, writes/blogs,

“Now these three numbers, 5, 15 & 150 have an alliterative quality which helps us remember and use them.
They also have some fairly immediate and practical implications for communities and networks”.

Humans are normally equipped to pay conscious simultaneous attention to \((7 \pm 2)\) up to 9 variable stimuli.

5 is linked to the natural limits on the short term memory.

15 comes from anthropology and relates to natural levels of deep trust for social groups.

150 is the number of identities that you can maintain in your head with some degree of recognition of acquaintance (I have seen/known this person before).
Diane Beale (pictured) makes some enlightening observations about frustration and learning in her article *Accelerative Learning and The Emerging Science of Wholeness* (Journal of Accelerated Learning and Teaching, Volume 22 Spring 1997):

> Learning shifts are often preceded by stress involving excitement, creative tension, even some confusion and anxiety. We know that crisis is essentially another facet of opportunity and that the creative process requires chaos before form emerges, thus a perturbation is essential for a dramatic shift or awakening to occur.

Frustration is, therefore, part of learning and even part of breakthrough (as in double-loop learning). Leading people through these experiences and transcending frustration is a basic requirement of leadership.

Imagine a large organisation being brutally (and comically) honest as it welcomes new employees by saying,

> Welcome. We are very pleased you have joined us. Please know that we appreciate you and your special gifts and your choice to be part of ‘us’. We sincerely hope you can continue to be part of ‘us’.

> To help you do this, please expect that we may not always be able to show our appreciation. In fact, our organisation is not perfect and may unintentionally treat you in ways less than you deserve. We hope you can do whatever it takes to:

- know these shortcomings are not personal or aimed somehow at you.
- be aware and emotionally robust about these realities, and
- continue to self-generate your own acknowledgement, satisfaction and motivations.

The realistic and open-hearted mindset of this honest invitation sets up some very important dynamics between the employee and the organisation. A major part of this more productive relationship is about leaders at all levels giving the organisation permission to be less than perfect.

Please note how this permission is open-hearted and not operating in spite of the organisation. It is based on the grace of acceptance of the organisation being imperfect, not just tolerating it being so.
Dr. Robert McDonald (pictured), co-author of *Tools of the Spirit*, suggests

*Forgiveness is giving up all hope of a better yesterday.*

*Forgiveness includes no longer requiring others to change.*

If you want to explore these ideas further, check out the article (also by Scott Arbuthnot), *Forgiveness – the Undiscovered Change Step*.

This new relationship between you and the organisation includes an assumption you, as an adult, are responsible for your own motivations, self-care, self-acknowledgement and maintenance of your abilities to contribute to the greater/shared purpose.

All this self-care is without lapsing into less mature, naive expectations for the organisation and/or people in it to be perfect or better by your standards or:

- The world to be fair and guarantee your virtues to be your exemption to misfortune (or imagine bad things will never happen to good people)
- Someone else to take care of your feelings on your behalf
- Someone else to guarantee your success so you can operate without risk of failure
- Timely or proportional gratification and rewards
- Work to provide your identity and reassure you of your personal worth
- Other people to act as champions on your behalf and bravely go first, do what you believe in and blaze a trail for you to safely follow

Watch the presentations by researcher Brene Brown about Vulnerability and Shame:

part #1  [http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability.html)
part #2  [http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_listening_to_shame.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_listening_to_shame.html)
This more mature expectation also enables you to deal differently with frustration by:

1. Adopting the attitude of confidence and trust that you will transcend frustration and be able to bear it, learn from it, make the best of it, and calmly treat it as far less than catastrophic so some good might come of it.

2. Actively search for the meaning, learning and possibilities highlighted by frustration. Withdrawal or giving up robs you of these opportunities. Stay active about getting value from your experience.

3. Using the messages and lessons from frustration. Not just getting smarter by collecting information. Your use of these learnings is knowledge-in-action. In other words, wisdom.

It is easy to intellectually agree with the imperfect nature of large organisations. It is also easy to accept the naivety of expecting them to be perfect. These intelligent thoughts do not, however, ease the emotional frustrations of operating within less than perfect organisations.

To help you personally experience the difference these thoughts-in-action can make, here is an experiential learning task to complete over two or more weeks. For best results, team up with a partner and share your experiences and learning:

**Your Frustration**

During the course of your normal week, deliberately give your organisation more permission to be imperfect and notice how this changes your own energy levels and effectiveness.

If and when your frustration is triggered, follow the steps of:

1. Assuming the attitude of “I will transcend this and good might come of it”
2. Being active and searching for the value from your experience.
3. Using the lessons as knowledge-in-action.

As you transcend frustration, pay attention to the influence this has on the people around you.

Reflect on your experience and debrief with your partner. Make notes about your new insights about:

- Your own experiences of transcending frustration and the impacts on your self perceptions of your own resilience.
- The influence your behaviours had on the people around you.
Increasing Resilience by the Power of Choice

Further to transcending frustration and accepting the imperfect nature of organisations, personal resilience can be increased by reducing feelings of being trapped within the organisation.

Predict for yourself how much more resilient staff will be when you:

• Take the confidence staff have, on their last day before leaving, to fearlessly contribute and
• Multiply this confidence across every working day.

This is the counter-intuitive “switch” that makes staff with more personal choices more resilient. The simple choice to participate or evacuate, to stay or go, is powerfully liberating.

The opposite illusion of being trapped is an awfully negative influence. Cornered animal style behaviours can emerge and be destructive.

Think about the differing perceptions, emotions and behaviours you have noticed from people who perceived they had choices, and people who didn’t perceive they had choices. Your own experience will no doubt already tell you volunteers are far better to have on your team than victims.

To increase your own awareness of your personal choices, think about several answers for each of the big questions like:

• if, for some reason known to you today, your current income and/or cash flow was guaranteed to disappear in 2 years, what would you do to replace your cash flow this week, this month and this year?
• if you chose to change employers, who else might you work with or for?
• if you chose to change career paths, what else might you do?
• if you chose to work for yourself, what might you do?

Preparing to leave an organisation does not mean you must leave.

Being ready to leave no longer means you are disloyal. It means you have choices.

Staff with real choices about leaving or staying are more resilient.

Being ready to leave enables staff to stay by their conscious free choice and contribute more.

There may no longer be such a thing as an organisation loyal to an individual or an individual loyal to an organisation”

Lee Crockett, Canadian Digital Learning Researcher

Leadership modules provided by Arbuthnot & Associates
scott@arbuthnot.com.au, +61 7 34253380
Please contact the authors for further modules and special requests
• if you chose to change jobs or careers and take a drop in income, how might your family and household cope with the lower income?

• if you chose to move to another city, where would you like to live?

Working through questions like these is often part of an outplacement process or career counseling session. These sessions are offered to middle managers after the organisational change.

Please consider these questions before the change so you can create your own power of choice and participate in change, or not.

Empowering yourself through personal choice reduces the need to pretend you support everything you’re told. Senior staff who volunteer to participate in change are far better able to lead others to perceive and make their own choices about change.

In short, you can’t give what you don’t have. People who don’t choose organisational change do not inspire others to volunteer for change.

The next applications of resilience are about extending your own resilience as a positive influence for the staff you work with. Please consider how clarifying your choices and personal boundaries can make you more available and reliable for others.

For example, being undecided about staying or going can obstruct decision making and planning, generally. Even though you think your indecision is secret and invisible, this uncertainty will leak into your thinking and relationships.

To make yourself more certain and present, please consider the below questions and how much you might strategically and safely disclose to the people you work with.

1. Instead of passively waiting to see what happens or ‘deciding later’, what time commitments can you make to sticking with this role for 6 months, a year, 2 years? Who will benefit from knowing you are this reliable?

2. What are the robust criteria you will use for deciding to stay or go? Draft your versions of “I will stick with this so long as 1-2-3 ” and/or “I will leave if xyz happens”. Who will benefit from knowing you are this predictable?

3. What clear expectations and agreements do you need to make with senior staff about this next period? What terms do you wish them to know in advance to help them avoid triggering your disappointment or exit? If they do not know your expectations, they may be more likely to fail them.

After enough weeks, debrief the impact of personal choice on your own resilience.