

Building Resilience (Adults)


haveTHAT talk



Building Resilience

What is Resilience?

Everyone experiences stress or challenges as part of life. Resilience is being able to work through life's difficulties, thrive and reach your full potential.¹

How can you build resilience?

Building resilience is a process where you develop skills to cope with, work through and recover from challenges in a positive way afterwards. Building resilience is something that you can learn at any time in your life. It is never too early or too late to learn and practice being resilient.

Some resilience skills are:

- being aware of your feelings and reflecting on them.
- being able to think of solutions to challenges you experience.
- thinking positively about your situation, rather than dwelling on the negative.
- knowing what you are good at and building new skills.
- knowing when and how to get support from others.

Resilience may not fix everything, but it will give you the skills to work through challenges and recover positively afterwards.

Additional Resources

English

- [Emotional Intelligence](#)
- [How students \(or anyone!\) can cultivate resilience](#)
- [Responding to Stressful Events](#)
- [Stress Strategies](#)

French

- [Comment les étudiants \(ou n'importe qui!\) peuvent cultiver leur résilience](#)
- [Faire face aux événements stressants](#)
- [Intelligence émotionnelle](#)
- [Stratégies sur le Stress](#)

¹ Pearson, J., & Kordich Hall, D., Reaching IN...Reaching OUT Resiliency Guidebook, 2006, Guide 1 Resilience – a brief overview. Retrieved from:

<https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/mha.ohio.gov/learnandfindhelp/TreatmentServices/TCC/Guidebook-06.pdf>

Activity 1: Reacting to Problems

Goal

- To understand how negative and positive thoughts/self-talk affect you.
- To understand that thoughts, feeling and actions are interconnected.

Messages

- There are many ways to look at, or re-frame a challenging situation.
- Changing how we think can help us to overcome challenges.
- Self-talk can be positive, such as “life isn’t perfect, but there are somethings I can change”. Or it can be negative. Like, “everything is horrible, and nothing will ever change”.
- Self-talk is connected to how we feel and act. Thinking in positive ways can make you feel better and help you take more positive steps to change your situation.

Time

- 15-20 minutes (depending on the size of the group).

Supplies

- Video: [*“Building Resilience.”*](#)
- One *“Reacting to Problems: Self-Talk Can Change a Lot”* worksheet for each person.
- Poster or overhead projection of *“Change One and You Can Change Them All”* sheet.
- Flip chart paper and markers.

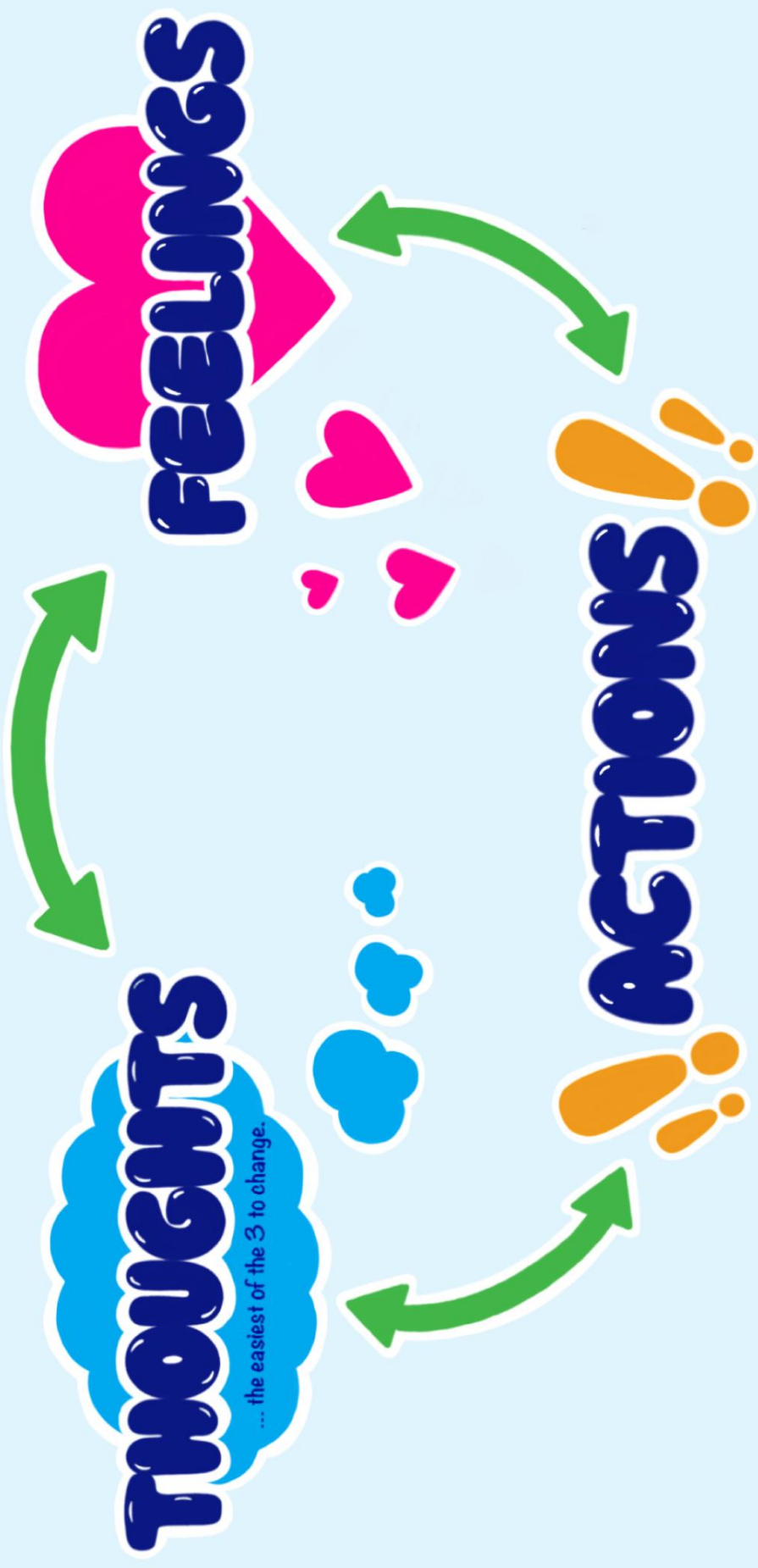
Activity

- View the video: *“Building Resilience.”*
- Divide participants into groups of 2-4.
- Discuss the concept of positive self-talk with the participants, using the “messages” section above.
- Give each participant one *“Reacting to Situations”* worksheet.
- Allow each group to create a scenario or assign them one from the “sample scenarios” below.
- Ensure that they provide examples of both positive and negative thoughts, feelings and actions.
- Ask each group to share their ideas with the larger group for discussion.

Sample Scenarios

- Due to work priorities, you need to work later tonight.
- You receive a call from your child’s teacher about an incident at school.
- On social media, your friends post photos and videos of the great time they’re having while you’re at home doing chores.
- You got your hair cut and styled, but your partner didn’t notice.
- Your partner tells you that they didn’t enjoy the meal you worked hard on.

Change one and you can change them all.



HEALTHY
TRANSITIONS

Reacting to problems: self talk can change a lot

Negative self talk situation:

You were rejected for a job you applied for.

THOUGHTS

I didn't try
hard enough

I'm not good
enough.

There must be something wrong with me.



FEELINGS

Angry

Rejected

Self-conscious

Insecure



ACTIONS!

No longer motivated to apply to other jobs.
Not feeling appreciated at work and burning out.
Not talking to anyone at work.

Positive self talk situation:

You were rejected for a job you applied for.

THOUGHTS

I didn't get the
job this time, but I
can book an
interview review
to find out what I
can do better
next time.

I will try again
next time.

Now that I have had practice, I will have a
better chance when I try again.



FEELINGS

Disappointed
but okay.

Confident in your abilities and work ethic

Motivated
to try again.



ACTIONS!

Review my interview answers with my manager.
Practice my interview skills.
Apply for more positions

SAMPLE WORKSHEET RESPONSES

Adapted from: Ottawa Public Health (OPH). (n.d.). Healthy Transitions: Promoting Resilience and Mental Health in Young Adults, Grade 6: Session 1, Ottawa Public Health. Retrieved from: https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/professionals-and-partners/resources/Documents/school-health-online/Healthy-Transitions-Grade-6-Facilitator-Guide_EN.pdf

HEALTHY
TRANSITIONS

Reacting to problems: self talk can change a lot

Negative self talk situation:

THOUGHTS

↓ ↓

FEELINGS

↓ ↓

ACTIONS!

Positive self talk situation:

THOUGHTS

↓ ↓

FEELINGS

↓ ↓

ACTIONS!

HEALTHY
TRANSITIONS

Activity 2: Resilience Toolkit & Making a Resilience Action Plan

Goal

- To learn new resilience skills.
- To plan ways for you to increase your resilience.

Messages

- Resilience is our ability to work through life's challenges in positive ways. It helps us thrive and reach our full potential, even when times are tough.
- Resilience can make the difference between feeling overwhelmed by a challenge and using the experience as a learning opportunity.
- You can learn to be resilient at any age.
- Strong social connections, community bonds and friendships, and a sense of belonging can increase a person's resilience.

Time

- 25 minutes (depending on the size of the group).

Supplies

- Video: [*"Building Resilience"*](#).
- Print one *"My Resilience Toolkit"* and one *"Resilience Action Plan"* for each participant.
- Flip chart paper, markers and pens.

Activity A: How Resilient am I?

- View the video: *"Building Resilience"*.
- Give each participant a copy of the *"My Resilience Toolkit"*.
- Ask participants to check off the resilience skills they regularly take part in.
- Ask participants to share ideas of other skills that can increase resilience. Have participants add them to the "other skills I can try" section.
- Ask if anyone wants to share their thoughts.
- Remind participants that there are many other ways to build resilience. The skills listed in this activity are just to help someone get started. Some skills may be helpful, while others might not. Don't be afraid to try new things to see what works for you!

Possible Answers

- Happy to know that these skills can improve resilience.
- Surprised by the effectiveness of these skills but willing to try them in the future.

My Resilience Toolkit

Resilience is our ability to work through life's challenges in positive ways. It helps us thrive and reach our full potential, even when times are tough. It can make the difference between feeling overwhelmed by a challenge and using the experience as a learning opportunity.

Check “yes” or “no” to the resilience skills listed that you regularly take part in when you're having a hard time. Don't be discouraged or alarmed if you don't have many checked off. Save this list and try some of these skills for yourself. Come back to it in a few weeks and reflect on how they made you feel.

Resilience Skills	Yes	No
When life gets tough, I can meet with people from my community or other people I enjoy being around.		
I believe I can learn from difficult times.		
When I am under stress, I can talk to someone I trust, like a family member, friend, religious/community leader, health professional, or other.		
When life gets busy or stressful, I try to make time for myself by meditating, reflecting on what I am thankful for, or doing other activities that bring me peace.		
I cope well with change.		
I know that I can call 211 to find programs and services available in my city and community.		
After a stressful event, I am able to let go and move forward by using positive self-talk and being kind to myself.		
I try to focus on the positives and the things I can control.		
Other skills I can try:		

Activity B: Making a Resilience Action Plan

- View the video: ["Building Resilience"](#)
- Ask the participants to brainstorm some ways to build resilience. Write their answers on a flip chart paper.
- Give each participant a copy of the *"Resilience Action Plan"*.
- Ask them to think of one challenge they are facing and to answer each of the questions.

Possible Answers

- Eating healthy, getting enough sleep and doing something that I enjoy.
- Being okay with not doing everything perfectly.
- Knowing my strengths and what has helped me in the past.

What tools and support do I have in my life to me help build my resilience?

- Call 211 to find programs and services available in your city and community.
- Meet with people from your community or country of origin.
- Talk to someone you trust. It can be a family member, friend, religious/community leader or a health professional.

What new things can I try to help me overcome my challenge and recover?

- Practicing deep breathing and mindfulness.
- Being active and listening to music.
- Being thankful for the good things in my life.
- Connecting with the community (cooking, sharing a meal).

Resilience Action Plan

Answer the questions below and think of ideas to help you build your resilience. Set a date for when you will put your plan into action.

Question	Ideas
What is one challenge I am facing today?	
How do I feel? For example: • Angry • Frustrated • Sad • Other feelings...	
What can I do to cope with my feelings? For example: • Get together with friends and family. • Talk to a health professional. • Get out and be active. • Breathe deeply. • Other ideas...	
What helped me cope or get through a challenging time in the past?	
What tools do I have in my life to help build my resilience?	
What new thing can I try to overcome my challenges and recover?	

Adapted from: Ottawa Public Health; Canadian Mental Health Association; Canadian Public Health Association; Mental Illness Caregivers Association; Military Family Services. (2016). Mental Health Caregiver Guide: A guide for caregivers of persons living with mental illness or experiencing mental health challenges. ON: Ottawa Public Health.

Adapted from: Keltly Mental Health Resource Centre (KMHC). (n.d.). How to Problem Solve. Retrieved from: https://keltymentalhealth.ca/sites/default/files/documents/toolkit_for_families_-_how_to_problem_solve.pdf

Activity 3: Add to Your Resilience

Goal

- To learn a practical way to increase your resilience using deep breathing and mindfulness.

Messages

- Deep breathing and mindfulness can help ease stress².
- These skills can help you become more resilient.

Time

- 10-20 minutes for deep breathing and mindfulness exercise.

Supplies

- Video: *“Building Resilience.”*
- *“Take Time to Breathe Deeply”* script (below).

Activity

- View the video: *“Building Resilience.”*
- Make the room as comfortable as possible (e.g., turn down the lights or play relaxing music).
- Read the *“Take Time to Breathe”* script (below).
- Ask participants how the activity made them feel.

Possible Answers

- Some participants might find these activities difficult. Remind participants that it takes time and practice to learn new skills.
- Some participants may feel relaxed and less stressed, while others might not feel a difference. Some may feel more stressed because they couldn't stop their thoughts from wandering. This is normal and improves with practice.

“Take Time to Breathe Deeply” Script

- Sit comfortably, with your knees bent and your shoulders, head and neck relaxed.
- Place one hand on your upper chest and the other just below your rib cage. This will allow you to feel your diaphragm move as you breathe.
- Inhale through your nose. The hand below your rib cage should move out. The hand on your chest should stay as still as possible.
- Tighten your stomach muscles, letting them fall inward as you exhale through your mouth. The hand on your upper chest should stay as still as possible.
- Practice deep breathing for one minute. As participants do this, ask them to think about the things in their environment they can feel, see, hear, smell and taste.
- Let them know that focusing on their senses can help to stop them from worrying about other problems going on in their life, and can support them with them being

more “in the moment.”

- Explain that deep breathing can be used any time they need a short break. This is a good way to take a “time out” from a situation and relax.

Adapted from: Ottawa Public Health Workplace Health. (2015). Balancing Work and Home Session Learning Plan: Diaphragmatic Breathing
2 Madhav Goyal, MD; Sonal Singh, MD; Erica M. S. Sibinga, MD; et al., (2014). Programs for Psychological Stress and Well-being: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. Jama Internal Medicine. Retrieved from:
<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/1809754>

"Mindfulness" is about focusing your mind on the things you can see, hear, smell, touch, and sense. Practicing mindfulness when you are going through a hard time can help build resilience and reduce stress.

