

Fostering Resilience for Adults



What is Resilience?

Resilience isn't about forcing through hard times and carrying on irrespective of how you feel; it is about creating strategies that help you manage when facing situations that you may find difficult or stressful. We all respond to stressful situations in different ways. Some people can carry on without much thought, other people may find quite small difficulties overwhelming. Having the capability to react well to, and learn from, stressful situations is what we think of as resilience. So, a good way to think of resilience is your ability to cope with, or recover from, stressful and even traumatic experiences.

Recognising Pressure and Stress

You normally feel pressure when there is too much of something (like workload) building up and causing you concern. It can be a short-term or long-term issue which can be harmful, both psychologically and physically.

Short-term pressure can occur from everyday situations: like being late to work, being short-staffed or facing unexpected demands. If short-term pressure is constant and/or re-occurring, it can lead to individuals misreading the situation, reacting inappropriately and become a health problem.

Long-term pressure builds up over time and could be affected by home and work issues. It can affect your judgement, behaviour and can lead to more serious health issues.

A key part in coping with pressure is being able to recognise when it starts to become a problem. This means you are able to be aware of how you are feeling and are alert to the signs and symptoms of too much pressure.

People can react to pressure very differently but some typical early signs include: physical reactions such as nausea, digestive issues, dry mouth and rashes; emotional reactions such as a short temper, feeling overwhelmed and paranoia; behavioural reactions such as procrastinating, neglecting responsibilities and nervous habits like pacing or nail biting; and thought process reactions such as the inability to concentrate, only seeing the negative, constant worrying, self-blame and poor judgement. These are just some examples of common signs, but every person will react to pressure differently.



Ways in which to develop resilience

Having strategies to cope with pressure will help overcome the initial reactions and help build your resilience. The following are some techniques that can be used in response to any pressure from any situation:

- **Relax**
 - Use some different techniques to help you relax. For example: breathe in for a count of 7 and out for a count of 11; tighten all your muscles for a count of 3, then let go; or a quick burst of movement such as a quick walk, going up and down stairs or stretching – it doesn't have to be strenuous, any sort of movement will help release some pressure.
- **Regain control of your thoughts and emotions**
 - Step out of the stressful situation. Literally walk away and focus your attention on something else, just for a moment. This will give you a chance to calm down and regain control of your emotions and thoughts.
 - Talk to a colleague. Talking about how you are feeling can help tremendously. Putting things into words to another person gives some space from the situation, helps you calm down and find a different perspective on the issue.
 - Notice how you are feeling. Ask yourself, 'What am I actually feeling?'. This is a mindfulness technique that can help manage emotions. Identify the feeling(s) and accept them. Don't judge yourself and don't fight them. Taking the time to identify your feelings and accept them puts you back in charge and can let you move on.
 - Break the cycle. When you have negative thoughts, make the effort to turn your attention to something positive, such as a good memory, something you are going to do or anything that makes you feel positive about yourself. This is a great distraction technique that allows you to reaffirm the good things in your life.
 - Problem solve. If you begin to worry about something that is coming up, stop and ask yourself, 'What do I actually need to do about this?' and, 'What can I actually do about this?'. Think it through logically and think about who you could ask for help. Mentally rehearse how you want to deal with the situation but keep in mind that sometimes there is a limited amount you can do. This technique is designed to put you back in charge and feel in control.
 - Stop worrying and think positively. If you find yourself worrying or stressed, try talking to yourself in a calm and logical way. If you are facing a challenge at work, think of a time you have overcome challenges before and tell yourself you can do it again. Try and view it as a positive, for example, 'This will be a great opportunity to move forward in my role and gain more experience'.

- **Become more self-aware**
 - Use reflective discussion to support self-awareness. This could be simply thinking about and reflecting on what you do. Next time you feel pressure, think about; what you did; what happened; and what would you differently next time. Using a journal to reflect on stressful situations can be very effective in sorting out your thought processes.
 - Know when to seek help. Being resilient is not about being self-sufficient. Finding help when you need it is very resilient behaviour.
 - Mindfulness. This involves paying full attention to your feelings, thoughts and bodily sensations in the present moment. This means putting aside any other thoughts, worries or plans that normally preoccupy your mind. Being mindful enables you to disengage from your pressure and worries, give you some distance from them and regain perspective and a deeper sense of self. A good starting point is to remind yourself to take more notice of your thoughts and feelings. Yoga, meditation and journaling are good ways to start mindfulness techniques.

- **Get the right work-life balance**
 - It is important to establish a boundary between work and home life. Make sure you set boundaries between work and home and manage your time effectively to make the most out of the time spent at work and home. Writing lists, planning and good routines are all effective ways to make sure you get a healthy work-life balance.

- **Look after your physical health**
 - It is important to look after your physical health if you start to feel pressure and stress. For example, eat healthily, get enough sleep and exercise regularly. This will help alleviate some of the affects from stress and maintain emotional balance and optimism.

- **Look after your mental health**
 - All of these techniques are ways to promote positive mental health. Pressure and stress can impact negatively on mental wellbeing. Connecting with other people, incorporating physical activity into your routine, trying new things and doing something for other people are also some ways to promote positive mental wellbeing and build confidence.

These are some suggestions to cope with pressure and anxiety which may be building in the current climate. These are easier said than done but they are effective techniques to try and cope with negative emotions and build resilience.

This is not medical advice and if you feel overwhelmed by the current situation please seek help from the appropriate source (such as the NHS (<https://www.nhs.uk/>) Metal Health Foundation (<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>)).



Sources used to create this document include:
Bank Workers Charity. (2020). Resilience: Learn more about resilience. <https://www.bwcharity.org.uk/guides/mind/resilience>
SkillsForCare. (2020) Building your own resilience, health and wellbeing. <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk>

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