

Navigating Life's challenges

Building my toolbox for resilience



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Student Housing & Community Services





Introduction

Why use this workbook?



This workbook was created as a resource for finding answers to important reflections and questions about building resilience.

Think of it as building a toolbox of strategies to help you navigate life's challenges. Building resilience is not a one-size-fits-all journey but unique to each person's identity and stage of life - and may hinge on your cultural practices and beliefs.

How to use this workbook

It's essential to understand that not all approaches work for everyone. With that in mind, pick and choose the exercises and reflections that resonate with you; be consistent with practicing them and reflecting on them. Building resilience is more than just a one-and-done thing. This journey is about consistency, repetitiveness, and personal reflection about things that have already happened to build a skill for the future when something happens that requires your resilience skills.

University is a whole new beast, and the journey through UBC is rarely straightforward. How can you, during your time at UBC, emerge stronger on the other side of this chapter in your life? We hope that with the activities from this workbook, you can discover this answer for yourself.

**Brought to you by UBC
Counsellors in Residence**

**Sabina Lupasco
Freeman Woolnough
Serena Ewe**

*"Do not judge me by my success.
Judge me by how many times I
fell down and got back up
again."
-Nelson Mandela*

<https://vancouver.housing.ubc.ca/counsellor-in-residence/>





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Introduction

What is Resilience?

Remember when you couldn't learn a new skill and failed a few times before nailing it? Or when your project was not selected for the annual school exhibition? Do you remember how you coped during those times? The journey through life is a challenging one. As you move closer to starting your career, revisiting some of these experiences from the past can bring you one step closer to identifying your ability to be resilient.

Think of everything you have accomplished thus far, from graduating high school to meeting a new friend when you were feeling shy, presenting in front of a class for a project in high school, going through a breakup, or losing a loved one. Life gets tough, but you are tougher. You are likely stronger than you give yourself credit for.

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from obstacles; you already experience resilience in one way or another just by going through life. Resilience means successfully adapting to challenging life experiences, primarily through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands. Resilience also means using your inner strength to work through and grow from challenges and crises. In other words, resilience refers to one's ability to emotionally and even physically "bounce back" after an upsetting era in your life. No one is born resilient – it's a life skill. With practice, anyone can become resilient.

When we are talking about what we can do to build our resilience, especially during challenging times, there is no "special instruction list" that will guide you through how to build resilience, saying: "If you do these 10 things, then you will turn into this very resilient person that is unbreakable". Instead, the process of building resilience is about doing a variety of things to help ourselves get through the difficult times in our lives, and as a result of doing these things, we will become more resilient and stronger in the face of adversity.



Find out more about what
resilience is:
tinyurl.com/348fn2rh



Introduction to resilience skills

In the following sections, we will examine a few skills that you can develop to build more resilience as a skill through life. Importantly, we know that these are not simply genetic gifts a lucky few are born with – they're skills all of us can learn and build. That sounds like a fantastic trait to have, but just like everyone else, you are human, and if you want to develop resilience, you must work on it step by step, with intention. This workbook will help you to explore how we can improve these traits in ourselves over three chapters focused on the following topics:

Purpose



Acceptance

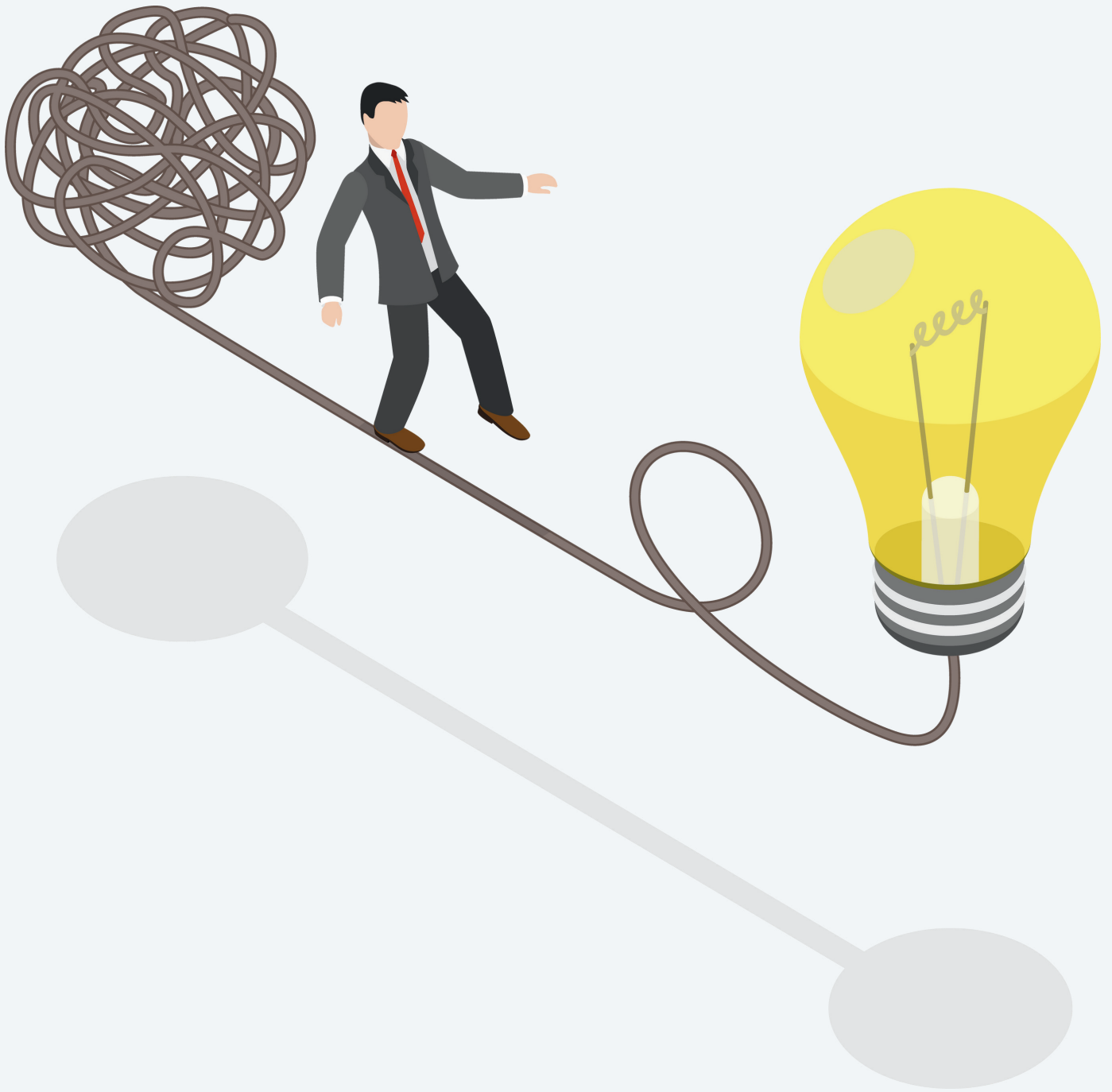


Flexibility





Purpose





What is Purpose?

Your purpose encompasses all the reasons why you get up in the morning. Purpose can guide life decisions, influence behavior, offer a sense of direction, help shape your goals, and create meaning in your life.

Purpose is not a one-and-done thing; it will often change over your lifetime. Like happiness, purpose is not a destination but a journey and a practice. That means we can sit and revisit and renew our sense of purpose as we transition through life, from high school to university or from university to professional fields.

In this chapter, you will find activities that can help you live your life with more purpose through:

Strengths

Discovering your strengths and using them in real life situations

Values

Knowing your values and living your life in alignment with them

Attitude

Using your attitude as a tool to overcome obstacles



Purpose

How does purpose connects to resilience?

The questions on the previous page help us get to the heart of the purpose. Finding purpose can help you find meaning in life's challenges and help you build resilience. Instead of being discouraged by your problems, with a defined sense of purpose, you'll be more motivated to learn from past experiences and keep going. Purpose is unique for everyone; what you identify as your path may be different from others. Your purpose is something that can shift and change throughout life in response to changes, as well as whenever you change your values, priorities, or direction.

Examples of purpose include:

- ✓ Making art or music
- ✓ Serving the community
- ✓ Volunteering in the community
- ✓ Giving voice to a social movement
- ✓ Joining a community/group of people that share the same interests, values, and hobbies as you do

Purpose is a stable sense of commitment to accomplish something meaningful to you personally and make a difference in the world beyond yourself. In the face of emotional hardship, such as the death of a loved one or the end of a relationship, knowing and reminding yourself of your purpose can be especially important in your recovery. This might mean becoming involved in the community, cultivating your spirituality, or participating in activities that are meaningful to you.

A growing body of research suggests that, compared to others, individuals with a purpose in life tend to be more resilient. Being inspired by a personally meaningful goal helps individuals withstand life's adversity and continue to pursue their goals despite this adversity.

"The purpose of life is the life of purpose"
-Rabin S. Sharma

Strengths

How do our strengths connect to resilience?

Knowing yourself and your strengths can help you build resilience. Aside from what you are afraid of and what weaknesses you think you might have, fully understanding and acknowledging your strengths can help you develop inner resilience and the ability to use those strengths and rely on them when things get tough. When you know your strengths, you can ask yourself:

“In this difficult situation, what might be some of my strengths that I can rely on to support myself going through this challenge?”

Your strengths are the elements of who you are and should not be taken for granted. When you know your strengths, you have a higher chance to use them in real life and a clearer picture of who you are and who you want to become. In other words, when looking at personal strengths, you can reflect on the strengths that you currently have and the strengths that you would like to have or improve on. Knowing your strengths can also enhance your self-esteem and self-confidence (which is a nice additional bonus!).



“Strength does not come from winning. Your struggles develop your strengths. When you go through hardships and decide not to surrender, that is strength.”
– Arnold Schwarzenegger



Strengths

Exercise: Strengths exploration

Exploring your strengths can help not only boost your self-esteem but also help you find your purpose. By thinking about your strengths, you might learn new things about yourself. In addition to asking yourself questions to find your strengths, doing other activities can help you better understand your strengths and how to use them effectively in your daily life.

Check out the exercise below to discover your strengths and get to know yourself better.

Circle your strengths from the choices below, or add your own at the bottom.			
Wisdom	Artistic Ability	Curiosity	Leadership
Empathy	Honesty	Open Mindedness	Persistence
Enthusiasm	Kindness	Love	Social Awareness
Fairness	Bravery	Cooperation	Forgiveness
Modesty	Common Sense	Self-Control	Patience
Gratitude	Love of Learning	Humor	Spirituality
Ambition	Creativity	Confidence	Intelligence
Athleticism	Discipline	Assertiveness	Logic
Optimism	Independence	Flexibility	Adventurousness



Strengths

Exercise: Strengths exploration

Think about a fictional character. Name an inspiring character from a book or a TV show.

List their strengths (use the strengths list from the previous page).

Describe how they use their strengths to overcome challenges or in everyday life.

Think about an inspiring person you know.

List their strengths (use the strengths list from the previous page).

Describe how they use their strengths to overcome challenges or in everyday life.



Strengths

Exercise: Strengths Exploration

Think about yourself.

List your strengths (use the strengths list from the beginning of this section).

Describe how you used your strengths to overcome a specific challenge in your life.



Values

How do values connect to resilience?

Research has shown that when we are consciously connected with our most important values, it serves as a buffer and protection from psychological stress, helping us to be more resilient when facing adversity. When we make decisions and do things that align with our values, we are more likely to feel happier and more accomplished going through life. When we choose to make decisions and do things that align with our highest priority values, we are more likely to do them willingly and gain a sense of satisfaction – even happiness.

When you step off the path of extrinsic values – things that other people make you think are important – and step onto the path of your own intrinsic values, you are developing profound courage. You are putting yourself in sync with something very powerful – your soul, spirit, true nature – your authentic self. Take a look at the list of values on the next page and note the values that you align with.

“Your core values are the deeply held beliefs that authentically describe your soul.”

– John C. Maxwell





Values

Acceptance	Elegance	Independence	Rational
Accomplishment	Emotional	Influence	Recognition
Achievement	Wellbeing	Information	Relatedness
Acquisition	Empathy	Inner peace	Relationships
Adventure	Encourage	Innovation	Relaxation
Alignment	Encouragement	Inspiration	Reliability
Altruism	Energy	Instruction	Religious/Religion
Ambitious	Enlightenment	Integrity	Resourcefulness
Amusement	Entertainment	Intelligence	Respect
Assistance	Environment	Inventiveness	Responsibility
Attractiveness	Equality	Joy	Responsiveness
Authenticity	Ethics/Ethical	Justice	Risk
Awareness	Excellence	Kindness	Safety
Beauty	Experience	Knowledge	Schooling
Being	Experiment	Laughter	Self-awareness
Bliss	Expertise	Leadership	Self-control
Calm	Explain	Learning	Self-worth
Capable	Exquisiteness	Love	Sensations
Charity	Facilitation	Loyalty	Sensuality
Cheerful	Fairness	Magnificence	Serenity
Coach	Faith	Mastery	Service
Community	Fame	Merriment	Simplicity
Compassion	Family	Nobility	Spirituality
Comprehending	Feeling good	Nutrition	Stability
Connection	Fitness	Obedient	Stimulation
Consciousness	Forgiving	Open-minded	Strength
Consideration	Freedom	Order	Strengthen
Constancy	Friendship	Organization	Success
Contentment	Fun	Originality	Superiority
Contribution	Generosity	Peace	Support
Cooperation	Grace	Peacefulness	Teaching
Courage	Gratitude	Perception	Tenderness
Create	Guidance	Personal	Touch
Creativity	Happiness	Development	Tranquility
Dependability	Hard-working	Play	Trust
Detection	Harmony	Pleasure	Truth
Dignity	Health	Positive attitude	Truthfulness
Direct	Helpful	Power	Understanding
Discovery	Honesty	Preparation	Victory
Diversity	Honor	Presence	Vision
Economic	Hope	Proficiency	Wealth
Security	Humility	Provider	Wholeness
Education	Imagination	Quest	Winning
Effectiveness	Improvement	Radiance	Wisdom



Values

Exercise: Values Exploration

Ask yourself: What do I care about the most in the world?

Make a list of as many things as you can. Your list should reflect what is important and personal to you, not what others (your family, friends, peers) may expect from you. Some examples might include family, money, comfort, friends, time, career, freedom, optimism, and connection.

Now, take some time to look at the list of values on Page 11 and select from the list the values that resonate with you and who you are. Try to select the top 10 values that resonate with you, your priorities, and your life.

From the list of top 10 values, choose 3 values that represent the core of who you are and what is valuable to you. Once you decided on the 3 most important values, rank them according to their importance in your life.



Values

Exercise: Values Exploration

After you've ranked them, it's time to define what they really mean to you in your own words. While it's okay to look in a dictionary to help yourself define a value, your own meaning that you give to it is what is the most important here!

Using the table below, take some time to define each value that you chose.

For example:

- Freedom: the ability to do whatever I want, whenever I want and however I want it.
- Freedom: the ability to be free financially and travel all over the world.

Remember, this is not a one-time exercise. It might take some time until you can finalize your list. Take the time to reflect and revise. Adding or cutting values as you continue ranking them and reviewing them is completely okay.

My top 3 values	My definition of the value



Values

Exercise: Values Exploration

Knowing your values is great! But how do we actually use them in real life?

Now you have your own definition of your values; this can help you bring more of these values to your life with concrete actions and steps.

Take a moment to reflect on how the values chosen can be incorporated into your life with concrete behaviors or actions.

For example:

Optimism - Learn to approach challenging situations with a glass-half-full attitude.

My top 3 values	How I plan to incorporate this value more into my life (concrete steps, actions to take)



Values

Exercise: Values Exploration

Let's explore a little bit more in-depth how knowing your values can help you behave in a way that is in line with who you actually are. Take some time to reflect and complete the following sentences.

Keeping my clues in mind, here are some ways I will treat others differently...

Keeping my clues in mind, here are some ways I will treat myself differently....

Here are some personal qualities and character strengths I will develop and demonstrate to others...



Values

Exercise: Values Exploration

Here are some goals I will work toward...

Here are some ways I will behave differently in relationships...

Here are some important things I will "stand for"...

Here are some activities I will start to do more of...



Attitude

How your attitude connects to resilience

Life is full of ups and downs. One day, you may feel like you have it all figured out. Then, in an instant, you've been thrown a curve ball. You are all alone in these feelings; everyone has to face their own set of challenges. Everyone has their own *preferences* for how to face challenges in life. No one looks forward to failure. After all, failure is evidence that we aren't "good enough." We all fail... But you won't see it on people's CVs, cover letters, or LinkedIn profiles. However, research shows that people who fail repeatedly develop persistence in the face of difficulties and as a result become more resilient.

Having said that, we can choose how we regard our failures. Many people are ashamed of them. They try to hide their failures so others don't discover them. To become resilient, we have to change the way we see failure. We should embrace it rather than dread it, cover it up, and redirect blame. Failure will never feel pleasant! But we can train ourselves to accept it and learn from the experience of failing so we can do better next time. Failure is a painful experience but often a necessary path toward growth, and if we can learn from our failures, this can allow us to operate at a level we did not think possible.

Failure can be an effective teacher. It's also a harsh and unsympathetic one. The insights and value we obtain from it ultimately depend on which lessons we learn. So much depends on how we interpret failure. Our perception of failure and the lessons learned from it can make the difference between giving up and persevering when life becomes difficult.

So, if you aspire to the heights, you might as well prepare yourself for some turbulence - it's the lessons you learn from failures that will prepare you for the success you seek.

"Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms- to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's way."
- Victor E. Frankl





Attitude



Exercise: Overcoming obstacles and rethinking failure

Making mistakes can be a valuable learning opportunity. You can find lessons from your mistakes that can help you improve yourself and learn how to do better next time in a similar circumstance. Take some time to reflect on past experiences when you may have failed at something, and explore some of the things that you have learned from those failures:

What is one challenge, mistake, or failure you have been through?	
What is something positive you learned about yourself from a past challenge, mistake or failure you went through?	
What is a bigger “WHY” you are choosing to go through certain struggles? What is motivating you to continue in the difficult times?	
What are 2 current goals in your life you can focus on, to keep you moving in a forward direction?	
The next time you experience a challenge, mistake or failure, what can you say to yourself to remind yourself that it is a learning opportunity?	

I’ve often failed over and over and over again in my life, and that is why I succeed”
– Michael Jordan



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Acceptance





Acceptance

What is Acceptance?

Acceptance refers to the act of embracing and acknowledging something or someone as true. It involves a positive reception of an idea, situation, person, or object without resistance and rejection. As we know, life is not always a bed of roses; it is filled with setbacks and adversities. Difficult emotions are also an inescapable part of this process. In order for us to navigate through life's trials with greater flexibility and adaptability, acceptance is another key piece to cultivating resiliency.

In this chapter, you will find activities that can help you develop more acceptance through:

Self-acceptance

Acceptance of myself with all my virtues and flaws

Acknowledging Control

Acceptance of things I have no control over

Managing emotions

Acceptance that difficult, uncomfortable emotions are a part of life



Acceptance

Self- Acceptance

How self-acceptance connects to resilience

We all have things we would like to improve about ourselves. We are only human – beautiful but flawed creatures, simply trying to do our best. None of us is perfect.

Self-acceptance is the ability to accept your strengths and shortcomings without judgment. It also means valuing yourself regardless of accomplishments or failures. By accepting yourself, you are permitting yourself to be human. Through this, you create a sturdy foundation of confidence, self-worth, and authenticity. This inner strength helps you face difficulties with a positive mindset, knowing you are capable and valuable. For example, higher self-acceptance can motivate us to seek out solutions, even when feeling stuck.

Similar to a shield that withstands blows, self-acceptance helps you endure hardships and criticism, making you more equipped to handle whatever comes your way. Remember that it's okay to have limitations and make mistakes.

Resilience isn't about never falling; it's about getting back up each time you do. In this case, self-acceptance is the springboard that helps you rise, learn, and grow stronger. So, be kind to yourself, love yourself, uniqueness and all.

“What self-acceptance does is open up more possibilities of succeeding because you aren't fighting yourself along the way”
– Shannon Ables





Acceptance

Exercise: Self-acceptance Letter

First, think of something about yourself that makes you feel ashamed, insecure, or not good enough. It could be something related to your personality, behavior, abilities, relationships, or any other part of your life. Once you choose something, reflect on how it makes you feel. Sad? Embarrassed? Angry?

The next step is to write a letter from yourself to yourself, expressing compassion, understanding, and acceptance for this part of yourself that you struggle with. As you express your thoughts and feelings in the letter, try to be good to yourself and as honest with yourself as possible. Remember that no one but you will see your letter; there is no “right” or “wrong” way of doing this exercise.

Imagine that there is someone who accepts you unconditionally for who you are. What would that person say to you about this part of yourself? Think about what you would say to a friend in your position or what a friend would say to you in this situation.



Acceptance

Acknowledging Control

How does acknowledging control connect to resilience?

Life gets stressful. Nobody can disagree with that. Having some level of control over your choices and actions can help you navigate challenges more effectively. Control empowers us as it gives agency and purpose.

For example, imagine that you're preparing for a big test. If you have control over your study habits, you can plan your study schedule, break down the material, and ask for help if you're stuck. This control over your study habits can build on your resiliency because it helps you face the challenge of the test with more confidence and preparation.

However, it is impossible (and unrealistic to expect) to control all circumstances, particularly when life can be unpredictable. When this happens, it is important to take a step back and learn to let go of the things we cannot control.

Resilience sometimes means accepting the things we cannot control in our life, and focusing our energy and time on the things we can influence. Namely: our reactions, behaviors, and decisions. When you focus on what you can do, you may notice a decrease in feelings of helplessness as well.

Taking a moment to think about the difference between the things you can control versus the things you cannot control can also help prevent us from catastrophizing a situation. A case of catastrophizing may look like: "If I fail this test, I will never pass school, and I will be a total failure in life". Instead, if you were to look through the framework of what you can control, this may be your thought process instead: "Failure might mean that I was not adequately prepared for the exam, so what are some steps I can take to ensure success?"



Acceptance

Exercise: Acknowledging Control

The idea of this exercise is that in any difficult situation, there are factors we can control and factors we cannot control. Anxiety and stuckness often arise when we focus disproportionately on the factors we can't control while neglecting to think about the things we can change. Unfortunately, this becomes a trap - because anxiety tends to perpetuate itself, keeping us focused on the big, scary things we have little or no control over, making it even harder to focus on the things that we can control.

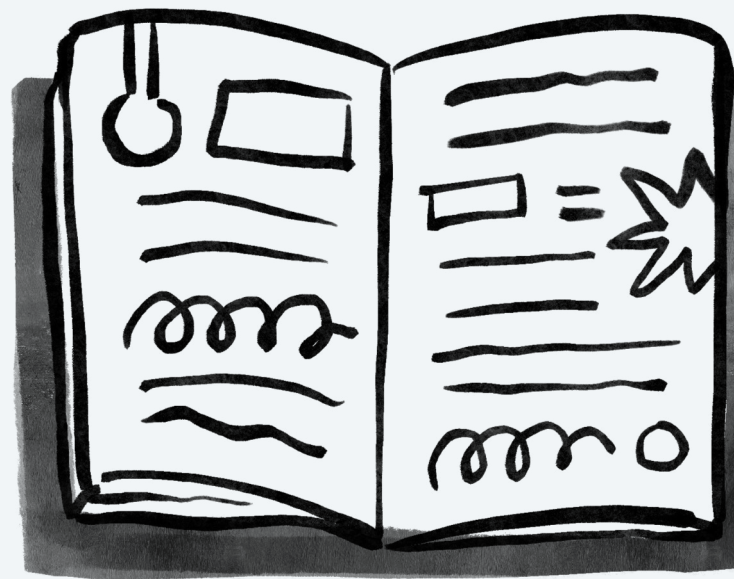
This activity will help you refocus your attention and energy towards the things that are in your control. Identifying the things that you are in control of is important because those are the things that you will have to try to focus your energy and time on. Let's get started:

Use the next page to reflect on a specific situation that makes you feel anxious, hopeless, or stuck.

- What you can't control and influence with your actions, words, and behaviors? Write all the things that come to mind outside of the circle.
- What are the things that you can control and influence with your actions, words, and behaviors? Write all the things that come to mind in the circle.
- Once you have finished writing down your ideas, reflect on this question: How can I focus more on the things that I can control?

"Incredible change happens in your life when you decide to take control of what you do have power over instead of craving control over what you don't."

- Steve Maraboli





Acceptance

Exercise: Acknowledging Control

Things that I am not in control of in this situation





Acceptance

Managing Emotions

How does managing emotions connect to resilience?

Learning to manage emotions takes time! And practice! Many of us spend a lot of time being influenced by our emotions, which ultimately influence the way we feel about ourselves and the world around us. Emotional mastery is often misunderstood as pushing down your emotions, ignoring them, pretending they don't exist, or distracting yourself from them. But that is a myth. Emotional mastery means recognizing your emotions, understanding why we are experiencing them, and managing them in a healthy manner. If we are constantly disconnecting ourselves from our feelings, it will only make us feel worse in the long run; this does not lead to resilience.

Emotional management plays a pivotal role in resilience as it allows us to respond thoughtfully rather than react impulsively to challenges. By giving yourself the space to express and process your emotions, you can obtain clearer perspectives, which will in turn help you in making sounder decisions and, subsequently, strengthen your sense of resiliency.

"Successful people have fears,
successful people have doubts, and
successful people have worries.
They just don't let these feelings
stop them"
– T. Harv Eker



There are three steps we can practice to manage our emotions better: acknowledging, allowing, and understanding.

[illegible]



Acceptance

Exercise: Managing Emotions

Allowing

After you acknowledge the emotions that you are experiencing (there can be a mix of them), this step focuses on allowing yourself to feel those emotions without judgment or criticism. Below are some statements that you can use to get into the headspace of allowing yourself to let the emotions be:

It's okay to feel the way I do right now.

I am allowed to feel this emotion.

This emotion is uncomfortable, but it will pass.

This emotion is overwhelming, but it won't hurt me.

The next time you notice that you are judging your emotions, read these sentences out loud to remind yourself that you are allowing this process to happen.

Understanding

One function of our emotions is to provide us with information. When we seek to understand the reasoning behind our emotions, the clarity can allow us to find solutions to current challenges. In this step, think about the objective facts that formed the context in which you are right now.

For example: "I am anxious because I was not proactive with my assignment's deadlines, and now I have a lot to catch up. Let me work through this step by step. What is the first thing I should do?"

The next page has a table outlined for you to practice these skills in a real-life situation. Take some time to fill it in.



Acceptance

Exercise: Managing Emotions

How I feel: (Acknowledging)	
Statements that will help allow me to feel the emotion: (Allowing)	
The reasons why I am feeling this way right now: (Understanding)	

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Flexibility





Flexibility

What is Flexibility?

The word "flexibility," in general, means the ability to bend without breaking, which is a wonderful way of thinking about the importance of flexibility when facing difficult life situations. Being flexible means you can change your plans and adapt to new situations easily. Research on resilience shows that you will be much more prepared to respond to difficulties or crises if you learn to be more flexible. Exposing yourself to different perspectives, challenging your beliefs, and being open to new experiences all help to enhance your flexibility and, by extension, your resilience.

In this chapter, you will find activities that can help you build flexibility through:

Cognitive flexibility

Opening up the way we think about things.

Behavioral flexibility

Being able to adapt and change the way we do things.

Connection and community

Allowing our relationships with others to impact us in a positive way.



Flexibility

Cognitive Flexibility

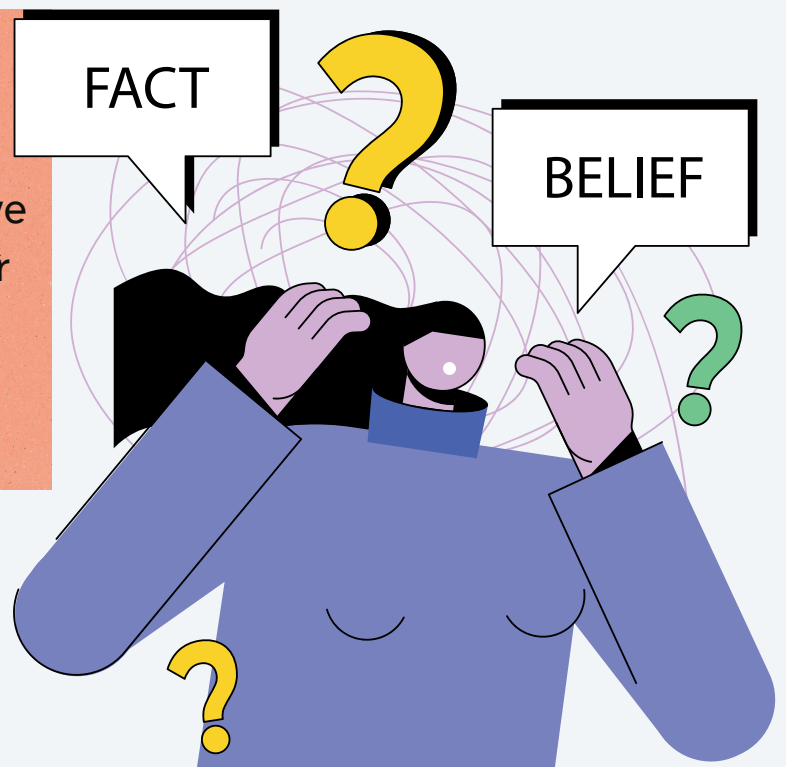
How cognitive flexibility connects to resilience

Cognitive flexibility is a skill that allows us to shift from one way of thinking about something to another. Building up cognitive flexibility also helps our brain to adapt to new events or circumstances that are unplanned.

One way to think about cognitive flexibility is to think about a story that you are familiar with, for example, from a childhood book such as 'The Three Little Pigs'. Most often this story is told from one particular viewpoint – that of the pigs. However, what would it be like to tell the story from the wolf's perspective? Even though the events (as well as the facts) of the story may look the same, the perspective would be quite different, and the story would have a very different feel.

This ability to reframe events is a great example of how cognitive flexibility works. Because resilience is all about how we manage and respond to new and different challenges, building up our cognitive flexibility naturally helps us to build our resilience!

“The language we use is extremely powerful. It is the frame through which we perceive and describe ourselves and our picture of the world.”
– Iben Dissing Sandahl





Flexibility

Exercise: Cognitive Flexibility

Think about a difficult situation from the past where you were feeling stuck when trying to find a solution. You can also think of a current situation where you are feeling stuck now, or where you are having a hard time finding a solution to an inner dilemma.

Ask yourself:

- Who do I know (or know about) that is an 'emotionally strong' person? You can also think about a resilient movie game character or a persona from your favorite book.
- What would my emotionally strong person do in this situation?
- How would they handle the blow to self-esteem and emotional pain and emerge from the shock and sadness with a smile, great attitude, and eagerness to seek new opportunities?



Flexibility

Exercise: Cognitive Flexibility

- Think about a time when a close friend might feel bad about themselves or is struggling in some way.
- How would you respond to your friend in this situation (especially when you're at your best)?
- Think about times when you feel bad about yourself or are struggling. How do you typically respond to yourself in these situations? Please write down what you typically do and what you say, and note the tone in which you talk to yourself.



Flexibility

Exercise: Cognitive Flexibility

- Is there a difference in the two responses? If so, ask yourself why. What factors or fears come into play that lead you to treat yourself and others so differently?
- How do you think things might change if you responded to yourself in the same way you typically respond to a close friend when you're suffering?



Flexibility

Behavioral Flexibility

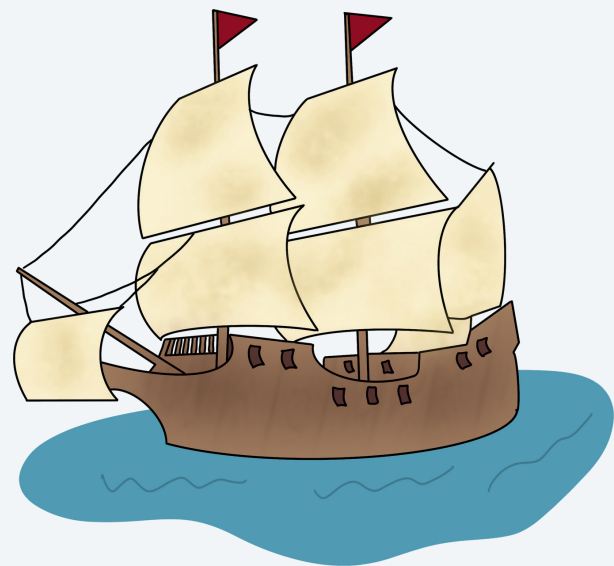
How behavioral flexibility connects to resilience

While cognitive flexibility is a skill focused on how you can adapt your thinking, behavioral flexibility is all about shifting your responses and adapting what you do, particularly when faced with unexpected challenges.

It is very human and natural to fall into patterns, or habits, of doing certain things in specific ways. This often creates a sense of stability and allows us to feel calmer in many situations. However, sometimes you may begin to rely on the same patterns and habits, leading to intense emotions and distress if (and when) the situation around you changes. Because change is often unavoidable, building up your ability to be flexible in your behaviors can be essential. Rather than continue to do and respond to things the same way every time, building your behavioral flexibility allows you to have a range of responses available for many different situations.

Resilience is, in part, something that allows us to manage life's challenges, particularly those we don't expect. While you can't plan for things you don't know about, increasing your behavioral flexibility helps you respond to the unexpected - a key part of resilience!

"A ship in harbor is safe, but that is
not what ships are built for."
- John A. Shedd





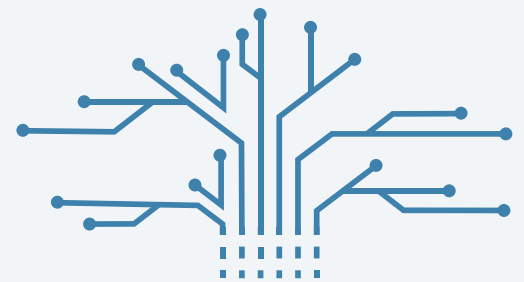
Flexibility

Exercise: Behavioral Flexibility

Life is not straightforward, and even with significant forethought, our plans rarely work out exactly how we think. As you've read in other parts of this workbook, resilience is not about planning for every possibility but rather being able to adapt when circumstances change. A big part of this is behavioral flexibility!

Sometimes, we get frustrated when we come up against barriers that prevent us from acting out our plans or meeting our goals. In these moments, we might be too focused on our goal (or what we want to do) rather than why we are doing things. Often, behavioral flexibility is found in the WHY.

To help you build this skill, take some time to fill in the first column of the table below with things that you want to do - these may be daily or weekly goals or plans that you have for yourself that you sometimes have difficulty meeting. Then, consider why you have these goals/plans, what some barriers might be, and finally, think about how you might still be able to meet the underlying reason for your goals/plans, even by changing what you are doing.





Flexibility

Exercise: Behavioral Flexibility

What I do	Why I do it	What might prevent me from doing it	How I could still achieve the why
(example) Go for walks outside	Physical activity	Rain	Dance party in my room
(example) Go for walks outside	To be around nature	Rain	Watch a nature documentary, take care of plants



Flexibility

Connection and Community

How connection and community connect to resilience

Most often, if you think about resilience, you might consider things that influence you on an individual level or things that you can change on your own. However, it is very important to recognize the power and impact that your relationships with others can have on how you adapt and cope with life's challenges.

Connecting with your community and others close to you can give you valuable perspective and the confidence to try new things. That said, 'community' can mean different things for different people - it's not always about having lots of friends. In fact, we typically see the most benefit from having good quality relationships, no matter what the quantity. Community can also be about feeling a sense of belonging and connection and doesn't even need to involve other people.

You can nurture and build your resilience by ensuring that you have a variety of interactions with people in your personal and professional life - conversations, text messages, and even shared experiences where you don't talk (ex. sitting by the same person each class) can help with this. Having variety in the types of relationships you have, and groups you are a part of, can also be a good way to continue building resilience. If you are able to invest some time in discovering or enhancing your personal sense of community, you will be well on the way to increasing your resilience!

"We don't heal in isolation,
but in community"
- S. Kelley Harrell





Flexibility

Exercise: Connection and Community

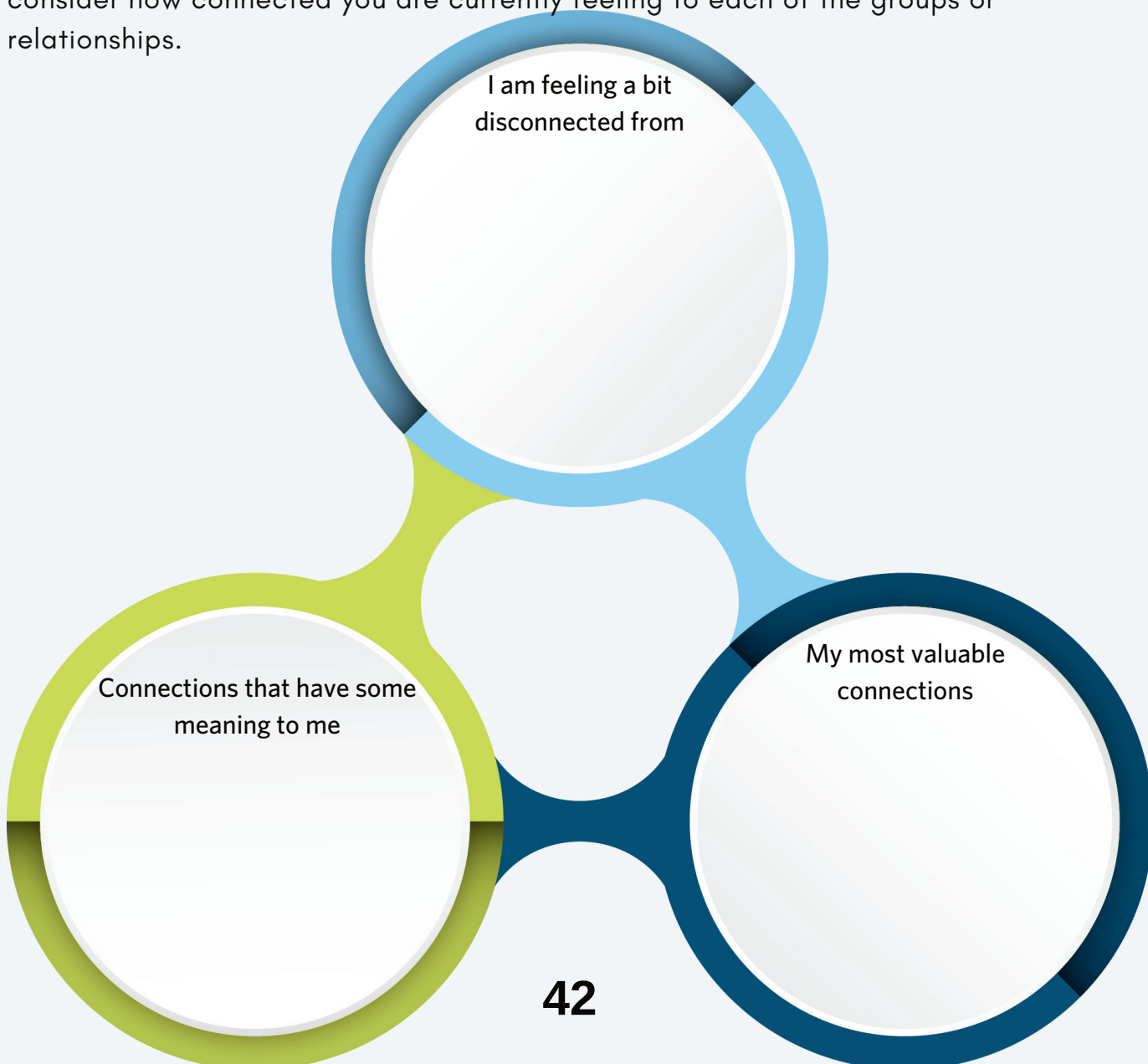
Consider your 'group membership' – what are the different groups that you are a part of?

- Chosen (ex. UBC, residence, sports team, etc.).
- Innate (ex. specific language speakers, country of origin, ethnic background, etc.).

List all of the ways you can describe your relationships to others (ex. child, parent, student, partner, friend, mentor, etc.).

•These are all potential sources of connection!

•Put all of your listed group memberships and relationships into the diagram below – consider how connected you are currently feeling to each of the groups or relationships.





Flexibility

Exercise: Connection and Community

Consider your most valuable connections. What do you think helps you feel most connected to these parts of your community/relationship? What are you doing that ensures you feel connected?

Consider the connections that have some meaning to you. Which of these communities or relationships would you like to develop more? What might be one step toward developing a stronger connection to these?

Consider the connections that you are feeling a bit disconnected from. Not all communities or relationships need to be developed – which of these are you okay with staying at the edge? For those connections you'd like to develop still, what might be one small first step toward drawing these connections closer to you?



Flexibility

Takeaway messages

Additional Resources on building resilience

Building Personal Resilience:
Managing Anxiety and Mental
Health. Free online Course
from Harvard University:
tinyurl.com/54kmsssj



How to be More Resilient – 6
Traits of Resilient People
tinyurl.com/4bfbmws5



From stress to resilience
tinyurl.com/ycax6am2



Personal Core Values
The Why, What, and How
tinyurl.com/36n4peue



How do you work out your
values:
tinyurl.com/mrx96tx3



Values Sorts Cards Activity:
tinyurl.com/pjzm5end



Why not try treating yourself
like a good friend and see
what happens?

tinyurl.com/4u9nxrvx



Narrative Psychology: Change
Your Story, Change Your Life
tinyurl.com/46efxr2t



Books:
dailystoic.com/books-on-stoicism/

