

# Resilience - some more resources

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Zoryna O'Donnell in her recent very interesting IHM guest blog on "[Resilience as a core competency of today](#)" referred to an article by Diane Coutu on "[How Resilience Works](#)", and a blog by Jon Morrow: "[7 Life Lessons from a Guy Who Can't Move Anything but His Face..](#)", as well as a [free resilience test](#) (which examines the characteristics of adaptability, self-control, self-sufficiency, optimism and persistence). If you have taken this test or if you would like to know more about this important topic, here are some additional resources.

### What is resilience?

Resilience, according to Vanessa King (from her book [10 Keys to Happier Living](#)), means the ability to bounce back from difficulties or not bending or breaking under pressure (it comes from the Latin verb *resilire* meaning to jump, leap or spring back). It's about the ability to successfully cope with, adapt to or deal with adversities and persevere in the face of challenges.

In the NHS, we understand resilience in terms of strengths in coping, flexibility and adaptability. The behaviour of individuals can impact on the resilience of others, highlighting the importance of compassionate leadership.

### How to become more resilient

According to Vanessa King in Chapter 8 of her book, being more resilient "...helps us to manage stress better, bounce back from difficulties faster, believe things can and will get better, and that there are things we can do to make a difference". She draws from the work of Dennis Charney and Steven Southwick who in their book [Resilience: The Science of Mastering Life's Greatest Challenges](#) have identified the most important ingredients of resilience; areas where we can take action to learn, feel and be stronger. The 10 elements are:

- *Keep a positive attitude.* Use optimism and humour - the use of positive emotions (e.g. I look for something good or positive in negative situations).
- *Reframe your stressful thoughts.* Thinking resiliently - the ability to tune into our thoughts, assess their accuracy and reframe or replace them with more accurate, helpful or positive ones (e.g. is there a more helpful way of looking at this situation?)
- *Develop your moral compass.* Have a sense of values, purpose and meaning (e.g. I keep focused on what's most important in life)
- *Find a resilient role model.* Imitation is a powerful mode of learning. "Our role models are so important in our lives that their values can influence our own values through psychological imprinting. Whether they're world leaders or friendly neighbours, find role models that you can look up to in times of stress."
- *Face your fears.* Keep learning and challenging yourself - draw on strength developed from past stressful experiences, so build your resilience by challenging yourself to try new things, experiment and learn (e.g. I can find ways around obstacles to reach my goals).
- *Develop active coping skills.* Using active coping strategies - where we face our difficulties and focus on what we are able to do or control (e.g. I make a plan of action when confronted with a problem)
- *Establish and nurture a supportive social network.* Nurture relationships and help others - in tough situations it's usually better together. Actively seek support from others and bond with a group (e.g. I know who I can turn to for help)
- *Prioritise your physical well-being.* Look after your physical well-being - physical activity can be an instant stress-reliever and also builds our cognitive capacities (e.g. I get out for a walk to clear my head)

- *Train your brain.* “Changing the way your brain works may seem like a daunting task, but with a little self-discipline it can be accomplished through regular and rigorous training.” The authors suggest that working to build emotional intelligence, moral integrity, and physical endurance can all help deflect stressors.
- *Play to your strengths.* Know, use, and actively develop your strengths - helping to build your confidence, find different ways round problems and appreciate and draw on the strengths of others (e.g. using what I am good at gives me confidence to tackle difficulties).

Roy Lilley (in his [NHSManger eNewsletter](#) of 5 March 2018) summarises five ingredients of resilience:

- Have a strong sense of purpose
- Understand your emotions
- Have the ability to see from a helicopter view
- Are fit and healthy (take holidays, eat well, live life to the full, find things to enjoy)
- Know other resilient people.

Daniel Goleman in his [Mind Fitness video](#) says that resilience is measured scientifically by how long it takes you to get back to your baseline (that pleasant mood you were in before the thing that flipped you out) - the shorter it is, the more resilient you are.

### **Resilience (HBR Emotional Intelligence Series)**

This [very useful book](#) is a collection of articles published by the Harvard Business Review, and it includes:

- 'How Resilience Works: Three traits of those who bounce back' by Diane Coutu
- 'Resilience for the Rest of Us: Train your brain' by Daniel Goleman
- 'How to Evaluate, Manage, and Strengthen Your Resilience: A methodical approach' by David Kopans
- 'Find the Coaching in Criticism: Turn tough feedback into growth' by Sheila Heen and Douglas Stone
- 'Firing Back: How Great Leaders Rebound After Career Disasters: Manage big professional setbacks' by Jeffrey A. Sonnenfeld and Andrew J. Ward
- 'Resilience Is About How You Recharge, Not How You Endure: It's not about powering through' by Shawn Achor and Michelle Gielan.

It can be currently purchased for less than £5, or you can search for the individual papers on Google.

### **Other resources on resilience**

#### **Papers and articles**

- [Bouncing Back: Leadership lessons in Resilience](#) (Chartered Management Institute publication)
- [Resilience and Strengthening Resilience in Individuals](#) by Derek Mobray (Management Advisory Service)
- [Understanding Resilience](#) by Derek Mobray (Management Advisory Service)
- [7 Ways To Become A More Resilient Leader](#) by Joseph Folkman
- [The Resilient Leader: Debunking the Myths and Growing your Capabilities](#) by Adrian Lock (Roffey Park)
- [Positive Leadership: Using Resilience to Lead Effectively](#) from the Positive Psychology Program

#### **Videos**

- [How to build resilience and boost wellbeing](#) by Brian Marien (an excellent talk from an Action for Happiness event)
- TED talk on [Super-Resilience - How to Fall Up](#) by Dr. Gregg Steinberg

- TED Talk on [The Power of Resilience](#) by Sam Goldstein
- TED talk on [What Trauma Taught Me About Resilience](#) by Charles Hunt
- TED talk on [Cultivating Resilience](#) by Greg Eells
- TED talk [On Resilience](#) by Michaela Murphy
- TED talk on [Resilience as a Key to Success](#) by Elke Geraerts

#### **Free online course**

- Free MOOC on [Professional Resilience: Building Skills to Thrive](#) from Deakin University via FutureLearn. This is a two-week course requiring a minimum of 3 hours a week study time. It covers:
  - Overview of resilience and why it's important
  - Steps to becoming more resilient
  - Building resilient capabilities and skills
  - Building resilient self-care practices
  - Building resilient values and engagement

Do you have any views on this? Is this useful? If you have any other comments, why not post something on Twitter? Join in at [@IHM\\_tweets](#). Or post it on the IHM Members Forum. Or you can contact me direct at [john.hunt@gmx.co.uk](mailto:john.hunt@gmx.co.uk).

*John Hunt has spent his whole career in the NHS. He is a former NHS Chief Executive who has in recent years been involved in leadership and management development. He is a Companion and Fellow of the IHM.*

<http://ihm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Resilience-Resources.pdf>