

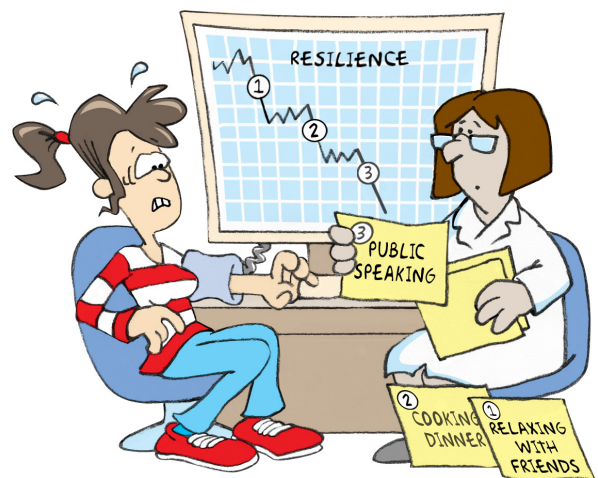
ENHANCING RESILIENCE RESOURCE SERIES

How to become more resilient

STUDENT RESOURCE

What is resilience?

Resilience is important for your emotional, psychological and social wellbeing and for your ability to learn and perform. More specifically, resilience is positively associated with good mental health, happiness, optimism, coping with stress, persistence in the face of challenges, successful completion of a degree, career decision making and career adaptability. Resilience can be developed.



Variable resilience

Resilience is a dynamic process of positive adaptation in the face of adversity or challenge. This process involves the capacity to negotiate for and draw upon psychological, personal, social, cultural and environmental resources. (Brewer et al., 2018)

Did you know it is possible to be resilient in one context but not another, or at one point in time but not another?

Research shows that a person can have a high level of academic resilience but a low level of social and emotional resilience (Luthar, 2006). A person can also feel resilient in a familiar context but not resilient in a context that is new and

challenging, such as when travelling alone in a country where you don't speak the language.

Another situation in which resilience can vary is when a person faces multiple challenges at the same time or in a very short period. For example, you may be recovering from the flu and have three assignments due at the same time as you are starting an industry placement in a new context (e.g. rural and remote Aboriginal community, intensive care unit, early childhood classroom).

What is your resilience like?

To find out where and when you are resilient, and how you can take your resilience to the next level, take the quiz on the following page.

Variable resilience activity

Think back over the past six months:

1. List 3 situations in which you felt resilient (able to cope well with the situation).

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

2. List 3 situations in which you felt highly challenged by the experience i.e. you felt out of your depth.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Remember: University students need **exposure to challenges** to prepare them for the workplace. Failure is okay and can be expected if you step out of your comfort zone and try something new and difficult. Experiencing challenges helps you build resilience.

To feel more resilient when we are faced with challenges, we all need to use our personal resources and the resources within our environment. Challenges can include common university challenges such as giving an oral presentation, completing assessments or starting a placement, and also major life events such as the death of a friend or loved one, a health crisis or a relationship breakdown.

Thinking ahead to the next three months or so, what situations are likely to challenge you such that you might feel out of your depth?

1. In the table below, describe two situations that are likely to challenge you over the next three months.
2. Look at some of the resilience resources people use to support themselves. We have included some of these on the following pages.
3. Choose one or more resources to assist you with each challenge. These resource can be the same for each challenge or different each time. An example has been provided.

Upcoming challenge	Resources I can draw on
<p><i>Example: I am starting a placement at a hospital/ mining site/school/etc. and I have never worked or been in this sort of environment before</i></p>	<p><i>Self-care: I am going to make sure I am well rested, eating healthy food and being active in the week before my placement starts.</i></p> <p><i>Preparation: I am going to research the placement site, work out how to get there, where to park, etc. on the weekend before my placement starts.</i></p> <p><i>Social support: I am going to identify peers in my course who have been on placement or worked in this type of setting and ask them for some tips. I won't be going to my classes during my placement, so I am going to keep in contact with my friends from my course at least once a week.</i></p>
<p>1.</p>	
<p>2.</p>	

Resources that support resilience

We can all draw upon a range of resources (behaviours, thinking patterns, social interaction) that support us to feel more resilient. Some of the key factors over which you have direct influence are listed in the table below together with an explanation of how these resources can enhance your resilience.

Resilience resources	Explanation
Self-care	Nutrition, sleep, exercise, relaxation and time out from studies and work
Self-awareness	Knowing yourself
Self-efficacy	The belief you have in your own abilities, specifically your ability to meet challenges and complete tasks successfully
Coping style and strategies	Some of the ways we cope build resilience, while others avoid dealing with a problem or can be destructive. Positive coping strategies include having time to yourself engaging in physical activity spending time with friends or pets, or engaging in hobbies
Time management	We all have 24 hours each day. The issue is how we manage ourselves including our energy and attention (focus)
Thinking patterns	Examples include optimistic (versus pessimistic) thinking, sense of humour, creative thinking, being curious and open minded, and being adaptable and comfortable with change
Mindset	Growth (not fixed) mindset: being open to new ways of thinking, being and doing
Self-reflection	Self-reflection in the context of learning may involve reflecting upon important questions such as: <i>Who is a good person to speak to when I need emotional support, and who is not?</i> <i>How long will these (negative) feelings last?</i> <i>What am I capable of?</i>
Mindfulness	Mindfulness is the ability to be fully present, aware of who you are and what you're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around you.
Relationships	Relationships with friends, family, peers, university staff, staff in workplaces such as placements
Preparation	Knowledge of any new environment helps you feel more comfortable and prepared. When your studies require you to learn in a new environment (e.g. undertake a placement in a workplace), spend time researching that workplace online - its vision, mission, etc, - and then when you arrive seek out information on important policies, procedures and the way things are done in that workplace to support your success
Mentors	Access to peer (and staff) mentors
Sense of connectedness and belonging at (and outside) university	Belonging is a subjective feeling of relatedness or connectedness. You can increase your sense of belonging through interactions with friends, peers and other people. For many cultural groups, connection to the land and their community is very important
Involvement in community activities	Active participation in activities at the university or in the community

Sources of support

Feelings of stress or low resilience tend not to be permanent. We all need support at different times in our life, so don't hesitate to seek help. Universities and community health services offer a range of personal support services; your doctor can also refer you for help. If you have general questions or concerns about a forthcoming challenge, make a time to speak to someone about these. There is no such thing as a silly question and you are very unlikely to be the first person to ask!

The table below includes a raft of resources online. These resources will change over time and they will also be more or less relevant in your location, so please see specific advice as above.

Area	Resources online
Self-care	The Desk (Website with activities & resources) MindTools (Website) MindShift (App) Headspace (website) Beyond Blue Wellbeing (Website)
Self-awareness	Staying on Track (Video Program) MindTools (Website) MindShift (App) Headspace (Website) Transforming Lives Through Resilience Education (Online Program)
Self-efficacy	Information and ideas on self-efficacy (Website)
Coping style and strategies	Coping skills (Webpage & resources) How good are your emotional regulation strategies? (Resource)
Time management	MindTools (Website) Time management V attention management (Website) Headspace's Meditation for Focus (Website)
Thinking patterns	Neuroplasticity (Video) MindTools (Website) Resilience and Optimism (Webpage) Resilience and Curiosity (Webpage) Resilience and Adaptability (Video)
Mindset	What's your attitude to feedback? (online quiz) Growth Versus Fixed Mindset (Video) MindTools (Website) Mindfulness Meditation and Loving Kindness (Compassion) Meditation have been shown to enhance people's sense of connection to others.
Self-reflection	Making the most of feedback (online resource) Maximise learning with critical reflection (online resource) How self reflection can help you create a better future (Webpage)
Mindfulness	Headspace (website) Mindfulness for Wellbeing and Peak Performance (Resource) Smiling Mind (Website & App)
Relationships	Building positive relationships in life and work (Resource) How to form an effective group or team (Resource)

Area	Resources online
Mentors	Curtin University offers a range of mentoring experiences for students Your course or school may also have a mentoring program for you to access
Sense of connectedness and belonging at (and outside) university	Transforming Lives Through Resilience Education (Online Program) Meditation for compassion (Resource) Working with people from different cultural backgrounds (Resource)
Involvement in community activities	Volunteer challenge (Online resource) Your course or school may have volunteering resources for you to access

Make it count

As outlined in our definition of resilience above, contemporary researchers view resilience as a dynamic process that can be developed or enhanced. In other words, you can develop resilience in response to adverse events that challenge you.

Where do I start?

Embrace a have-a-go approach. University students need **exposure to challenges** in order to prepare for graduate life. Failure is okay and it can be expected if you step out of your comfort zone to try something new and difficult. Experiencing challenges helps you to build resilience.



Challenge task

Step 1. Pick one of your upcoming challenges. Write this challenge down.

Step 2. Find a support person for this challenge (peer, mentor, family or friend). Record the person's name here.

Step 3. Undertake the challenge and then answer the following reflective questions:

How did you feel during the challenge?

Were you able to complete the challenge as planned?

If not, what did you achieve?

How did you feel after you had completed the challenge?

What resources did you draw on to support your resilience? Which of these were most helpful?

This resource was developed by Margo Brewer (Curtin University) and Dawn Bennett (Curtin University)