

## What is Resilience?

Resilience refers to the ability to manage change to maintain and restore mental health and wellbeing, particularly after an adverse event. It is the ability to cope with unexpected changes and challenges in your life. It is your ability to cope with tough times by applying your inner strength and engaging support networks.

It's not always possible to prevent stressful or adverse situations, but you can strengthen your capacity to deal with these challenges. Resilience can not only enable you to face difficult situations, but often provides an opportunity to further develop your coping skills.

**Coping with challenges:** Stress and setbacks are a part of life, and you can't avoid them. Coping strategies can enable you to deal with stress and maintain a sense of control in your life. There are many different ways of coping with stress as everyone is different, so it's about finding something that works for you. Anything that is not harmful to your health and wellbeing could be worth a try, such as:

- taking time out to relax.
- exercise or meditation.
- breaking a challenge down into small, achievable goals.
- celebrating achieving your goals.
- keeping a journal.
- thinking about the big picture.

**Strengthening Resilience** enables you to better cope with challenging situations, and helps with your mental wellbeing. You probably already have skills and support networks that help you be resilient. You can build these up even more, making it easier for you to cope with life by:

- Knowing your strengths.
- Building your self-esteem – have confidence in your abilities and the positive things in life.
- Build healthy relationships.
- Knowing when to ask for help.
- Managing stress and anxiety levels.

- Working on problem solving skills and coping strategies.
- Identify and express their feelings and thoughts.
- Not hide away from strong feelings.
- Rearrange your plans to work around an unexpected situation.
- Have a sense of agency or responsibility.
- Keep on trying if something doesn't work out and use your judgment about when to stop.
- Hold a sense of purpose or hope for the future.
- Actively ask for help if they need it.
- Feel a sense of attachment to family, their broader community and to learning.

**Sense of belonging:** Belonging means acceptance as a member or part. A sense of belonging is a human need, just like the need for food and shelter. Feeling that you belong is important in seeing value in life and in coping with intensely painful emotions. Some find belonging in a church, some with friends, some with family, and some on Twitter or other social media. Some see themselves as connected only to one or two people. Others believe and feel a connection to humanity, nature, and to the earth. Some struggle to find a sense of belonging and their loneliness is physically painful for them.

A sense of belonging to a greater community improves your motivation, health, and happiness. When you see your connection to others, you know that all people struggle and have difficult times, and that you are not alone. There is comfort in that knowledge.

**Building a sense of belonging** requires active effort and practice.

- One way to work on increasing your sense of belonging is to look for ways you are similar with others instead of focusing on ways you are different.
- Another way to build your own sense of belonging is to work on acceptance of others. To accept others and views that are not the same as yours may require that you open your thoughts to the idea that there is value in everyone's thinking. Validation builds a sense of belonging and strengthens relationships.
- Try saying yes to opportunities to be with others and then throw yourself in to whatever the activity is. Let go of your judgments.

Judgments build walls. Focus on people.

- Watch your words and your way of thinking. Some words create separateness and others promote togetherness. Other people don't need "fixing". They have strengths and offer their own unique contributions. Think community and acceptance.
- Connect or reconnect with friends and family – staying in contact with loved ones can prevent loneliness and isolation. If your family does not live nearby, technology can help you stay in touch.
- Get out and about – regular outings for social functions, exercise, visiting friends, doing shopping, or simply going to public places can help.
- Get involved in your community – Try a new (or old) hobby, join a club, enrol in study, or learn a new skill. Try looking online, at your local TAFE/Community College, library or community centre for things in your area that might be interesting to you.
- Volunteer – helping others is a great way to help yourself feel more connected.
- Consider getting a pet –pets are wonderful companions and can provide comfort and support during times of stress, ill-health or isolation.
- Get support – If loneliness and social isolation are causing you distress, you should discuss your concerns with a GP, counsellor or a trusted person.

Remember that personal knowledge, awareness and greater consciousness of your own patterns (including underlying fears, modus operandi, ways of self-sabotage) gives you the power to identify when you are sabotaging your life and leading yourself to be isolated. Personal knowledge also gives you the option of making a conscious decision of what actions are coherent with what you want for life, breaking unhealthy cycles and refining yourself.

***Building resilience and a sense of belonging is a way of showing love, care and respect to yourself!***