



**Building your
own resilience,
health and
wellbeing**



Welcome to this practical guide to building personal resilience.

In this booklet you will find plenty of information to help you understand what resilience is and why it matters.



You will also find several tasks/activities to help you reflect on what you are learning and think about how you can use it to improve your own health and wellbeing. Look out for this logo as you work through the guide.

Contents

1. Understanding what resilience is and why it matters

- What do we mean by resilience?
- Why does resilience matter?
- What are the benefits of building your resilience?
- What makes a person resilient?

2. Recognising and coping with pressure and stress

- What is pressure and when is it a problem?
- Strategies to cope with in-the-moment pressure
- How to recognise when long-term pressure becomes a problem
- Strategies to cope with long-term pressure

3. Personal development to build your own resilience, health & wellbeing

- How resilient are you?
- Developing emotional intelligence, accurate thinking and realistic optimism
- Reminder of key learning points and where to find further help



1. Understanding what resilience is and why it matters

What do we mean by resilience?

Simply put, resilience is the ability to cope under pressure. A person who copes well under pressure is resilient.

Research suggests that the ability to cope well under pressure is based on a positive outlook, combined with strategies to manage pressure.

What does resilience look like?

Behaviours associated with resilience include:

- understanding and valuing the meaning of what you do at work
- doing what you can to get on with the people around you
- taking a problem-solving approach to difficulty
- keeping a sense of perspective (and humour) when things go wrong
- being flexible and willing to adapt to change and to learn
- greeting new situations, new people and new demands with a positive attitude
- drawing on a range of strategies to help you cope with pressure
- recognising your thoughts and emotions – and managing them
- offering support to colleagues when they need it and asking for help when you need it
- being willing to persevere when the going gets tough, but also...
- recognising and respecting your own limits, including what you can control and what you can't.

Where does resilience come from?

The way we behave is shaped by a range of factors including personality and past experience, as well as current circumstances and the people around us. All of these things therefore influence a person's resilience.

Are some people naturally more resilient than others?

Some people may have qualities that make them more resilient than others. Resilience, however, is best defined in terms of behaviour and support. Behaviours can be learned and support put in place – which means that, in practice, there is a lot we can do to help people become more resilient.

That's the focus of this resource.

Why does resilience matter?

Resilience matters for two main reasons. Resilience helps to

- protect you from stress
- ensure you deliver high quality care and support.

Protection against stress

Stress is a significant cause of mental and physical ill health. The Health and Safety Executive describes stress at work as a 'major problem', accounting for around 40% of all work-related illness.

Work-related stress is a particular issue in social care. Yes, care work is rewarding: we make a positive difference to vulnerable people, but it is also inherently stressful.

The impact of stress on quality of care and support

The daily stressfulness of care work can contribute to:

- errors and misjudgements
- low morale
- sickness absence
- burnout
- staff turnover in the sector.

These are all factors that undermine quality in all sorts of ways.

Build your resilience to protect against stress

It's not possible to take the pressure out of care work – which makes it all the more essential to do what you can to help yourself cope with pressure – to become, in other words, more resilient.

What are the benefits of building resilience?

Care workers, including personal assistants, benefit from:

- enhanced job satisfaction
- personal development, including:
 - greater self-awareness and understanding of others (enhanced emotional intelligence) – leading to better personal and working relationships
 - enhanced self-management skills (e.g. ability to set limits, coping skills)
- enhanced physical and psychological well-being (e.g. optimism and hope, confidence, solve problems, keep going despite setbacks)
- better decision-making (stress impairs our thinking processes – undermining professional judgement, often just when its needed most).

All of which lead to people who need care and support, including individual employers, benefitting from better quality care.

What makes a person resilient?

Personal resilience is about self-awareness, coping strategies, getting the right support and being positive.

Self-awareness, strategies and support help you to cope.



Feeling able to cope builds your confidence and helps you to develop a positive outlook.



Confidence and a positive outlook enable you to grow and develop.



You then become a source of strength and support for others.

A resilient person

...has a sense of purpose and direction

...is self-aware

...takes a positive outlook on things

...can recognise when pressure is causing a problem

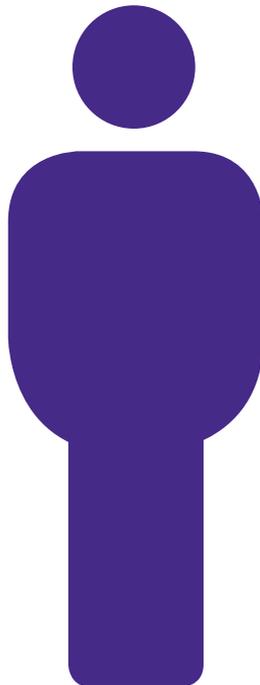
...has confidence in their own abilities

...has strategies to cope with in-the-moment pressure

...makes connections to other people

...has strategies to cope with long-term pressure

... grows and develops





2. Recognising and coping with pressure and stress

What is pressure and when is it a problem?

Part of coping with pressure is recognising when it starts to become a problem. That means being:

- aware of how you are feeling
- alert to the signs and symptoms of too much pressure.

Pressure can be in-the-moment or long-term. Too much of either kind is harmful physically and psychologically.

In-the-moment pressure can arise from everyday situations such as being late to work, being short-staffed or facing last minute demands.

Too much in-the-moment pressure makes people misread situations and react inappropriately – with consequences that can last well beyond the moment. Repeated often enough, in-the-moment pressure also becomes a health risk.

Long-term pressure builds up over time and could be affected by both home and work issues. Long-term pressure poses a much more serious health risk, as well as undermining people's judgement and behaviour.

In-the-moment pressure

How to recognise when in-the-moment pressure becomes a problem

People's reactions vary, but here are some typical early signs.

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Physical | Digestive problems, nausea, light headedness, dry mouth, heart pounding, rashes or flushing |
| Emotional | Immediate emotional judgement, short temper, feeling overwhelmed, paranoia |
| Behavioural | Procrastinating, neglecting responsibilities, nervous habits such as pacing, nail biting |
| Thinking | Inability to concentrate, seeing only the negative, constant worrying, self-blame, poor judgement |

Learning to recognise these early signs is one of the most important stages in developing resilience. It enables you to take action before the threat becomes overwhelming.



Task: What are your early signs?

Take a moment to think about what your early signs are. If it's helpful, imagine you're a person in a restaurant having their card rejected. What does that moment feel like?

Strategies to cope with in-the-moment pressure

Strategies for coping with in-the-moment pressure focus on simple but highly effective techniques to relax, become more self-aware and regain control of your thoughts and feelings.

Here are some examples that you might find useful.

Techniques to relax

- Breathe

Breathe in for a count of seven, out for 11.

- Tighten, then relax

Tighten all your muscles for count of three, then let go. Repeat.

- Movement

A quick walk, going up and down stairs, stretching – it doesn't have to be strenuous. Any sort of movement will help you de-stress.

- Targeted muscle relaxation

Muscle tension is a very normal reaction to pressure and can contribute to so-called 'stress headaches'. Stomach, shoulders, neck and jaw are all typical places to store tension. Notice where you are tight and consciously relax the muscles. Self-massage (e.g. pressing your fingertips into the muscles in the back of your neck, or your shoulders) is good way to find and release muscle tension.

Techniques to manage thoughts and emotions

- Step out of the stressful situation

Literally walk away and give your attention to something else, even if only for a moment. It gives you a chance to calm down and regain control of thoughts and emotions.

- Talk to a colleague

Talking about thoughts and feelings can help to release tension. All your colleague needs to do is listen and make sympathetic noises while you talk. Putting things into words to another person gives you distance and helps you calm down. It can also give you a different perspective on the issue.

- Notice what you are feeling

This is a mindfulness technique to help you manage emotion. Ask yourself, 'What am I actually feeling?' Identify the feeling (or feelings) – anger, fear, embarrassment, whatever. Don't judge yourself, don't fight your feelings. Just observe and accept them. Whatever they are, those are your feelings. Taking that step back, becoming aware of your feelings and accepting them puts you back in charge and lets you move on.

■ Break the cycle

When you find yourself caught up in a cycle of negative thoughts, deliberately turn your attention to something positive (e.g. a good memory, something good you're going to do, anything that makes you feel positive about yourself). This is a distraction technique, the mental equivalent of stepping out of the situation – into a place that reaffirms the good things in your life.

■ Problem solve

When you find yourself worrying about something coming up, something that seems overwhelming, stop and ask yourself, 'What do I actually need to do about this?' Mentally rehearse how you will deal the situation. Think it through logically. If you will need help, think who you will ask. This is a problem-solving technique designed to put you back in charge.

■ Stop worrying and think positive

If you find yourself worrying about a problem, try talking to yourself in a calm and logical way. If you are given a challenging task at work, think of a time you have done something similar and tell yourself you can do it again. Instead of seeing the task as a negative, try and view it as a positive, for example 'this will be a great opportunity to move forward in my role' or 'to gain more experience'.

Techniques to become more self aware

- Practice the techniques as a team

The techniques described here are mostly quick, straight-forward and do-able anywhere. Often the trick is simply having the presence of mind to use them when you are caught up in the pressure of the moment. Team learning helps to make them a shared resource: colleagues can prompt each other and offer a different perspective.

- Use reflective discussion to support self-awareness

Reflective discussion is simply thinking about, or reflecting on, what you do. Next time you experience in the moment pressure, think about:

- what you did
- what happened
- what would you do different next time.

Remember these key points and use them in future experiences.

- Know when to seek help

Being resilient is not about being self-sufficient. Resilience is about thriving under pressure. Sourcing help when you need it is a very resilient behaviour!

■ Mindfulness

The essence of mindfulness can be summed up in three words, **be here now**.

Mindfulness involves paying full attention to your feelings, thoughts and bodily sensations in the present moment. This means standing aside from any other thoughts, worries, upsets, plans etc. that normally absorb and preoccupy our mind.

Being mindful enables you to disengage from your worries and upsets, to give you a break and some distance from everyday stress, and helping you regain perspective and a deeper sense of self.

Mindfulness training is about acquiring techniques to focus your attention in that way. You can start by reminding yourself to take more notice of your thoughts and feelings. Tai-chi, yoga and meditation are more formal ways of practicing mindfulness.



Long term pressure

How to recognise when long-term pressure becomes a problem

Exposure to too much pressure over an extended period results in chronic stress. Chronic stress can produce a wide range of effects.

People can feel:

- tense, agitated, irritable, tearful, moody, helpless, anxious, depressed
- weary - physically and mentally
- apathetic, withdrawn
- distracted, unable to concentrate.

They may experience problems with:

- relaxation, sleep
- judgement, memory
- muscle tension, headaches, dizziness, nausea, stomach problems
- frequent colds, minor infections.

Often people:

- worry constantly, see only the negative, feel lonely and isolated
- eat too much or too little
- use caffeine, tobacco, alcohol and other drugs to help them cope
- put things off.

Others are affected too

Feelings are infectious, behaviour is contagious. Too much pressure on one person can affect those working around them or the team as a whole.

Signs to be aware of include:

- conflicts and unhappiness
- sickness absence
- poor performance
- complaints and grievances
- people quitting.





Task: How are you coping at the moment?

Develop your self-awareness with a widely used self-assessment test*. Answer the questions below and total your score.

| | Never | Almost never | Sometimes | Fairly often | Very often |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| At work in the last month, how often you have felt... | | | | | |
| 1. Upset because of something that happened unexpectedly? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. Unable to control important things in your job? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. Nervous and 'stressed'? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. Unsure about your ability to handle problems in your job? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. Things are not going your way? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. You can't cope with all the things that you have to do? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. Unable to control irritations in your job? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. You aren't on top of things? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. Angry because of things that are outside your control? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. Difficulties are piling up so high that you can't overcome them? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Add up your scores in each column | | | | | |
| | <input type="text"/> |
| Now add all your scores together for an overall score | | | | | |
| | <input type="text"/> | | | | |

Interpret your score

0-10 You feel able to cope with pressure at work – you may be practising resilient behaviours already.

11-14 You are coping with pressure at work most, but not all, of the time – start developing your resilience now.

15-18 You are only coping with pressure at work some of the time – this may be affecting your judgement, behaviour and relationships at work; over time, feeling like this may start to affect your health.

19+ You feel overwhelmed by pressure at work – feeling like this will affect your judgement, behaviour and relationships at work; it is likely to damage your health. If you are worried about your health, see a doctor. Please note this questionnaire is not a professional diagnosis.

*Adapted from the Perceived Stress Scale developed by Dr Sheldon Cohen, Carnegie Mellon University.

Strategies to cope with long-term pressure

Strategies to cope with long-term pressure aim to help you develop sustainable ways to manage work demands.

Here are some examples you might find useful.

Look after your physical health and wellbeing

These are the types of things that can help you to look after your physical health:

- eating a healthy diet
- not smoking
- taking regular exercise
- getting enough sleep.

They help protect your body from the effects of stress and maintain emotional balance and optimism.

Look after your mental health and wellbeing

These are the types of things that can help you to look after your mental health:

- connection to other people
- physical activity
- doing something new
- taking an interest in your surroundings
- doing things for other people.

These things build your confidence and help you to flourish in the world in a positive way.



Task: Do you know how to look after yourself?

Can you answer the following questions about yourself?

- What foods should you eat to ensure an adequate supply of energy throughout the work day?
- How many hours' sleep do you personally need to feel rested? How often in a week do you sleep that number of hours?
- How much exercise should you be taking in a week? How often do you take it?
- Identify three realistic changes you could make to improve your lifestyle. Are you going to make these changes?

Have a look at the NHS guidance documents for support with physical and mental health and wellbeing.

- Healthy eating
www.nhs.uk/livewell/healthy-eating/Pages/Healthyeating.aspx
- Sleep
www.nhs.uk/Livewell/sleep/Pages/sleep-home.aspx
- Exercise to combat stress
www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/mental-benefits-of-exercise.aspx
- Fitness activities
www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/Pages/welcome-to-nhs-fitness-studio.aspx
- Mental health
www.nhs.uk/Livewell/mentalhealth/Pages/Mentalhealthhome.aspx

Get the right work-life balance

Life outside work has its own pressures, which can lead to conflicts between your roles at and outside work.

Establishing a boundary between work and home is key to establishing a sustainable work-life balance and helps you manage role conflicts. What constitutes a good work-life balance is individual to you and changes over time, but it should ensure space to unwind properly, physically and psychologically.

Try to dedicate some time every day to an activity that gives you both exercise and a moment to yourself.



Task: Write down some activities you enjoy and/or have been meaning to do. Make an effort to make time to do them in the next month.

Here are some tips to help you manage your work-life balance:

- Know and stick to your limits

Care work is just as emotionally rewarding as it is demanding.

The rewards come from helping people which makes one feel important, valued and good. That makes it hard to say 'no' and all too easy to say 'yes' when you're asked to do something.

To manage long-term pressure you have to recognise and respect the limits of your time and energy.

- Set boundaries

Boundaries between work and home help protect your work-life balance. Boundaries at work between you and your colleagues help to keep your job manageable. Well-managed boundaries enable harmonious team working and greater understanding of self and others.

In theory, boundaries at work are clearly defined by:

- job descriptions
- policies
- procedures.

In practice, the unpredictability of work makes them fuzzy. For example:

- a colleague has to go home early and asks you to cover
- a client needs help so you stay on after regular hours
- emails arrive after work hours.

It's worth the effort to keep reminding yourself and others exactly where your boundaries are.

Next time you're asked to do something beyond your boundaries, you could say:

'I'd really like to help, but I can't swap shifts this weekend.'

Or, 'It would be great to go out for a drink with you all, but I can't tonight'.

■ Assertive communication

Communication underpins boundary-setting and the negotiation with colleagues that enables you to stay within your limits. Being assertive means that you express yourself effectively and stand up for your point of view, while also respecting the rights and beliefs of others.

Here are some tips for assertive communication.

- Use 'I' statements, for example 'I disagree' rather than 'you're wrong.'
- Practice saying no! Be direct and if an explanation is needed, keep it brief.
- Rehearse what you want to say.
- Use assertive body language. Keep your body upright, lean slightly forward, keep eye contact, keep a neutral facial expression and don't use gestures such as crossing your arms.

■ Time-management

Effective time-management helps you maintain boundaries and can extend the limits of your time and energy, which again makes it a little easier to deal with the unpredictability and uncertainty of work.

Here are some tips for effective time management.

- Plan! Write a list of everything you have to do.
- From this list, prioritise the tasks by importance and urgency.
- If you work in an office, block time out in your calendar to complete tasks.
- Have a simple routine for your day, but allow for unexpected issues.



Task: What are your limits?

Use this exercise to become more aware of your limits. If possible, do the exercise with a colleague.

Observe yourself over the course of a week. Notice when you feel pushed beyond your limits.

At the end of each day, reflect on what happened. Think through:

- The situation – what happened, what led up to it, who else was involved, what state were you in at the time
- How it affected you – what buttons it pushed, the thoughts that went through your head, the feelings you experienced, how you reacted physically
- The demand – what was actually being asked of you
- How you responded – what options you felt you had at that moment, how you chose to respond, what prompted you to respond the way
- What the result was – for you, for others
- What other ways you could have responded
- What you can learn from the experience about your limits and how to respect them.

Jot down your conclusions – just in bullet form.

At the end of the week, get together with your colleague and explain to each other what you have learned about recognising and respecting your limits.

Support from others

Research has found that support networks offer important protection against stress. Building networks of support is a resilient behaviour.

Some types of support are quite structured such as supervision and appraisal meetings at work. Others are much less formal such as social networks of colleagues and friends.

They help you manage pressure in two ways. On a practical level, they are a problem-solving resource. On a more general level, they provide reassurance and help make work feel safer.

Bullying and harassment

Bullying and harassment can be significant sources of workplace stress and will undermine efforts to build resilience.

Forms of bullying include:

- excluding people
- belittling them
- gossiping about them
- humiliating them
- giving them unachievable or meaningless tasks
- undervaluing them.

Bullying and harassment damage victims and also others exposed to the process. If you experience or witness bullying or harassment, report it. There are well-established ways of dealing with it.

For more on bullying and harassment see the Health and Safety Executive website

www.hse.gov.uk/stress/furtheradvice/bullyingharassment.htm.

**Feeling stressed for
a long time can take
its toll.**

**Do something about
it now!**





**3. Personal development to
build your own resilience,
health & wellbeing**



Task: How resilient are you?

Consider each of the questions below, then mark where you sit on the line between 'not much' and 'a lot'.

Afterwards, ask people who know you well if they agree.

If you think about yourself at work and outside work, is there any difference in where you are on the lines?

| To what extent are you | Not much | A lot |
|--|----------|-------|
| 1. In touch with your thoughts and feelings? | | |
| 2. Able to live with an unresolved problem? | | |
| 3. Positive and optimistic about life? | | |
| 4. Able to think accurately about things? | | |
| 5. Sensitive to how people around you are feeling? | | |
| 6. Confident of solving problems? | | |
| 7. Willing to embrace the new in order to grow? | | |

From your answers, you can see your key areas for development. This next section will help you to develop your own personal resilience.

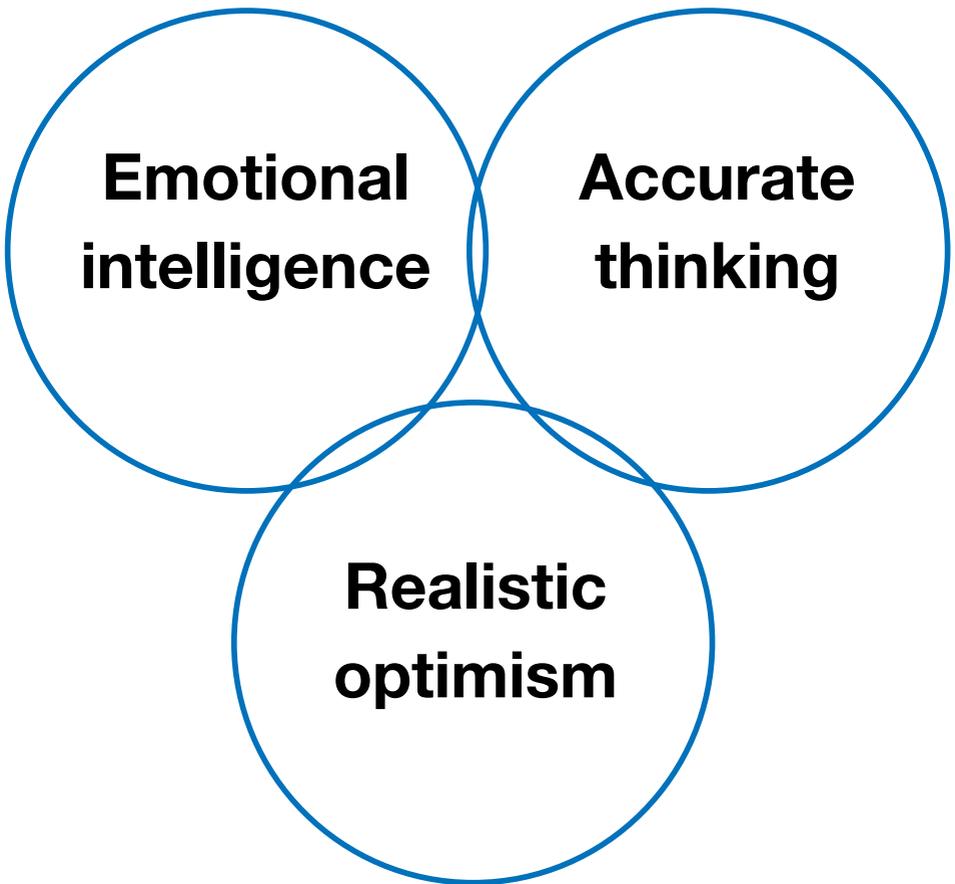
Seven characteristics of personal resilience

People behave resiliently when they:

1. are able to identify and manage their thoughts and feelings
2. tolerate ambiguity – in other words, they can live with the fact that there are uncertainties in a situation; that ability allows them time to assess the situation before they respond, allowing them to act thoughtfully
3. take a positive approach – in other words, they take a realistic view of people and situations and then try to make the best of things; this has been called being realistically optimistic
4. think accurately about events and their causes – this is essential for problem solving, but it also greatly affects how a person interprets events, which affects how they see themselves and everything around them
5. are sensitive to other people's emotions – helpful in all sorts of ways, not least in communicating with people and in building networks of support
6. have confidence in their ability to solve problems – they make a realistic assessment of their strengths and their weaknesses; they make good use of their strengths and they do not dwell on their weaknesses (in other words, they take a positive approach to themselves)
7. are willing to run the risk of failure in order to grow – they accept that failure is part life and fear of does not stop them from exploring new directions.

What can you do to develop your personal resilience?

To develop the seven characteristics, focus on three areas of personal development.



Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify and manage your own emotions, understand what they are telling you and respond thoughtfully to the emotions of others.

It requires:

- **self-awareness** – the ability to identify your feelings
- **self-management skills** – the ability to control your feelings
- **empathy** – sensitivity to other people's emotions
- **interpersonal skills** – ability to connect with other people and sustain constructive relationships.

There is a great deal of detailed and helpful information on emotional intelligence and how to develop it. In the end, however, it boils down to noticing and reflecting on your own and other people's reactions and responses to things.

Discussing thoughts and feelings with other people will help you both notice and reflect. Care work involves contact with strong, sometimes difficult emotions.

Tips for developing your emotional intelligence

- Notice the clues (physical, emotional, thinking or behavioural) that you are finding in the moment pressure difficult to cope with and use a technique (such as 7/11 breathing) to help you manage it.
- Practice identifying your feelings and emotions. Ask yourself what it is you are actually feeling. If possible take a few moments to watch the emotion without trying to change it.
- Notice how the people around you affect your feelings. Is the effect positive?
- Make it a habit to pause for thought before forming a judgement or reaching a decision, particularly when you feel pressured. What is the reality of the situation? What might an outsider make of it?
- When faced with a problem, look at it from as many different perspectives as possible. What factors are involved? Is it a problem that can be solved, or not? Are you spending too long worrying about it. If it is possible to solve, then how? Who can help you?
- Make a point of asking yourself what the people around you are feeling and why. What might the situation look like from their perspective?
- When listening to someone, give them your full attention. Try not to interrupt. When they have finished, summarise what you have understood back to them to check your understanding - and to show them you want to understand them.

- When helping people solve problems, ask them questions to help them arrive at their own solution, rather than coming up with your own solution for them. Simple, sympathetic questions are best. Have you had to deal with anything like that before? What did you do? What seems the best course of action now? Who might be able to help you?
- When something doesn't work out as planned remember FAIL – it stands for First Attempt In Learning. If we got everything right first time around, there wouldn't be much learning involved. Reflect on what you can learn from the experience.

**Emotional intelligence
helps you build stronger
relationships, succeed at
work, and achieve your
career and personal goals.**



Accurate thinking

Accurate thinking means being objective and basing your understanding on facts rather than emotions.

How you think about something helps to determine how you feel about it and what you choose to do about it. That makes it essential to think as accurately as you can, particularly when dealing with any sort of problem.

Tips for thinking accurately

To think accurately you should:

1. Separate facts from information
2. Separate facts into two groups: relevant and irrelevant, or important and unimportant.

Try and focus your thoughts on the facts that are important.

Inaccurate thinking

Have you ever watched a friend jumping to a false conclusion, or worrying seriously about something that was highly unlikely to happen, or reading far too much into someone's chance remark? They get so caught up in the thing, they lose all perspective.

There are different ways we think inaccurately.

- Filtering out the positive to focus on the negative – for example, ignoring three nice compliments to focus on one minor criticism.
- Personalising – making every problem about you; for example, something goes wrong at work and you immediately assume people will blame you, even though it had nothing to do with you.
- Awfulising and catastrophising – automatically assuming that every small problem will turn into a major disaster.
- Polarising – seeing everything as either good or bad, right or wrong, with no middle ground; for example, one colleague is completely wonderful, another is totally useless.



Task: Develop your ability to think accurately by observing your own thinking patterns and questioning your conclusions.

Imagine you are walking down the road and you spot a colleague from work walking past on the other side. You smile and call out to your colleague, but they ignore you completely and turn the corner.

What thoughts go through your head? Are they more like pattern A or B?

Scenario: Imagine you are walking down the road and you spot a colleague from work walking past on the other side. You smile and call out to your colleague, but they ignore you completely and turn the corner.

| Pattern A thoughts Automatic negative thought | Pattern B thoughts Other interpretations of what happened |
|--|--|
| She doesn't like me | They just didn't see me |
| I've done something wrong | They had something on their mind |
| | They need glasses |

Pattern A thoughts belong to a category called Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANT).

Pattern B thoughts are consistent with balanced conclusions and are a good example of accurate thinking.

Now choose other events to explore how you can challenge ANTs and come up with more positive interpretations. Recording your feelings may help you feel more confident, in control and better able to cope.

| Scenario: | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Automatic negative thought | Other interpretations of what happened |
| | |

Realistic optimism

People who are optimistic tend to be happier and more able to cope when times get tough. There are lots of advantages to thinking this way. However, it is also possible to be unrealistically positive if you pretend things are fine when they aren't.

Realistic optimism means seeing things as they are, accurately, then making the best of them to maintain a positive outlook on life whilst been aware of the difficulties that exist.

Consider this idea: The things we can change, we should. The things we can't change, we must accept.

Realistic optimism is not about unrealistic wishful thinking. It's certainly not about ignoring problems. Making the best of things might mean you make radical changes to a situation – or that you leave the situation altogether.

Realistic optimism is about:

- engaging with life positively and constructively
- taking personal responsibility for your choices
- taking a problem-solving approach to difficulty
- looking for solutions.

Tips to be a realistic optimist

- Reframing

Reframing is a way of viewing events and experiences in a more positive way. It doesn't change the situation, but it can show you the situation from a different perspective. Seeing it from a different perspective may change your understanding of the situation.

You can feel different ways at the same time about a situation, of course. The important thing is to understand things from as many perspectives as possible. That helps you draw balanced conclusions.



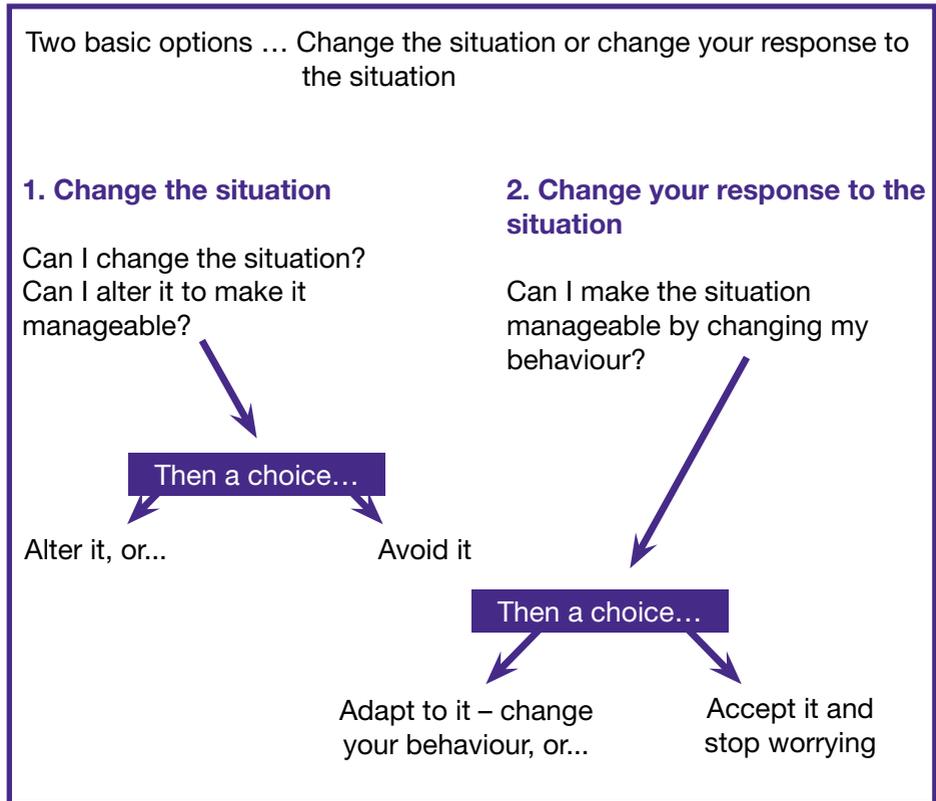
Task: Reframing negative thoughts

Over the next week, write down any negative thoughts you have at work.
At the end of the week, revisit them and think how you might reframe them in a positive light.

| Thought: | Reframe: | Balanced conclusion: |
|--|--|---|
| Example: I've worked here so long now, how boring is that!? | I'm one of the most experienced people here, how great is that!? | On balance, I get a real satisfaction from being here |
| | | |
| | | |

■ Making the best of a difficult situation

A difficult situation presents you with two basic options and then a choice.



■ **Develop optimism**

Emotional intelligence and accurate thinking both help to develop realistic optimism.

At its heart, however, optimism comes from a feeling that:

- what you are doing is worth doing
- you have the skills required
- you can deal with the problems and difficulties you are going to encounter.

The best way to develop those feelings is to:

- understand your role and its value – that means talking about what you do with colleagues and clients
- build networks of mutual support
- take every opportunity to learn and develop.



Reminder of key learning points

You behave resiliently when you:

- manage your own thoughts and feelings
- assess a problem before you try to resolve it
- are realistically optimistic
- think accurately about things
- are sensitive to other people's emotions
- are confident in your own ability to solve problems
- are willing to embrace the new in order to grow.

Personal resilience in a nutshell

- Personal resilience is about self-awareness, strategies, networks of support and being positive – these are all things that can be developed.
- Personal resilience is underpinned by the ability to manage in-the-moment and long-term pressure.
- Managing pressure begins with recognising when pressure is becoming excessive.
- Too much in-the-moment pressure leads people to misread situations and react inappropriately; repeated often enough, in-the-moment pressure can become a health risk.
- Simple techniques exist to relax, become self-aware and regain control of thoughts and feelings.
- Exposure to excessive long-term pressure results in chronic stress and can produce many negative physical, psychological and behavioural effects.

- Key strategies for managing long-term pressure include addressing the sources of pressure, recognising unhelpful thinking, achieving good work-life balance, respect for personal coping limits, boundary-setting, assertive communication, time-management and building networks of support.
- Research closely associates personal resilience with seven characteristics: self-management, tolerance of ambiguity (impulse control), realistic optimism, accurate thinking, empathy, self-efficacy, openness.
- Focus personal development on emotional intelligence, accurate thinking and realistic optimism to become more resilient.
- Optimism is linked to feeling that what you are doing is worth doing; you have the skills required and are able deal with difficulty.
- Employers can help staff develop personal resilience by reinforcing understanding of the meaning and value of what people do at work; networks of mutual support; learning and development
- Reflective team learning is an effective way to do this.

Where can I find out more about resilience?

Investigating resilience online

Resilience is an area where practice and research are developing quickly. Internet searches offer an easy way of keeping up to date with trends and approaches. Put any of the questions below into your search engine for some interesting results.

- What is resilience?
- Resilience and stress at work
- What are resilient behaviours/attitudes/skills?
- How can I become more resilient?
- How can I help others become resilient?
- Resilience training UK



Resources from Skills for Care

Resilience connects to many other important agendas in adult social care. For information, guidance and resources on them from Skills for Care, see the following.



Greater resilience, better care

We've created a guide that offers practical advice on how to build your resilience and cope with stress.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/resilience



Culture for care: your toolkit

We've created a toolkit to help managers develop a positive workplace culture in your organisation.

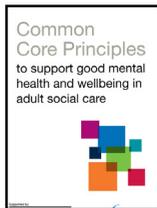
www.skillsforcare.org.uk/culture



Core skills

We've developed resources to help you develop your English, number, digital and employability skills.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/coreskills



Common core principles to support mental health

This guide provides a basis for a general understanding of promoting good mental health and recognising signs of poor mental health.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/mentalhealth

The Social Care Commitment

When you sign up to The Social Care Commitment you and your employees choose from a number of tasks designed to help improve your care services and the skills of your workers.

www.thesocialcarecommitment.org.uk



Resources to help you understand and address stress at work

Health and Safety Executive website section on stress:
www.hse.gov.uk/stress

CIPD Preventing stress website:
www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/axa/preventing-stress.aspx

NHS resources:

- Help with stress www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/low-mood-stress-anxiety.aspx
- Exercise to relieve stress www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/stress-relief-exercise.aspx
- Beat stress at work www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/workplace-stress.aspx
- Be a mindful employer www.mindfulemployer.net
- Fit for work fitforwork.org/employee

ACAS guidance on stress:
www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=782

Business Balls guidance on stress management:
www.businessballs.com/stressmanagement.htm

Business Balls guidance on time management:
www.businessballs.com/timemanagement.htm

UK National Work Stress Network:
www.workstress.net

International Stress Management Association (UK-based):
www.isma.org.uk

Resources to help you understand and foster resilience

Boingboing, resilience research centre:

www.boingboing.org.uk

Business in the Community toolkit on emotional resilience:

www.bitc.org.uk/sites/default/files/emotional_resilience_toolkit_0.pdf

CIPD Guide on developing resilience:

www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/developing-resilience_2011-evidence-based.pdf

CIPD Research report on developing resilience:

www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/research/developing-resilience.aspx

WfD Organizational Resilience Scorecard: a quick online assessment to measure how well your organization is managing resilience: www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=83146511579

RobersonCooper i-resilience: a quick online assessment to measure your own resilience:

www.robertsoncooper.com/improve-your-resilience/i-resilience-free-report-preview

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Mental Health Professionals:

padesky.com

COPE's Sphere of Wellbeing:

www.cope.co.uk/our-services/health-and-wellbeing

In Equilibrium resources:

www.in-equilibrium.co.uk/resources

Organisation Health resources:

www.orghealth.co.uk



twitter.com/skillsforcare



facebook.com/skillsforcare



linkedin.com/company/skills-for-care

Skills for Care
West Gate
6 Grace Street
Leeds
LS1 2RP

T: **0113 245 1716**
E: **info@skillsforcare.org.uk**

skillsforcare.org.uk