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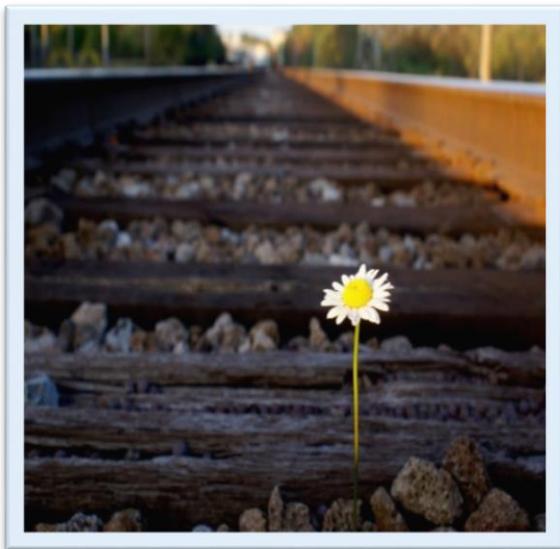
Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol  
Aneurin Bevan  
University Health Board



## Building Resilience

This toolkit is for parents or carers of a child with a physical health condition or difficulty.

Here are some ideas and strategies ***to promote and strengthen your own resilience as a caregiver.***



With special thanks to the  
**ABUHB Helping Hands  
Psychology team for  
Children with Additional  
Needs** for the original  
content of this resource.

**Remember...**

**Self-care is important, you can't  
pour from an empty cup!**



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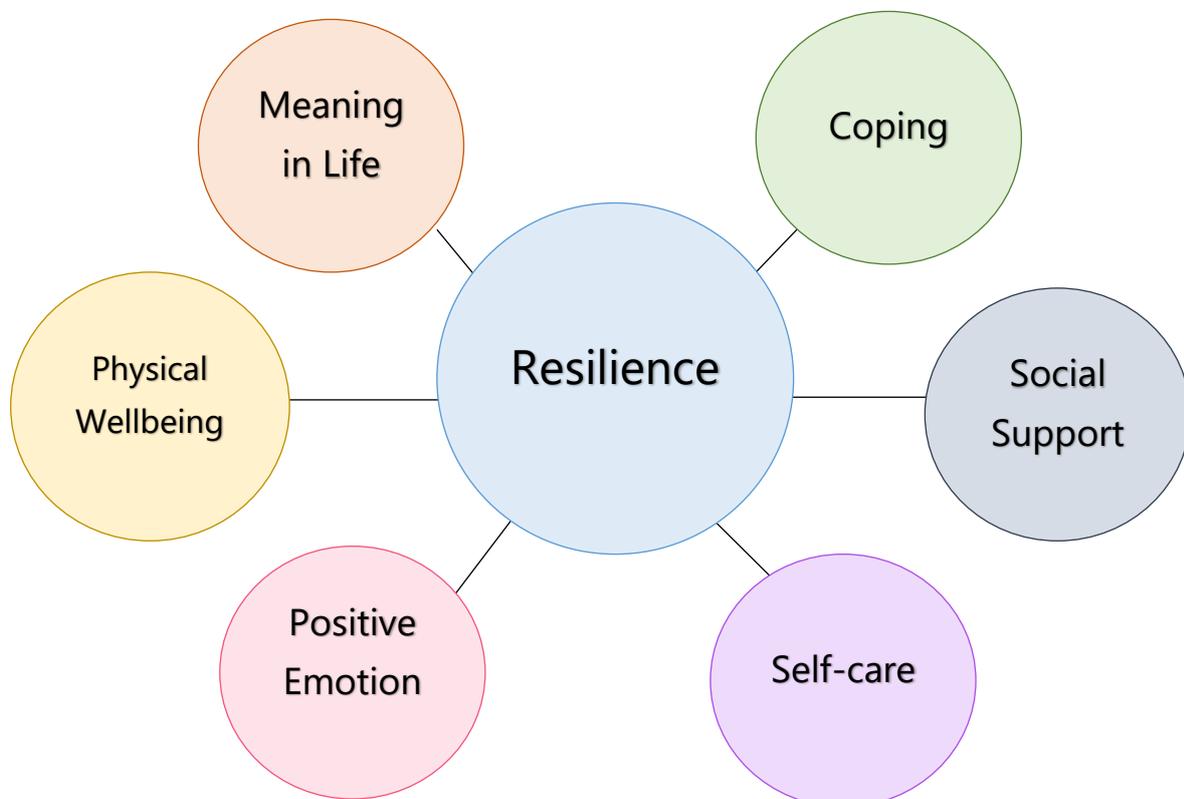


# What is Resilience?

**'Resilience'** is the capacity to overcome adversity and "bounce back" from tricky situations. When faced with a difficult life event, for example, the sudden loss of a loved one, work stressors, relationship problems, or the difficulties that come with caring for someone else, resilient individuals are able to successfully cope with, or adapt to, the associated stress. Being resilient does not mean that a person doesn't experience difficulty or distress; resilience means they are able to adapt in the face of this adversity.

Resilience is a skill and not something that we 'just have', it is something we build up. Therefore, our resilience can be tested and damaged. We have to work to maintain our resilience.

## A web of 6 factors that help foster resilience



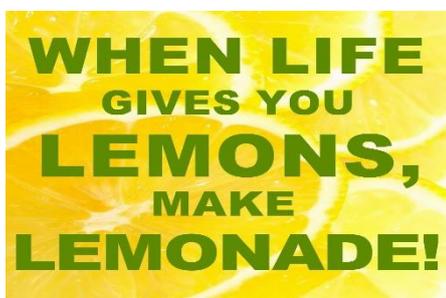
You can find out more on resilience here - [Mind.org.uk - Resilience](https://www.mind.org.uk/resilience)

# Building Resilience

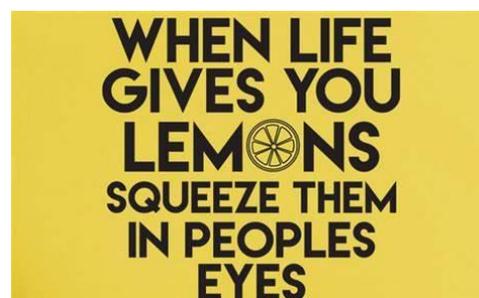
There may be times in your life where you or someone close to you experiences difficulties and challenges which are tough to deal with. Some people may be able to use their resilience to adapt and respond to stressful situations where others may struggle. It may take a lot of time and effort to build resilience but it is important to try to do so. It's helpful to notice when you have taken small steps in building your resilience and acknowledge that you are on a journey to build an important skill.

# The Importance of Self-Care

Although this may sound obvious, it is really important to look after yourself. In keeping yourself both physically and mentally healthy, you may feel better equipped to help others around you. Your self-care must be centred on what works for you as an individual. It does not have to mean implementing a new activity into your already busy schedule, it can just be 5 minutes to yourself where you can pause and reflect. Although self-care can help, it's important to acknowledge that there may be times when despite your best efforts you find it difficult to respond to situations with resilience and that this is okay.



Although there are some inspiring quotes throughout this toolkit...



It's okay to feel like this sometimes!

# Focusing on your Values

## What matters to you?

Although these questions may feel big and daunting, it can be good to ask ourselves some questions that identify where our values lie. This can help us know what kind of person we want to be, and help us to live our lives in line with this.

- *What really matters to you, deep in your heart?*
- *What do you want to do with your time on this planet?*
- *What sort of person do you want to be?*
- *What personal strengths or qualities do you want to develop?*

Identifying and thinking about these things can help you learn how to be true to yourself, even when life gets hard, or things get in the way.

Values and goals are often confused, but they are different. We can think of values as being like points on a compass, helping to point us in the right direction in life. But just like the points on a compass, your direction of travel is not your destination. For example, you can travel in the direction of West, but you can never say "here I am, I've arrived at West". There is always more West to travel towards.

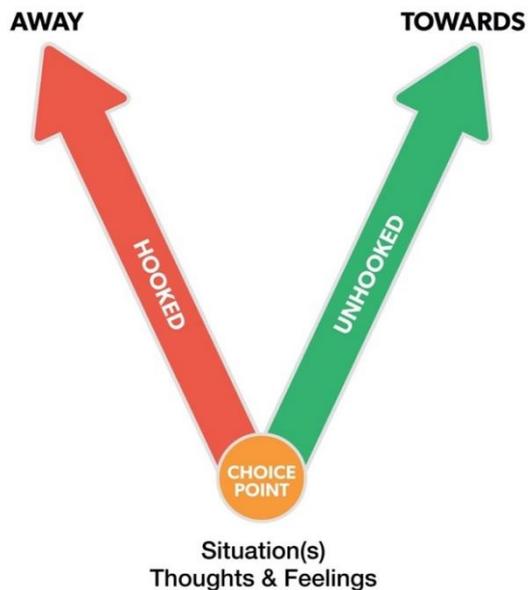
## Your own core values

There may be lots of values that are important to you. Try to think of the four most important, or '**core**' values, and write them here. Some people might choose 'kindness' or 'family'.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

## The Choice Point

A choice point is a moment in time when it is possible to choose between taking action towards your values and taking action away from your values. Sometimes things come up which 'hook' us away from our values. This could be the unhelpful thoughts or difficult emotions that arise in tricky situations.



When faced with a choice point, it can help to remember to be BOLD:

**B** - *Breath* - Breath slowly, slow down.

**O** - *Observe* - Observe what you are thinking, feeling and doing.

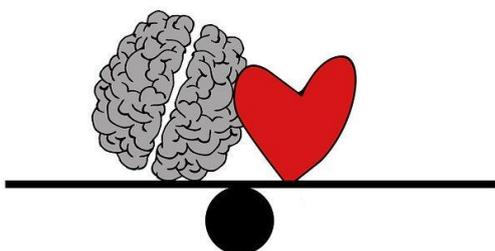
**L** - *Listen to values* - Right now, what kind of person do you want to be?

**D** - *Decide* - Decide on actions and do them. Choose actions that reflect your values.

## Compassion Circle

What is one thing that is going well for you at the moment? Can you think of one thing, no matter how small, that you already do to take care of yourself?

This might be an aspect of your physical self, your creative self, your emotional self, your social self. As parents/carers, you may regularly support others in your life (your children, partner, family, at work), but it is so important to keep something for you; keep some compassion for yourself.



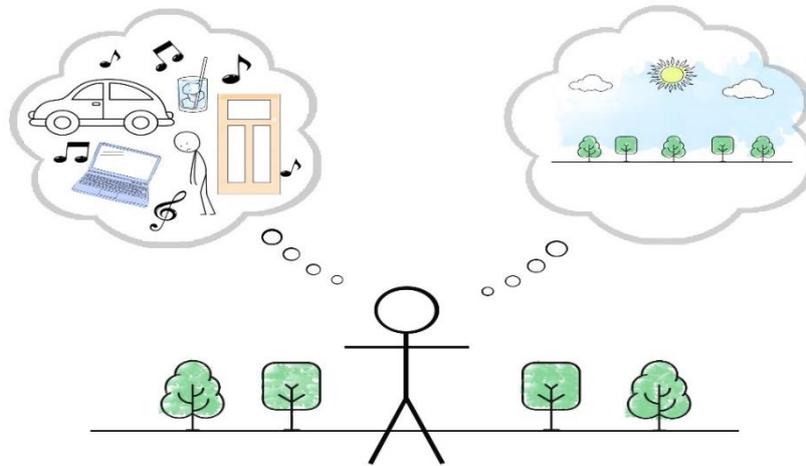
# Mindfulness

Mindfulness is simply... ***noticing what is happening right now.***

It brings us back to the present moment by noticing how our body feels and what we may see, hear, smell, taste or touch.

Mindfulness is also noticing what your mind is doing. It encourages us to acknowledge our thoughts and choose to let them go.

*Mind full, or Mindful?*



## Mindfulness Script

Here is an example of a mindfulness exercise that may be helpful to try.

The exercise could be tried for 5-10 minutes at a time, 2-3 times a day... whatever works for you!

### **“Leaves on a Stream” Exercise (Harris, 2009)**

1. Sit in a comfortable position and either close your eyes or rest them gently on a fixed spot in the room.
2. Visualize yourself sitting beside a gently flowing stream with leaves floating along the surface of the water. *Pause 10 seconds.*
3. For the next few minutes, take each thought that enters your mind and place it on a leaf... let it float by. Do this with each thought – pleasurable, painful, or neutral. Even if you have joyous or enthusiastic thoughts, place them on a leaf and let them float by.
4. If your thoughts momentarily stop, continue to watch the stream. Sooner or later, your thoughts will start up again. *Pause 20 seconds.*
5. Allow the stream to flow at its own pace. Don't try to speed it up and rush your thoughts along. You're not trying to rush the leaves along or “get rid” of your thoughts. You are allowing them to come and go at their own pace.
6. If your mind says “This is dumb,” “I'm bored,” or “I'm not doing this right” place *those thoughts* on leaves, too, and let them pass. *Pause 20 seconds.*
7. If a leaf gets stuck, allow it to hang around until it's ready to float by. If the thought comes up again, watch it float by another time. *Pause 20 seconds.*
8. If a difficult or painful feeling arises, simply acknowledge it. Say to yourself, “I notice myself having a feeling of boredom/impatience/frustration.” Place those thoughts on leaves and allow them float along.
9. From time to time, your thoughts may hook you and distract you from being fully present in this exercise. This is *normal*. As soon as you realize that you have become side-tracked, gently bring your attention back to the visualization exercise.

Perhaps to end this exercise, you could allow the image of the stream to dissolve in your mind and bring your attention back to sitting in the chair. Open your eyes gently and look around the room, noticing what you can see and hear. This will bring you back into the present moment, ready to continue on with your day.

## Ideas for Self-Care

We asked some of our families what they do as self-care activities:

*"I feel it's so important to keep myself feeling strong because if I become poorly who looks after my family?"*

*Just to have enough time to have an undisturbed bath with a cup of tea is bliss. It recharges my batteries and sets me off again."*

*"I recognise the importance of taking time to myself. For me, reading, singing and attending a parent group provides me with an element of escapism and/or an increase sense of purpose and worth building resilience to keep on supporting my family."*

**INTERACTIVE TIME:** Now it's over to you... use **my relaxation activities postcard** below to write or draw activities that you can do to make you feel relaxed and do that is time for you. Once you have finished you can cut this out or take a photo as a reminder of self-care activities you can do.

## My Relaxation Activities