



TOOLKIT: Resilience

POPULATION

These resources are designed for use with high school aged students in small and large group activities as well as individually.

FOCUS

To increase awareness of and skills to improve resilience.

OVERVIEW

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from the challenges that life presents throughout its entirety. It's a skill that can be learned and improved. Activities and resources are provided to assist teens in doing so.

BENEFITS

Resilience is a learned skill that can always be improved and enables us to better cope with the challenges presented throughout life and is needed by all.

COST

none

TOOLKIT CONTENTS

Attached- Resilience quiz, introduction to concept of resilience and various facets, 7 small group activities, resources, pocket card and worksheet for building and maintaining resilience.

CONTACT

Dr. Larry Kubiak larrykubiak@me.com

Table of Contents

RESILIENCE POCKET CARDS	5
Assessment.....	5
Affirmations.....	6
Skills.....	6
GROUP ACTIVITIES	7
A. Brainstorming.....	8
B. Commonalities.....	9
C. Come to Me.....	9
D. Coping.....	10
E. Pairs Walk.....	11
F. Role Play.....	12
G. Awareness.....	12
INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES	13
Tip Sheet 1.....	13
Tip Sheet 2.....	15
Letting Off Steam Without Exploding.....	17
My Plan for Building and Maintaining My Resilience.....	19

PREFACE

The materials provided in this toolkit are designed to assist in the promotion of resilience as a skill needed by all which can be learned and enhanced throughout life. The user should feel free to use any or all portions of this and not feel obligated to complete all of it to gain benefit. Any effort to improve resilience is positive. Feel free to refer back to these materials at any time and repeat any to gain additional benefit.

INTRODUCTION

Resilience. Another way of expressing it is have you got bounce? You might wonder what I mean by that. Bounce or resilience indicates how sometimes people can go through really rough times and still bounce back. Those skills that allow them to do it are considered resilience. It is the ability to adapt well in the face of hard times which might involve natural or man-made disasters or even very stressful times in our life.

While others may think that life at a particular age is easy, life is never easy. You have all faced times in your life that have presented challenges for you. Resilience makes us stronger. Much like a muscle the more you use it the stronger it gets. And the stronger it gets the stronger you get.

This is critical because none of us have a crystal ball to know what life has in store for us. You have expectations about your life that may turn out to be very different. Our resilience can help us to get through those rough patches a little better.

The exciting news is that resilience isn't something you're born with but rather they are skills that can be learned much like riding a bicycle. It's something we build but there is no one right way or path to do so. We're going to talk today about some tried-and-true ways to build resilience. Some of you might have been using the skills already without even knowing it and you may learn some new strategies to help you cope with stress the next time you're preparing for a big test, challenges in a relationship or other situations. Building resilience doesn't happen overnight, it takes time.

As we have already said, there is no single way to get or build resilience. What works for you may not work for someone else. Even if you are resilient that doesn't mean that sometimes you may not feel overstressed, angry, sad or anxious. After all we are all humans and subject to those emotions and we will always have them. What resilience does is it helps us to weather those events more effectively. As you get through those tough times you become stronger because of your resilience.

Fifty years of research on resilience has identified 3 main factors: sense of mastery, sense of relatedness and emotional reactivity.

Sense of Mastery represents the likelihood that someone will be able to cope with adverse circumstances currently and in the future. An affirmation epitomizing this is **I can cope successfully.**

Sense of Relatedness serves as a buffer against stress and represents feeling securely connected to individuals in a social context. The affirmation is **I can connect with anyone and everyone.**

Emotional Reactivity evaluates the vulnerability to stress or impact from adversity as it relates to a child's pre-existing circumstance, a pre-existing vulnerability, arousal or threshold of tolerance to stimulation prior to the occurrence of adverse events or circumstances. The affirmation is **I can overcome stress.**

Another concept might be called a **Vulnerability** index representing an estimation of one's personal vulnerability as a discrepancy or imbalance between their emotional reactivity and their perceived personal resources. A high score would suggest a greater risk of being overwhelmed by a stressful event. The affirmation is **I grow from challenges.**

RESILIENCE POCKET CARDS

Assessment

Please answer the following as honestly as possible on a Likert scale from 0 for never to 10 for always.

Never-----Always
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1. I can control what happens to me.
2. No matter what happens, things will be all right.
3. If I have a problem, I can solve it.
4. If at first I don't succeed, I will keep on trying.
5. I can learn from my mistakes.
6. I can ask for help when I need to.
7. I can trust others.
8. I can let others see my real feelings.
9. There are people who will help me if something bad happens.
10. There are people who love and care about me.
11. I can make friends easily.
12. I feel calm with people.
13. I can calmly tell others that I don't agree with them.
14. If people let me down I can forgive them.
15. It is easy for me to get upset.
16. I get very upset when things don't go my way.
17. When I get upset I stay upset for a long time.
18. I get so upset that I lose control.
19. When I am upset, I do things that I later feel bad about.

NOTE: Higher scores indicate good resilience for questions 1-14, lower scores are preferable for 15-19. Scores of 95 or less suggest a strong need to improve resilience, scores of 96-122 suggest a moderate need for improvement and scores of 123 or greater suggest you're doing quite well with resilience but can always get better.

Affirmations

1. I can cope successfully
2. I can connect with anyone and everyone
3. I can overcome stress
4. I believe things will work out
5. I will succeed
6. I embrace change
7. I can count on others
8. People will help me if needed
9. I can fit in anywhere
10. I embrace diversity
11. I boil slowly
12. I calm quickly
13. I embrace challenges
14. I cope successfully and connect with everyone
15. I grow from challenges

Skills

Resilience represents the ability to adapt well in the face of hard times and bounce back. Resilience is made up of skills that can be learned. It makes us stronger and much like a muscle the more you use it the stronger it gets. Resilience helps us weather events effectively and those skills include the following:

Relatedness

Emotional reactivity low

Support from others

Involvement with others

Low boiling point

Invulnerable

Ease with others

Negotiate differences

Cope successfully

Embrace diversity

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Researchers recognize ten skills or knowledge (numbered 1-10 below) as significant for resilience. These are not fixed, we can enhance them by exercising related activities. Let's read what they are, what they mean, and then give the group an opportunity to work on them.

Preparation:

- ✓ Ideally, the available space includes enough round tables, seating and supplies for everyone in the group to write at the same time plus a flip chart, markers, masking tape and sticky notes.
- ✓ Select the handouts you want to use and print enough for everyone (at minimum the *Coping Awareness* worksheet).
- ✓ Write the text from number 1) below on a flip chart sheet and tape it on the wall to mark one area for small groups to gather in the room. Repeat with the next until 1) through 10) below are written onto flip charts posted to indicate ten different areas to gather around the room.

- 1) The first skill or knowledge is optimism. This includes the positive attitudes that you have about the world and life in general and generally the positive belief that things will work out. It often describes the individual who sees the glass as half-full instead of half-empty. Affirmation: I believe things will work out. Technique--Reframing
- 2) The second one is confidence. This represents your approach to the obstacles and challenges that life presents to you. It is the sense that you can master those challenges using the resources that you have at your disposal. Affirmation: I will succeed. Technique—Positive Self-statements
- 3) The third one is adaptability or flexibility. This means that someone is not narrow-minded or wearing blinders when it comes to meeting challenges. They are able to consider different options for problem-solving. They are open to suggestion, receptive to criticism and are able to learn from their own mistakes. Affirmation: I embrace change. Technique—Brainstorming creative problem-solving
- 4) Trust is the fourth one and represents the degree to which you view other people as reliable when the chips are down. It is certainly not something that is simply given but something that must be earned in most cases. Affirmation: I can count on others. Technique—Experimenting with Self-disclosure
- 5) The fifth area is support. In this case it represents more your belief that support is there regardless of whether or not you actually take advantage of it. For many of us perception is reality and believing that people are there that you can rely on is critical to our confidence that we can succeed. It is based on the capacity for trust and ability to relate to others in a meaningful way. Affirmation: People will help me if needed. Technique—Brainstorming a support network.
- 6) The sixth area is ease with others. This means being able to be around other people without being anxious or in discomfort. It means that you can go to a home in a foreign country and be at ease even if you don't know the language that well, the customs or are familiar with the food. Affirmation: I can fit in anywhere. Technique—Role playing introducing self to strangers.

- 7) The seventh area is tolerance. This indicates the ability to allow others to have their own thoughts and express them even though they may differ from our own. It is a belief that you can safely do this and not be rejected by others. Affirmation: I embrace diversity. Technique—Identify irritating persons or events and setting a goal of increasing tolerance.
- 8) The eight area I refer to as boiling point. Some people get to a boiling point very quickly and some much more slowly. The quicker you get to a boiling point the more likely it is to create problems for you in coping with situations and predicts how quickly you get upset about a situation. Affirmation: I boil slowly. Technique—Practice counting to ten or other mental exercise that allows for cooling off.
- 9) The ninth one is quick recovery. When something occurs that challenges your status quo how quickly do you get back to a normal state of functioning. How quickly does your heart rate return to normal, your blood pressure return to normal, etc. This is a measure of how quickly you bounce back from emotionally disturbing situations. Affirmation: I calm quickly. Technique—Listing activities that help restore the status quo.
- 10) The 10th one I refer to as being wiped out. When a challenging event occurs are you overwhelmed with it and not able to function at all or are you able to address it and move on without significant disruption in your everyday life? It represents the ability to maintain an emotional equilibrium when challenging events occur. Affirmation: I embrace challenges. Technique—Role play pressing the “restart” button.

A. Brainstorming

The session leader should ask the large group to evenly split into smaller groups (no fewer than 5 people in a group and no more than 10 groups) and go to an area marked by one of the flip chart sheets. Ideally, facilitators would work with each small group at least some of the time.

The session leader should explain to the groups that the challenge is to identify specific strategies for improving and developing the one skill listed on their group’s flip chart sheet. Also make clear that it is a two-step process, with the first step being to generate as many ideas as possible (in brainstorming no idea is a bad one). Time will be called after a few minutes to end the first step and to begin the second step of selecting one or more ideas to write as a sentence describing a strategy for improving and developing the targeted skill.

Note that before you start the clock to begin the brainstorming step, instruct the groups to select one of their members to be their group’s recorder (preferably someone with good handwriting that is legible) to list the ideas as they are shouted out or read off a sticky note. After each group has identified a recorder, tell them the clock is starting (allow 5-10 minutes).

When the brainstorming ends, ask everyone take just one minute to silently mark their favorite three ideas using a pencil or sticker. Then ask the recorder or another volunteer in each group to write the favorite idea/s of the group as a sentence describing an action for improving and developing the skill targeted by that group (allow 3-5 minutes).

Finally, close the activity with an entire group debrief by asking the recorder or a volunteer from each small group to share aloud what was produced. Listen attentively, critically and offer any suggestion you may have.

B. Commonalities

The session leader should explain to the large group that they will be participating in an exercise designed to discover things they have in common with each other. That you will call out a category like 'the month you were born'. The immediate goal will be to find everyone else who has the same birth month that you do and stand together in a group. You will have approximately 45 seconds to find your group. At the end of each round we will have different groups clustered together by what they have in common. *SCRIPT: In fact, the first category is birth month. I will say ready, set and go and you should move quickly to find your group.*

After everyone has found their group be sure to recognize each one and provide each group with a brief round of applause. Some groups will be relatively small and extra acknowledgment may be appropriate for being unique.

The next categories are as follows:

1. Favorite fruit
2. Favorite ice cream flavor
3. Favorite sport
4. Favorite subject in school
5. Favorite day of the week
6. Special talent
7. Foreign languages spoken

Close the activity with an entire group debrief by asking volunteers to answer: What did you learn about each other? Did any of these responses surprise you? What other facts would you like to find out if you have in common with others in this group? How could you find out on your own?

C. Come to Me

The session leader should split the large group into pairs by having each person count off as 1 or 2. Instruct all the 1's to pair with the 2 at his or her left. Ask all pairs to stand about ten foot apart, facing each other. Then ask the 1's to play the role of a blind person by closing their eyes during the activity. *SCRIPT: "When I say begin I would like for the sighted partner (2's at start) to walk slowly towards the other until the person in the blind role holds up a hand and says stop. The sighted person should notice how close you were before the stop was signaled. Then go back to your starting position and do it a second time."*

Next, with both people at the same distance have the blind person turn around. The sighted person again approaches until the blind person says stop. You may also do so from either side. Ask everyone to reverse roles and go through the entire procedure again.

Close the activity with an entire group debrief by asking volunteers to answer:

- Was this fun?
- Was there discomfort in either role?
- What relevance does this have?
- Do you anticipate that there will be a difference in terms of personal space and comfort level? If so, how will you determine that?"

D. Coping

The session leader should ask the large group to evenly split into smaller groups and go to tables to write.

SCRIPT: "There you will find an exercise sheet on which I will ask you to identify one of the most challenging experiences in your life, how you successfully coped with it, what resilience characteristics you used to do so and how you plan to cope with challenges in your life. There is no need to put your name on the sheet."

After everyone has completed the worksheet, invite anyone interested in sharing to read what they wrote aloud to the group. No one is required to share what they wrote.

Close the activity by saying you 'would appreciate collecting everyone's worksheet if you are comfortable sharing it with me'.

Building and Manifesting Resilience Exercise Sheet

One of the most challenging experiences in my life was:

Rather than become overwhelmed by it I coped and showed resilience by:

This is an example of the resilience characteristic(s) of (please circle all those that apply): optimism, confidence, flexibility, trust, perceived level of support, ease with others, tolerance, low boiling point, quick recovery and not being easily wiped out.

In the future when confronted by other challenges I will:

E. Pairs Walk

This activity requires a fairly open outside area away that allows for exercises such as walking up or down an incline, kicking a soccer ball, stepping within a hula hoop, sitting on a bench, picking up a pine cone, avoiding a tree or other obstacle, etc.

Bring the group outside. The session leader should split the large group into pairs by having each person count off as 1 or 2; then instruct all the 1's to pair with the 2 at his or her right.

Ask the 1's to play the role of a blind person by closing their eyes during the activity. Explain that the sighted person (2's at start) will serve as their eyes in various activities and challenges. The sighted person can guide the other only by speaking, not by touching or other help.

Ask the sighted person to be creative with the tasks for the person in the blind role, such as walking up or down an incline, kicking a soccer ball, stepping within a hula hoop, sitting on a bench, picking up a pine cone, avoiding a tree or other obstacle, etc. Emphasize that the sighted guides must do whatever is necessary to prevent injury or discomfort to their person and must be sensitive to their emotional and psychological safety as well. If at any point the safety of the individual seems to be in doubt then the leaders will intervene to keep this from happening. Tell the sighted group to begin. Allow 5-10 minutes.

Gather the pairs for the next challenge. Explain that the sighted person can no longer speak but must guide by placing their hand on the person's shoulder or communicate in other ways nonverbally on what the person is to do and where they are to go. Allow 5-10 minutes.

Gather the pairs for the next challenge, which is to reverse the roles, starting with the verbal guidance through tasks. After 5-10 minutes switch them from spoken guidance to begin the non-verbal guidance.

Close the activity with an entire group debrief by asking volunteers to answer:

- What did you think of this activity?
- What did it feel like to be guided by someone else both verbally and nonverbally?
- What did it feel like being the guide?
- Which role did you like best?
- How many times did you sneak a peek and why?
- What is the biggest difference between the roles you played?
- Were you at any point frightened and if so when and why?
- What did your guide do to make you feel safe and comfortable?
- Have you ever experienced a situation where you felt blinded and if so what can you take from this to help in the future if you feel lost or unsure where you are going?

F. Role Play

Before issuing instructions, collect the ten flip chart sheets written with one of the resilience skills or knowledge. Fold them in half, mix them up, and then – still folded so the text is hidden - randomly post them around the room. The session leader should then ask the large group to evenly split into smaller groups (no less than 5 people to a group and no more than 10 groups). Assign each small group to one of the unoccupied areas where a folded flip chart sheet is posted.

Explain that each group will develop a skit or role-play that manifests the resilience skill or knowledge described within the folded flip chart sheet. Ask them not to reveal it to the other groups when they unfold their flip chart sheet. Each small group will present their role play to the larger group. The larger group will then be asked to guess the resilience skill or knowledge portrayed. The role plays must include at least two people; more are fine. As soon as the skit topic is correctly guessed by the larger group, ask the small group to re-post their flip chart sheet onto the wall (because it may be needed in a later activity).

You can decide the time to allow for skit development and presentation based on how many groups are involved. Ideally, you can leave enough time to first have the entire group vote by applause volume which two skits best portrayed the skill assigned and then to 'break the tie' by giving those two groups an additional few minutes to embellish and re-present their skit for final audience reaction and applause.

Close the activity with an entire group debrief by asking volunteers to answer:

- What did you learn from this exercise?
- Was it fun?
- How accurately did the group portray their assigned resilience characteristic?
- Were there some concepts that were easy to portray? Some difficult?
- What is the "take home" message from this exercise?

G. Awareness

There should still be posted on the walls the ten flip chart sheets describing resilience skills or knowledge. *SCRIPT: Now that we've talked about different ways to build resilience, I'd like you to take a few minutes and think about ways you have used resilience in your own life, perhaps without even knowing it. Using sticky notes, write down at least one way you have been resilient (you should not write your name or any other personal information) and then stick it onto the related flip chart sheet.*

To complete this activity, the session leader should read aloud some sticky notes on each poster, discuss them briefly and ask volunteers to identify other strategies that can be helpful.

Consider compiling the results to make them available to all participants for reference.

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES

Tip Sheet 1

Let's look at some of the ways that the American Psychological Association has identified to build resilience. Again some of them may be ones that you are already using. Further information on resilience can be found at the website of the American Psychological Association by visiting the Psychology Help Center (at www.apa.org/helpcenter).

1. **Get together.** Talk to your friends, parents and other people who are important to you. It is vital to talk to people who have life experiences that are similar to the ones that you will be experiencing. Don't be afraid to express your opinion with these people even if they take an opposite view from yours. Ask questions and listen to the answers. Get connected to your community whether it be a church group, high school group, band, etc.
2. **Take control.** Even in the midst of challenges, we can move toward goals one small step at a time. Even during a really hard time just getting out of bed and going to school may be all you can handle but even accomplishing that can help. Bad times can make us feel out of control so grab some of the control back by taking decisive action. Be aware of the things you have control of in your life and start from there. Remember the Serenity Prayer used by alcoholics anonymous: "Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I can not change, the courage to change the things that I can, and the wisdom to know the difference".
3. **Create a hassle free zone.** Make your area one that is a safe haven for you free from stress and anxiety. It is important to understand that parents, siblings and friends may have their own stresses if something serious has just happened in your life and may want to spend a little more time than usual with you. It's important to find the right balance between spending time in your hassle free zone and with others.
4. **Cut yourself some slack.** When something bad happens in your life, the stress of whatever you're going through is intensified by daily stress. Your emotions could be all over the place because of hormones and other physical changes. The uncertainty of a trauma can make those shifts seem even more extreme. Be prepared for this and take it a little easy on yourself and on your friends.
5. **Take care of yourself.** Take care of yourself in all ways including physically, mentally and spiritually. Make sure that you get enough sleep. If you don't you will be more grouchy and nervous at a time when you need to stay sharp. There's a lot going on and it's going to be tough to face it if you're falling asleep on your feet.
6. **Express yourself.** Challenges can bring up a number of conflicting emotions but sometimes it's just too hard to talk to someone about what you're feeling. If talking isn't working, do something else to address your emotions like starting a journal or creating artwork.
7. **Help somebody.** Nothing gets your mind off your own problems like solving someone else's. Try volunteering in your community or at your school, cleaning up around your house or helping a friend with their homework or whatever else you are able to do that will be meaningful to you.

8. **Put things in perspective.** The very thing that has you stressed out may be all anyone is talking about at the present time but eventually things change and bad times end. Learn some relaxation techniques whether it's thinking or listening to a particular song at times of stress or taking a deep breath to calm down. Think about the important things that have stayed the same even while the outside world is changing. When you talk about bad times make sure you talk about good times as well.
9. **Turn it off.** It is important to stay informed and you might even have homework that requires you to watch the news. Sometimes the news with its focus on the sensational can add to the feeling that nothing is going right. Try to limit the amount of news you can take and weather each from television, newspapers or magazines or the Internet. Watching a news report once informs you while watching it over and over again just adds to the stress and contributes no new knowledge.
10. **Stick to the program.** During a time of major stress, map out a routine and stick to it. You may be doing all kinds of new things but don't forget the routines that give you comfort whether it's the things you do before class, going out to lunch or having a nightly phone call with a friend.

Tip Sheet 2

Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress such as family and relationship issues, serious health problems, school or financial stressors. Resilience is not a trait that people either have or don't but involves behaviors, thoughts and actions that anyone can learn and develop.

Developing resilience is a personal journey. What works well for one may not work for another so people must use several strategies. Some variations can reflect cultural or other differences.

The following points may help in considering one's own strategy for building resilience:

1. **Make connections.** Good relationships with others are important. Accepting help and support from people who care about you and will listen to you strengthens your resilience. Being active in various groups like Boy Scouts or churches provide social support and help with reclaiming hope. Assisting others in their time of need can also benefit and help.
2. **Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems.** You can't change the fact that highly stressful events occur but you can change how you interpret or respond to them. It's important to look beyond the present to how future circumstances can be better.
3. **Accept that change is a part of living.** Certain goals may not be attainable as a result of adverse situations. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed will help you focus on circumstances that you can.
4. **Move toward your goals.** Think about possible solutions to problems you are facing and decide what realistic goals you want to achieve. Do something on a regular basis even if it seems like only a small accomplishment in order to move yourself forward. Focus away from tasks that are unachievable. It is important to ask yourself what is one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps move me in the direction I want to go. Some people find it helpful to track their progress by making a record of any accomplishments that move them toward their goals. It is important to reflect on the fact that you are taking positive action and achieving what you need to do.
5. **Take decisive actions.** Act on adverse situations as quickly and completely as you can. Take decisive actions and not just detach from problems and stresses and simply wish them away. Being active instead of passive helps people be more effective in managing adversity.
6. **Find positive ways to reduce stress and negative feelings.** After a stressful event many people feel they need to turn away from negative thoughts and feelings they are experiencing. Positive distractions like exercising, going to a movie or reading a book can help renew you so that you can refocus on meeting challenges in your life. Avoid numbing unpleasant feelings with alcohol or drugs.
7. **Look for opportunities for self-discovery.** A crisis or loss often enable someone to learn important things about themselves and to grow in important ways. Many people who have experienced tragedies have reported better relationships, a greater sense of strength even though they feel more vulnerable, increased self-esteem, increased spirituality and a heightened appreciation for life.
8. **Nurture a positive view of yourself.** Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts will help build resilience.
9. **Keep things in perspective.** Even in painful situations try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Don't blow the event out of proportion. Strong emotional reactions are normal and typically lessen over time.
10. **Maintain a hopeful outlook.** An optimistic outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life. Try visualizing what you want rather than worrying about what you fear.

11. **Take care of yourself.** It is important to pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in activities that are relaxing and contribute to good health like exercise and healthy eating. Taking care of yourself enables you to recharge your batteries and be better prepared to deal with other situations that require resilience.
12. **Additional ways of strengthening resilience may be helpful.** Some people write about their deepest thoughts and feelings or use meditation or other spiritual practices that enable them to build connections and restore hope. The key is to find ways of building your resilience that are likely to work well for you.
13. **Where to look for help.** Getting help when you need it is crucial to building your resilience. Many people turn to family members, friends or others who care about them for support and encouragement. Self-help and community support groups can be helpful. Sharing information, ideas and emotions allow group participants to assist one another and find comfort in knowing they are not alone in experiencing difficulty. If using one's own resources and getting help from others is not sufficient for building resilience, seeking the assistance of a licensed mental health professional can be an important next step.

Letting Off Steam Without Exploding

One definition of stress is that it is a condition that requires the body to adjust to change. This involves several components:

- It elicits the fight/flight response which prepares our body in a very primitive way to either stand and physically fight our stressor or run away from it. Unfortunately, most of our modern day stressors do not respond well to this ancient condition.
- Stress can be positive or negative as well as either internal or external to the person.
- What is critical is the amount of adjustment required, for how long and whether or not one is able to dissipate the changes in one's body in an effective manner.
- Stress is essential for life but we need an optimal level. An optimal level of stress is not linear but represents more of a butterfly curve.

Effective strategies for dealing with stress in our lives can include the following:

1. Recognize that the events most likely to produce stress have the following characteristics: negative, uncontrollable, unpredictable, and ambiguous. Work to identify these as much as possible ahead of time and to avoid or cope with them most effectively.

2. Utilize assertiveness in your interpersonal relationships. Remember the formula for an assertive statement is as follows:

- I feel ...
- When you ...
- Because ...
- I would prefer ...

3. Utilize effective time management techniques. This involves putting your short, intermediate and long-term goals in writing, vividly imagining the accomplishment of those goals, and utilizing the 80 – 20 rule which recognizes that 80% of the value of a group of items is concentrated in only 20% of them. Therefore, we are considered a most effective person if we concentrate on the two most important items from any list of 10 things we need to do. Constantly ask yourself what is the best use of my time right now and direct your activities accordingly.

4. Incorporate appropriate nutritional planning in your diet which limits processed foods, sugar, salt, caffeine and nicotine and increase the use of fiber and fresh fruits and vegetables. Don't skip meals and recognize that there is no fast way to lose weight.

5. Incorporate the three major types of exercise into your daily regimen. These include aerobic, flexibility and muscle strength exercises. Aerobic exercise should be engaged in at least 3-4 times a week for 20-30 minutes each time with your heart rate up to 70-80% of your maximum heart rate.

6. Recognize that breathing properly is the quickest and easiest form of relaxation. To be effective it must be done deeply from your diaphragm rather than from your chest.

7. Recognize that we are generally disturbed by our perceptions of events and the irrational statements that we make to ourselves about these. Identify your irrational thinking, confront it, and replace it with more rational thoughts. Examples of irrational thinking include "I must be unfailingly competent and almost perfect in all I undertake" and "You should feel fear or anxiety about anything that is unknown, uncertain or potentially dangerous". Remember, you **feel** the way you **think**.

8. Utilize imagery that is most effective for you and give yourself permission to return to a safe place when feeling most troubled such as a favorite vacation spot.
9. Recognize that those with sufficient social support networks adjust better to stressful events. Seek out either formal or informal groups of peers who can share your concerns and understand the stresses you experience.
10. Try to empathize with others and put yourself in their shoes before judging.
11. Learn to laugh at yourself. Don't take yourself too seriously.
12. Practice forgiveness and don't hold grudges.
13. Utilize the recommendations of the National Institute of Mental Health for dealing with stress. These include:
 - A. Talk it out.
 - B. Escape.
 - C. Work off anger.
 - D. Give in occasionally.
 - E. Do something for others.
 - F. Take one thing at a time.
 - G. Shun the Superman urge.
 - H. Go easy with your criticism of yourself and others.
 - I. Give the other fellow a break.
 - J. Make yourself available.
 - K. Schedule your recreation.
14. Take time for yourself and give yourself permission to enjoy it.

My Plan for Building and Maintaining My Resilience

In completing this form be sure to develop SMART goals. These involve the following components:

- **Specific:** what exactly are you going to do?
- **Measurable:** how will you and others know when you have reached the goal?
- **Attainable:** are you capable of reaching the goal? Do you have the ability? The resources? Time?
- **Realistic:** are you willing to commit the time, resources, etc., to reaching the goal?
- **Time specific:** exactly when are you going to start? What is your timeframe? When should the goal be reached?

Goals can push and pull us forward, especially in bad times. We need to be persistent in trying to reach our goals but not overly rigid. Ask yourself how you would change your goals if your life suddenly changed due to illness, death of a loved one or a natural disaster and modify them accordingly.

GOALS FOR RESILIENCE

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.