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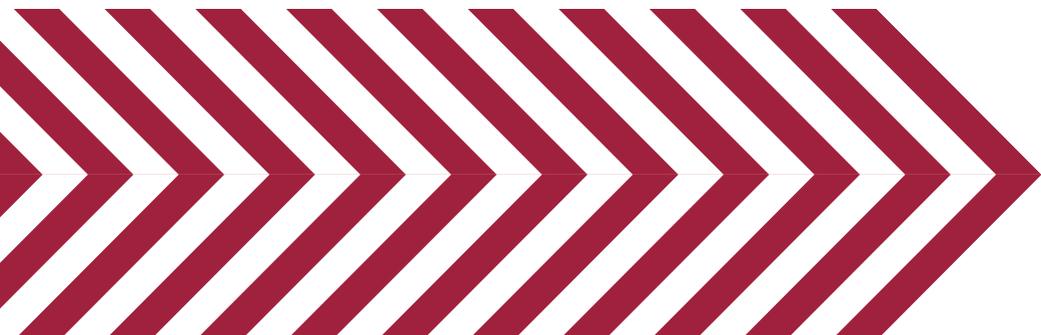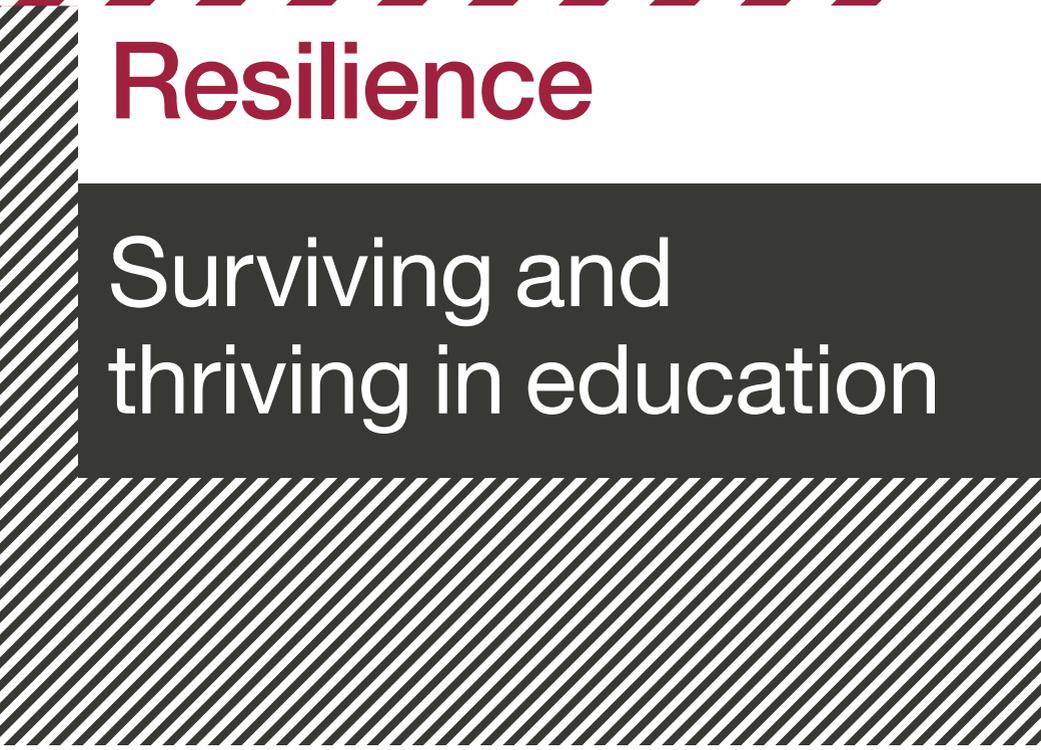
for leaders in education

Resilience

Surviving and thriving in education

Peter Rushton and Jackie Christie

About AMiE

AMiE is for leaders in education. We champion our members, influence education policy and provide bespoke expertise. We help members achieve their potential with our career development programme, while our information resources help them to understand how the latest issues impact on their working lives. Our team of legal experts is available to provide confidential advice, guidance and support to members in times of need.

To join go to
www.amie.org.uk/join

There are plenty of good reasons to join, as well as support, advice and a wide selection of publications and CPD – all free or at a reduced rate to members – AMiE also provides up-to-date news and views, discounts and offers on an array of products and services, and a first class website for instant access to a range of advice on workplace issues.

About the authors

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Foreword

Resilience is often associated with the capacity to persevere against the odds and to develop the famous 'stiff upper lip' as a means to cope. It is more powerful than this.

Resilience is essentially about leadership of self. It is not a personality trait, but a process. Investing time in this area of leadership opens huge potential not only to cope but to discover how to challenge the factors prompting challenges in the first place.

Building resilience is part of the self-leadership you need from your first day in front of a class to the day you retire. This booklet and associated training offered by AMiE are designed to help leaders build their own resilience, lead those in middle management and lead the senior leadership team. As a leader, building resilience among your staff has a host of organisational benefits including better staff retention, low sickness absence and low presenteeism.

It is a practical guide that includes proven strategies for developing and maintaining resilience, and case studies that illustrate just how critical resilience is for staff and students.

AMiE knows from casework that senior leaders find their personal resilience eroded when they are under pressure, which can result in leadership problems that undermine the organisational resilience of the school or college. It makes sense for all leaders to regularly review their levels of personal resilience and lead staff to build their capacity in this area as part of an approach to staff well-being.

Mark Wright
Director of AMiE
National Education Union

Introduction

Turbulent is a word often used to describe the education sector. Practitioners, stakeholders and observers constantly refer to a period of unprecedented and incoherent change. Navigating change is not necessarily just an analytically detached process; it is an emotional process which leaders need to embrace.

This will require resilience so you have the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties. Toughness and courage are prominent among the wide range of resilience qualities required by education leaders.

> Obstacles don't have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it.
>
> Michael Jordan, retired basketball player

Common descriptions of the education sector.

- Headship now has job security similar to that of a football manager – only worse given that sacked football managers very often find a new role managing another club.
- There is unintelligent accountability.
- There is an emphasis on results at all costs.
- Mental health problems among students and staff are increasing.
- Staff retention, recruitment and low morale are leading to sleepless nights.

Within this climate, leaders, staff and students are expected to carry on regardless. However, pressures on leaders, staff and students in the sector are now intense and relentless. Stress and a lack of resilience are a worrying cocktail.
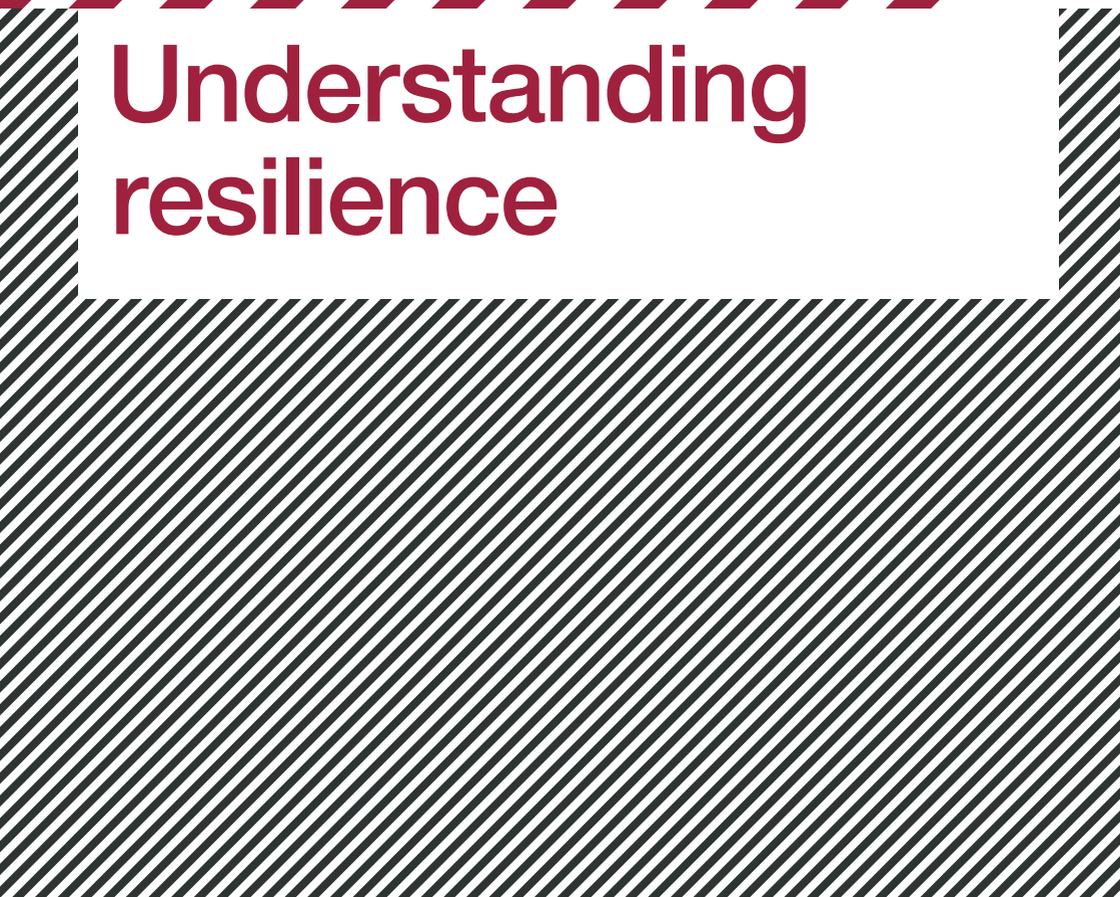
At a time when there is incredible pressure to deliver more with less money, resilience is a great quality to have, develop and pass on to others.

Success is how high you bounce after you hit bottom.

General George Patton

Understanding resilience

What is it?

Researcher Edith Grotberg, of the International Resilience Project in the Netherlands, defines resilience as "a universal capacity which allows a person, group or community to prevent, minimize or overcome the damaging effects of adversity". Resilience is the persistence in pursuing goals despite obstacles and setbacks. It is a great quality in leaders as they operate from hope of success rather than fear of failure – sometimes described as having a "half-full" or "half-empty" glass.

People and organisations with resilience possess a range of abilities such as:

1 "The ability in the face of difficulty, to retain flexible cognitive behaviour and emotional responses." (Michael Neenan and Windy Dryden, *Life Coaching: A Cognitive-Behavioural Approach*, (2002)

2 The ability to "bounce back" and "roll with the punches".

3 The ability to deal with perceived adverse situations in a positive and creative way by transforming challenge into opportunity or by learning quickly from setbacks.

When you experience adversity or stress you may feel anger, grief or pain. Resilient people can keep functioning both physically and psychologically. Resilience helps us to survive. It also helps us grow and develop. Resilient people have lower levels of depression, develop personally through adversity, and harness an inner strength that helps them respond positively. It is a core competency for stress management.

Setbacks are manageable circumstances rather than insurmountable barriers. Leaders with this quality can learn from setbacks. They can keep problems in perspective.

Being resilient can have a host of benefits. On a personal level it can help you:

● cope with multiple tasks, juggling projects, combining teaching with management so that one does not feel overwhelmed

● stay focused and calm, instead of being overwhelmed by emotion or stress

● see solutions instead of just problems and to think more widely and creatively

- cope with negativity, personal criticism and rejection more effectively
- give students a better experience and deal with their problems with more assurance
- be healthier and survive and overcome medical problems
- get on better with colleagues and improve our home lives
- improve performance within ourselves and our teams.

At an organisational level, resilience is key to achieving sustainable success, which is the ability to survive in a continuously changing environment.

This means embedding a transformational approach into the culture, ethics, values, beliefs, processes and practices and into the mindset of the workforce.

Change is expected, it is what we do and we are all responsible for making it happen.

Anon

Resilient behaviours

People who are resilient show the following behaviours:

- They can overcome obstacles or setbacks.
- They are willing to try new things.
- They don't give up easily in the face of failure.
- They show confidence and willingness to have a go even in difficult circumstances.

Resilience reflection

Do you have these qualities?

Have you observed them in others?

Quality	Reflect on my own resilience	Examples of when I observed this in others
Self-discipline		
Flexibility		
Integrity		
Assertiveness		

1. Self-discipline

Self-disciplined people usually know what they want to achieve and have a lot of drive. They also display a great deal of energy and persistent determination in pursuing their goals and they are good at prioritising. Aligned with this, they can be decisive and capable of exploiting their strengths.

People with this quality can often have good emotional self-control and are more resistant to stress.

People with good self-discipline:

- maintain good performance in stressful conditions
- avoid defensive, negative or aggressive behaviour
- calm others
- respond to problems in a constructive manner
- manage their own stress effectively, can "switch off"
- maintain stamina in difficult circumstances, often have exceptional attendance records
- take important decisions and show good judgement.

2. Flexibility

This is the ability to be adaptable and work successfully within a variety of changing situations and with various individuals or groups. Flexibility entails understanding and appreciating different perspectives and viewpoints. People with this ability can adapt their approach as the requirements of a situation change. They cope with change in their working and personal lives more easily.

People who are flexible:

- handle multiple demands
- change their own ideas, can "change tack"
- alter procedures on the basis of new evidence
- adjust their strategy appropriately
- respond positively to new situations
- remain calm at times of change
- can take on new challenges with a constructive approach.

In today's educational environment, successful organisations need to have flexible and responsive workforces that relish the opportunity to try out new things, with the right support. These people are more likely to deliver sustained high performance.

3. Integrity and openness

Resilience is helped by a leader behaving in an open and transparent way. Such leaders act in line with their espoused values and beliefs. They are often described as closely aligning what they are thinking and feeling with what they say and do. At the highest level they act in line with values and beliefs even when it is difficult to do so.

People who are open and act with integrity:

- are able to make decisions, even when unpopular
- create trust and respect from others
- take responsibility for their actions and performance
- accept personal mistakes and admit to them
- confront unethical actions in others
- show independence of thought and action
- maintain a strong focus on long-term strategic objectives.

Integrity and openness are important leadership qualities in supporting resilience in individuals, teams and organisations. People who act with integrity are able to "walk the walk." They act openly and honestly and by behaving in such a way they inspire others to be strong and resilient, even in difficult, emotionally charged situations. By trying to do the "right thing", they help themselves and colleagues to do their best, be at ease with their actions and possibly be less stressed and anxious as a result.

Openness and transparency and employing a growth mindset are critical for staff and students and to long-term and sustainable success.

4. Assertiveness

> Our ultimate freedom is the right and power to decide how anybody or anything outside ourselves will affect us.
>
> Stephen Covey, American educator

Assertiveness is the ability to stand up for oneself – being able to tell other people what you think or want. Being assertive gives you the opportunity to make a statement about why you deserve the right to be heard.

People who are assertive will:

- develop their relationships with colleagues and students
- have more control over their working life by improving time management
- deal with disruptive behaviour.

When may you need to be assertive?

- one-to-one conversations
- emails – from and to
- meetings – including chairing
- dealing with student behaviour
- handling complaints
- when you need to say no.

Assertiveness is sometimes confused with other types of behaviour such as bossiness, aggression, abruptness or manipulation.

What is the difference between passive, aggressive and manipulative behaviour?

Passive:

- You do not stand up for your rights/yourself.
- You do not express your views in a positive way.
- You do not care enough about the issue to intervene.

Aggressive:

- You stand up for your rights in a way that violates or offends others.
- You express your views inappropriately.

Manipulative:

- You use guilt or bribery to ensure compliance.

Passive, aggressive and manipulative behaviour may sometimes produce short–term rather than sustainable gains. Being assertive will bring greater rewards. Before you start you need to know what to say.

Here are four steps:

1 Clearly state what you want to say – don't waffle or be woolly or jokey.

2 Make the conversation two-way – listen and ask for views.

3 Empathise with others before proposing solutions.

4 Be open and honest about effects and what you want to happen.

Assertiveness – verbal techniques	Assertiveness – non-verbal techniques
Do:	**Do:**
● prepare in advance	● use positive body language
● ensure you have the person's full attention	● lean forward and make eye contact
● be straightforward	● keep your head, shoulders, neck and arms relaxed
● repeat the message as necessary	● use positive facial expressions to show interest
● begin statements with 'I' eg' I think'	
● if you are interrupted, say 'please let me finish'	
● let others express their opinions	
● listen to others' viewpoints	
● keep an open mind	
● try to find common ground, a compromise or an alternative	
● accept that others can also say no	
Don't:	**Don't:**
● be afraid to say no, but explain your refusal	● fidget
● blame others	● look bored
● apologise for your views	● lose your temper
● interrupt others	

Assertive feedback

- Positive feedback is more powerful than negative.
- Descriptive, evidence-based feedback is more helpful for improvement.
- Assertive feedback will empower people.
- Focus on behaviour not personalities.
- Do not make assumptions – explore reasons in a two-way conversation.
- Do it in person rather than by email. If you must email – reflect first, then re-read the email before sending it.

How to handle criticism

- **Listen** carefully – and ask for an example or clarification.
- **Avoid** being aggressive – denying, sulking or saying nothing – accepting unfounded criticism.
- **Reflect** on the criticism – is it fair?
- **React** – stand up for yourself, be respectful, reject it, or accept it and work on it.

How to develop your assertiveness

- Practise in low-risk situations.
- Treat others as you would expect to be treated yourself.
- Ask for feedback from a critical friend.
- Keep an open mind and consider others and factors that may be affecting them.
- Be sincere and respectful.
- Avoid absolutes – steer clear of words like 'never' and 'always'.

> Assertiveness is your ability to act in harmony with your self-esteem without hurting others.
>
> Anon

10 ways to be assertive

1. Be decisive.
2. Take responsibility for your actions.
3. Say no when you need to.
4. Be an attentive listener.
5. Communicate clearly.
6. Say yes when you need to.
7. Ask for what you want.
8. Follow your intuition.
9. Feel free to take a chance.
10. Stand up for yourself.

Remaining positive

In a similar way to assertiveness, you can become far more productive and effective by thinking and being positive. Those who are resilient tend to think positively and are proactive rather than reactive when managing problematic situations.

Having a positive outlook means:

- challenging any negative thoughts as soon as they enter your head
- making sure that individuals who are negative and drain your energy are avoided – spend more time with individuals who are 'upbeat'
- dealing with facts not with 'what ifs' – as imagining a situation can lead to negativity
- using positive language, look in the mirror and tell yourself "I will do", "I can do", "I am".

How resilient are you?

Reflections

- Can you recall incidents or experiences where you showed resilience?

- What personal behaviours did you show and why were they important?

- Conversely, can you think of situations or experiences where you did not show resilience?

- How did you behave?

- What did you learn?

How do you react to unexpected difficulties?

Healthy resilient people have stress-resistant personalities and learn from tough experiences. The most resistant people overcome adversity, can recover from tough experiences and become stronger and wiser. Resilient people expect to find a way to have things turn out well. They are self-reliant and have learning or coping reactions rather than feeling victimised or blaming others, both of which are common in today's pressurised world.

Having an accurate self-assessment of your own resilience is a great starting point.

Assessing your resilience

Rate yourself from 1 – 5 on the following:
[1 = very little, 5 = very strong]

Ask yourself…	1	2	3	4	5
In a crisis or chaotic situation, do I calm myself and focus on taking useful actions?					
Am I usually optimistic? Do I see difficulties as temporary and expect to overcome them?					
Can I can tolerate high levels of ambiguity and uncertainty about situations?					
Can I adapt quickly to new developments?					
Am I playful. Do I find the humour in tough situations, and can I laugh at myself?					
Am I able to recover emotionally from losses and setbacks?					
Do I feel self-confident, appreciate myself and have a healthy concept of who I am?					
Am I curious? Do I ask questions? Do I want to know how things work? Do I like to try new ways of doing things?					
Do I learn valuable lessons from my experiences and from the experiences of others?					

Assessing your resilience — continued from page 15

Ask yourself…	1	2	3	4	5
Am I good at solving problems? Can I use analytical logic, be creative or use common sense?					
Am I good at making things work well? Am I often asked to lead groups and projects?					
Am I flexible?					
Am I always myself, but different in different situations?					
Do I prefer to work without a written job description? Am I more effective when I'm free to do what I think is best in each situation?					
Do I read people well and trust my intuition?					
Am I a good listener? Do I have good empathy skills?					
Am I non-judgemental about others and adapt to people's personality styles?					
Do I hold up well during tough times? Do I have an independent spirit underneath my cooperative way of working with others?					
Have I been made stronger and better by difficult experiences?					
Have I converted misfortune into good luck and found benefits in bad experiences?					

Your resilience score is:

80 or higher	very resilient
65–80	better than most
50–60	adequate
40–50	you're struggling
40 or under	seek help

Interpretation of results:

Highly resilient people show many similar qualities.

Playful, childlike curiosity

They ask lots of questions; want to know how things work. Play with new developments. Enjoy themselves as children do. Have a good time almost anywhere. Wonder about things, experiment, make mistakes, get hurt, laugh.

"What is different now? What if I did this? Who can answer my questions? What is funny about this?"

Constantly learn from experience

Rapidly assimilate new or unexpected experiences and facilitate being changed by them.

"What is the lesson here? What early clues did I ignore? The next time it happens I will …"

Adapt quickly

They are mentally and emotionally flexible, and comfortable with contradictory personality qualities. Can be both strong and gentle, sensitive and tough, logical and intuitive, calm and emotional, serious and playful, and so forth. They can think in negative ways to reach positive outcomes…

"What could go wrong, so it can be avoided?"

Have solid self-esteem and self-confidence

Self-esteem is how you think about yourself. It determines how much you learn after something goes wrong. It allows you to receive praise and compliments. It acts as a buffer against hurtful statements while being receptive to constructive criticism.

"I like, appreciate and love myself…"

Self-confidence is your reputation with yourself

It allows you to take risks without waiting for approval or reassurance from others. You expect to handle new situations well because of your past successes.

"These are my reliable strengths…"

Have good friendships, loving relationships

Research shows that people in toxic working conditions are less likely to get sick and are more stress resistant when they have a loving family and good friendships. Loners are more vulnerable to distressing conditions. Talking with friends and family diminishes the impact of difficulties and increases feelings of self-worth and self-confidence.

Express feelings honestly

Experience and express anger, love, dislike, appreciation – the entire range of human emotions honestly and openly. Can also choose to suppress their feelings when they believe it would be best to do so.

Expect things to work out well

Deep optimism guided by internal values and strengths. High tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty. Can work without a job description, and is a good role model of professionalism. Brings stability to crises and chaos.

"How can I interact with this so that things turn out well for all of us?"

Read others with empathy

See things from the perspective of others, even antagonists.

"What do others think and feel? What is it like to be them? How do they experience me? What is legitimate about what they feel, say and do?"

Use intuition, creative hunches

Accept subliminal perception and intuition as valid, useful sources of information.

"What is my body telling me? Did that daydream mean anything? Why don't I believe what I'm being told? What if I did this?"

Defend self well

Avoid and block attacks, fight back. See through and side-step cons, games, and manipulations attempted by others. Find allies.

Have a talent for serendipity

Learning lessons in the school of life is the antidote to feeling victimised. People who are resilient can convert a situation that is emotionally toxic for others into something emotionally nutritious for them, and thrive in situations distressing to others because they learn good lessons from bad experiences. They convert misfortune into good luck and gain strength from adversity.

A good indicator of exceptional mental health is when a person talking about a rough experience says: "I would never willingly go through anything like that again, but it was one of the best things that ever happened to me."

"How can I turn this around? Why is it good that this has happened? What is the gift?"

Get better and better

Become increasingly life competent, resilient, durable, playful and free. Enjoy life more and more.

Having assessed your own resilience, here are seven rules to help you gain some perspective and maintain it.

1 Make peace with your past so it won't screw up the present.

2 What others think of you is none of your business.

3 Time heals almost everything, give it time.

4 Don't compare your life to others and don't judge them. You have no idea what their journey is all about.

5 Stop thinking too much. It's all right not to know the answers. They will come to you when you least expect it.

6 No one is in charge of your happiness, except you.

7 Smile. You don't own all the problems in the world.

Leaders can take steps to monitor and develop morale and resilience. Does your school or college provide supportive activities to enable best staff performance, for example, coaching supervision, and other forms of employee assistance and support? In one primary school in the south west, two thirds of staff have a coaching qualification, which enables them to work with pupils and colleagues. This school, despite its location in an area of significant deprivation, is able to give staff both collectively and individually the resilience to continue working in difficult circumstances. Simple activities, such as briefly reviewing the day before finishing, help to identify successes with students and maintain morale.

Leaders should review practices to enable best performance. For example, a large secondary school found that cutting the hours required of staff in school increased efficiency. Another school banned managers from sending emails to staff on Sunday evenings. Shifting the lesson-change signal from a raucous bell to a civilised bleep (or even doing away with it altogether) can have a real impact on the school environment. Using texting or tweeting to communicate can ensure that all staff are kept informed and never feel out of the loop – poor communication is one of those things that affects staff morale in all organisations.

Schools can hold regular morale-raising activities and celebrations, such as school awards and celebratory gatherings. Are staff encouraged and enabled to organise diversionary activities for positive bonding: quiz nights, cake days, seasonal entertainment and so on?

Staff well-being and resilience are too important to be left to chance.

Headteacher, 11–18 high school

- When you're looking at staff morale, well-being and resilience, make sure you look at the whole staff spectrum. How the office staff, premises staff, classroom assistants, lunchtime supervisors feel about their work can be as important as how teachers behave. Everyone in an organisation needs to feel valued if they are to perform at their best.

- Being nice to each other is an exhortation, not a strategy. A strategy is a carefully devised plan of action to achieve a goal. Many schools and colleges do have well-being strategies and action plans. Such a strategy might identify areas where staff think the organisation could do better, with steps to be taken to achieve improvements and to review progress.

You will face many defeats in your life, but never let yourself be defeated.

Maya Angelou, author

How can you become more resilient?

Resilience at work is the capacity to maintain high performance and well-being. It means appearing self-confident and stress-free when coping with the demands of the job. Resilience enables individuals to sustain success, performance and well-being for staff and students in the face of tough challenges and adversity. It encompasses the ability to adapt to change and deal well with misfortune.

> The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.
>
> Nelson Mandela

Resilience is a mixture of personal attributes and skills. The skills can be developed through training and experience and can be used to help change our preferred attitudes and ways of dealing with things.

Building personal resilience

Building resilience will contribute to keeping the workforce motivated, engaged, committed and maintaining performance through periods of uncertainty and change, inside and outside the organisation.

Resilience is about attitudes towards (individually interpreted) adverse events and poor behaviours. Attitudes arise from the degree to which the person maintains personal mental control in the face of events and behaviours. Positive attitudes are more likely to occur within positive cultural environments. The same event or behaviour occurring in a positive cultural environment will provoke a different response compared to a negative cultural environment. It depends on the interpretation of how the event or behaviour will affect the future success, and happiness (self-interest) of the individual, and whether the individual thinks it's 'worthwhile' being resilient.

Even the most resilient person will find their resilience has limitations according to the cultural environment in which they find themselves, and it can also depend on whether being resilient will produce benefits of value to the individual.

Resilience is a choice, heavily influenced by the interpretation made from within the culture in which the individual experiences the adverse event or behaviour. In effect, the person calling on their resilience is asking themselves is it worth rising up to the challenge this event or behaviour creates? Is it worth it for me to address this challenge so that I can continue to be engaged with my work and/or my organisation?

Good relationships with others, including colleagues, are important as everyone needs support from those they can trust. Getting this positive reinforcement from people we value can strengthen our resilience and build up self-esteem.

Ways to increase self-esteem and resilience

- Think about the things you do well. What are you good at?
- What positive things do other people say about you?
- How do you react when people praise you?
  Can you accept compliments?
- Don't focus on negative aspects of yourself – or compare yourself with others.
- Don't think 'this isn't fair' or 'why me?' Instead think about sharing problems and resolving them.
- Think of failure as an opportunity to learn.
- Stand up for yourself – don't be a pushover.
- Tell yourself that you matter.

  Building resilience is a continuous process. Everyone deals with resilience in a different way.

Everyone has managed under adversity. What strategies and support enabled you to be resilient and take control in specific situations?

What is your preferred way of dealing with difficult issues?

Task

Consider the following:

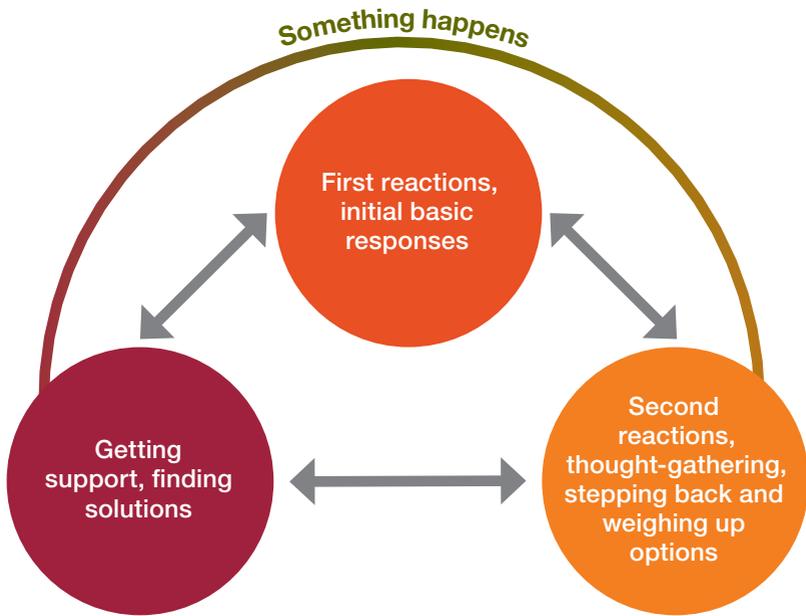What kinds of events present the biggest challenges and how did you overcome these difficulties?

Is it helpful to think of examples of people at home, or at work who have faced similar challenges?

What strategies have you developed to remain positive during difficult times?

What have you learnt that you can you pass on to others to help them build their resilience?

Although much depends on individual reactions and responses there are common themes and behaviours that help develop resilience.

The Resilience Cycle

Something happens

First reactions, initial basic responses

Second reactions, thought-gathering, stepping back and weighing up options

Getting support, finding solutions

By developing resilience, you can deal more effectively with changes that happen. Resilient people show patience and good judgement to allow for the resilience cycle to unfold. This gives time for emotional reactions and provides more opportunities to find positive solutions.

Supporting and breaking factors

Resilience expert and author Dr Carole Pemberton says we should think of personal examples of where we have shown resilience.

Supportive factors	What have you done or experienced to build resilience?
emotional control	
making meaning, "coming to terms with"	
being proactive	
realistic positivity, "we can do something about it"	
flexibility	
support	
solution-finding	
self-belief	
humour	
acceptance	
seeing the bigger picture	
gaining perspective	
knowing how to self-protect, "looking after oneself"	

Threats to resilience

How is your organisation dealing with these threats?

primary threats	secondary threats	tertiary threats
● leaders who are overbearing ● managers who are unsupportive ● people who undermine colleagues	● culture ● organisations ● change (eg huge curriculum change) ● mergers ● serious financial concerns ● growth and expansion ● worry of redundancy ● rules and bureaucracy ● structure	● conflict ● harassment ● bullying ● discrimination ● autocratic leadership ● intimidation ● insecurity ● lack of personal control ● job insecurity ● fear ● poor performance ● isolation ● excessive demands ● boredom ● loss and bereavement ● accidents ● illness

What breaks resilience

There is no guarantee that we can be resilient in every situation. Adversity, personal tragedy, stress and trauma can happen to us all and whether we thrive will depend on our ability to bounce back. Even if we are fairly resilient we will still experience a variety of challenges at work and in our home life such as making mistakes, accidents happening, or people letting us down, so it is important to understand and manage some of the factors that cause us to feel anxious in order to build resilience.

Breaking factors

Factors that can undermine individual resilience are shown below.

Use them to reflect on your experiences and situations and think of your reactions and what would you do now.

undermining factors	your personal experiences and responses to difficult situations
overload	
your mistakes	
others' mistakes	
unanticipated bad news	
difficult managers, colleagues	
unresolved conflict	
sustained criticism	
emotional or physical shocks	
things not going to plan	

Using the checklists on pages 30 and 31:

- What do you need to do more of?
- What do you need to work on to improve your resilience?

The Robertson Cooper Model of resilience has four elements that are influenced by our personality and the skills we develop over time.

confidence

competence

social support

good relationships

Resilience

purposefulness

clear sense
of purpose

clear values

adaptability

flexibility

manages
change well

1	Confidence
Element	**What helps develop your resilience?**
Worry	Dealing with negative self-talk in relation to future events. Stay in the present – this is where you can build your strength.
Anxiety	Being confident with people, overcoming shyness and embarrassment.
Pressure	Having a positive response to pressure – keeping it in perspective.
Enthusiasm	Being optimistic and cultivating feelings of positivity.
Compliance	Dealing well with conflict.
Modesty	Celebrating and talking about your achievements.
Resourcefulness	Being capable of overcoming barriers and solving problems.

2	Purposefulness
Element	**What helps develop your resilience?**
Assertiveness	Taking a lead in situations and not being put upon.
Activity	When appropriate, showing energy and initiative.
Adventurousness	Not being too risk averse, seeing exciting opportunities.
Aesthetics	Appreciating nice things and events.
Social values	Having a clear sense of what is right and wrong.
Sense of duty	Having strong ethical principles.
Ambition	Balancing a need to achieve with relaxation.
Self-discipline	Being determined and strong-willed.
Deliberation	Striking a good balance between caution and being decisive.

3	Adaptability
Element	**What helps develop your resilience?**
Frustration	Acting in calm manner, showing emotional control.
Impulsivity	Responding constructively and flexibly to situations.
Imagination	Striking a good balance in dealing with short term issues but anticipating future developments.
Emotional Awareness	Alertness to others' emotions and your own.
Variety	Coping well in a range of situations.
Ideas	Being open to new ways of doing things, having a will to adapt.
Sympathy	Where appropriate, being sympathetic and being flexible where personal warmth is required.
Order	Not being over-reliant on order and structure.

4	Social Support
Element	**What helps develop your resilience?**
Warmth and sociability	Being aware of the importance of support networks and not being afraid of being open and friendly with people you trust.
Trust	Trying not to be too sceptical, trusting your intuition so you rely on those you trust when you need it.
Straightforward	Maintaining a good balance by communicating in an honest and open way without being too sharp.
Consideration	Being empathetic, willing to respond to requests for help from others. This is often reciprocated.

Developing resilience at work

The workplace presents many situations that test our resilience.

The Asset Model highlights six aspects of work which are key in promoting resilience.

Six personal resilience assets

1 **Informed and equipped**
Individuals feel they have the information and resources they need to do their best.

2 **Balanced workload**
Individuals feel their workload is stimulating and manageable.

3 **In control**
Individuals feel they have control and influence over how their work is done.

4 **Sense of purpose**
Individuals have a sense of purpose and feel their goals have meaning and are achievable.

5 **Well-managed change**
Individuals experience change that is positive and well managed.

6 **Collaborative relationships**
Individuals feel encouraged and supported by colleagues.

Taking positives in difficult situations

- The ability to think carefully and prioritise options when dealing with fewer resources.

- Being well organised and efficient.

- Be assertive and ask for more information and possibly more resources.

- Be prepared to be flexible and not over-reliant on formal planning and organisation.

- Be prepared to take a lead if you feel you are right and put energy into gaining support and be persuasive.

Where there is little freedom and autonomy

- Be aware of the need to cope with potentially stressful situations. Take advice and be proactive if you feel anxious and panicky.

- Try to remain optimistic, take a positive perspective. If possible, see the humour in it and identify aspects of the situation you can do something about.

- Work hard on your self-management and your emotional self-control.

- Don't be prepared just to sit back, speak up, come up with solutions to problems.

- Don't give in too easily to others' demands or priorities.

Where there are significant pressures on workload

- Good self-awareness, be positive in your ability to cope and recognise when you are reaching your limits and take appropriate action.

- Take a rational view and look for ways of reviewing performance issues and practical ways of reducing workload.

- Work hard to develop your ability to organise well, plan ahead and prioritise wisely.

- Be prepared to share workload, working to your own and others' strengths. Empower others, but avoid dumping responsibilities on them.

Where there is a lot of change and uncertainty

- Be aware of what you can and cannot control.

- Remain as positive as possible, look for win-win.

- Be prepared to step out of your comfort zone and avoid being overly cautious. Be open to trying new things and new ways of doing things.

- Some cynicism is healthy but an overly sceptical view, and a tendency to mistrust, can lead to dislike of all change and inertia.

- Be prepared to develop effective responses and create solutions to new challenges.

Where there is not a supportive or collaborative climate

- Be open and direct about your objectives and concerns in helping to defuse conflict and improve relationships.

- Be aware of the trap of taking an overly pessimistic view of difficulties in work relationships.

- As far as possible, try not to take things too personally and approach difficult situations by focusing upon the issues, not the personalities involved.

Where there is a lack of a sense of purpose

- Create time for yourself, following your interests and things you enjoy to help you remain positive.

- Develop your personal responsibilities and focus on doing the right things as well as you can.

- Try to evaluate the aspects of your job that are most important and beneficial to others.

- Be prepared to take opportunities to challenge and ask pertinent questions, eg why are we doing this?

Building a resilient team

Are you building a resilient team?

Score yourself on the following using a four-point scale.
Four is high and one is low.

	1	2	3	4
I am prepared to show that I make mistakes and learn from them				
I seek help and I am not too proud to learn from others				
I think things through with other people				
Others can see that I have an optimistic attitude				
I know how to break things down and generate solutions				
I am prepared to take time in order to let the right solutions emerge				
I give people opportunities to do things they haven't done before				
I reward persistence and help others to see what they have achieved				
We are up-front with each other and limit negativity and backtalk				
We take opportunities to get to know each other socially				

Building a resilient team

How well do the systems and procedures support the work of your team?

Score yourself on the following using a four-point scale. Four is high and one is low.

	1	2	3	4
To what extent are our team meetings concerned with administration?				
To what extent are our team meetings concerned with quality in the classroom?				
Do our monitoring procedures pick up on the most appropriate information?				
How effectively do we use the data we collect?				
Do we use data to interrogate how pupils learn as well as their results and progress made?				
Are the most appropriate people acting as team leaders?				
Do we share roles and responsibilities effectively?				

What does this tell you about your leadership and your team's resilience?

Think of ONE thing you will prioritise as a result of this task.

Twelve ways to build a resilient team

1 Take calculated risks yourself and show that it is OK to make mistakes and learn from them.

2 Encourage people to get help from other successful teams or individuals.

3 Involve less experienced team members in decision-making.

4 Build and promote a 'can-do' mindset.

5 Provide opportunities for others – stretch and challenge them (without impacting on their well-being).

6 Talk about "us" and "we" not "you" and "I".

7 Be clinical – break down problems and examine solutions together.

8 Step back and think – don't rush into anything.

9 Keep options open to let solutions arise naturally.

10 Keep your vision and mission at the forefront of your decisions.

11 Avoid tickbox solutions – they send the wrong message; instead ensure there is a meaningful comprehensive strategy encompassing leaders, managers, teachers, TAs, culture, the working environment and workload reviews.

12 Use action learning sets or staff meetings to embed the resilience learning.

So how can we improve resilience at work for those in leadership roles?

- Focus on health and emotional well-being for students and staff as a top priority. This could include resilience training programmes.

- Give coaching and mentoring a high value and profile.

- Promote physical activity programmes – eg, gym membership, use of pool, staff well-being days, day for shopping in December, staff walks with alternative levels of difficulty, yoga after work, pilates after work.

- Exercise mindfulness – considering factors that cause stress and anxiety. Up to a point stress can be energising but it can also be debilitating. In difficult situations take a moment to focus on breathing. Breathe in deeply to the count of four and hold for two counts. Then exhale to the count of four. Try this whenever you feel anxious.

  - Or stretch – stand up, stretch and smile. Imagine the stress leaving your back, legs and shoulders and then streaming out of your fingertips and toes.

  - Exercise – go for a walk instead of having a tea or coffee break. This is physically beneficial and will help you to refocus.

Cultivate a compassionate work culture where people caring for each other is the norm. Compassion and success are not mutually exclusive.

Eradicate fear and blame from the culture of the school or college. As leaders and managers you should understand your role in building resilience in staff to motivate and boost well-being.

You need to demonstrate sufficient emotional intelligence to be able to respond positively and actively to staff feedback and observations, especially those who might otherwise trigger an automatic defensive reaction.

Resilience is a key aspect of psychological well-being and healthy, sustainable performance. The workforce, as a whole, can develop into an organisationally resilient workforce, with the additional benefits of better staff retention, low sickness absence, low presenteeism and low staff turnover rates. The benefit dividend includes the prospect of achieving peak performance if other elements are also in place, such as the commitment, trust, social engagement, kinship, motivation, and concentration. This principle, of real distributed leadership and support, is a significant shift for many schools and colleges but in the current climate it is becoming ever more necessary that we work in this way. This is a move away from the cult of hero leaders to the more inclusive, adaptive leadership.

For individuals, personal resilience can certainly be strengthened by our **life experiences** to date. Experiencing a broad range of events and behaviours and how we managed them in the past can help us understand how to cope more effectively in the future. Our **technical and social skills** can also help us deal more confidently with the challenges that arise and the unpredictable behaviours in others.

Some examples:

- Using technology to overcome setbacks – such as disagreements over the accuracy of results, attendance, retention, and other data that can impact on pay and performance. Judgements and strategic decisions can be biased and political if the data is not correct. Leaders and governors can be given sets of personal, inaccurate information to cloud tricky situations. Therefore, the culture in any organisation should first ensure the accuracy of its data, and then promote the line that everyone uses the centrally produced information. This allows staff to prepare action plans and strategies for areas of improvement, and to celebrate success. Resilience comes from accepting facts and moving forward together, rather than being in denial and stagnating.

- Coping well with aggressive colleagues. Anyone can have a bad day and it may just be a case of asking them how they are. This can be positive so long as they realise that you are being supportive. However, some colleagues are not self-aware and may not see the effect they are having on others at work. You may need to speak to them, and tell them about their manner or behaviour, which may lead to various reactions. This could be the moment when resilience is called for on your part if they try to argue back in a belligerent manner. Rather than backing down you may be advised to stop the conversation, and say that you will return when they have calmed down. Sometimes remaining calm, using logic and rational argument will be enough to resolve a situation.

Also, people who are sufficiently aware and have vision are more likely to be able to form an attitude towards anticipated events and behaviours and to have already worked out their Plan B.

> If Plan A didn't work, the alphabet has 25 more letters! Stay cool.
>
> Anon

Tips to develop personal resilience

- **Know yourself**

  People who have accurate self-assessment can understand others and see in others what they see in themselves. The insight into oneself contributes to self-belief and self-esteem.

- **Avoiding thought traps**

  Can you honestly say that you never jump to conclusions, suffer from tunnel vision, make a mountain out of a molehill, take things too personally, or attempt to second guess? Learn and practise how to stop these habitual thought traps.

- **Be personally disciplined and strong-willed**

  Be deliberate about work activities such as emailing, number of meetings etc. Create dedicated times in a day to do specific activities – much in the same way as you would do physical exercise.

- **Switch off**

  Take detachment breaks. Mental focus, clarity and energy are optimally cycled between 90 and 120 minutes. Between these cycles step away from work to refresh energy and attention. Good breaks are healthy.

- **Develop mental agility**

  Work hard to develop your mental ability to pause, stand back, consider things more objectively, create options and choose wisely.

- **Take a positive attitude**

  Adopt a constructive attitude when talking about work-related stress. Focus on the staff / student experience, high standards and expectations, and hard work to develop a genuine team spirit. Talk about 'we' and 'us' and generate an atmosphere of mutual support, sharing and cooperation.

- **Put things in perspective**

  Work hard to develop your sense of perspective. Try not to blow problems out of proportion. Try to find a humorous side, stay calm, take a deep breath, think before you speak or react. Focus your thoughts on reducing stress and use appropriate language.

- **Learn from past failures**

  Prepare a post-mortem on a failed project, identifying the risks, costs and possible ways to make a success of the next similar project. Keep a journal of lessons learned. Be realistic and frank about errors made to pave the way for improvement and well-grounded self-confidence.

- **Think and reflect on resilience**

  Take some time to sit and reflect on just how important resilience is for the lives of students and colleagues. This time for thinking and research can help develop a sense of purpose in striving to transform the lives of our young people. It will also help with self-confidence and being optimistic about how our profession can change lives for the better.
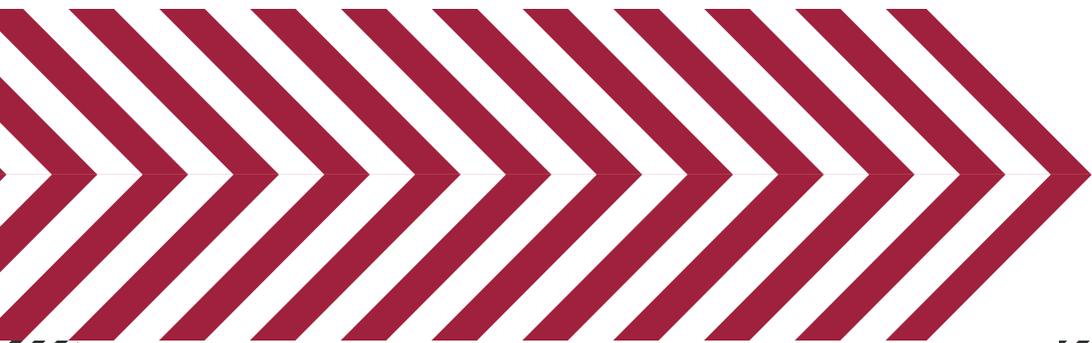
Resilience in practice

Successful organisations implement practices to build resilience and promote health and emotional well-being in students and staff.

Research clearly demonstrates the link between the welfare of teachers and students and the effects on academic performance. Much of the advice on building resilience applies to children and adults.

There is a strong body of evidence that confirms the value of positive teacher-student relationships for learning and behaviour. The quality of relationships in a school or college also impacts on the teacher's well-being and their ability to cope well with the many and varied stresses that are hallmarks of the profession. Teacher attrition is a major concern. How teachers feel makes a difference to their ability to respond effectively to the challenges they face. A teacher's resilience can be enhanced by specific actions that promote positive feelings of belonging, respect, value and trust.

These were highlighted by Gibbs [2011] as a hallmark of resilience in teachers and he also suggests this is subject to social and cultural influences. In other words, what is actually happening within a school to impact on self-belief, attribution and motivation. He cited work by Goddard, Hoy and Woolfolk [2004] on the influence of senior management actively endorsing and supporting inclusive practices on the perception of both personal and collective efficacy of teachers. The outcomes include both positive effects for children's knowledge and attainment and also teachers' professional commitment, knowledge and satisfaction.

Former teacher Jackie Beere now trains teachers in resilience and has built on psychologist Carol Dweck's growth mindset work. Growth mindset is about helping children from an early age to be aware of their thinking and its effect on their behaviour. It would help prevent many problems further down the line, says Beere in her 2016 book *GROW – Change Your Mindset, Change Your Life – A Practical Guide To Thinking On Purpose*, "This idea of mindset and thinking is absolutely crucial to well-being, resilience and self-esteem. What really makes the difference is the way you think. Whatever is going on – social media, peer pressure, school and family pressures – it's what's going on in your head that creates your own perception of how happy you are."

Beere offers tips for learning to think on purpose rather than going with the flow of your thoughts:

- Stand back from your thinking. You might have a thought that is habitual but you have never examined before. Ask yourself if you want to think like that.

- Challenge and change your thinking. That inner critical voice can be a bully and you don't have to listen to it. You can change the tone or the words it is using. You can reframe it. It might feel uncomfortable at first because you're in the habit of thinking in that negative way.

- Turn mistakes into learning opportunities. Say to yourself; I got it wrong but how can I learn from that? Redefine 'struggling = I'm stupid' to 'struggling = I'm growing my brain'. You're on a journey, you're going to make mistakes and that's all part of the learning journey.

- Reframe situations. Don't see a nasty comment as you being rubbish, see it as reflecting badly on the person who says it. Change yourself from a victim to someone who can take action.

- Share your feelings with family and friends you can trust. Tell children they should be around people who make them feel good. Boys are often unhappy but never talk about it and they grow up like that, and now suicide is the most common cause of death for men under 50. "*It takes practice and hard work*," Beere says, "*but if you start when they're young enough it will help children develop resilience.*"

- Resilience is important for everyone, but particularly young children who face challenges and setbacks and need to be able to deal with them. Beere believes the way teachers deliver feedback can play an important part, citing Sutton Trust research that shows excessive praise, intended to encourage, can have the opposite effect. She advocates praising effort rather than results or talent. "*Say, 'I'm very impressed with how hard you're working' rather than '10 out of 10, well done*,' she says. Focus on effort and strategy rather than saying how clever they are. Praising talent can feed self-doubt.

The Mindsets

	Fixed mindset Intelligence is static	**Growth mindset** Intelligence is developing
challenge	avoid	embrace
obstacles	give up	persevere
effort	no point	work hard
criticism	deflect	learn
success of others	feel threatened	celebrate

What can you do?

- Work on changing your mindset as well as that of the students.
- Adapt the language that you use / you encourage the students to use regarding their learning.
- Take time to talk about learning and reflect upon it.
- Educate students about how the brain works.
- Experience and embrace failure.

Building students' resilience

Whole-school approach to building emotional resilience

Building emotional resilience in Denny schools – Falkirk in Scotland

This pilot project was funded by the Scottish Government and led by charity YoungMinds. It involved primary and secondary schools, with a focus on building emotional resilience during the primary to secondary transition. It had four core elements: coping with personal challenges and self-esteem, promoting self-confidence and enhancing the understanding of resilience and emotional well-being in teaching, raising the awareness of parents and carers, and recognising the crucial roles of senior leadership teams in changing cultures.

The evaluation found:

- an increase in pupil self-esteem before transition
- greater staff confidence in dealing with resilience and emotional well-being
- a sharper focus on resilience in schools.

See the full evaluation report: www.scotland.gov.uk

American researcher and psychologist Angela Duckworth devised a 12-question Grit inventory to assess an individual's resilience. The survey asks users to score their ability to do a number of things that include overcoming setbacks.

Duckworth defined Grit as "perseverance and passion for long term goals", and she believes Grit is the greatest predictor of academic success, more important than IQ, more influential than socio-economic background, more powerful than what you look like or who you know. She was also influenced by Dweck's work on growth mindset [2006], particularly when considering how our education system reinforces failure and its negative connotations.

As part of a leadership development programme, a practitioner undertook a piece of action research into developing resilience in their students using the Grit model.

Resilience in students – Grit by Clare Proctor, a former English teacher and assistant leader of student support at Appleby Grammar School in Cumbria

Clare's research involved 30 Year 11 students and 12 students in Years 1 to 10.

The main aim of this action research was to find a method to motivate students to become independent and resilient learners. Clare asked her students to complete Duckworth's Grit inventory and then compared their score with the progress they had made to GCSE. She focused on developing skills such as teamwork, lateral thinking and adaptability. The project involved the students becoming lead learners, leading parts of the curriculum, training staff in new technologies and developing cross-curriculum work. It was a huge success. The students were passionate about learning. They were confident speakers, independent learners and made impressive academic progress. Above all, they were resilient. They saw they could make a difference and they did. They had the potential to be inspirational leaders!

The rigorous testing and labelling of students is now a feature of their educational experience from KS1. How can we develop in students a desire to tackle the greatest challenges, even when there is no guarantee that they will receive any sort of praise, benefit or personal gain from it? How can we convince them that any progress they make is good progress, that it is the very process of pushing themselves and trying hard in the face of adversity that is so commendable, when their own education system brands them a 'failure'?

Clare Proctor (2015)

Using her Year 11 English class personal grit scores Proctor assessed the correlation between Grit and academic progress, as measured by levels of progress made between the end of KS2 and KS4.

Main findings and recommendations.

- There is a correlation between grit and academic progress and some correlation with behaviour and 'rewards' points.
- Grit can be developed by specific coaching and mentoring.

Can children learn to be resilient? By Nicola Morris

Nicola Morris's study involved children in Years 4 and 5, using the Resilience Doughnut approach, which was developed in Australia by Lyn Worsley, a clinical psychologist who has a background in nursing and teaching. Worsley's model links the internal factors affecting resilience (the 'I have', 'I am' and 'I can' statements) to seven external factors. The key is to focus on the child's strongest factors, not their weakest, and to use them to support the child in building resilience.

The Resilience Doughnut Model

Her research focused on the child in their setting, as resilience is about what happens around them, with people, including families and school communities, playing an important role in promoting their resilience. Interestingly, as our school has children from many different cultures, she states that there is a relationship between culture and resilience factors.

A particularly challenging Year 5 cohort made Morris question traditional methods of teaching and the curriculum in use.

> They brought with them a range of issues that we were used to dealing with – SEND (including learning difficulties, ADHD, social and emotional), child protection, behaviour, English as an additional language, bereavement – but also had an underlying negativity towards each other, themselves, and everything around them. There was a significant minority who were very difficult to engage as they didn't actually seem to be interested in anything.
>
> Nicola Morris (2017)

Morris decided to focus on resilience with the rationale that everyone will face situations of adversity and need the tools to deal with them. It is a quality all children have the potential to possess.

The main findings:

- A growth mindset is important, not only for the children but all the adults involved in supporting them. Use the growth mindset alongside resilience development.

- You need to be positive and honest, able to give a child constructive criticism from which they are willing to learn.

- Using 'resilience' language/vocabulary can be effective.

- Older pupils supporting younger pupils can be a win-win.

- It is not helpful to shelter children from all adversity, in the way overprotective parents do.

- Telling well-known stories about resilience is beneficial. Using real life experiences helps young people gain a better understanding of what resilience is.

- The Resilience Doughnut can be embedded into behaviour management strategies.

The Resilience Rucksack

bravery medal

stamina juice

helping hand

skills and strategies

good listening

clever thinking

teamwork

Brunswick Infant School in Cumbria has developed its Resilience Rucksack to encourage children to value and understand the importance of resilience and other related qualities. Pupils draw rucksacks and make their own examples of items to put in their rucksack.

The rucksack is very visible and is attractively displayed round the school. It is referred to on a regular basis by staff and helps children at an early stage to be encouraged to develop the lifelong skills.

How leaders build resilience

Perseverance and resilience at work – assistant headteacher

As a newly appointed senior manager to a college that Ofsted saw as merely 'satisfactory', but where the staff were going about their daily routines believing that they were 'good', any effort to change practice was not only met with resistance, but with an air of superiority, and an unspoken 'we know better'. After the first weeks, it would have been easier to go along with the existing culture, but for the obvious detrimental impact on students, and a personal innate drive to do the best no matter what.

There had been no real leadership, which filtered down into the classroom. Teachers ranged from outstanding to downright awful. They had been allowed to give little or no homework, to deliver anecdotes not the exam syllabi, to teach the top 10% and ignore any requests from students for assistance. Imagine being required to deliver staff development in this context, with the added pressure of a visit from Ofsted looming. More than a little resilience was required – and a critical friend to sound-off to when things got really difficult.

All staff training sessions were made mandatory. So staff attended, but made their negativity known through their body language, and often through thinly veiled derisive remarks. My response was always positive and enthusiastic, I also pointed out the benefits of whatever was being offered, either through objective data or my own experience. There were times when certain groups of staff made me feel like I had been transported back to my first year of teaching when I was faced with a dreaded Year 11 class who thought I was fair game. However, I never let them know how I felt and eventually my optimism overcame them too. I truly believed in what I was trying to accomplish and stuck at it no matter what, and dealt with situations as they arose fairly but firmly.

When staff start to see the benefits of what you are trying to achieve it makes all the hard work and perseverance worthwhile. Ofsted did come – within the year. We got a 'good'.

Personal resilience – a headteacher's philosophy

Good-quality education and real learning give young people life chances. I've experienced it myself and know it can make a huge difference. If you are lucky, you have parents who give you a range of positive experiences and act as the role models you need to have a successful adult life. If you do not have this good fortune, a well-rounded, high-quality education is vital to having a chance in life. Focusing on this, and then doing the best I can by each and every child in my care, is what motivates me. When you are working with children who have not been given the best hand in life, who are growing up under the shadow of domestic violence, neglect or poverty, it can be hard to keep going. Constantly arguing your case for why children with multiple layers of deprivation have not made expected national standards is hard in a system developed to look at averages not exceptions.

I aim for the highest standard I can reach for every child. But what if you are not working with national average children? Multiple demands can pull you in all directions. I keep myself going by filtering what I believe in.

1. Children come first.

2. Every child deserves to be safe, happy and successful.

3. Identifying what needs to be improved and how I can work with others to achieve that.

These filters are useful for work. They make sure distractions do not get in the way. However, if they are successful for your work in school, they also need to impact on your own needs. Sometimes, you need to recognise that you and your well-being have to be a priority. You also deserve to be safe, happy and successful and you need to keep an eye on maintaining and developing your own life.

I regularly question myself, and working with a good and trusted team is invaluable in those circumstances. Voicing concerns to trusted colleagues and debating how well we are really doing compared to the anxiety I may be feeling help to keep things moving forward. Going back to first principles and the evidence and data proves we are having the right impact, even though national averages may not be met.

Building resilience – A Gift for Life – Nicola Powell, founder and director of education consultancy Primary Matters

The ability to keep going through the ups and downs, the joys and trials, the ebbs and flows, is essential to living life. We also know that one quality shared by people who achieve their goal and/or their dream is resilience - the ability to keep going, refusal to quit, strength to get up and try again.

Recently I have read life stories of a diverse group of people all exceptional in their own way, Malala Yousafzai, Tim Peake, Steve Jobs, Ernest Shackleton, Doreen Lawrence, Maya Angelou and last month Verdun Hayes, a D-Day veteran who went sky-diving aged 101. I was struck again how essential resilience is to living life to the full. The determination to get up, dig deep and try again is literally life-giving.

And yet we don't explicitly teach, or value, this skill in school.

Beyond early years, children are rarely able to work on a task over time, seldom invited to re-visit learning and are not encouraged to develop a skill or piece of work over weeks. The obsession of inspectors to see progress in all children over 20 minutes shuts down any opportunity and freedom for teachers to open up the learning, encouraging children to learn through trying, failing, adapting, talking, trying and trying again and therefore developing resilience.

And yet in the early years setting, children are encouraged to be independent learners, directing their own lines of enquiry, returning to a task when they choose. The simplest of routines like learning to put your own coat on and do it up, demands resilience – it took my own son half a term to crack this skill. Great was the rejoicing in nursery that day! His teacher was thrilled, acknowledging to me the resilience and fine motor control it had taken to button himself in.

In the early years environment, children are able to choose whether to work alone or with others, building resilience around working with different children with varied preferred learning styles. In play-based learning, resilience can be developed naturally, as a child is motivated to complete a task they have chosen, often working without an adult close by, they are expected to solve problems and move learning forward themselves.

As an early years teacher I valued and assessed so-called soft skills as keenly as academic skills. I would note and praise problem-solving, working with others, talking, connecting with previous learning and resilience and I would do this frequently and enthusiastically.

Why should this stop as children leave early years?

Over 30 years in education I have developed an approach to teaching and learning that takes the best of this early years practice through to Year 6, ensuring our children grow in resilience as they move through the primary phase. Every day children have Task Time (Independent Learning Time) where they can choose what they want to work on from a range of connected tasks. These tasks will draw on skills and knowledge recently taught, allowing children to apply, consolidate and practise what they have learnt. Each week there will be some 'must do' tasks for every child and other open tasks from which children can select. These Task Time sessions see the teacher facilitating, questioning, observing, teaching a group, praising both learning and soft skill development.

In schools where I am fortunate enough to support curriculum development, I always introduce Task Time. It leads to:

- improvements in behaviour
- children owning their learning
- children leading the learning
- surprise and wonder at unplanned-for outcomes, inspiring even greater desire to learn
- excitement about tasks and ideas of how to improve them from children
- development of key 'soft' life skills in every child
- inclusion of every child
- growth of independence and resilience.

Resilience – playing the long game – former primary school headteacher

I have witnessed a number of respected professionals, who have tried to do the right thing, step back from a school they have invested all their energy and passion in. One common factor leading to this is the willingness, or not, of staff to share concerns in a professional manner, and in a way that a leader can address directly to achieve a positive outcome.

My approach to school leadership, in which I always aimed to promote fairness and a professional approach, made it difficult to understand the resistance and negativity underlying everything we tried to do as a school. After several weeks in the role, I had to manage what could only be described as an attempted coup. Although I promoted an open door culture, staff decided to approach individual governors directly with their 'concerns'. I was approached by one governor who told me that staff had said that they were truly miserable and morale was at rock bottom. They added that staff were 'keeping books on me' and waiting for me to make a wrong move that could form the basis for a formal complaint.

I decided to meet this head on, while still operating in what I felt was an ethical manner. I arranged a meeting with the governing body and all staff. I calmly and politely explained that I had always been willing to listen to staff, and that this meeting was a chance for them to air their concerns and know that the presence of governors meant that the process was open, and everything would be addressed. I asked for everyone to share their concerns, regardless of what they were. You could have heard a pin drop, for a very, very long time. After nothing was contributed, it soon became clear that addressing the 'concerns' was not going to be possible at this time.

Although this was very frustrating, I still believed that the ethical approach was the way forward, and also the only way I could operate and still retain my integrity. On reflection, my personal resilience was vitally important here. It helped me keep going under very difficult circumstances.

The negativity persisted, without any chance to address it through appropriate channels, for more than three years. Staff refused to discuss things directly with the leadership team, and a self-sustaining culture of negativity by a small number of staff impacted upon the climate as a whole. Families moved their children to other schools, and staff, who appeared to operate in a professional manner in most aspects of their work, were suppressed.

One day however, a key contributor to the negative culture surrounding school, chose to act in a way that provided the evidence required for them to be held to account. Procedures were followed, and the result was an improvement in overall behaviour. This was possibly due less to a change in attitude, but more from realisation that the consequences of not doing so were potentially serious. The climate improved, and a resilient approach towards the 'long game' eventually tipped the balance in favour of a more positive culture within school.

Resilient leadership requires a high degree of faith that good will win through in the end, a strong sense of optimism combined with an acceptance that in the short to medium term it might not. It also helps immensely to have access to a network of wise and positive people to call upon for support when times are tough.

The ethical route is not often an easy road to travel, but could you really maintain your self-respect if you chose the easy way out?

Resilience in colleges

Promoting resilience and well-being at a sixth form college

This outstanding college has worked very hard to promote resilience and well-being in staff and students. It has adopted three themes:

1. Healthy minds:

- promoting mindfulness (working within the Mindful Employer framework, offering courses to staff, making available Headspace, meditative for all etc.)
- offering the Mindful Employer Plus Helpline Service
- offering guided meditation practice
- offering yoga and zumba sessions
- offering occupational health support
- offering access to counselling
- having a staff well-being group
- scheduling an annual staff well-being day
- regular good mental health awareness campaigns and activities.

2. Healthy bodies:

- offering a confidential health service for students called 'Open Door' managed by a student welfare officer with health practitioners from the local NHS trust
- regular health awareness campaigns, eg smoking cessation, drugs awareness and healthy eating
- sport and fitness, eg sports programme, an outdoor gym, a staff running club.

3. Giving to others:

- volunteering
- charity fundraising
- showing gratitude (eg, sending thank you cards to favourite teacher from High School).

Institutional resilience in a sixth form college

An INSET on vision and values resulted in a vision of 'becoming an outstanding, inclusive, Catholic sixth form college'. The values agreed were valuing the individual, celebrating learning and raising aspirations. To develop them we needed to build students' literacy, confidence and self-belief. Due to the college's locality near to another sixth form college with selective entry criteria, there were relatively few students with a high GCSE grade profile (less than two per cent had a GCSE grade profiling averaging grade A or above compared to a sector average of 12%).

Action plans were put in place to develop: literacy skills; teaching, learning and assessment protocols; raising standards and expectations through stretch and challenge with support mechanisms in place; providing significantly more experiences outside the classroom and beyond the boundaries of the local area; celebrating and praising achievements of all kinds.

An award and certification scheme was devised which included awards for students of the month, 100% attendance and assemblies were scheduled during the year specifically geared towards recognising achievements of all kinds, inside and outside the classroom. Students were also invited to weekly staff briefings to share their successes and receive recognition for their achievements.

Also we introduced a Summer Arts Festival, the plan centering around an exhibition of art work. This was expanded to performances of theatre, music, literature and poetry and the showcasing of film and media projects by students. The Summer Arts Festival gave rise to our 'Endeavour Award', which recognises student success in the face of adversity. Every nominated student is celebrated on a display and receives a certificate and vouchers before the overall winner is announced.

Collaboration helps resilience – Archdiocese of Liverpool

By working together, organisations can be more resilient and gain strength to fulfil their vision and mission, despite many challenges.

In an area of the north west of England, schools have had a long history of positive partnership working, but essentially the collaborative arrangements could be best described as "loose and informal", something like the "swap-shop" on the characteristic of collaboration diagram (see next page).

Characteristics of the stages of collaboration

Level 1 **The Moat**	At this level, the school/college: ● is strongly competitive and determined to gain advantage for itself ● carries historical baggage leading to a determination to avoid partnerships and a refusal to collaborate.
Level 2 **The First Novel**	At this level the school/college: ● could be at level 1 but may not admit it – difficult to tell if there is a genuine interest in collaboration ● may feign interest but will find excuses not to engage – 'yes but not now' – collaboration is a low priority.
Level 3 **CCTV**	At this level the school/college: ● is attracted by the actions of others, wants to know what is going on and does not want to be left out ● will make a connection, but may be for inappropriate reasons, eg funding ● joins in but with little conviction and fails to appreciate the real purpose of the collaboration.
Level 4 **Fig Leaf**	At this level the school/college: ● engages in collaboration but with private reservations and without taking a leading role ● fails to establish openness and trust – will conceal underperformance.
Level 5 **Glasnost**	At this level the consortium: ● develops a critical mass of committed partners ● seeks ways to use resources effectively to avoid 're-inventing the wheel' ● actively looks for ways to progress practices.
Level 6 **Swap Shop**	At this level the consortium: ● has openness and trust to sharing to meet mutual needs ● acknowledges differences and individual needs and reconciles them ● has forward momentum, is creative and practically focused.
Level 7 **Co-op**	At this level : ● there is genuine ownership within organisations – developments are not entirely principal/headteacher/CEO-led ● strategies exist to promote trust and ownership of issues across the collaboration to minimise risk to individual partners ● there is a community sense of resilience.

More recently, collaboration has become more formal, with the establishment of Schools Direct Companies, especially focusing upon Initial Teaching Training (ITT).

What is now being proposed to further strengthen collaboration is to form a Schools Trust as a registered charity, similar to the "cooperative" stage on the collaboration diagram. This will enable a large community of schools to resist national policies that do not fit well with professional practitioners, understanding of students' real needs.

The main aims of this are to:

- ensure all schools have access to good quality support from others within the trust

- protect the autonomy of schools and their governing bodies to determine their own vision and mission

- take advantage of the economies of scale at a time when funding cuts will affect all schools.

In essence, the trust can be likened to a hospital where you have treatment to make you better and when you are better you are able to continue developing individually, setting your own purpose and direction.

This is very different from the purely academisation agenda, where schools feel threatened by the consequent loss of freedom and empowerment.

This collaborative approach is very popular with a wide range of schools, most of which are good or outstanding. For the last few years, there have been effective sub-regional cluster arrangements, which have helped build trust, respect and partnership working.

Learning points

- There has to be strong leadership with a shared vision, a genuine commitment to collaboration and a willingness to take collective responsibility.
- Synergy, ie greater than the sum of the individual parts, helps build resilience in schools.
- Protecting the autonomy of individual schools under intense and adverse circumstances is a real sign of resilience.

> The key thing is that we want to do the job as well as we can and do it in a way which we think is right for our communities. We believe we can be stronger and more resilient by working together.
>
> Secondary headteacher

Key points

- Your integrity is your shield. Protect it at all times, and it will protect you.

- Keep your vision in mind when times are tough – there is often a much bigger reason behind everything you need to do.

- Don't make hasty judgements about people from what you have heard, been told, or observed during when taking on a new leadership role. Sometimes it can take a while to ascertain a person's true character. Some who resist at first might just need time to see that you share common values, and can make trusted allies.

- Build, and tap into, trusted support networks, and make sure you give as much as you get when someone else is having a difficult time.

- A lot of the job is telling people things they don't want to hear, but it does help a lot to be honest in a sensitive manner.

- Try not to react to events if you have time to respond in a considered manner. If you don't appear to have time, try and make it.

- The truth usually comes out in the end, and justice is often served.

- How you manage situations will be scrutinised by the often silent majority. Keep things fair and operate within policy guidelines. They are not just pieces of paper.

- Keep your perspective and sense of reality in challenging times. The sun will come up tomorrow.

- Look after your nearest and dearest: they also deserve care if they are frequently called upon to offer another perspective / shoulder to cry on.

- Smile, make time to enjoy your life and maintain a sense of humour and sense of perspective.

Conclusion

Nurturing and sustaining resilience is a critical responsibility of leadership.

Personal resilience is about being able to deal with challenges without them causing you distress. Understanding resilience and how it might be strengthened is often behind efforts to strengthen the resilience of the workforce in difficult and challenging times.

However, personal resilience will only help so far. As a leader you need to develop a culture that is supportive and helpful. There is a limit to which personal resilience will have a positive effect in preventing stress.

Strengthening personal resilience should be seen in the wider context of the well-being and welfare agenda, which helps organisations make the workplace a good place to be.

Ensuring a working environment where people can survive and thrive is key. With these factors in place individuals will not need to call on their personal resilience except for extreme circumstances.

In the educational climate resilience throughout an organisation is critical to success, to maintain well-being and performance under pressure. It is worth emphasising that those personal skills and characteristics that make up resilience can be developed over time, particularly with the right type of leadership.

Appendix: stress risk assessment

When to use this risk assessment

This risk assessment tool is aimed to assist in the identification of potential work pressures or demands which may be causing an individual to perceive they are feeling under excessive pressure or are feeling stressed.

This form can be completed in any of the following circumstances by:

- An individual member of staff who perceives at any time they feel they are working under excessive pressure or other types of demand placed upon them, which they perceive to be having a direct impact on their ability to undertake their role.

- A senior leader or line manager who perceives an employee to be behaving 'out of character' which may be stress related, or perceives they are working under excessive pressure or other types of demand placed upon them, which is having a direct impact on their ability to cope and undertake their role.

- A member of staff returning to work following a period of absence due to stress.

- A senior leader/line manager and employee during part of an annual appraisal.

In each case the employee and their line manager should discuss the outcome of the risk assessment and agree an action plan. The action plan may include making reasonable adjustments to address the perceived stressors, or may indicate 'no identifiable concerns' in which case a statement such as 'review in six months' may suffice.

If an individual perceives there are workplace stressors when completing this tool, then temporary 'reasonable adjustments' should be considered alongside an action plan to minimise the risk of further harm from those perceived stressors. There is no specific right or wrong method when making reasonable adjustments; these should be agreed between the employee and their line manager. You are encouraged to seek advice from the Head or HR Manager when undertaking a stress risk assessment and agreeing an action plan.

This risk assessment should not be seen as a one-off exercise. If, on initial completion, reasonable adjustments have been made then these should be reviewed at the end of a 4 week period to ascertain their effectiveness.

Please note: This is not a diagnostic tool for medical purposes. It should only be used as a guide to identify perceived or potential workplace stressors/triggers and to assist in the management of these to prevent further harm. If an employee raises concerns in relation to their wellbeing they should be advised to contact their GP.

How to complete this risk assessment

Look carefully at each individual answer and for those answered 'Never', 'Seldom' and 'Sometimes' discuss with the member of staff to try and identify their concerns. Record your results in the outcomes section and complete the Action Plan.

Stress Risk Assessment

Please tick the most appropriate answer.

Change	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always	Role
I am provided with information to enable me to understand the reasons for proposed changes						The School provides information to enable me to understand my role and responsibilities
I feel that The School consults me regarding changes and provides opportunities for open discussion						The School ensures that the different requirements it places upon me are clear and that these are compatible with my role
I am made aware of the probable impact of any changes to my job						There are adequate opportunities for me to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts concerning my role and responsibilities
I am given training to enable me to facilitate changes within my job						I have a good understanding of my role and what is expected of me during my duties
I am made aware of time tables for change						My current job role adequately reflects my current job description
I have access to relevant support during change						I know the standards I have to meet in my job
When change is implemented, I feel equipped to deal with it						I know what I am expected to achieve in my job

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always	Relationships	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
					The School promotes positive behaviours at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness in the workplace					
					I share information relevant to my work with colleagues					
					The School has policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour					
					I feel that managers deal appropriately with reports of unacceptable behaviour					
					There is a supportive team atmosphere and dynamics between the team are good					
					If I had a problem I feel that I would be able to approach my line manager/senior leader					
					My team/department works positively together					

Stress Risk Assessment

Please tick the most appropriate answer

Demands	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always	Control
The School provides me with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work						Where possible I have control over the pace of my work
My skills and abilities are matched to the job demands						The School encourages me to use my skills and initiative to do my work
I feel empowered to use my full skills and potential abilities at work in the day to day tasks						Where possible, I am encouraged to develop new skills to help me undertake new and challenging pieces of work
I feel my skills and abilities are used to their full potential						I am able to take my breaks
In general, my job is designed to be within my capabilities						I am encouraged to raise concerns I may have
My concerns about my work environment are addressed						I have a say in planning my work
I regularly only work my annual contracted hours						I have opportunities to express my ideas and points of view

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always	Support	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
					The School has policies and procedures to adequately support me					
					I feel supported by my line manager					
					I feel able to support and encourage my colleagues					
					I know what support is available and how and when to access it					
					I know how to access the required resources to do my job					
					I have regular supervision and appraisal from my line manager					
					I have the right equipment to do my job well					

Personal Stress

If the employee indicates that there are personal triggers that may be impacting upon their perceived stress levels, these should be acknowledged and the employee should be encouraged to seek support from their GP.

Outcomes and Action Plan

Use this space to record statements the employee has answered 'never, seldom, sometimes' and the agreed action plan you are putting in place to manage these.

Perceived Trigger Points (List)		
Agreed Action Plan (continue on separate sheet if required) Consider what changes are required to reduce the gap between the current state of perceived beliefs in the question sets and that of the desirable state to be achieved.		
Signed Employee	**Signed Manager**	**Review Date**

Signs and Symptoms of Stress

Physical	Psychological	Behavioural
● Over-eating or loss of appetite	● Constant irritability	● Accident proneness
● Frequent indigestion or heartburn	● Apathy	● Poor work/ uncharacteristic errors
● Constant tiredness	● Loss of sense of humour	● Aggressive or passive behaviour
● Insomnia	● Difficulty in making decisions	● Increased absence from work
● High blood pressure	● Poor concentration	● Increased alcohol consumption
● Frequent crying or desire to cry	● Excessive concern about physical health	● Compulsive behaviour
● Nervous twitches	● Withdrawal and daydreams	● Irritability
● Breathlessness or panic attacks	● Excessive and rapid mood swings	● Talking, walking, eating fast
● Inability to sit still without fidgeting	● Anxiety	● Change in sleep pattern
● Muscle tension/ headaches	● Inability to feel sympathy with other people	● Poor time management
● Palpitations and sweating	● Supressed anger	● Early morning waking
● Nausea	● Paranoid thinking	● Withdrawal from supportive relationships
● Vague aches and pains	● Reduced self esteem	● Increased smoking/ caffeine intake
● Frequent colds, flu, etc	● Increased worrying	● Lack of holiday planning/usage
● Skin irritation, rashes	● Nightmares	
● Pain and tightness in chest	● Suicidal feelings	
● Increased susceptibility to allergies	● Depression	

Health Effects of Stress

Short Term Effects	Long Term Effects
● Loss of appetite	● High blood pressure
● Feeling tired all the time	● Anxiety
● Headaches	● Ulcers
● Poor concentration	● Depression
● Trouble getting to sleep/early waking	● Thyroid disorders

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