



Resilience for Leaders

This is the tenth 'tool of the month' from the IHR Project's Workforce Development Team. We are sharing our favourite concepts, models, hints, and tips that resonate with us and really helped us out in different work environments. Please come back each month to see what we are sharing. As with any concepts, models, hints and tips – these do not represent a fixed way of doing things, they are not hard and fast rules – if they resonate with you please make use of them – if they don't that's fine too!

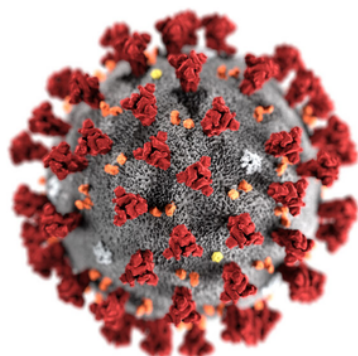
Imagine you are departing on a long journey. Whilst most of the way is due to be on even ground, your map shows that you will encounter periods of harder terrain. How would you make sure you can safely complete your journey and handle any expected and unexpected problems that come your way? Life may not come with a map, but everyone will experience twists and turns, from everyday challenges to events with more lasting impact. Each change affects people differently, but our ability to adapt to these changing and stressful situations defines our resilience. [1]



What is resilience?

Resilience has been described as the “ability to succeed, to live, and to develop in a positive way . . . despite the stress or adversity that would normally involve the real possibility of a negative outcome”. It is the ability to maintain personal wellbeing in the face of challenge.” [2]

What resilience is not: “Resilience is not just your ability to bounce back, but also your capacity to adapt in the face of challenging circumstances, whilst maintaining a stable mental wellbeing. Resilience isn't a personality trait – it's something that we can all take steps to achieve.” [3]



Understanding resilience is important as leaders – we need to manage both our own resilience, whilst also looking out for our direct reports and colleagues – helping them manage their capacity and stressors. This is especially important in the context of public health. The COVID-19 pandemic brought global public health very quickly into the spotlight and demanded unprecedented action. Public health professionals were expected to work extremely hard and fast in an ever-changing environment, under public scrutiny, and with little knowledge of how long this pressurised situation would go on for.

By understanding our capacity and using tools to manage our resilience we can determine the right type and level of challenge to push ourselves to nurture our own development and look after our wellbeing. The below models are strategies we can use to understand this.

Model 1: Comfort/Stretch/Panic Zones [4]

This model is how you might assess resilience in yourselves and others.



The Comfort Zone: your Comfort Zone is just that – doing what comes easy to you, including everyday activities, doing the same things and mixing with the same people. This is ‘comfortable’ but you do not learn very much nor develop yourself.

The Stretch Zone: your Stretch Zone is the area of exploration. These are things that you haven’t done for a long time or have never done before. This zone is not really a comfortable place – but it is a stimulating one and important for your development. We stretch and challenge ourselves mentally, emotionally, or physically. It does require extra energy, so make sure it doesn’t consume your whole day!

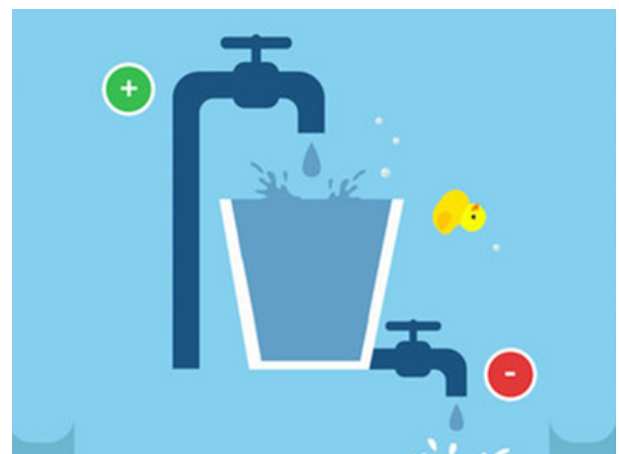
The Panic Zone: The Panic Zone is the area of things that are currently a ‘stretch’ too far! Notice how much time you spend here and if it’s serving you. Sort out the panic by considering how you can step out of it, pause, reflect and prepare yourself for the next time you visit!

The key thing here is to understand how your body and mind is feeling, if it’s not good, its time to take action – this might mean taking time to look after yourself or seeking support from another.

Model 2: The Bucket Model [5]

The Bucket Model is a good place to start to take stock of your levels of resilience and what effects it.

Think of your resilience as being like a bucket of water. The water is resilience – it fills and fuels you. But the bucket has holes that drain this resilience away.



- Fuels give us energy and strengthen our resilience – they keep our buckets “full”.
- Drains reduce our energy and diminish our resilience – they “empty” our buckets

Example fuels and drains:



Fuels - family and friends, good sleep, positive workplace relationships



Drains - Poor work/life balance, unsympathetic colleagues, social isolation, poor physical/mental health

Think about your current fuels and drains? This exercise helps you identify what those holes are, how you can plug them and how you can top up the resilience levels.

Model 3 Robertson Cooper Model [6]

This model may also help you understand where you may be vulnerable and where to take action to promote your resilience. Similar to the above model the aim is to help you identify factors that ‘help you resilience’ or ‘hinder your resilience’ under four categories i) Confidence, ii) Social Support, iii) Adaptability, and iii) Purposefulness.

The difference though is the structured questionnaire that is provided to help you explore these elements step by step - you can find this at iResilience (gooddayatwork.co.uk)

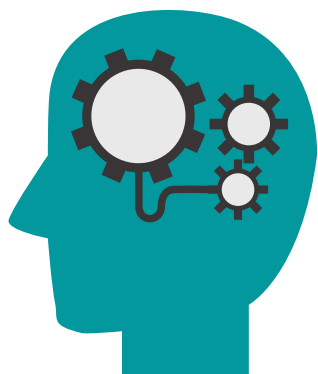


There are many models exploring resilience, some help you understand the factors that contribute to resilience, other models help you identify how you can act to increase your resilience. As with all models – it is important to use the one that resonates with you.

Other models that you may wish to explore:

- ➔ The 3 P's - Personalisation, Pervasiveness, and Permanence – A simple model of resilience help us understand how our thoughts, mindset, and beliefs affect our experiences (Seligman 1990) [7]
- ➔ PERMA - Another model from Seligman (2016) that explores Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Achievement [8]

What now? Now that we have a better understanding of resilience and our limits, what can we do to implement these models and tips into our work?



What can you control? If you find yourself worrying about things you can and can't control, these steps are a good place to start:

1. Determine what you can control.
2. Focus on your influence.
3. Identify your fears.
4. Differentiate between contemplating and problem-solving
5. Create a plan to manage your stress.
6. Consciously develop healthy attitudes.

It is also helpful to remember that there are always things beyond our individual and our team's control. Therefore, it is important to look after yourself and set boundaries at work. Setting boundaries is not about neglecting work but is about doing your best work. In creating the distance to recover, to act within your limits, you'll be able to do substantial and sustainable work instead.

- ✓ **Set expectations:** Be sure that everyone knows what your availability is and isn't. Try reinforcing this through your responses to requests.
- ✓ **Use structures and routine to manage the boundary:** Set routines for your communication patterns, you can train others to work with you on your boundaries.
- ✓ **Communicate your rationale:** Be sure everyone understands the values that drive these decisions, and you expect it will help you deliver as a leader. By sharing your "why" it's much easier for your peers to accept how you're doing your work.
- ✓ **Maintain integrity:** Setting boundaries for yourself is an important precursor to setting and accepting boundaries for others. If you're doing the right thing by giving yourself room to step away from work at home, do the same for others. This creates a supportive culture.

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IHR Strengthening Project. March 2022
www.gph-ihrstrengthening.org

References and further reading

- [1] [Building your resilience \(apa.org\)](http://apa.org).
- [2] <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/releas-capcty-6-topic-sht-6-2.pdf>
- [3] [Developing resilience - tips | Mind, the mental health charity - help for mental health problems](#)
- [4] [Comfort Stretch Panic Tool | Crowe Associates \(crowe-associates.co.uk\)](#)
- [5] [Resilience | NZDF Health](#)
- [6] [iResilience: Free Personal Resilience Report | Robertson Cooper](#)
- [7] [3 P's – Growing Resilient](#)
- [8] [What is PERMA by Martin Seligman \(gostrengths.com\)](#)