BLUEPRINT

Resiliency and the 5BR Toolkit

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BLUEPRINT
www.blueprint.ngo

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The traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Stó:lō and (Tsleil- Waututh) Nations

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Blueprint

Blueprint is a Vancouver based non-profit organization that focuses on supporting men's health and well-being to build strong communities. Created in partnership with the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Medicine, Vancouver Coastal Health, VGH + UBC Hospital Foundation and the Canadian Men's Health Foundation with generous support from the Leon Judah Blackmore Foundation and Mohseni Foundation, Blueprint is honoured to serve the first responders of British Columbia.

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Research tells us that resiliency is about individuals being "ready and resourced", rather than just "rugged".

Learning and adopting "resiliency practices" can strengthen the coping capacity of both the individual and the team.

First Responder Resiliency Training

The First Responder Resiliency Training is a program being piloted with first responder organizations to explore how to better equip individuals and groups with the knowledge and skills needed to strengthen and retain optimal resilience and well-being.

The program is based on two evidence-based models developed over 20 years at the University of British Columbia for military veterans and for first responders working to regain or maintain optimal fitness under operational load.

Why Resiliency training?

According to the World Economic Forum, depression is the number one cause of ill health and disability worldwide, costing the global economy one trillion dollars in lost productivity each year. In Canada, forty-six percent of all disability claims are mental health-related, costing Canadian employers an estimated six billion in costs.

Despite being chosen for their fitness and resiliency, those in first responder and emergency service roles are not immune. Forty-four percent of Canadian first responders meet diagnostic criteria for one or more common mental disorders – four times the normal Canadian average (CIPSRT). Mental health impacts of service in emergency roles are a known hazard and "hoping" that there are no adverse impacts on you, or on a member of your team is not a viable plan.

Disaster preparedness training tells us that putting the right knowledge, skills and abilities in place prior to a known hazard occurring can keep it from becoming a disaster. Resiliency can be strengthened for both the individual and the team by adopting the right practices to mitigate impacts of operational stress and traumatic exposures. Resiliency is about being "ready and resourced", rather than just "rugged".

Objectives

The objectives of the Resiliency Program are to:
1. Assist serving first responders to understand the mechanisms and effects of operational stress on the body, the brain, on behaviour, and on relationships;
2. Understand the unique impacts of cumulative stress and operational load on the human stress response system, the evolutionary adaptive value of trauma reactions, and factors that help the body and brain re-adjust after exposure to operational stressors.
3. Learn communication skills for situations of high conflict and/or strong emotions.
4. Improve grounding skills for physiological self-regulation and/or helping others regulate their physiological response during stress.
5. Understand the relationship between personal factors and cohesive team factors in maintaining personal and organizational resilience and performance under operational load.

What is Resiliency?

The term "resiliency" is a term that has entered common usage although expert consensus on the meaning of the term is lacking. For this course, a working definition has been adapted from the work of the PreVAIL project[1].

Resilience is a dynamic process in which psychological, social, environmental, and biological factors interact to enable an individual at any stage of life to develop, maintain, or regain their mental well-being despite exposure to adversity and changing demands.

It is conceptualized as both an individual and an emergent group capacity that evolves over time, is enhanced or eroded by internal and external factors (resources and demands), and, like physical fitness, is best maintained by planning and regular practice (i.e resilient individuals are "ready and resourced" versus "rugged").

Like physical fitness, resilience can be eroded or enhanced by internal or external factors and is best maintained through regular practice.

[1] The PReVAiL group is a Canadian research network sponsored by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (retrieved from www.prevailreseach.ca on August 15, 2012).

Understanding the Context of Resiliency: External Factors

The goldfish model

Captain James West from the University of Military Medicine tells a story that illustrates how we often think about resilience and go about identifying resilient individuals. It goes like this.

Imagine that we're looking to identify the very best, most resilient goldfish. We go to the store and carefully select the largest fish, the fastest swimmers, or those that have perfect scales and bring them home in a plastic bag.

Then, to identify those that can thrive under stress, we take each goldfish out of the bag and put into a pot of boiling water. As they float to the surface, we dismiss them as not having the "right stuff" and go back to trying to search for those elusive recruits who do.

If we find a fish that doesn't succumb right away, we study them carefully to see if we can find out why they were more resilient than the others. We focus on the goldfish that survived the longest, ignoring the context of the hot water as if it has nothing to do with the fate of the others at all.

This, of course, doesn't make much sense. The temperature of the water is relevant. Yet, when we talk about resilience, it's easy to forget to consider the context that we're hoping that resilience will emerge in response to. So, what do we know about the context of first responders' work? What exactly is the temperature of the water we're getting you into?

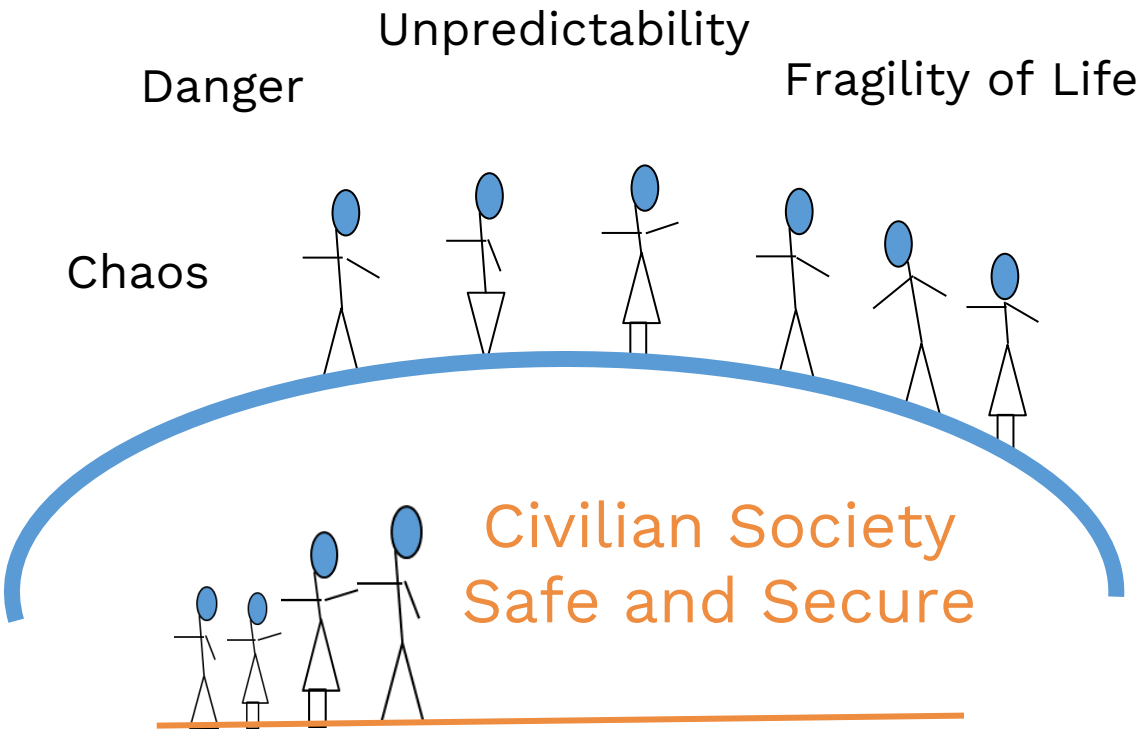
First responder roles and the "bubble"

Traumatic events, by definition, are outside the norm, are unexpected and are subjectively disempowering, shattering key protective assumptions about self, safety in the world, and trust. It is normal in the face of these events for individuals to struggle with the implications of experience – to question, did that happen? Why? How could this be?

Because they are so far outside what we would expect, these events provoke reactions that feel strange and "abnormal", but which in reality are typical and expected responses to abnormal events. For most people, exposure to traumatic events will be just that, “abnormal”, however for those who take on first responder and other emergency services roles, and who are exposed to higher levels of traumatic events in their work, traumatic events may become a “new normal”.

Civilian society in the west lives within a bubble where citizens are largely protected from exposure to traumatic events, to chaos, danger and the fragility of human life by a group of individuals (often but not always in uniform) who guard the surface of the bubble.

Work outside the bubble...



When those in first responder and emergency roles are recruited and trained for service outside the bubble, there is a time when they are under scrutiny from their peers to see if they can “handle it”, “suck it up” and do what needs to be done. Acceptance and belonging to the team are contingent on performance. Personal qualities selected for include team players, the ability to put emotions aside to get the work done, and those who will not require assistance themselves.

The stoic service culture that emerges for groups outside the bubble is effective and useful for “the call” but may be silencing and isolating for members when they struggle with an experience. If everyone hides normal human emotional responses, this may also inadvertently perpetuate a myth that no one is affected, leading to stigma and barriers to mutual support.

As recruits or probationers adjust to their early exposures, their sense of what is “normal” begins to shift and they may find that they have become increasingly different from their friends and family who remained within the bubble. This may lead to a loss of shared experience with family and friends which can be additionally isolating. This can also cause transition strain when moving between roles within and outside of the bubble, carrying experiences and impacts back and forth between the two.

The higher than usual dosage of trauma exposure taken on by first responders and others in emergency roles has predictable impacts related to our evolutionary ability to learn and adapt to new dangers in our environment. Trauma symptoms originally evolved to help us recognize and avoid dangerous situations quickly - before it was too late.

We are all hard wired with embedded capacities to adapt to trauma in ways that may not make sense in our modern world. The deer that freezes in the forest to escape detection by a predator is responding in adaptive ways that have evolved over hundreds of thousands of years. The deer that freezes on a highway is using an ancient survival response in a modern context where it is no longer adaptive. PTSD is the name given to this problem in humans when ancient survival responses are cued out of context from where they would be adaptive.

Understanding the Context of Resiliency: Internal Factors

Understanding our evolutionary heritage

Unlike computers or mechanical systems that that can be built from the ground up, integrating prior learning into radically new designs, evolution does not have the luxury of starting over from scratch. Neuroscientist Paul McLean, noting the preservation of primitive brain structures over the course of evolution, proposed the theory of the triune brain. Embodying an evolutionary connection to both reptiles and lower mammals, he proposed that the modern brain is structured in three layers with each layer devoted to increasingly complex functions and abilities. While several decades of brain research since have led us to understand that the way that the brain functions is considerably more complex than this, it remains a useful simplification or "map" of the territory that we can use to navigate.

At the lowest level is the brainstem and reptilian brain that is responsible for basic activation, arousal, homeostasis and reproductive drives. The second level is the paleo mammalian brain or limbic brain, which wraps around this core and is central to learning, memories and emotion. At the highest level, and the latest to evolve, (and latest to develop in the child) lies the neo-mammalian brain or cerebral cortex, which organizes conscious thought, problem solving, and self-awareness.

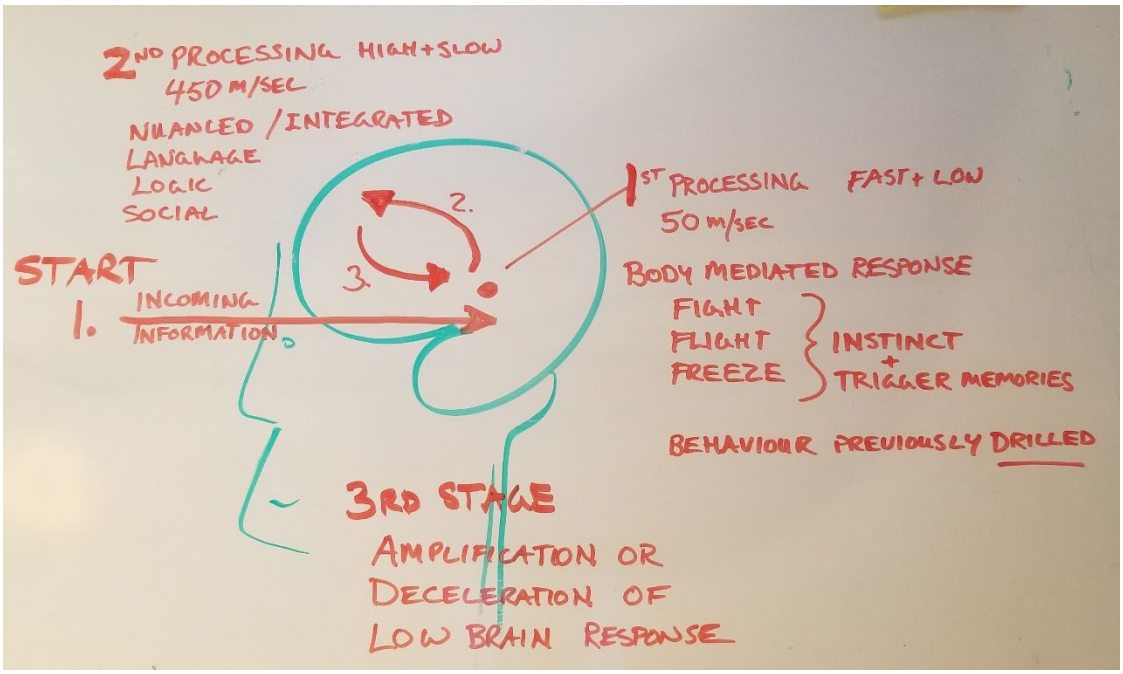
While the low-level brainstem and reptilian brain are fully formed and functional at birth, the higher levels of the brain, in particular the structures of the cerebral cortex, continue to develop throughout the first three decades of life. In interaction with our social and environmental milieu, the cortex is initially organized by, and then comes to organize, our experiences and how we interact with the world.

Fast and low, high and slow – The neural pathways of threat processing

The neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux demonstrated the existence of two separate yet interrelated neural circuits that regulate threat response - a low fast road, and a high and slow road that are related to our two memory systems. The first of these paths, the low and fast reflexive system, is mobilized by structures within the ancient reptilian and limbic or paleo mammalian brain. The second, high and slow path, involves the highest layers of the brain, the neo-mammalian brain or cerebral cortex, which organizes conscious thought, problem solving, and self-awareness. The existence of these two paths for learning and threat response is critical to our understanding of both the normal response to stress and the symptoms of prolonged reactions after exposure to traumatic stress.

The low fast reflexive system sends incoming information directly from the sense organs through the thalamus directly to the amygdala for review in implicit memory systems within 50 milliseconds (1st Processing). By contrast, incoming information can take as long as 450 milliseconds to reach consciousness and the high neural structures of the cortex where it can be reviewed in explicit memory and learning systems (2nd Processing) – far slower than the reflexive system when it comes to responding to a charging predator.

Evolutionary selection and survival favoured a system that bypassed the explicit conscious management of the cortex – the brain's center of higher and integrative functioning (High and Slow). It favoured retention of the faster responding primitive reflexive systems of the lower brain - a system that is wired directly into the implicit learning system and the brain's "fear center", the amygdala (Fast and Low).



In this lower response system, sensory input is evaluated in the amygdala, in conjunction with the thalamus, against ancient instinctual and crude representations of danger. Once the amygdala has received the information, and where threat is determined to exist, survival action is quickly mobilized. The amygdala's direct connectivity to the hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal axis (HPA), limbic-motor circuits and brainstem nuclei allow it to trigger rapid and intense somatic survival responses. Within a fraction of a second, heart rate, blood pressure, breathing rate, blood distribution and pupil dilation are all fundamentally altered in a sympathetic fight or flight response. Complex behavioural responses narrow to those that have been highly practiced to the point of automaticity. All of

these functions are executed and mobilized before the sensory input reaches the cortex and is available for conscious review.

Meanwhile, along the high slow road, sensory information is sent on to the hippocampus and cortex for further evaluation. This road allows more thorough analysis through the rich synaptic connections of the cortical circuits of explicit memory, conscious appraisal and executive functioning including inhibitions, which allow more careful and detailed comparison to prior experience. The high slow circuit aids in threat processing by contextualizing ongoing perceptions and behaviours with the input of time, space and learning. It also has the task of making sense of the behavioural, affective and visceral responses already set in motion by the amygdala and the HPA circuit – to discern why we already became anxious before we could begin to understand why. Where environmental cues are ambiguous and do not result in firing of the low amygdala circuit, the high slow road allows a more deliberate second assessment of the nature of the threat.

Evolutionary Adaptive Model of Threat Response

This dual circuit human capacity to process threat responses is both crucial to our species' survival and also the cornerstone of our capacity to become locked into the threat response mode of an acute stress reaction or PTSD. During threat, the brain bypasses cortex-mediated "conscious" decision-making processes and triggers a faster responding amygdala-mediated "survival brain" to mobilize autonomic "fight, flight and freeze" responses. Part of this response also promotes future safety by encoding a network of implicit trauma related memories that will re-trigger autonomic response whenever similar cues are encountered.

When these triggers remain prevalent in the post-trauma environment, the body and brain return continuously to sympathetic autonomic arousal states, overriding and reducing functioning of cortical brain systems necessary for learning, managing distress, facilitating growth and self-development, and making judgments and plans.

Three decades of research suggest that chronic and repeated activation of this stress response can result in lasting neuronal and functional changes. This rewiring of the brain may have once ensured survival in continuously unpredictable and unsafe environments by adapting the brain for optimal processing of threats.

A human being who has not been traumatized is capable of using both the "low" and "high" roads to process threat. For the person who has been traumatized or subjected to chronic levels of stress, the low road to fear may come to predominate. For example, during stress, neuroimaging evidence indicates that, unlike healthy control subjects, those with PTSD do not shift neural processing activity from

amygdala to prefrontal areas; areas related to the use of higher cognitive affect reappraisal functions used to reduce negative affect. Where threats do not actually exist, the hyperarousal associated with low road predominance is unnecessarily taxing on the body and brain.

Most of the time these normal responses to abnormal events resolve within a few days or weeks of a disturbing experience: Not everyone who experiences a traumatic event will develop an operational stress injury. When daily life does not provide a high enough dose of safety and security however, or when avoidant or numbing strategies are used to avoid being triggered, the brain may stay locked into this conservative survival response system. When this happens, symptoms may persist for weeks or months, or when they are extreme, professional help may be needed to artificially create the conditions of safety and security to reset the safety system.

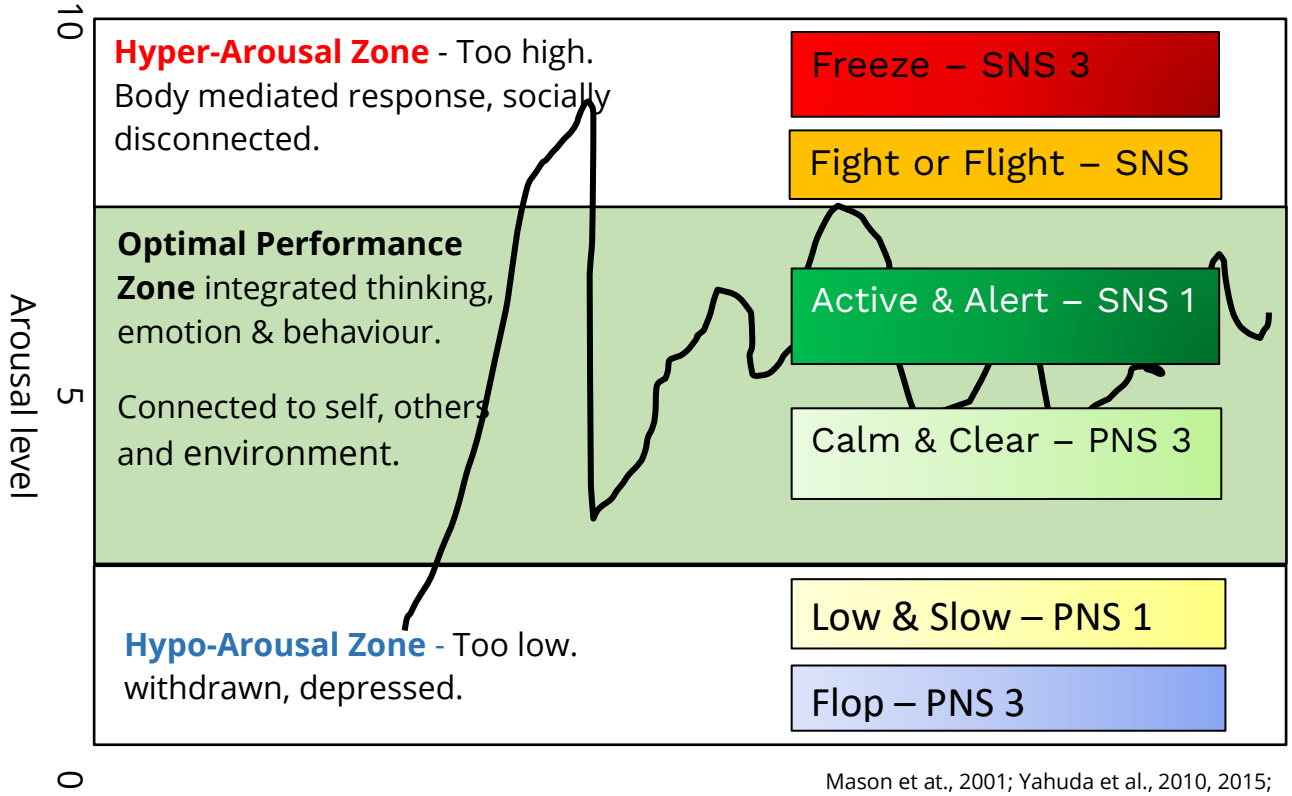
Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5) lays out the concept and criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The trauma that can set these disturbing reactions in motion is defined as a person's direct experience, witnessing, learning about, or exposure to details of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or sexual violence. The former DSM IV criteria that the reactions of the person affected must involve intense fear, panic, helplessness or horror at the time of exposure was removed from the diagnostic criteria in this new version. Diagnosis now requires the presence of four distinct clusters of reactive symptoms, including: 1) intrusive symptoms associated with the traumatic events involving intense sensory and visual memories, dreams, dissociative symptoms, or intense and prolonged psychological or physiological distress; 2) avoidance of reminders of the trauma, either internal and/or external; 3) a pattern of negative alterations in cognition and mood; and 4) marked alterations in arousal and reactivity associated with the traumatic event(s). These symptoms must be existent for at least one month leading to clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning (APA, 2013a).

This presents PTSD as an atypical rather than a normative stress response, yet a significant legacy of our common evolutionary ancestry with other animals is a highly developed capacity to adapt to threat in the environment. Like other animals, our survival depended on our capacity to react instantly to threat of attack from physically superior predators. Successful adaptation demanded the evolution and maintenance of a system capable of instantly altering the body's functioning, preparing it for fight, flight, or the capacity to freeze completely to escape detection by predators.

The optimal performance zone for integrated thought, emotion and behaviour

The optimal performance zone (represented as the green zone below) represents the optimal zone of arousal for complex problem solving in which the individual has access to high and low processing systems in an integrated way. In this zone it is possible to integrate thinking and emotion, remain connected to self, others and environment, and engage in complex reasoning.



Mason et at., 2001; Yahuda et al., 2010, 2015; Rothschild, 2016

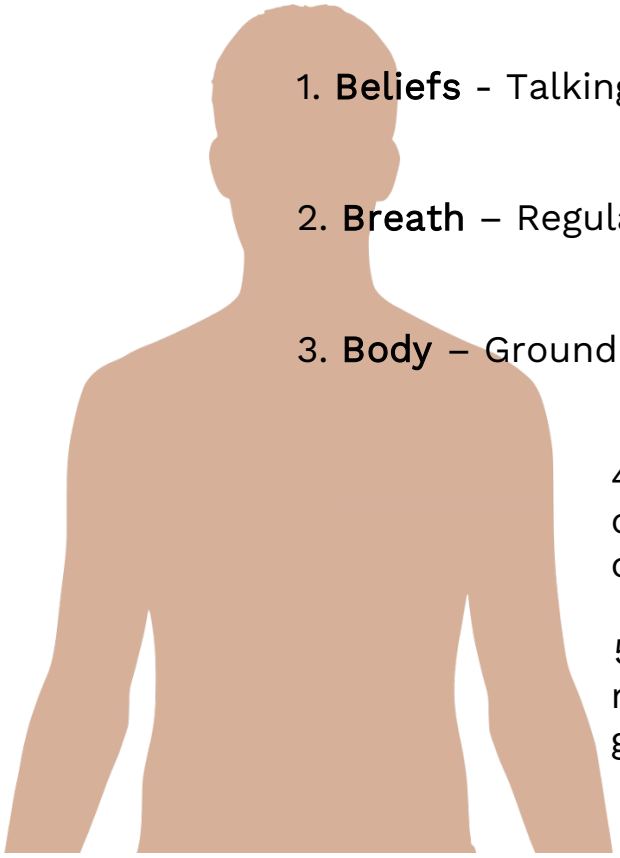
Resiliency Toolkit

If you have a GPS device and rely on it to navigate, it should function very well in most circumstances. If, however, you have (and have practiced using) a map and compass, you'll still be reasonable okay on the day the GPS quits. Redundancy in survival tools is good practice.

You may have a time tested and effective means of restoring your resilience. If you like hard-driving exercise when you're stressed, try a "slow down" strategy like breath work or grounding to prepare for the time when you're sidelined from exercise by an injury or by the normal aging of the body.

Try to diversify your toolkit. In this section there are a number of tools to help you maintain or regain resilience. As you go through the material, it isn't necessary to adopt all of these tools, only to experiment and find ones that are practical and useful for you.

5B Levers of Performance Resilience



1. **Beliefs** - Talking yourself "down and through".

2. **Breath** – Regulating the breath.

3. **Body** – Grounding the body.

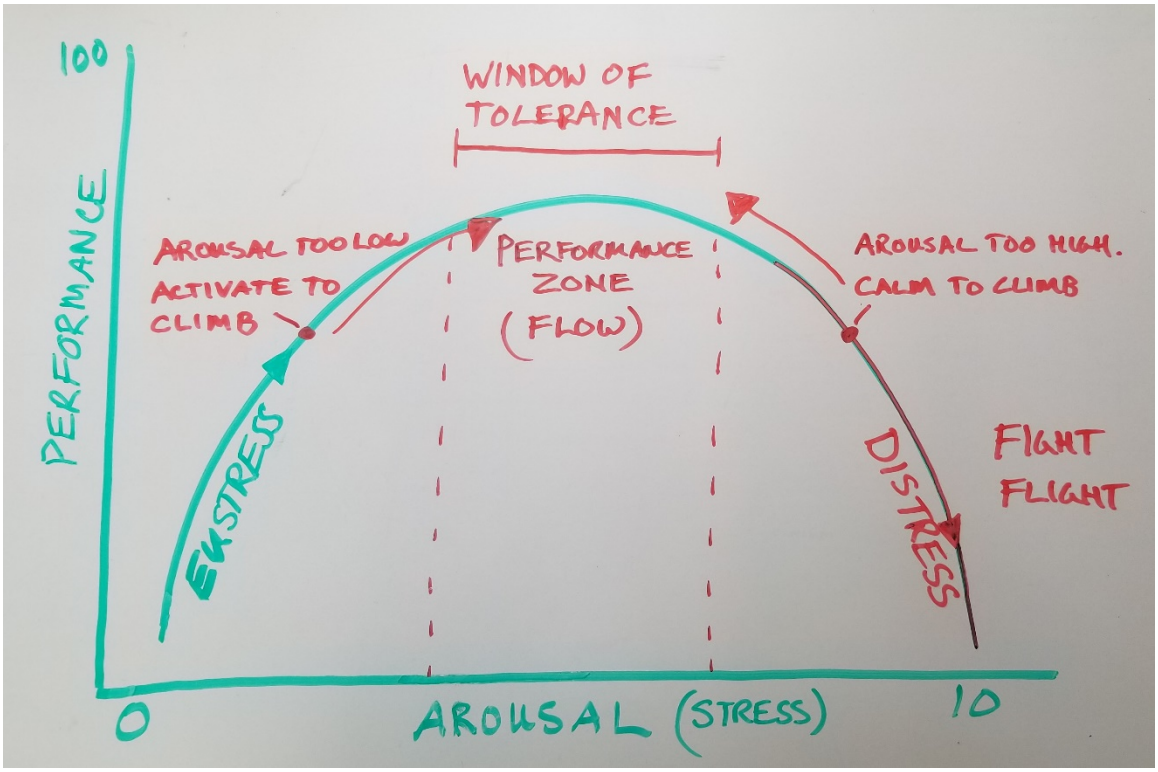
4. **Behaviour** – Attending to sleep, diet, routine, exercise and goal-oriented behaviour.

5. **Bonds** – Performance and resilience emerge in the context of great relationships.

5B Lever # 1- Beliefs

The Anatomy of Emotions

Emotions provide the energy to drive how people approach challenges and problem solving. Understanding emotional impact and ways of maintaining productive emotions is critical to the development and sustainment of resilience and psychological health.



Yerkes Dodson (1912) provided a simple model that has stood the test of time. If you think of what happens to a sports team or to individual performance under high stress, you can see that sometimes high stress leads to loss of more complex skills (higher road) and a return to ancient but les nuanced survival responses of flight, fight, freeze, take cover, posture or flop. Like the good coach who has a “whip” speech to increase stress and a “cool down” speech when the team is overdriven, adaptive and functional appraisal allows for higher performance.

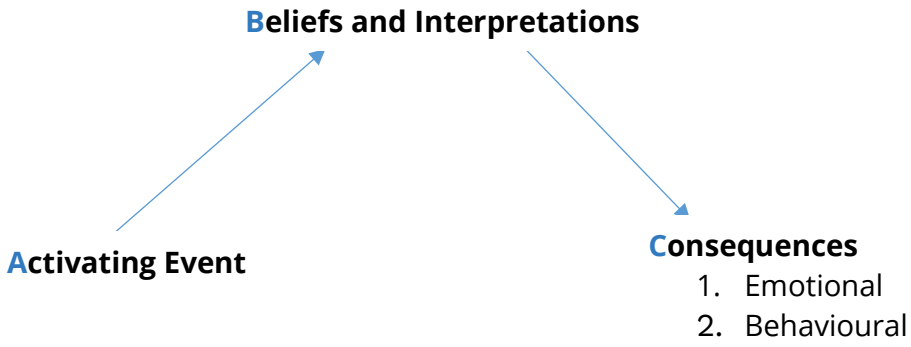
People’s reactions to events vary widely between individuals and within the same individual from time to time. From this variability we can deduce that it is not just the event that precipitates reactions, but the manner in which individuals make sense of the event.

A person's reaction to an event can range from debilitating emotion to functional/productive and healthy emotion: from depression and guilt to sadness or disappointment; from anger and rage to annoyance or irritation; and from terror, fear or anxiety to switched on concern.

The behavioural consequences also cover a wide range: from suicide to healthy grief; from violent outbursts to constructive work for change; and from panic-stricken flight to conscious and courageous action.

The A.B.C. model

This model illustrates how your experiences influence your emotions and behaviours. Your emotions are caused, not simply by external events, but by how you think about and interpret those events.



A. At point "**A**" a situation or "Activating Event" occurs. This could be any event. High stakes situations might include a threat, rejection from a loved one, a car accident, bad news, some injustice against you, the possibility of some future frustration or personal failure, etc.

B. Point **"B"** is your **Belief** system. This is how you interpret events based on the attitudes and beliefs, habits, values, morals, and standards that you have learned from your previous experiences. These interpretations become automatic and tend to be difficult for people to identify. At "B" it is important to be aware of the language you use to describe the situation to yourself.

For example, "It's unfortunate that this has happened, but I can handle it" or thoughts like: This is awful; It shouldn't have happened; I can't deal with this; Why am I such a loser; What a jerk he is…

C. Point **"C"** are the **Consequences** (feelings and behaviours) that result from your beliefs. These emotions and actions come from the particular evaluations and beliefs you have about "A" the Activating Event, not directly from the Activating event itself.

5F's of Functional Thinking

Use **5F** Questions to keep your thinking and appraisals functional.

Ask yourself,

Is the way I'm talking to myself about this:

1. Functional
Even if it were true does it help or am I amplifying the negative and making it harder for myself to function well?

2. Friendly
Would I advise a friend to think about it this way?

3. Factual
Am I even sure this is true?

4. Fully informed
Is there more information to consider?

5. Firm
Do I need to be firm (but friendly!) with myself to bring out my best?

The model provides a simple way of putting your emotional reactions and behaviours into perspective so that you can take ownership and responsibility for those reactions. When you accept responsibility for your emotions you gain the opportunity to start to detach your emotions from the roller coaster of life events.

Identify **A**. What objectively happened?

Identify **C**. How did it impact me emotionally and in my behavioural response?

Identify **B**. What must I have told myself about what happened to have that emotional response? These are often automatic thoughts that have to be unearthed.

D. Have a **Discussion** with yourself to dispute the unproductive beliefs and interpretations until you arrive at a more functional point of view.

Identifying counterproductive thoughts about an activating event, and the consequences of those patterns of thinking, helps people to understand their reactions to a situation.

B.A.D. habits of thought

Identify and correct **B.A.D. habits** of thought.

Blame
Sometimes we talk to ourselves in harsh ways and use a single negative label to describe ourselves. This kind of thinking is unhelpful and unfair. We are too complex to be summed up in a single word. Using shaming and derogatory labels to motivate change has been demonstrated to be ineffective. Momentary compliance may be followed by avoidance. When we apply the labeling to others it limits understanding, compassion and the opportunity for learning. In team environments, blame kills trust and destroys the safety needed for creative problem solving.

Awfulizing
This includes catastrophizing, over-generalizing and negative fortune-telling. Catastrophizing is when we imagine that the worst possible thing is about to happen, and predict that we won't be able to cope with the outcome. But the imagined worst-case scenario usually never happens and even if it does, we are most likely able to cope with it. Over-generalization is when we use words like "always" or "never" to describe situations or events. This type of thinking is not helpful because it does not take all situations or events into account. Sometimes we make mistakes, but we don't *always* make mistakes. Fortune-telling is when we predict that things will turn out badly. But, in reality, we cannot predict the future very accurately.

Demanding
Sometimes these show up as "should" statements: This is when you tell yourself how you "should", "must", or "ought" to feel or behave. The result is that you are constantly anxious and disappointed with yourself and/or with others around you. There is no question that sometimes it would have been better if you or someone else had behaved differently. But demanding that the past be different than it was simply interferes with your ability to move on, adjust and adapt.

5B Lever # 2 - Breath Zone

Stress Effective Breathing
When we respond to stress, whether real or anticipated, we breathe in a more rapid and shallow way. Although this is an effective way for our body to quickly fill the bloodstream with available oxygen for our muscles to use to flee or fight for our lives, it works against us when immediate and strenuous action is either not appropriate or not possible. Shallow and rapid breathing, in the absence of action, actually causes many of the uncomfortable physical sensations of anxiety. These symptoms can be reversed or prevented by altering your breathing pattern.

Slow diaphragmatic/abdominal breathing helps reverse anxiety symptoms during anxious times by decreasing overall arousal level. Although normal breathing rates vary, if you are inhaling more than 12 or 13 times per minute, you are probably in, or entering a hyperarousal state.

Note: Breathing techniques like the ones that follow make some people feel uncomfortable or anxious. If you experience any discomfort or concern while experimenting with these techniques, stop using them and move on to the next section. It isn't necessary to use every tool in the toolkit, just find the ones that work for you.

Diaphragmatic Breathing
When you are first learning this technique, you may find it helpful to sit or lie down.

1. Put one hand on your stomach and your other hand on your chest.

2. Inhale slowly through you nose (four seconds) making sure that the hand on your stomach rises, and the hand on your chest hardly moves at all.

3. Without pausing, exhale through your mouth slowly (five seconds). The hand on your abdomen, not your chest, should fall.

4. Pause briefly before your next breath (one second).

Practice this diaphragmatic breathing twice each day until it feels comfortable and easy to do in any situation or place. Practice this stress effective breathing in situations where you are feeling uptight, anxious or otherwise upset.

Take Five Breaths

Take 5 is the core mindfulness practice taught in the MindWell Challenge. The Challenge has been studied by researchers at UBC's Sauder School of Business and is proven to increase focus and attention while reducing stress and increasing performance and resilience. The technique can be used as a single 10 second breath or 50 second series of five breaths. Repeated five times through the day, the full exercise takes only five to 10 minutes a day and can be done from anywhere.

1. Choose a cue in your day to pin the practice to. (for example, on waking, breakfast, lunch, dinner and before sleep).

2. Focus on something you weren't paying attention to a moment ago - Come out of autopilot.

3. Lengthen and deepen your breath, inhaling for five seconds through you nose and exhaling for five seconds through your mouth.

4. Repeat the deeper breathing for five full breaths using your fingers to keep track.

5. Refocus on what is in your environment now and move forward with the day.

Outbreath Doubling

Notice your breathing and, without attempting to alter your breathing pattern, count off the duration of each inbreath and each outbreath for a few breaths (3-6). Now, leaving the duration of your inbreath unchanged, double the duration of your outbreath.

For example, if your inbreaths were 2 seconds and your outbreaths were approximately 3 seconds, alter your breathing to 2 seconds in, and six seconds out.

If your breaths were 2 seconds in and 2 seconds out, alter your breathing to 2 seconds in, and 4 seconds out.

Continue this altered breathing pattern for 8 to 10 breaths and notice any changes in your body.

For breathing techniques to be most effective and available to you when you're under pressure, it requires practice. If your mind races off during practice (and it probably will) and you forget to focus on your breathing, just refocus on breathing as soon as you recognize this. Keep bringing your breathing back under control until your arousal level decreases. Tactical breathing – any system that improves physiological coherence, is one of the "big four" cognitive behavioural techniques of stress reduction and resilience enhancement. There are many variations of these techniques – find one that fits you.

5B Lever # 3 - Body Zone

Grounding the body
During stressful episodes, the physical sensations of emotional arousal and stressful thoughts sometimes get "carried away", each one feeding the other in an ever-escalating spiral. Slowing down your body breaks the cycle, allowing your mind to "collect itself", access resources, concentrate and find solutions more easily. Experiment with the grounding strategies on the following pages to find a way to recalibrate the body and brain.

Awareness and Tracking
Tracking helps you to learn how to recognize nervous system activity and bring reactions back into the optimal zone. As you begin to observe your internal sensations notice your:

- Breath (rapid, shallow, panting, slow, deep)
- Heart rate (slow, fast, just right)
- Muscular tension or relaxation (tight, loose)
- Shifts in posture (stiff, open, loose)
- Movements in your body (eyes, head, neck, shoulders)

If you have many symptoms because you have been bumped out of your optimal zone, your own body can feel like the enemy. Tracking inner sensations, even ones that are comfortable, can be difficult at first.

As you track your nervous system, you will notice symptoms of “parasympathetic nervous system release”. Parasympathetic Nervous system release is a biological process that happens automatically when your body puts on the brakes to “stand down” and release energy after a stressor has passed. This release can be confusing or unsettling until you recognize and understand what is happening to your body.

If you notice any of the sensations of release, try not to block them or, alternatively, consciously slow the release while not stopping it completely.

Sensations of Release

- Heat or warmth or cooling down
- Tingling in hands, arms and/or legs or itchiness
- Shaking or trembling within your body
- Deeper breathing
- Crying and tearfulness
- Laughing
- Burping and stomach gurgling
- Yawning

Using the senses to recalibrate: Three-Two-One Scan

The 321 scan is a simple tool to recalibrate the bodies stress system using principles derived from relaxation and meditation. Much of our tension and stress, comes from our conscious attention being pre-occupied with events from the past or events to come in the future. As you bring your awareness to your senses, noticing things that are happening here and now, your senses can ground you in the present moment. The scan technique uses this by deliberately noticing three touch sensations then two sound sensations then one sight sensation to ground the body in the present moment.

It is meant to be "portable" and "deployable" in any situation – no one may know what you're doing except that you may seem calmer. With practice you can experiment with making the scan even shorter and playing with the technique to see how you can get the best results for you. This kind of "mindful" attunement to the present moment is a key skill set that simultaneously grounds the brain, breath and body through a specific behavioural tactic – hitting four of the five B's in one activity.

Set aside 3 to five minutes for this exercise initially. If possible, while you're learning, find a time and a place where you won't be disturbed, and where you feel comfortable and secure. If you can, turn off any phones.

1. **Sit on your chair with your hands resting in your lap, palms facing up, and legs gently apart. Experiment with your position – find one that's comfortable and easy to maintain.**

   You can close your eyes if you wish, or simply find a spot in front of you on the wall or on the floor to rest your eyes on. On a scale of one to ten, with 1 as the most relaxed you can imagine being, and ten being as stressed as you can imagine, take a moment to look inside your body and note where you are. What is your number now, has it changes, has your body become more relaxed, or your mind slowed down?

2. **It's important to remember that you don't need to try to relax.**

   Trying creates tension. Relaxation may happen or it may not. What you'll be doing instead is becoming aware of each passing moment and just accepting what is happening within you, seeing it as it is. Let go of the tendency of wanting things to be different from how they are now and allow things to be exactly as you find them. Just watch the activity of your mind, letting go of judgmental and critical thoughts when they arise, and just doing what the exercise guides you to do as best you can.

3. **Start by becoming aware of the sensations of your breath.**

   Not trying to control your breath in any way but simply experiencing it as the air moves in and out of your body, noticing your abdomen and feeling the sensations there as your breath comes into your body and your abdomen gently expands. Then noticing your belly deflate as the breath comes out of your body. And following the rhythmic movement of each breath…the rising of your belly on the inbreath and on each outbreath just letting go. Just bringing full attention to each breath in each moment.

4. **Begin the 321 scan by first moving your attention to your kinesthetic sense or sense of touch.**

   When we move our attention into one of our senses, we can amplify our awareness of that sense for a moment, bringing it into clearer consciousness for a moment. As you bring your awareness to your senses, noticing things that are happening here and now, your senses can ground you in the present moment.

5. **Begin by feeling the weight of your body on the chair.**

   Notice the points of contact between the chair and your body. Each time you breathe out, allow yourself to sink a little deeper into the chair. Notice the sensations that might have been outside of awareness just moments ago, until the exercise brought this part of your experience into your awareness. Take a moment to let your attention rest on this sensation of the chair pressing up against you, notice it, take a deep breath and label the source of the sensation – that's the chair. It's really that simple.

6. **Now, when you're ready, you can bring your awareness to a second kinesthetic sense, noticing the temperature of the air on your face, your cheeks.**

   Is it warm, or is it cool? Is there a slight breeze or is the air still? What does it feel like? If you can't feel any sensation, that's okay too. If you are registering a blank as you tune in, then just experience nothing. Take a deep breath and as you breathe in, imagine your breath moving all the way down to your toes and then when you reach your toes, begin your long outbreath and let it move all the way up your body and out your nose.

7. **Repeat this process of curious awareness with a third physical sensation, bringing your awareness to the feeling of your hands where they rest on your legs, noticing the texture and sensation there.**

   Are your hands warm or cool? Again, taking a deep breath in, as you breathe out, let your hands soften and release all tension. Notice the sensation as you sink even deeper into a state of relaxed awareness and stillness. Totally present in this sensation, in this moment.

8. **Now moving from our sense of touch, gently shift your awareness now to something that you can hear.**

   You may choose to listen to the sounds in the room, or outside of the room. Choose one thing that you can hear and notice the volume and the characteristics of the sound. Take a deep breath and label the sound for yourself and then let your breath out.

9. **Let your hearing drift to a second source of sound.**

   Are there sounds from the ventilation, is there a clock in the room? What subtle sounds come into your awareness that you had missed moments before? Notice this new sound. Then with another breath in, and then out, let it go.

10. **Now slowly open your eyes if you've had them closed, notice some object or mark in front of you. Any thing will do.**

    Let your eyes rest on some thing. What is it, what colour is it? Is it reflective, or dull? Dark or light? Become aware of the it and label it for yourself – that is a "_____". Take a final deep breath, and let it out.

11. **Now, when you're ready, let your awareness shift back into your body.**

    Get a sense of your whole body. Remember this sense of being grounded is always available to you when you need it and can be found again with a few deep breaths and by focusing on your senses with 3, 2 and 1. Coming back to that scale of one to ten, with 1 as the most relaxed you can imagine being, and ten being as stressed as you can imagine, take a moment to look inside your body and note where you are. What is your number now, has it changes, has your body become more relaxed, or your mind slowed down? When you're ready, move slowly and carry on with your day while trying to maintain the body and mind state that you arrived at through the exercise.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Separately tense your individual muscle groups (provided below). Hold the tension for about 5 seconds and then release the tension slowly and tell yourself to slow down or relax. Take a deep breath between each tension phase and as you breathe out a long slow breath, tell yourself to slow down, or some word that makes sense to you.

Head

- Wrinkle your brow
- Squint your eyes tightly.
- Open your mouth widely.
- Push your tongue against the roof of your mouth.
- Clench your jaw tightly.

Neck

- Bring your head forward to touch your chest.
- Roll your head to your right shoulder.
- Roll your head to your left shoulder.

Shoulders

- Bring your shoulders up as if to touch your ears (count to 5).
- Roll your shoulders forward.
- Roll your shoulders backward.

Arms and hands

- Make a fist with each hand.
- Push your hands together and squeeze them together to tighten your chest.
- Bend your arm at the elbow, tighten up your biceps.

Back and Stomach

- Pull your stomach area in.
- Arch your back.
- Push your stomach area out.
- Join your hands above your head and pull to tense your lats.

Hips, Butt, Legs and Feet

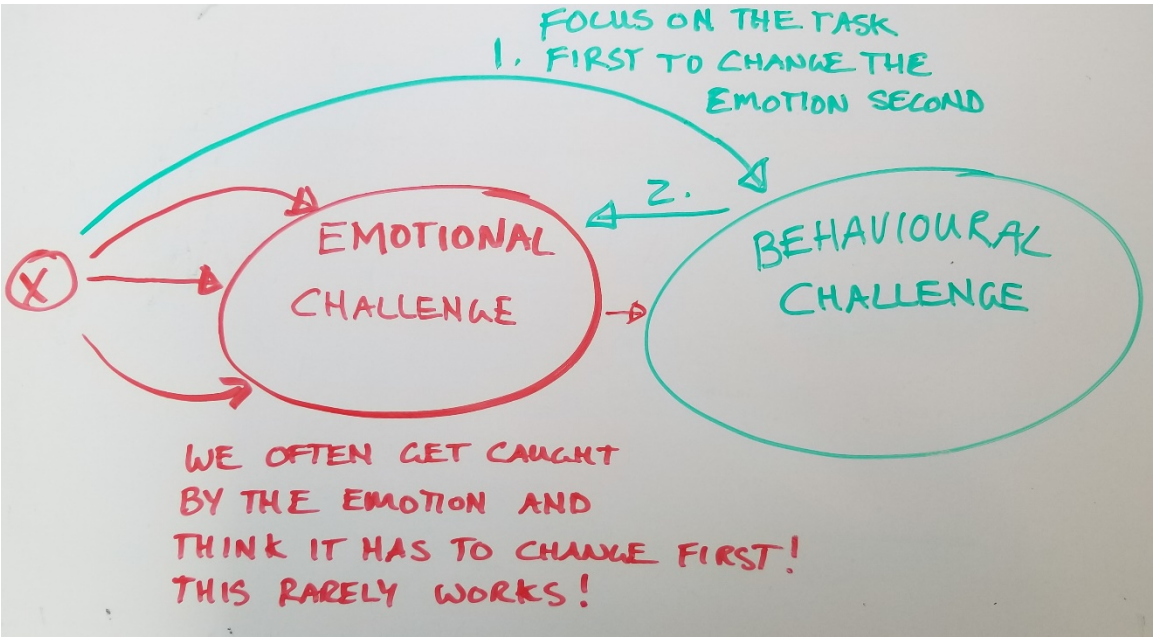
- Tighten your buttocks.
- Push the heels of your feet into the surface where you are practising.
- Tense your thighs.
- Tense your calves.
- Pull your toes upwards
- Scrunch your toes under.

5B Lever # 4 – Behaviour: Approach, Avoid or Prepare

Approach behaviours

Focusing on task and tangible actions helps to pull our focus away from how we feel about a situation and back towards our actionable sphere of influence. This can help us feel more in control over our environment and help us evaluate a stressor as a challenge instead of a threat.

Japanese Morita therapy depicts this as two challenges that can be helpful to distinguish in many situations – 1. the behavioural challenge (what we want to do) and 2. the emotional challenge (how we feel about the situation).



For example, when we first learn to drive (behavioural challenge), most of us don't have any confidence in our ability to drive or may experience some degree of anxiety (emotional challenge). If the new driver focuses on the emotional challenge (feeling confident driving) before beginning on the behavioural challenge (driving), they would likely be waiting for a long time to gain that confidence – if ever. Instead, it's more helpful for the new driver has to engage in the new behavioural task, while managing the lack of confidence, until practice allowed the emotional challenge to shift. With any new task, confidence usually comes *after* engaging in the new behaviour, not before.

Endurance is about putting one foot in front of the other in spite of exhaustion.
Courage is about taking action despite the presence of fear.
Assertiveness is about giving a measured response despite the presence of anger.
Integrity is about living according to values despite the lure of easier paths.

Behavioural Activation and Depression

There is a close relationship between our activity and our mood. When we're feeling good, we tend to spend time with people whose company we enjoy, do activities that make us feel good, and take on new tasks and adventures that challenge us. All of these activities have positive spinoff effects, providing contentment, a sense of mastery and a sense of being connected and valued.

The reverse is true too. People who are depressed tend to be less active overall and struggle to motivate themselves and so they have fewer opportunities to feel pleasure, mastery, and connection. This lack of positive experiences has spinoff effects in more depression and more difficulty motivating oneself.

We can wait until something external disrupts the cycle of inactivity/depression/inactivity or we can be proactive by increasing our level of activity even if we don't feel like it to begin with. This approach is called Behavioural Activation (BA) and it is a treatment for depression with one of the biggest evidence bases demonstrating its effectiveness.

A Note about Avoidance

It isn't always necessary or even functional to focus on the problem or task all of the time. In particular, when there is nothing that can be done immediately or when the facts are ambiguous, it may be beneficial to put the problem aside for a time. A desire to bring closure to a problem prematurely, before all the facts are in, could result in less optimal outcomes in the long term.

Taking yourself out of task focus for a time can also allow for the "spontaneous" solution generation that comes in what researchers call "drift" mode. Fortune favours the prepared mind but often waits until you're not looking for solutions to pounce.

What are the healthy distractions that you can use to bracket a problem and put it aside for a moment? Reading, movies and hobbies all allow for a period of refocusing that can be regenerative. Note that numbing with alcohol or other substances, while effective in the moment, can compound challenges by interfering with physical health and with cognitive processes of memory consolidation and the functional coherence of high and low brain processing systems.

Preparation strategies - Strategic Personal Goal Setting

Resilience is not a static state, it is an emergent capacity that waxes and wanes over time. Optimal resiliency emerges as a result of a resiliency practice or life style. How can you intentionally work to mitigate negative and amplify positive determinants of resilience in your daily life?

For you to succeed and make real and lasting changes you need to identify what you want to change, why it is important, and what the barriers are to making that change. You will have a better chance of success if your goals are realistic and specific. The other essential ingredient is PERSEVERANCE. Identify what you wish to change and then *determine* to work at creating that change.

Key Resiliency Awareness Questions

Where are you on a scale of 0-10 today?
What are the key determinants of *your* resiliency?

- What supports your optimal resilience? In the past? Now?
- What negatively effects your resilience? In the past? Now?
- What are the predictable triggers that will negatively impact your resilience?

Internal triggers:	**External triggers:**
Negative thoughts and appraisals	Organizational stress and politics
Cynicism / compassion fatigue	Operational stress and accumulation
Rapid heart rate	Domestic conflict or stress
"Butterflies" in the stomach, nausea	Sights, sounds or smells
Muscle tension	Sensations (vibration, heat, sweat).
Fatigue / hunger	

To live is to choose. But to choose well, you must know who you are and what you stand for, where you want to go and why you want to get there.

Kofi Annan

What steps can you take if you move out of the window of tolerance?

What values do you want to hold on to that helps you achieve your best?

What must you let go of in order to experience your optimal health and resilience?

What new practices should you take on in order to support your optimal resilience?

Are you attending to the triad of exercise, sleep and nutrition to improve personal and team performance, resilience, and readiness?

What do you want to achieve in the next four weeks?

What do you want more or less of?

Identify one goal for each of the following areas and fill in a SMART goals worksheet:

1. Personal
2. Career/work
3. Relationships/social life
4. Other personal goal?

Today's Date _____ Target Date _____ Start Date _____

Goal: Write goals in the present tense so that you can visualize them happening now.

Verify your goal is a SMART goal:

Specific: *What exactly will you accomplish?*

Measurable: *How will you know when you have reached this goal?*

Attainable: *Is achieving this goal realistic with effort and commitment? Have you the resources to achieve this goal? If not, how will you get them?*

Relevant: *Why is this goal significant to your life? Why do you want to reach this goal?*

Timely: *When will this goal be achieved? Deadlines help people switch into action.*

Revisiting Strategic Personal Goal Setting

Over the past few weeks, you may have made progress towards some of your goals while also discovering barriers to achieving other ones. It is important to acknowledge these challenges as part of our process of change. Examining what helped and what interfered with our goals is very important as it helps us sort out what has not been helpful, what new resources, skills or supports we need, and what would be most useful for us. It also reveals where we may "want" something else more than we "want" to achieve the goal we have set. Examining and resolving these inner conflicts in values or desires is important to the achievement of goals.

What resources/skills/relationships did you notice that supported you in achieving each goal?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What obstacles or barriers lay in the way? Did you sabotage your own success? What surprised you, got in your way, pissed you off, tripped or triggered you? What wall did you run into? What interfered with your plans?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

How will you adjust your plan to acknowledge obstacles or to ensure continuation of progress and consolidation of gains?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

5B Lever # 5 - Bonds

As the master adapter species, human beings are exceptional in our capacity to adapt to changing threats and environments, thriving in every ecosystem on the planet. Yet what makes us so adaptable is not just our mental capacity – our intelligence, creativity and language. It is our ability to cooperate, pooling our knowledge across groups and across time in ways that form something greater than ourselves. Oxford researcher Toby Orb observes that, in ecological terms, it is not the *human* that is remarkable, but *humanity*. Learning from each other allows us to continually expand our capacity to adapt to today, while also shaping the future.

MIT Senior Lecturer in leadership and management, Peter Senge, concluded that a group's capacity for high performance and adaptation is grounded in their ability to create a climate of "dialogue", the ability of individuals to put aside assumptions to enter into a process of "thinking together". The Greek origins of dia-logos meant the free flowing of meaning through a group, that allowed the group to benefit from differences of opinion and experience to surface the best solutions. Senge differentiates this process from "discussion" which shares the same root as "percussion" – the knocking back and forth of ideas to find a winner.

If you have ever played on a cohesive team, you know that the quality of the relationships can "up" everyone's game – performance improves and with it the capacity to recover from reversals. On fractured teams, by contrast, few might achieve their best. When Senge asked people about being part of a high performing team, what he found most striking was the meaningfulness of the experience. People talked about being a part of something larger than themselves, of being connected.

> *...for many, their experiences as part of a truly great teams stand out as singular periods of life lived to the fullest.*
>
> *Peter Senge*

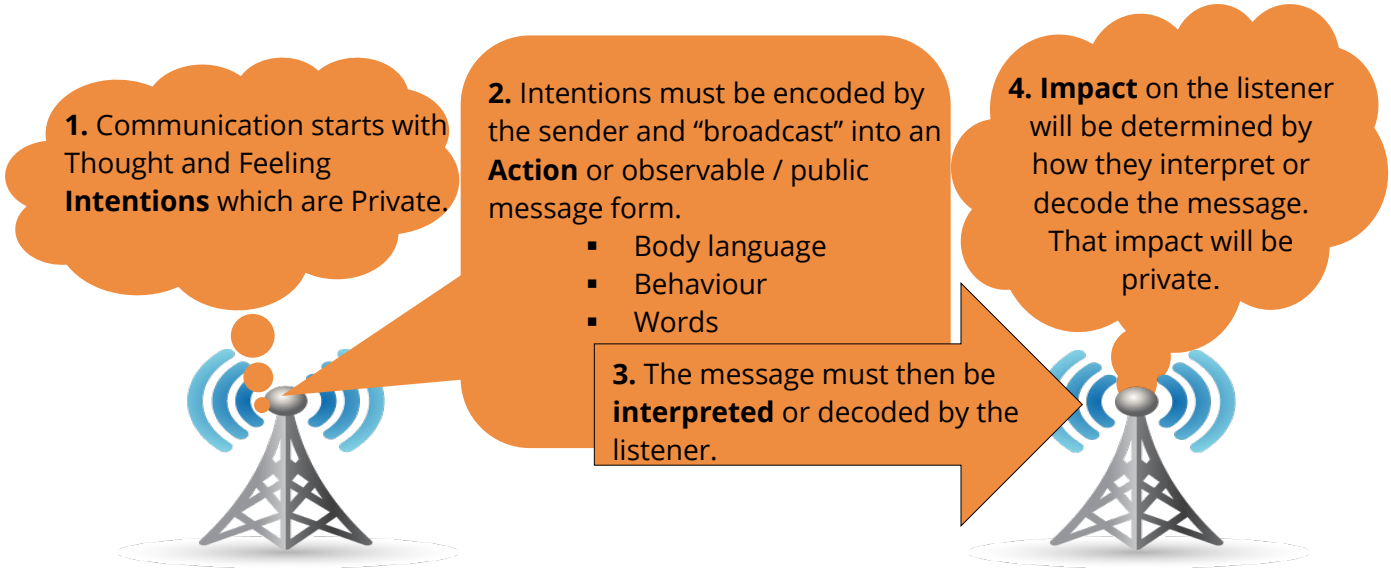
Developing and maintaining trusted, valued relationships and friendships that are personally fulfilling and foster good communication, including a comfortable exchange of ideas, views, and experiences, is fundamental to supporting ongoing resiliency and our ability to shape our future. From a resiliency perspective, the sense of family and esprit de corps that is often associated with emergency service roles is important because it is a support for those who experience challenging events or other setbacks in life.

While it's easy to look around to see how others challenge group cohesion, we have most control over our own contribution. Consider who you are and the role you play on the various teams of your life. Choose to be part of the glue that holds the team together, make those who are on the periphery feel like they belong, and look for, magnify and support the best of people's abilities.

Communicating for Accuracy

Communication skills are the foundation for group cooperation that is the primary resource for maintaining our resiliency as individuals and as groups.

Communication is a complex process that involves the translation (encoding) of our private intentions into public and observable language. The person we are talking to must then successfully hear, decode and interpret what we say. How they do this, and the context in which they interpret our intentions, will determine the impact of our communication on them and the extent that they will fully understand our message. Without a full context of information to assist decoding, and inform our interpretations, we risk reaching wrong conclusions.



1. Intentions are private - we know our own and can only guess at others.

2. Actions are public - they are the observable parts of communication. People vary in their skill in translating their intentions into an understandable message. How people encode their intention into the public message will also be influenced by stress, sleep, illness, gender, generation, family background, culture and life experiences.

3. Interpretation is private - it is highly dependent on the listener's state of mind, memories, beliefs and experiences. Like encoding, decoding is influenced by stress, sleep, health, gender, generation, family background, culture and life experiences.

4. Impact is private - The effect of our communication on the other person is determined by their decoding accuracy and interpretation, not on our intentions. We will often judge others by their impact on us while we judge ourself by our intentions.

In relationships or conversations that matter, it is often a good idea to give the other person the benefit of the doubt and explore their intentions rather than reacting based on our interpretations. We can improve communication, decoding accuracy and our understanding of others by deliberately prolonging our time in "receiving mode", staying curious and exploring whether our interpretation and understanding of what we have heard or seen is accurate. Exploring the full context of feelings and thoughts will assist in achieving accurate communication, as will informing the other person about the impact on us of what we have heard, and exploring whether that was their intent.

This is similar to communicating by radio, where we use specific techniques to encode our message (e.g. ALPHA, BRAVO, CHARLIE, etc.) to maximize the probability that the message will be decoded and understood. We also use specific techniques to ensure that we have understood a radio message (e.g. I repeat…) to check that we have decoded correctly. These techniques acknowledge the presence of interference that can affect communication and are deliberate strategies to ensure understanding.

People often misunderstand each other or get into conflict because they insist on being heard before they begin to listen. Listening *first* often paves the way for resolution. Experiment with these CPR skills in conversations that matter.

CPR for Communication that Matters

C – Keep **Calm** and get **Curious** and make sure you understand the person's experience and point of view: Listen Carefully and with Curiosity and Check out what you think you heard. Even simple words and context can mean different things to each person. Lead with your curiosity and listen to understand rather than to respond.

P - **Paraphrase:** Put yourself in the other person's shoes and try to see the world through their eyes. Paraphrase to make sure you've captured and understood both the content and the emotional impact of the experience.

1. **Paraphrase** the other person's words and the content of their message. *"Okay, let me see if I've heard you right…"*
2. **Paraphrase** Personal Impact. Go beyond the content and facts that you heard to reflect back how the other person is probably feeling based on what they've said and what you think you heard.

"That sounds like that was (trying, aggravating, surprising, sad, amazing, embarrassing, satisfying, irritating, mind-blowing, fun, fulfilling, a proud moment, anxiety provoking, terrifying, disgusting, horrifying)"

R - Keep the conversation focused on their experience, **respectfully** resisting telling any stories of your own that you might be reminded of until you have fully heard and captured their experience. Give the other person the gift of your quality attention. Convey an attitude of **respect** and interest, even if you feel frustrated or angry with the other person. Take the high ground in conflict by being willing to listen and striving to understand the other first. (Men in particular are socialized in hierarchies and trained to offer solutions or compete with our own stories - This can interfere with conveying that we are listening and that the other person matters to us).

Empathy – Listening to Understand

Empathy is about being able to understand another person's experience, including their perceptions, feelings and meanings. Listening with the active intent to develop a complete understanding of the other person's experience can be contrary to our inner feelings and state of mind. In order to listen empathetically, you first need to control your own impulses to defend, argue, or shut out perceptions that do not match your own.

Sometimes when we're trying to be empathetic, our mind and feelings are still focused on our own point of view. We may be trying to listen and understand, but the message we're sending is one of pushing our point of view.

This can show up as saying "yes" (responding with empathy) and then adding "but", which is followed by your point of view. For example:

I know you're frustrated with the program, but you have to be patient.

Versus,

Sounds like you're feeling increasingly frustrated. What's the part that isn't working for you.

Empathy is the willingness to accept and respect another person's right to their point of view and feelings, regardless of whether or not we fully agree with it.

We can never fully understand the experience of another, but the openness, willingness and effort to understand is a major factor in building rapport and

collaboration.

Empathic listening can:

- Defuse tension, anger, resentment etc.
- Reduce defensiveness and repetitive cycles of argument/debate
- Convey willingness and openness toward another person's experience
- Provide opportunities to change negative perceptions of the other person
- Provide opportunities for reflection and awareness
- Create an atmosphere of willingness to listen in return

The verbal and non-verbal skills that are part of empathy are a combination of intentionally listening to understand, deflecting personal impulses to defend, argue or fix, clarifying and exploring the other's experience, and paraphrasing and checking understanding.

Empathy is the fundamental skill deployed in mediation and negotiation, sales, people and issues management and for risk assessment.

Material adapted from "Conflict Resolution", (1996). Justice Institute of BC

Non-Verbal Communication R.O.L.E.S

Pay attention to the messages you give through your non-verbal communication. This includes your posture, movement, gestures, facial expressions, and the non-word sounds you make (e.g., sighs, grunts, hmms, etc.). If you are saying all the right things but your non-verbal communication says something else, the other person will probably pick that up and the conversation will go off the rails.

R - REGULATE your body - relaxed posture, breathe.

O - Adopt an OPEN body posture; uncross arms and legs.

L - LEAN toward the person.

E - EYE CONTACT to show you're present / attentive.

S - Face the person SQUARELY to indicate interest.

Three tips for communicating during conflict when preserving the relationship matters...

1. The disarming technique:
Find some truth or something to agree with in what the other person is saying, even if it at first seems totally unreasonable or unfair. It costs you nothing, often takes the other person by surprise, and reduces the level of conflict. "I get it. I can see how you'd see it this way and be upset about this. That certainly wasn't my intent."

2. "I feel" statements:
When you've heard the other person out and it is time for you to give your perspective be assertive, not aggressive, and express your own ideas and feelings in a direct, tactful manner. Use "I feel" statements, such as " I feel frustrated and angry" rather than "you" statements, such as "you're making me angry" (Watch that you don't go half way and say "I feel you're making me angry!").

3. Set the time and pace:
Be genuine and be present. If you can't be present or you're losing your cool, suggest another time for the conversation, or respectfully but firmly say you need to take a break.

Appendices

Tips for Family, Friends, and Co-workers of Individuals Involved in a Traumatic Event

Your family member, friend or co-worker has been involved in a traumatic event, also called a critical incident. A critical incident can cause people to experience unusually strong reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function either during the incident or later. Even though the event may be over, they may now be experiencing or may experience strong reactions. It is common, in fact normal, for people to experience acute stress reactions when they have been through a powerful event. These are normal reactions to an abnormal event.

Sometimes the acute stress reaction may last days, weeks, months and occasionally longer. With the understanding and support of family, friends, co-workers and supervisors, acute stress reactions pass more quickly. As well, trauma response interventions may help to prevent or decrease the severity and length of the reactions. Occasionally the traumatic event is so powerful that additional assistance from a mental health professional, specially trained in traumatic stress, may be necessary.

First Responder culture often promotes a model of stoicism and toughness that perpetuates the idea that first responders *shouldn't* be affected by the trauma that they witness. It is important to understand that ***we all can and will be affected*** by traumatic incidents eventually. We can never predict when or what we will respond to. It is important to promote a culture of preparedness, rather than a notion that first responders are "bullet proof". Research has clearly demonstrated that those people who are socially well-integrated, active and socially supported tend to be more resilient, regain resiliency more quickly and have better long-term health outcomes. Resiliency is not simply about the individual. Resiliency emerges and is maintained in the context of social relationships.

DO's

- Listen carefully even when they repeat their story over and over.
- Spend time with them.
- Give them some private time.
- Offer your assistance even if they have not asked for help. Don't be afraid to ask how they are doing.
- Reassure them that they are safe (if this, indeed, is true).
- Encourage them to eat well, exercise and rest.
- Help them with daily tasks like cleaning, cooking, caring for family members, minding the children.
- Call for help or support when you need it or when you want assistance for the person who was involved in the traumatic event.

DON'Ts

- Don't take their withdrawal from people or their anger personally.
- Don't try to explain why this event happened. It is not your job to fix it.
- Don't tell them to "forget the incident and get on with your life" or that "everything is okay".

Tips on Coping for Individuals Directly Involved in a Traumatic Event

You have experienced a traumatic event, also called a critical incident. A critical incident can cause people to experience unusually strong reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function either during the incident or later. Even though the event may be over, you may now be experiencing, or may experience later, some strong emotional or physical reactions. It is common, in fact normal, for people to experience acute stress reactions when they have been through a powerful event. These are normal reactions to abnormal events.

Acute stress reactions may last days, weeks, months and occasionally longer. With the understanding and support of family, friends, co-workers and supervisors, acute stress reactions usually pass more quickly. As well, trauma response interventions, may help to prevent or decrease the severity and length of the reactions. Occasionally the traumatic event is so powerful that additional professional assistance from a mental health professional, specifically trained in traumatic stress, may be necessary. This does not imply "craziness" or weakness.

First Responder culture often promotes a model of stoicism and toughness that perpetuates the idea that first responders shouldn't be affected by the trauma that they witness. It is important to understand that ***we all can and will be affected by traumatic incidents*** eventually. We can never predict when or what we will respond to. It is important to promote a culture of preparedness, rather than a notion that first responders are "bullet proof". Research has clearly demonstrated that those people who are socially well-integrated, active and socially supported tend to be more resilient, regain resiliency more quickly and have better long-term health outcomes. Resiliency is not simply about you as an individual. Resiliency emerges and is maintained in the context of social relationships.

DO's

- Even if you do not feel like it, do some physical exercise. This will alleviate some of the physical reactions.
- Force yourself to eat regular, well balanced meals.
- Eliminate or at least cut down on the amount of caffeine consumed—that is, no coffee, teas, colas, or chocolate. Instead, drink water, fruit juices, herbal teas, etc.
- Expect the traumatic event to bother you.
- Give yourself permission to feel rotten but share your feelings with others.
- Reach out – people do care.
- Talk with a trusted friend/spouse/colleague — talk is the most healing medicine.
- Call EAS for help or support if you need it — the earlier, the more effective.
- Help your co-workers by sharing your feelings and checking out how they are doing.
- Structure your time — keep busy.
- Allow yourself some private time but still spend time with others.
- Do make as many decisions as possible. These will give you a feeling of control over your life. For example, if someone asks you what you want to eat, answer even if you are not sure.
- Do things that make you feel good.
- Have realistic expectations for recovery.

DON'Ts

- Do not use legal or illegal substances to numb the consequences of the traumatic event.
- Do not take any medications such sleeping pills or alcohol for sleep.
- Do not fight sleeplessness — get up, read, walk, exercise, keep a journal, write your thoughts down through those sleepless hours.
- Recurring thoughts, images or flashbacks are normal — don't try to fight them. They will decrease over time and become less painful.
- Do not watch the news or read the newspaper if your incident is featured. Limit your exposure to the sights and sounds of the event.
- Avoid giving interviews to the media as this places more demands on you when you are already highly stressed.
- Don't label yourself as "crazy" or think "I'm losing it". Tell yourself that you are normal and having normal reactions to abnormal events.
- Do not make any major decisions or big life changes. Do not automatically stay away from work.

Adapted from Health Canada's
Psychological First Aid Training for Health Professionals