**Resilience**

Personal resilience matters now more than ever because so much of our ‘normal’ is changing around us, Charles Darwin once said:

“It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.”

**Strong Foundations**

Resilience in the face of COVID-19 needs to be built on strong foundations, in particular:

**1) Getting the basics right –** It is important to meet your basic needs on an ongoing basis:

* **Sleep, waking times and cleanliness** - regular patterns of going to bed and getting up, making sure you get the amount of sleep you need and getting washed and dressed each day;
* **Diet** - maintaining a healthy diet, accepting that limited availability of certain food products may mean you need to switch to other variants or try new recipes; and
* **Exercise** - making time for exercise, particularly if you are spending more time at home.
* **Leisure** - making time for things you enjoy.

**2) Believing in yourself** – Self-belief is also an important part of your foundation. It can be the product of childhood experience it can also be built up over time. You can use “cognitive reframing” to build self-confidence by countering negative thinking. This involves:

* **Thought Awareness -** Understanding the negative thought patterns, unpleasant memories or misinterpretation of situations which may interfere with your performance.
* **Rational Thinking** - Learning to challenge these thought patterns and either learn from them or refute them as incorrect.
* **Positive Thinking** - Replacing the negative thought patterns with positive thoughts, affirmations and beliefs.

A practical step you can take to counter negative thinking in this way is to maintain a thought awareness log. Like sharing a feeling with a friend, the very act of writing thoughts down will give you a more objective perspective and, by doing so over a period, you will start to become aware of repeating themes:

A thought log is simply a table with three columns as below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Negative Thought** | **Rational Thought** | **Positive Thought** |
| *The [task] go wrong?* | *I prepared and rehearsed thoroughly.* | *I am well position to do my best and that is all I can do?* |
|  |  |  |

**3) Reaching out -** This is the ability to ask for support or help without seeing it as a sign of weakness. Maintaining and developing support networks can help you with:

* **Keeping things in perspective** - Talking things through can help us see setbacks for what they and help us start to plan on our response.
* **Feedback and learning from your experiences** – Sharing with someone who is prepared to challenge you and whose judgement you respect can give you a new perspective to learn from.
* **Taking positive steps to recall the positive** – Acknowledging positive feedback from others and remembering it, perhaps keeping a note of it, can act as evidence to challenge the negative self-talk as well as building a sense of self-worth.
* **Identifying new opportunities** – By reaching out to others you may come across opportunities to gain new skills or gain new experience.

Sometimes reframing in this way is more than we can manage. A compassionate alternative at times like this can be [mindfulness](https://intranet.justice.gov.uk/guidance/security/emergencies/coronavirus-guidance/keeping-well/mindfulness/), where you’re not required to try and change or get rid of your thoughts and emotions, simply allow them to be there on their own terms.

**Building Resilience**

**4) Purposefulness** - Having a clear sense of purpose, clear values, drive and direction are central to resilience. If you find yourself questioning these in the confusion of COVID-19 you might find it helpful to reflect on:

* [**The Justice Story**](https://intranet.justice.gov.uk/about-us/the-justice-story/) **–\*** That Justice is the foundation of a safe, fair and prosperous society and that we are at the heart of the justice system.
* [**Colleagues’ Values stories**](https://intranet.justice.gov.uk/about-us/our-values/values-stories/)– \*How colleagues across the department live out our values of Purpose, Humanity, Openness and Together every day often in the face of challenge.
* **Your goals in life –** The shear unusualness of COVID-19 will give you the opportunity to reflect on your work and personal goals and may present for new opportunities to further them.

**5) Adaptability** – COVID-19 is requiring all of us to adapt to a new and rapidly changing set of circumstances. At your best you will find yourself handling problems and everyday frustrations in a calm, flexible manner. You will have good self-control and you will respond to situations in a constructive, adaptable way. At other times you may find you become irritable or impatient with everyday frustrations and react negatively to what is going on around you.

Getting the basics right, building your inner self belief will give you strong foundations and your sense of purpose will help hold you to them. The cognitive reframing approach described can be applied to building adaptability too by:

* Building your awareness of negative thought patterns about the current situation, for example recognising fear of becoming ill with COVID-19 or feelings of isolation
* Learning to challenge this negative thinking, by focusing on rational thoughts such as the precautions you are taking and the opportunities technology give you to keep in contact.
* Substituting negative thoughts with positive thoughts on the opportunities an enforced change of lifestyle may bring.

**Further Information**

[CSL Personal resilience workbook](https://civilservicelearning.civilservice.gov.uk/learning-resources/personal-resilience-workbook) \*

\*Please note that these links to the MoJ Intranet will not work on external home computers.