

# Resilience

Session #3 within "Health" Unit



VETERANS

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**ONWARD**

## Training Materials:

- Whiteboard and pens or flipchart and pens.
- Paper and pen for all participants.
- Printouts of access to resilience frameworks (see page 5).
- Access to printouts / email link to assessment tools:
- PTSD Checklist - Military Version (PCL-M) which can be accessed at <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/assessment/adult-sr/ptsd-checklist.asp>
- Repetitive Thinking Questionnaire (RTQ) which can be accessed at <https://www.midss.org/content/repetitive-thinking-questionnaire>
- Trauma History Screen (THS) which can be accessed at <https://www.midss.org/content/trauma-history-screen-ths>
- Journaling templates: copy for each participant, which can be accessed at <https://newwritingnorth.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Lockdown-Diary.pdf>

## Learning Objectives:

1. To define resilience and to name and describe components and indicators of resilience.
2. To recognise challenges that veterans can face in MCT, and how developing resilience can support veterans in this process.
3. To be aware of and consider the benefits of a variety of assessment tools that support developing self-awareness around our personal strengths and vulnerabilities.
4. To have experiential opportunity to explore how journaling can support the development of resilience for veterans.

## Training Script:

Hello everyone, how are you today? My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am going to be your tutor today for this training module on Resilience. It is the second of three modules within the “Health” unit. In the last session on Wellbeing, we saw how the 7 domains of wellbeing can contribute to a sense that we are flourishing, or languishing: otherwise known as thriving or surviving. We saw that wellbeing exists on a continuum, and our sense of wellbeing can fluctuate over time. Our sense of wellbeing can vary according to which domain we are focused on. We saw that self-care strategies and paying attention to our own wellbeing is important for MCT and veterans.

Today’s module will take between 90 and 120 minutes to complete.

You will need a pen and paper to jot down your own ideas and thoughts in response to some of the tasks.

Before we look at this session’s learning objectives, are there any points, questions or queries based on our last session? Has anyone had any more ideas about wellbeing tips, or challenges that face veterans?

[Allow 5-10 minutes as needed for facilitated discussion].

Our learning objectives for today’s session are:

1. To define resilience and to name and describe components and indicators of resilience.
2. To recognise challenges that veterans can face in MCT, and how developing resilience can support veterans in this process.
3. To be aware of and consider the benefits of a variety of assessment tools that support developing self-awareness around our personal strengths and vulnerabilities.

4. To have experiential opportunity to explore how journaling can support the development of resilience for veterans.

We will make a start on learning objective 1:

- 1. To define resilience and to name and describe components and indicators of resilience.**

The word resilience is often defined as bouncing back from adversity, or difficulty. When we think of the word resilience, we may think of the image of a bouncy ball.

A bouncy ball can be a helpful image to explain how a person might respond to some difficulty or problem. They don't give in when they hit the problem. Instead, they bounce back, they are resilient. Some people prefer a slightly different definition of resilience. Resilience can also be defined as bouncing up or even bouncing forward, that is, doing better than you'd think given the circumstances. Beating the odds can be a way of explaining resilience.

Resilience is a quality that we can develop and nurture within ourselves. That explains the differences in how individuals cope with adversity. Some people have had more experience of practising and developing resilience, and are more able to cope with adversity as a result. They are more resilient. Like a muscle, resilience is something we can develop through practice and repetition.

There have been numerous writers who have written on the topic of resilience, and it's now a popular and well-studied concept in psychological literature. One definition comes from the developmental psychologist, Ann Masten. She describes resilience as “ordinary magic”<sup>1</sup>. In other words, resilience isn't the actions we take that are particularly dramatic or earth shattering. Rather, resilience is the everyday stuff, the small choices and decisions we make and the small acts that help us to cope that little bit better with difficulty. This definition helps us to understand that it is possible to develop and foster resilience. Masten describes resilience, as “positive adaptation to adversity”<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 227-238.

<sup>2</sup>Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 227-238.

**Task:**

Spend a few moments reflecting on a time where you faced some difficulty or adversity in the past. Consider Masten's definition of resilience, as "positive adaptation to adversity"<sup>3</sup> and think about the ways that you adapted as a result of the difficulty. In doing so, you will have developed resilience.

Now try to write a sentence to express what you gained, and how you adapted as a result of the difficulty.

[Allow participants 5 minutes to reflect and write their statement. Following this, facilitate a 5 – 10 minutes discussion in which participants are able and invited to share their sentences with the group].

When we think about resilience in terms of veterans, and those facing MCT, we recognise that it can be difficult to transition from military life. There can be adversity and difficulties faced by veterans as they transition. For this reason, it is a good idea to support veterans in developing resilience.

To help us learn more about what we mean by resilience, we can use a tool called the resilient framework. This is based on the findings, ideas and practices, originally developed by Angie Hart and Derek Blincow in a book called *Resilient Therapy*, published in 2007<sup>4</sup>. This book was aimed at those working with children and young people to help them to remain positive when living with difficulty.

This book has resulted in further research and thinking around the idea of resilience. An organisation known as "Boing Boing"<sup>5</sup> has developed various frameworks to make it easier to put into practice some of the ideas within the original book. These are known as resilience frameworks.

Figure 1 provides an example of a resilience framework aimed at children. Figure 2 provides an example of the resilience framework aimed at adults.

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<sup>3</sup>Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 227-238.

<sup>4</sup> Hart, A., Blincow, D., & Thomas, H. (2007). *Resilient therapy: Working with children and families*. Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.boingboing.org.uk/>

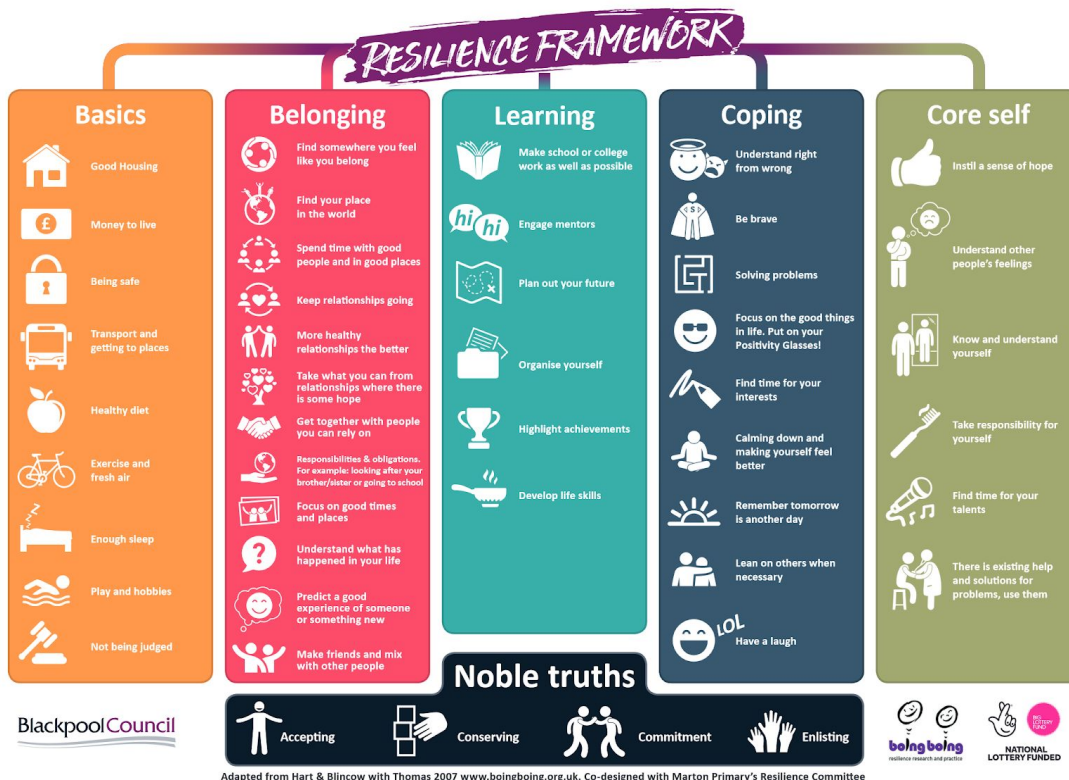


Figure 1 : resilience framework aimed at children

Resilience Framework (Adults) – Copyright Hart, Blincow & Cameron (adapted from original) www.boingboing.org.uk					
	BASICS	BELONGING	LEARNING	COPING	CORE SELF
<b>SPECIFIC APPROACHES</b>	Good enough housing	Find somewhere to belong	Make work & learning as successful as possible	Understanding boundaries and keeping within them	Instil a sense of hope
	Enough money to live	Help understand place in the world, & that others may face similar situations		Engage mentors	
		Tap into good influences (eg peer support)	Identifying & solving problems (reduce self blame and guilt)		Promote understanding of others
	Being safe	Keep relationships going (eg educator /support partners/carers/family)	Map out career or life plan		
	Access & transport	The more healthy relationships the better		Fostering their interests	
		Take what you can from relationships where there is some hope	Help self-organisation	Calming down & self-soothing (support reflection, not feeling overwhelmed by illness)	Help the person take responsibility for her/himself (self-advocacy)
	Healthy diet	Get together people the person can count on		Remember tomorrow is another day	
	Exercise and fresh air	Responsibilities & obligations	Highlight achievements		Lean on others when necessary
		Focus on good times and places		Develop life skills	
	Enough sleep	Make sense of where the person has come from	Develop life skills		Have a laugh
Predict a good experience of someone or something new					
Leisure & work occupations	Make friends and mix				
<b>NOBLE TRUTHS</b>					
<b>ACCEPTING</b> Interpersonal skills, empathy		<b>CONSERVING</b> Interpersonal skills, trust		<b>COMMITMENT</b> Ongoing support issues	
				<b>ENLISTING</b> Self (eg not passive), family, friends, mental health professionals, GP	

Figure 2: resilience framework aimed at adults.

Both of these Resilience Frameworks feature a number of “resilient moves”, small steps that we can take to improve our resilience levels. Each step might seem only a small step, a small move towards increased wellbeing. However, with practice, time and time again as we make more and more steps, it's been shown that we can develop that muscle of resilience.

The resilience framework is divided into five headings, covering:

- Basics
- Belonging
- Learning
- Coping
- Core self.

So, for example, a resilience move that helps us to work on the basics in our life is to simply make the choice to put in measures to get enough sleep. It may not seem like a big action, but getting enough sleep will help us to cope better with adversity and difficulty.

Under the heading of belonging, there is a focus upon social support and social networks. So, a resilient move from this category is to make friends and mix, to socialise, and to foster our social networks. As we saw in our last session on wellbeing, socialisation and social networks is an important aspect of wellbeing. In this framework, it's also something that can help us to be more resilient to cope better with adversity.

In the learning category, there are a number of resilient moves we can take, for example, we can map out a career or life plan and begin to think about the next month, next year, or even the next five years. This can be something that can help us to be more resilient, as we begin to think about the future and make plans about what we would like to achieve.

Under the heading of coping, resilient moves include things like leaning on others when necessary. That is another way of saying that we are more resilient when we tap into support. Having a laugh is another resilient move that helps us to cope. Both of these help us to be more resilient and cope with difficulty.

Finally, the fourth, the core self-column is very similar to the idea of identity. We can become more resilient when we have a stronger sense of our core self. So that might mean, helping us to know ourselves better by developing our self-awareness. Much of the learning and the tasks we complete in these modules has fostered our self-awareness. By doing so, we have become more resilient. Recognising and fostering our own talents, and recognising the things that we are good at can help us to be more resilient.

**Task:**

Spend a couple of minutes looking at the resilience framework. Choose to either use the resilience framework for adults, or consider looking at the resilience framework for children. The children's framework can still be a very useful tool for adults as it is attractive and easy to access.



From each of the five headings of basics, belonging, learning, coping and core self, choose one resilient move that you would like to put into practice over the next week.

From this list of five resilient moves., highlight the two that seem the most important to you. These are now your goals for the next week.

By practising these resilient moves, you are more likely to develop your sense of resilience; your sense of being able to cope with difficulty and adversity. Remember, the more practice we have at developing resilience, the better we get at being resilient.

[Allow 5 to 10 minutes for participants to identify their resilient moves, and to identify the two resilient moves they want to focus on in particular, over the next week.

Following this, facilitate a brief 5 minute discussion about the resilient moves participants have chosen to commit to working towards].

So far, we've defined resilience and recognised that it has an element of bouncing forward and coping with adversity. And we've also looked at the resilience framework which helps us to describe components and indicators of resilience.

We're now ready to move on to our second learning objective, which is to:

- 2. Recognise challenges that veterans can face in MCT (military to civilian transition), and how developing resilience can support veterans in this process.**

In our last unit on wellbeing, we recognised the seven domains of wellbeing.

These are:

1. Employment,
2. Finances,
3. Health,
4. Life skills,

5. Social integration,
6. Housing,
7. Cultural and social environment.

- We looked at some of the challenges that veterans can face on each of these domains. Let's remind ourselves of some of these challenges.
- We recognised that nearly 8 in 10 service members leave the military without a job.
- We recognised that over one third of veterans report financial difficulties.
- We recognised that some veterans experienced poor physical and mental health. Many service members leave active duty with untreated mental and physical health issues. Half of all military veterans report a significant physical or mental health issue for which they are not receiving care.
- We recognised that 1 in 10 veterans have considered suicide or made plans to end their life by suicide.
- We recognised that some veterans may not have sufficient life skills in the various domains that will be needed in the civilian environment, for example, managing money and budgeting.
- We recognised that social integration can be difficult for veterans who face the challenge of adapting from a military identity towards a civilian identity. There will be changes to a person's social networks, and social relationships as a result of MCT.
- We recognised that housing can be an issue for veterans with a significant number of service members, at least 40%, leave the military without having permanent housing arranged.
- We recognised that there can be cultural difficulties in MCT as the values and norms of civilian society can differ to the values and norms of military culture. This can cause what has been termed "reverse culture shock"<sup>6</sup>.

It is for all these reasons that developing resilience can be a real support to veterans in managing the challenges of MCT.

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<sup>6</sup> Bergman, B., Burdett, H., Greenberg, N. (2014). Service life and beyond—Institution or culture? The RUSI Journal, 159, 60–68.

**Task:**

Thinking about the seven domains of wellbeing. Consider what you anticipate will be the three biggest challenges you will personally face as you transition from the military to civilian life. Spend time thinking about this question, and reflecting upon it before writing down your responses.

Once you have identified the three challenges you anticipate will be the most difficult for you, consider how a resilient attitude, and the resilient moves of the resilient framework, could be useful to you. For each of the challenges, choose one resilient move from the resilient framework that could be beneficial to you in managing that challenge. Write these down.

[Allow participants 5 to 10 minutes for this task. Following this, facilitate a discussion in which participants are invited to share their reflections upon the task].

We are now ready to move on to our third learning objective for this session, which is:

**3. To be aware of and consider the benefits of a variety of assessment tools that support developing self-awareness around our personal strengths and vulnerabilities.**

Understanding the challenges, difficulties and adversity we face can be helpful in recognising the need to develop resilience. There are numerous ways of assessing our own vulnerabilities and challenges. Today we will look at three questionnaires that can support such assessment. Each of these three assessment tools are particularly pertinent to veterans transitioning from the military.

The first of these is the PTSD checklist military version. It is recognised that a certain percentage of military personnel experience PTSD or post-traumatic stress disorder. If we recognise that we suffer the symptoms of PTSD, we are then in a position to choose to access support. The PTSD checklist is one of the assessment tools on offer to you today.

The second assessment tool is the Repetitive Thinking Questionnaire. This helps us to identify patterns of rumination and repetitive thinking that we may experience. This can be an issue for some

military personnel, particularly if they experience anxiety. Again, this is one of the assessment tools on offer to you today.

And the final assessment tool I have for you today is the Trauma History Screen. Like the others, this is an assessment tool which asks you to answer a series of questions, allowing you to gain increased self-awareness about your own history of trauma. For serving military personnel and veterans, trauma can be something that they experience as a result of their duties.

**Task:**

[Invite participants to choose at least one of the questionnaires on offer. Allow time for participants to access and complete the assessment tools. This will take at least 10 minutes.

Following this, facilitate 5- 10 minute discussion, in which participants can share their thoughts, feelings and reflections upon the results of the assessment tool.

During this discussion, please reiterate how important it is for serving personnel and veterans to access support with mental health and physical health issues. Encourage participants to speak about their responses as a way of de-stigmatising mental health].

Our final learning objective for this session offers a chance for an experiential opportunity in which we can develop resilience learning objective for is to have experiential opportunity to explore how journaling can support the development of resilience for veterans.

Learning objective 4 is:

- 4. To have experiential opportunity to explore how journaling can support the development of resilience for veterans.**

Journaling can be an important tool in developing resilience. When we look at the resilience framework for adults, we see that under the heading of coping, identifying and solving problems is a resilient move. Under the heading of core-self, another resilient move is to know yourself. Under the heading of learning, we can highlight achievements to become more resilient. Finally, under the heading of belonging, we can focus on good times and places. Each one of these resilient moves can be supported through the process of journaling. Journaling is simply using writing, or sometimes pictures and artwork, to express how we feel about the day we have experienced allows us space to note, our feelings, thoughts, and responses to the day. Many people do this, freestyle or freehand by simply writing from the heart what they think and feel about the day. However, many people benefit from having some structure or framework, and that is what I'm going to offer you today as a resource. This resource will allow us a chance to reflect on the good times and places from yesterday. It will help you to highlight your achievements. It will help you to identify where you have problems and how you have solved those problems, and it will also allow you a chance to express how you feel, allowing you to know yourself that bit more.

**Task.**

[Provide participants with copies of the journaling template].

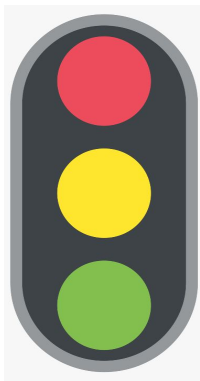
Using the journaling framework pro forma, ask participants to spend 10 minutes, reflecting on yesterday, as they do so they are to complete the pro forma using words, sentences or even sketches and pictures.

Allow 10 minutes for this task and encourage participants not to rush to this task, be reflective and relaxed, allowing time for participants to work on their reflective skills.

On completion of the task, lead participants in a 5 – 10 minutes facilitated discussion about their experience of journaling, what they liked about journaling, what they found difficult and how they might like to journal in the future].

That brings us to the end of our learning for this session on resilience. It would be great to hear how you get on with implementing your resilience moves, your goals to help you develop resilience. Remember, resilience is like a muscle – it develops the more we exercise it.

We are now going to complete our evaluation of this session’s learning. Using a simple traffic light system, I’d like you to evaluate your own learning. For each objective, you are going to decide whether you feel you are:



<b>RED / STOP</b>	You have made no progress in learning this and are still at a “standstill.”
<b>AMBER</b>	You have some understanding but aren’t quite ready to apply it yet.
<b>GREEN / GO</b>	You have a good grasp of this objective and are ready to go and apply this learning in the real world.

1. To define resilience and to name and describe components and indicators of resilience.

**RED   AMBER   GREEN**

2. To recognise challenges that veterans can face in MCT, and how developing resilience can support veterans in this process.

**RED AMBER GREEN**

3. To be aware of and consider the benefits of a variety of assessment tools that support developing self-awareness around our personal strengths and vulnerabilities.

**RED AMBER GREEN**

4. To have experiential opportunity to explore how journaling can support the development of resilience for veterans.

**RED AMBER GREEN**

What do you want to do as a result of your learning today?

Thank you to everyone for your engagement and participation in the session. I hope you have learnt some useful ideas that can be applied in your daily life.