



# Resilience

Lesson workbook

Your companion guide

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## General instruction for watching all Zone Positive videos



The “Pause” button is here. If you don’t see this bar on your screen, roll your cursor over the lower left hand corner of your screen and the bar should reappear. Click on the Right Arrow ► to resume watching the video.

**Important Note:** If you want to pause the video and go to another website, open a new window in your web browser. This will enable you to return to the video lesson and resume where you left off.

# Part 1: What is resilience and why is it important

## Key Points

Resilience involves our ability to respond well to adversity. What constitutes an adversity applies to a wide range of challenging events, from the trivial and annoying to the truly tragic.

In his book, *Developing Resilience*, therapist and coach Michael Neenan writes that there should be a distinction between the skills of resilience necessary for everyday irritants and those called on for significant traumas. What Neenan refers to as “competent functioning” involves our response to life’s relatively minor, quotidian issues. In contrast, what Neenan calls “true resiliency” is the art of coping with major, life-altering events. While it’s a common expression to say that we “bounce back” from adversity, Neenan points out that only the minor setbacks allow us such a rapid and complete recovery. Major life challenges, however, change us and don’t return us back to the point at which we were confronted by them. Rather, Neenan claims we “come back” from such life-altering experiences. And this coming back is often a slow and painful recovery process that will engage all of a person’s resources in order to face, endure, overcome, and hopefully be transformed by the experience.

In this lesson, we are going to explore the different skills of resilience needed to respond to a wide range of adversities. Depending on the magnitude of the adversity, your goals, coping techniques and timeline for recovery will be ultimately vary.



## Meet the expert

**Michael Neenan** is the Associate Director of the Centre for Stress Management, in Kent, United Kingdom. He is an accredited cognitive behavioural therapist and author of several books including (with Windy Dryden) *Life Coaching: A Cognitive-Behavioural Approach* (2002) and *Developing Resilience* (2009).

## Part 2: What enables resilience and what undermines it

### Exercise 4 Avoiding the sink holes

Complete this exercise using recent events in your daily life. Record examples of these events that might fit into any or all of the following categories. *Here's an example for jumping to conclusions: my sister called yesterday and asked what I was up to. I immediately assumed she was looking for a favor- like covering for her down at the club where she works. I could feel my blood pressure rising- I felt like I was being backed into a corner.*

Sink Hole	Signs:	What happened?
<b>Jumping to conclusions</b>	Responding impulsively to situations before you have full information. Loss of control over emotions.	
<b>Tunnel vision</b>	Focusing on the negative. On behaviors that mesh with your thinking (negative or positive)—ignoring data that could disconfirm beliefs.	
<b>Magnifying and minimizing</b>	Collecting all the information, but overvaluing some and undervaluing others. Leads to self fulfilling prophesy. Growth and change requires a balanced, accurate appraisal of the situation.	
<b>Personalization</b>	Reflex tendency to attribute problems to one's own doing. Often leads to depression and/or guilt (because others have been violated and it's your fault). You only see the internal causes of a problem and not the external cause. Resiliency requires accuracy. Self efficacy requires belief that you can change the internal causes.	
<b>Externalizing</b>	Opposite of personalizing. Problems are rarely your fault. Protects the person's self esteem. Externalizers fail to identify the problems that were genuinely their fault and within their control. They think everyone else has let them down. Prone to anger.	
<b>Over generalizing</b>	Character assassination reaction to problems (I'm a bad parent). Explanatory style (me, always, everything).	
<b>Mind Reading</b>	Those who jump to conclusions. Getting angry because others can't read your mind and know what to do/say. Gets in the way of problem solving. Ask questions to understand/clarify the situation before making assumptions.	
<b>Emotional Reasoning</b>	Falsely attributing positive emotion. I'm feeling good so I must have convinced them that I'm the person for the job. Drawing false conclusions about the world based on your emotional state.	

*\*Adapted from the ABC exercise, Karen Reivich Ph.D. - University of Pennsylvania*