

RESILIENCE

Guidelines

a key skill for education and job

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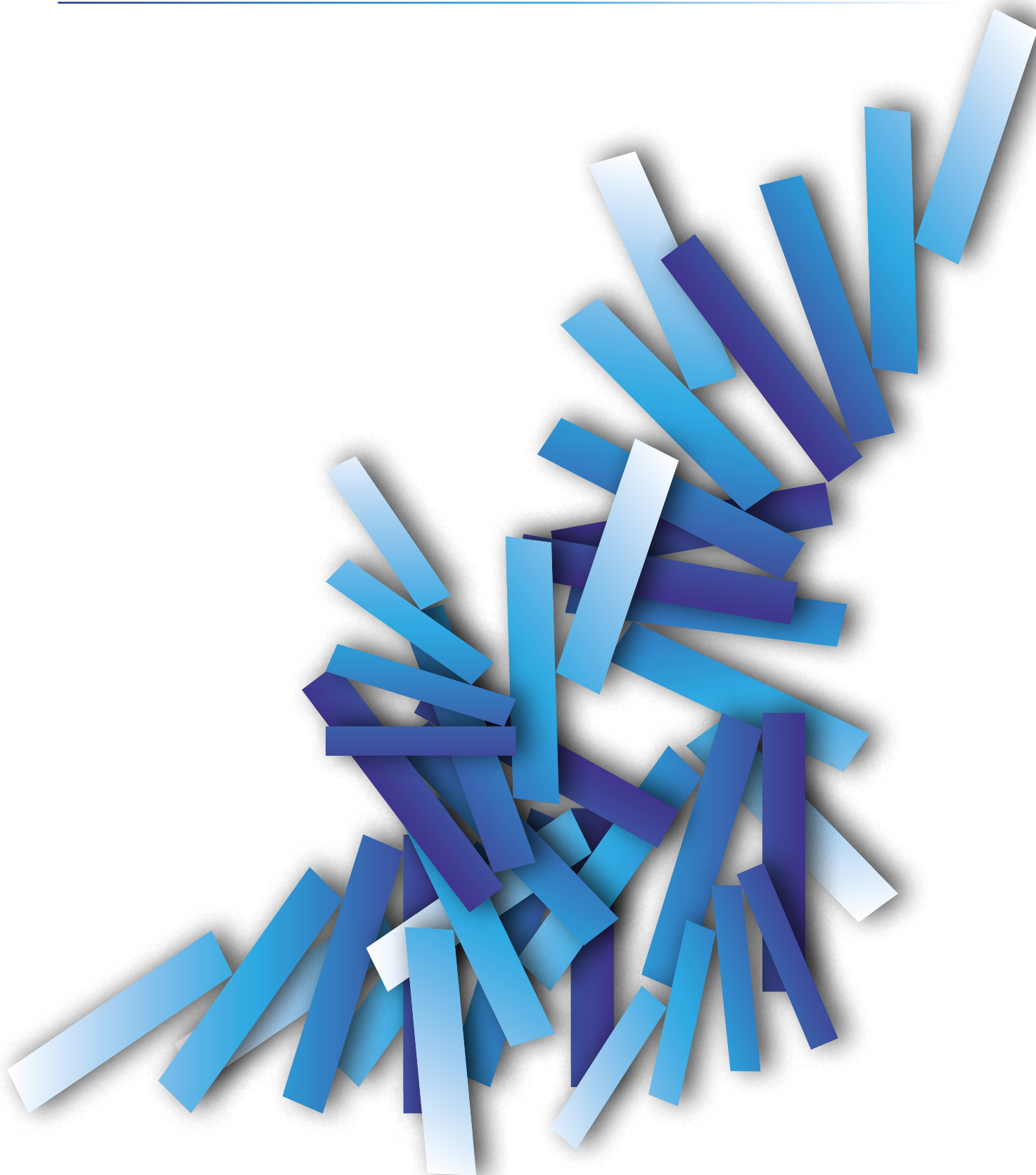
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PRELIMINARY



Preface

The resilience project

The EU funded project “Resilience – a key skill for education and work (duration 12/2012 – 11/2014)” has been focusing on developing ways to enhance resilience. Now resilience is a well-known concept and a lot of training providers, especially in the business sector, offer resilience training promising that trainees will become more resistant to stress and therefore the output of companies will rise and their employees, mainly managers and decision makers, will act more efficiently. This is true but

The intention of our project is not to reach mainly managers and decision makers with tailor-made exercises – although we agree that these professional groups have to deal with a lot of stress and therefore resilience training of course makes sense for this target groups. We believe that many people -especially those coming from disadvantaged target groups - can benefit from resilience training. So the main intention of our project is to establish resilience as a horizontal theme in adult education. To reach this aim our project targets multipliers in adult education and counselling. Our products are dedicated to trainers, teachers and counsellors working in the broad field of adult education, including business training as well as training for unemployed people, vocational training, language courses, IT courses, etc. The vision of our project is to enable educational staff – including those who have no psychological background – to introduce aspects of resilience as a horizontal theme into their daily pedagogical work.

In the two years’ lifetime of our project we have had good collaboration within our partnership and therefore we are proud that we have gained the knowledge and experience from eight different institutions coming from six different countries including training providers, a college and experts in resilience at university level.

These Guidelines introduce some practical tools for resilience training. The Resilience Project presents a three-part toolkit including Guidelines, Exercises and a Personal Profile developed by Resilience Project Partners to fit

into adult education and counselling. It is based on knowledge and experiences of resilience and health promotion gained from academic research and developmental projects in various European settings. We hope you will enjoy the tools and find them handy for your practical work.

The concept of resilience stems from psychology and is a way of explaining how people can manage life and live well in spite of adverse situations. As a concept within this field it was first developed for children and young people and has later been expanded into adulthood. Historically, the development of the concept has been defined in a number of ways. For example, Fonagy¹ argues that the first and most important key to resilience in childhood is based on reflective dialogue. This means that the person is being confirmed, seen and respected for what she or he is by a trusted person or a significant other. In short then, resilience research is looking for key factors that enable people to develop normally in spite of adverse life conditions where several factors are in play:

1. Individual factors (genetics, age, developmental stage, gender, constitution, life experience and life history).
2. The social context (social support, social class, culture, setting).
3. The quantity and quality of life events (desirability, controllability, magnitude, clusters, time-duration and long-term effects).

In adolescence research, for example, focus has been placed on how well the social arenas of the young – the family, the social and geographical context, cultural and historical context, the learning systems, the work place and daily activities – are all connected. The connectedness of these arenas has a major impact on resilience, life success and well-being. This was evident in various ethnic, social and cultural settings in over 60 countries. Naturally, the conditions and skills to manage are different and vary over time periods and differ in cultural contexts. This fact is important to take into

consideration when applying theories of resilience into practical work. With regard to competence development, it is important to understand and recognize that the competences that were applied yesterday are perhaps not functional today because conditions may have changed.

If we create processes where people perceive they are able to live the life they want to live, they will not only feel better but will also live better

Thomas Wenzel 2014

Klaus Linde-Leimer 2014

Resilience and health

Discussions on resilience cannot be undertaken without a discussion on the concept of health. Since 1948, when the World Health Organisation was constituted and included a declaration of health in its constitution, this has become the most commonly used definition: “Health is a state of complete wellbeing in a physical, social and psychological dimension and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity”².

This definition has been criticized but still remained central to the health discussion. This definition, in a sense, took the discussion on health out of a pure biomedical understanding because both social and psychological dimensions were included. However, the definition has been seen as too rigid and static and also “ecstatic” because of the formulation of “complete wellbeing” and too exclusive since by definition one cannot obtain “health” without the absence of disease which excludes all people with chronic disease or disability among others. If the definition somehow had stated one can have a complete state of wellbeing even if one is suffering from a disease it could have made more sense today. A further development in the understanding of health came with the WHO Ottawa Charter on Health Promotion in 1986. Without going into too many details (see the principles of the Ottawa Charter WHO 1986,³), health is now seen as a process that enables people to gain control over their health determinants, thereby improving their health in order to lead an active and productive life. Health is no longer a state but a dynamic process over time. This means that encountering a risk or major life event will not always lead to a permanent

loss of health because in a process over time where the risk or life event can be integrated into one’s life experience, it can eventually even become of benefit to overall health development and is comparable to the concept of resilience. The Ottawa Charter also focuses much more on people’s participation and involvement in their health development. Furthermore, it considers people’s contexts and living conditions beyond the traditional individual risk-health- behaviour-approach that previously was more the focus of public health and health education. After the Ottawa Charter, health as such is no longer as central as before since it now has become only the process that leads to an active and productive life or in other terms wellbeing and quality of life. Health promotion however did not at the time of the Ottawa Charter explicitly stand on a theoretical



Figure 1: Aaron Antonovsky

foundation but rather on principles which created the problem of not forming a clear fundamental to health activities and unfortunately for a long time, actions were more focused on individual risk elimination and health behaviours than on a comprehensive system approach where contextual factors are also considered in the overall process. There are several new theoretical approaches but for our discussion we want to emphasize the research done by Aaron Antonovsky (1979, 1987 and 1996) and the launch of the salutogenic

approach to health where assets for health and the ability to use these assets are central.

Health as such became a lifelong learning process. (See for instance the studies made by Lindström and Eriksson that undertook a systematic review of the global salutogenic research and staged an evidencebased framework for salutogenic research (Eriksson 2007 and Lindström and Eriksson 2010 in the list of recommended literature).

Bengt Lindström 2014



1 Fonagy, P. et al (1994) The theory and practice of resilience. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry. 35,2.231-257

2 http://www.who.int/governance/eb/who_constitution_en.pdf

3 <http://www.who.int/healthpromotion/conferences/previous/ottawa/en>

Part I: General introduction – an overview of resilience

Resilience has over the last decades become a key issue in a number of fields including school, adult education, and health care.

In the following guidelines, we provide you with an overview of the general subject of resilience, giving you information such as what resilience can mean, a very short summary of what we know about it so far and the manual for the structure and application of the materials provided on our web platform. This will help you to:

- » create awareness of resilience
- » teach and train in resilience in different settings and environments.

If you are interested in a deeper understanding of resilience or related concepts such as salutogenesis, we provide links and literature lists for further reading, summarising recent developments in some common applications of resilience training that illustrate how these activities can be embedded in work with specific target groups.



What is in a word? Language and the meaning of the term

While the term resilience is also increasingly used to describe social, technical, or economic phenomena (such as in “regional resilience”), in the context of this project, “resilience” is restricted to the psychological and health related aspects of the use of the term.

In general, resilience was originally seen as a physical and/or psychological trait or set of coping mechanisms inherent in the person, or a capacity on a psychological and (or) physical level that enables the individual to “bounce back” after adverse events.



Figure 2: bamboo as a symbol for bouncing back

More recently, it is increasingly seen as a dynamic process:

“Resilience refers to a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity.”¹

In this sense, the human being and resilience are seen in a holistic way, reflecting psychological, physical, neurophysiological, and social factors in health, psychological balance or functioning.

It should be noted, that the term used in this definition has originated mainly as an English language term based on specific observations and that translations into another language can suffer from the lack of an exactly corresponding word or concept², most commonly the word is directly transferred through its Latin root³.

Resilience is, depending on language and model used, seen as close to, related to or partly overlapping with related or similar concepts such as hardiness or salutogenesis (as described later in this manual).

What is it and how does it work? – a short history of research on resilience

Research and observations on what keeps people sane and healthy under difficult circumstances dates back further if a broader definition is used. Especially the experience of survival in the most extreme circumstances – concentration camps – has led authors to reflect on possible factors that

can support physical and psychological survival even in adverse circumstances. Key observations were contributed especially by those who had survived the camps, such as Leo Eitinger and Viktor Frankl.

1 Luthar, S.; et al. (2000). “The Construct of Resilience: A Critical Evaluation and Guidelines for Future Work”. Child Development 71 (3): 543–562.

2 This might have to be considered in the use of the project materials in different cultures and is addressed by one of the exercises as developing a common understanding of the term can be important in a training setting. In many cultures or groups, related terms can be explored

3 In historical dictionaries, such as for German the “Grimm” dictionary which is seen as the historical standard, the word is therefore usually missing.

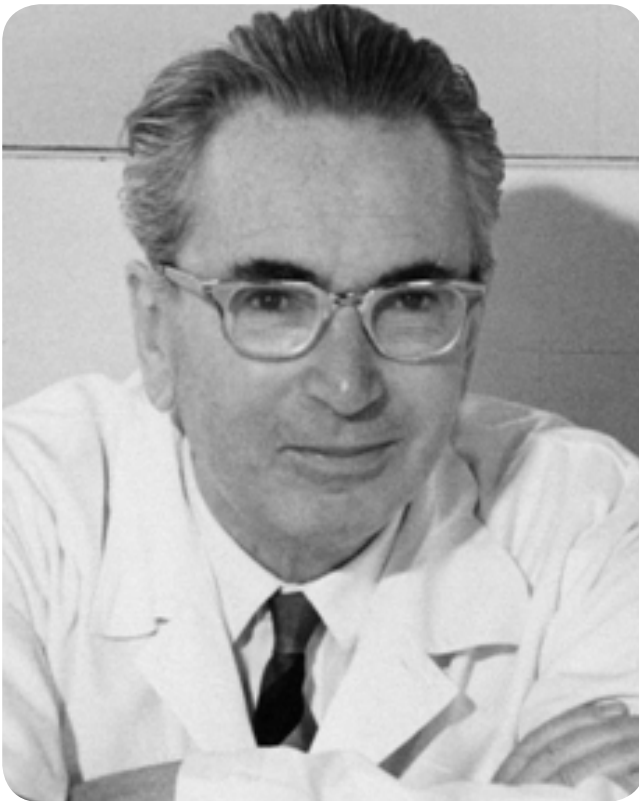


Figure 3: Viktor Frankl, (CC source Prof. Dr. Franz Vesely)

Viktor Frankl, for example, stressed the ability to give meaning to an experience as an indicator or predictor of better chances of psychological survival in such circumstances, building his model of Psychotherapy on this core concept ⁽⁴⁾. Recent studies have confirmed this aspect for example in survivors of torture ⁽⁵⁾.

Aaron Antonovsky developed his complex concept of “Salutogenesis,” at least in part, based on observations of a group of female concentration

camp survivors and postulated the “Sense of Coherence” (SOC) ⁶ as the indicator of physical and psychological health and survival in a continuously changing and potentially challenging environment.

One of the first authors to conduct systematic research on resilience was Werner ⁷ in the late sixties of the twentieth century. Her research on resilience, published in a number of books and articles, explored a group of children in a region (Hawaii) and observed that about a third of all high-risk children with a negative psychological and social environment – mostly those living under adverse circumstances - displayed “resilience”, i.e. grew into caring and competent adults despite their problematic background histories.

Resilience has been explored since then in different areas and with a large number of groups, leading to a number of possible factors that are seen to either contribute to or predict better resilience.

Most recent comprehensive models of resilience are as noted earlier based on integrated models that reflect the contribution of psychological, neurobiological, genetic, social, and general environmental factors in the development, presentation and outcome of resilience.

Some of the present concepts – similar to those modelling “intelligence”- differ between a more common model of a “universal” resilience that is equally strong in different areas and protects both physical or psychological health and a resilience that might differ in diverse areas and challenges.

⁴ Frankl V. (2006 (latest edition)): *Man’s Search for Meaning*, Beacon Press

⁵ Basoglu M. (1994) Psychological effects of torture: a comparison of tortured with non-tortured political activists in Turkey. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 151(1), 76–81.

⁶ Antonovsky, A. (1979). *Health, Stress and Coping*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

⁷ Werner, E. E. (1971). *The children of Kauai : a longitudinal study from the prenatal period to age ten*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press and Werner, E. E. (1989). *Vulnerable but invincible: a longitudinal study of resilient children and youth*. New York: McGraw-Hill

Your resilience – a given or can it be improved?

Resilience was described earlier, at least in research, as a trait that is part of the genetic and personality “set” a man or woman is either born with or develops in early or late childhood. Concepts to improve resilience have been proposed and tested in nearly all areas of life and have demonstrated that new skills with a corresponding rise in resilience can be acquired later in life. Results indicate that in fact training can

improve resilience or at least aspects of resilience in a significant way, an insight that has also led to the development of our project materials and probably to your interest in our project.

Such training models are for example quite a common offer in the area of capacity building in management, in education and in health. Some examples are provided later in these guidelines.

Can we measure resilience?

Though good resilience might be indicated by observation of outcomes in actual adverse situations, in research but also in the assessment of training or interventions, measurement tools can be an important tool.

Of course again it should be considered that the term and even concepts can differ between cultures. This also means that measurement might be culture dependent or reflect different models and interpretations of resilience which could best be defined in the specific setting.

Although a number of scales (such as the “Brief

Resilience Scale”) have been developed for measuring resilience, no general gold standard therefore exists and most review articles dealing with the issue conclude that no scale is preferable over the others.⁸

While the issue might not be of relevance in working with groups in a training environment, trying out at least one of the common instruments in the group can on the one hand improve the participants’ understanding of what resilience can mean, but can also be used for documentation of changes in resilience areas achieved as part of training.⁹

Why and when to train in resilience?

If we accept that resilience can be improved by training and exercises, it is obvious that this can in fact benefit everyone.

The positive outcome in relation to physical

and psychological health and social adaptation in individuals with higher resilience has been documented in numerous studies and successful training examples provide convincing arguments for all such activities.

⁸ Windle, G., Bennett, K. M., & Noyes, J. (2011). A methodological review of resilience measurement scales. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*, 9(1), 8.

⁹ A self-evaluation questionnaire is provided as part of our project.

Different fields – many applications

Based on the previously mentioned consideration, we give you short examples of how resilience teaching and training can and have been used.

Education – and how it can be structured

Resilience resources can be used at any level in young adult and adult training institutions such as schools, colleges, universities and community learning organisations.

As a horizontal approach, training can be used in a variety of ways including as part of individual or group tutorials, in counselling for those facing transition points in their lives, student support, healthy living promotions, or teacher training and in staff development. Special workshops and groups intended to gradually build a comprehensive set of resilience related skills can use sets of exercises marked for this aim in our platform as demonstrated later in this manual. Such a curriculum can and should reflect the special situation, priorities and cultural background of the participants.

If less time is available, more simple exercises used to create basic awareness, interest and key

concepts can be embedded into any course such as IT (computer) teaching, language learning, vocational qualifications, or other fields.

Resilience training can help students to develop positive coping strategies in order to:

- » Manage examination stress
- » Adapt to living away from home and take responsibility for learning
- » Adopt a healthier lifestyle (healthy eating, giving up smoking, etc.)
- » Develop stress management techniques useful for the workplace
- » Find solutions to problems such as bullying and harassment
- » Have more positive relations
- » Have a stronger self-image

Transition points in life

An individual faces many changes and transitions throughout life. Some of the changes are unforeseen whilst others are planned ahead. Individuals deal differently with the consequences of unexpected changes in their lives. The unexpected changes call on the individual to carefully look at their way of thinking and dealing with challenges. Resilience is a concept used in a positive way to describe the ability to 'bounce back' from life's challenges or transitions. Resilience is of great importance to adults and adults can learn and develop their ability for resilience by taking good care of themselves, rethinking their thinking

patterns and looking for ways to help themselves in times of crisis. People who believe confidently in their abilities are thought to be more consistent in overcoming challenges as well as being less susceptible to anxiety disorders and depression and more successful in education and professional life. Through resilience training, people can gain important skills like stress management, resource-seeking, flexibility and the ability to face the future in a positive way. Training helps them to extend their ability to take action, see themselves as self-efficient and realise their personal and professional ambitions.

Resilience for learning mobility

Moving to another country to accomplish part of an individual's educational programme, either within a study or work placement abroad, might represent a challenging process. For some, this might be the first time they have been away from home or from their country. Living in a foreign country, even for a short period, confronts learners with orientating and integrating into a new environment and establishing relationships with new and different people. Learning in another country is an effective way to explore new approaches and attitudes both in the work dimension as well as in life in general. This is potentially an enriching process not only

in terms of exploring the outside world but also it is a good way to become more self-aware. Like any educational process, transnational mobility challenges the learners who might feel isolated or discouraged when they need to improve their communication, interpersonal or professional skills.

Resilience is essential in this process, in the perspective of raising awareness of one's internal and external resources, and may help the individual to cope successfully with new challenges as they arise.

Resilience for entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurship is one of the priorities of European economic and educational policies, especially because, when compared with the USA and other industrialized countries, our entrepreneurial attitude and willingness to start up a company is somehow lagging behind. Over 98% of European businesses are small and medium sized enterprises and 92% are micro enterprises with less than 10 employees. The small size of European businesses is one of the critical elements making life difficult in these times of economic downturn and globalized markets. In this context, a number

of successful initiatives have been launched to support entrepreneurial attitude and capacity building such as, among others, the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs and the Enterprise Europe Network. Indeed, launching a small company in today's European economic climate is not an easy task and it represents an extremely demanding adventure, as newly established entrepreneurs are confronted with a number of complex issues to be dealt with. Resilience is one of the most important skills that entrepreneurs need to cultivate in order to successfully overcome daily challenges.

Business

If you want to be an entrepreneur, you need to be resilient. If you want to be a successful entrepreneur, you need to embed resilience in your mind-set.

An increasing number of business consultant agencies are now offering commercial courses



on resilience to managers and employees. Resilience is proven to be very effective in dealing with daily challenges as well as in adopting a strategic view in business management. Resilience may help entrepreneurs to identify the opportunities hidden behind the crisis, as suggested by the Chinese ideogram.

Figure 4 Chinese words for crisis and opportunity

The focus of our project – and who could benefit

Our materials aim to create awareness of the relevance of preparedness and resilience training and to empower trainers, teachers, counsellors and other specialists to efficiently train core strategies for improving resilience when working with disadvantaged groups facing possible adversities such as unemployment, social disadvantage or chronic illnesses. This will enable individuals:

► **to participate in lifelong learning**

By learning to cope with adversities, trainees can improve their self-esteem. Individuals with a higher self-esteem are more curious and open to new knowledge and therefore more readily participate in education that will in turn enhance occupational and general social functioning.

► **to take care of their own mental and psychological health – preventative health**

People belonging to disadvantaged groups are often prone to maladaptive strategies and a decrease in psychological health which inhibits them from finding new solutions and from learning in general. People with a higher self-esteem more strongly appreciate their well-being and therefore take more care of their health.

► **to improve their success in professional life**

By training in resilience, people gain skills like stress management, resource-orientation, flexibility and the ability to face the future in a positive way. They extend their scope of action and see themselves as self-efficient. This attitude facilitates and encourages the realisation of all personal and professional ambitions

► **to improve their coping skills in all other areas of life**

In the development of our project, we have encountered two particular situations or groups of participants that are seen to need all the coping strategies and resilience they can acquire:

- those who are at a high-risk at any time caused by either low resilience or by especially challenging circumstances (like going into a dangerous occupation field)
- and those who are already under severe stress or distress due to chronic illness or extreme life situations (like those encountered by persecuted minorities, refugees or even the long-term unemployed).

A further special group is professionals who face tough work situations and workloads, such as teachers, health care personnel and humanitarian aid workers who might be interested in teaching resilience to individuals but also need protective strategies in their own professional lives.

In the materials provided on our website, we therefore offer a broad range of exercises that especially target these two settings but can also be used in more everyday situations, such as in school and education, with less challenged or disadvantaged groups.

A special interview scheme, the “Personal Profile”, is provided as part of the materials and can be used to explore the needs and resources of individuals to give advice and select possible exercises that best fit his or her background, situation and challenges. This will be explained later on.

On the project website you will also find the country and framework analysis that explores how resilience is understood and promoted in the partner countries of this project.

Part II:

The “hands on” part – the materials on our website

There are four main products that have been developed in this project. They are described shortly first and then in detail later in this chapter.

All products are available on our project website: www.resilience-project.eu

Selection Box

The Selection Box is designed for all adult education and vocational qualification institutions and for trainers. It includes a selection of various resilience exercises. To make the Selection Box user friendly, all exercises are included in a database on our project website. Users can choose from several topics to find most suitable exercises that fit into their teaching schemes and learning environments.

Serious Game

A serious game is included in the Selection Box targeting at learners in different educational contexts. This online game is downloadable as an app and functions as a “teaser” to promote dissemination and engagement.

Personal Profile

The Personal Profile is a structured interview scheme and is designed for counsellors, trainers and other professionals to use in adult education centres, higher educational institutions, job centres, etc. This interview scheme aims to offer a holistic and preventive approach for facilitators and other professionals to systematically examine the strengths of individuals who seek support after facing stressful situations in life.

Resilience Self Evaluation

As another product of the project we designed from currently popular Resilience-theories a self-test that matches the search criteria “focus area” on the Selectionbox. It includes 3 questions to each focus theme and can be used as an introduction to the subject, as a separate exercise, as well as a tool to find suitable exercises. Another possible application is the documentation of changes of resilience during training.

Selection Box

The Selection Box includes 58 exercises that can be used with groups or individuals. The exercises cover various topics but they all aim to enhance resilience or to develop a workshop on this subject. To give a little insight into the variety of exercises, a list with the titles is provided here:

1. Multi culture discussion
2. ABC model
3. Acceptance of being alone
4. Active-constructive response
5. Areas of action control
6. Balance of choice
7. Balloon game
8. Bounce back
9. Challenging beliefs
10. Circle of friends
11. Coaching Group Motivation
12. Coaching Group Self-awareness for the future
13. Common denominator
14. Coping with loss
15. Experience your barriers and learn to love your problems
16. Giving compliments
17. Guided imagery
18. How to cope with stress
19. Laughing makes you feel good and others too
20. Learning to cope with stressful situations. Can you learn from others?
21. Lifestyles and values
22. Managing stress
23. Mind map for resilience
24. Move from problems to solutions
25. My hero
26. My personal factors for happiness
27. Perfectionism
28. Pleasant memories
29. Procrastination
30. Progressive muscle relaxation
31. Resilience and vulnerability line
32. Resilience in Movies
33. Resilience parcel
34. Resilient thoughts
35. Senses
36. Snakes and ladders
37. Take an instant vacation
38. Taking responsibility for one's life events
39. The 3 Cs of Resilience
40. The camel and the needle
41. The health treasure toolbox
42. The importance of listening
43. The power of laughing
44. The tiger
45. The treasure toolbox
46. The Why game
47. Thinking habits
48. Thinking traps
49. Three chairs
50. Understanding confidence
51. What is resilience?
52. When you are feeling stressed, rehearse for success
53. Why do you enjoy learning? Would you like to listen
54. Witness - Resilience in Movies - Cultural Differences
55. Yarn roll
56. You are a project in progress, so is your journal
57. You have got mail
58. Your Mirror for Resilience

How to select and use the exercises

In addition or as alternative to participation in one of our workshops, you can, as an experienced trainer, use the materials provided on our internet platform, referred to as Selection Box, in any setting or reasonable combination, as noted earlier, with your own exercises.

The Selection Box includes a set of various resilience exercises for use with individuals and groups. In order to make the selection of exercises as user-friendly as possible, the exercises are available online on the project's website. Users can easily find the right exercise by choosing different search criteria such as topic, group size, duration, etc.

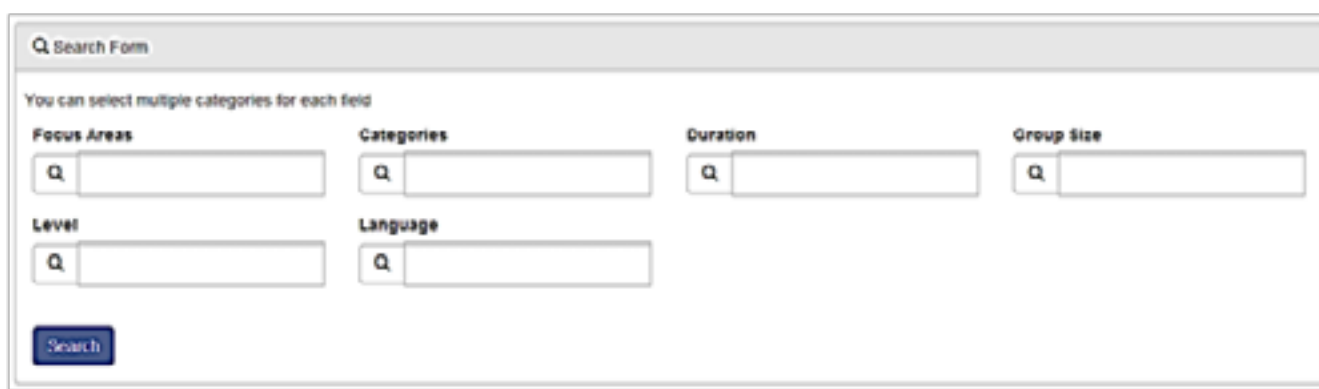


Where to find and how to search for exercises

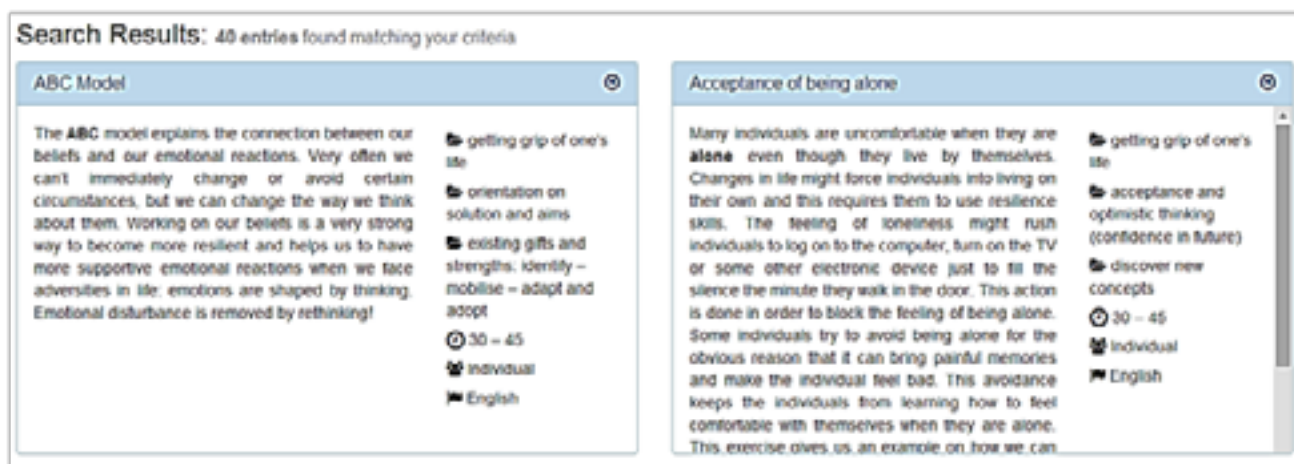
All exercises are uploaded onto our online database called Selection Box. You can easily get access to the Selection Box by clicking on the following link on our project's website:



You may use the Search Form (see the picture below) to search for exercises that fit your search criteria such as **language**, **group size**, **duration**, **category**, **focus area** or **level**. Just select the appropriate search criteria (one or more).

The 'Search Form' is a web-based interface with a light gray header containing the title 'Search Form'. Below the header, a subtitle reads 'You can select multiple categories for each field'. The form contains six input fields, each with a magnifying glass icon and a dropdown arrow: 'Focus Areas', 'Categories', 'Duration', 'Group Size', 'Level', and 'Language'. A blue 'Search' button is located at the bottom left of the form.

Then, click on the search button and the exercises that fit the search criteria will appear (Search Results).

The 'Search Results' page displays '40 entries found matching your criteria'. It features two exercise cards. The first card, titled 'ABC Model', describes a model for understanding beliefs and emotional reactions, listing skills like 'getting grip of one's life', 'orientation on solution and aims', and 'existing gifts and strengths'. The second card, titled 'Acceptance of being alone', discusses the discomfort of being alone and the importance of resilience, listing skills like 'acceptance and optimistic thinking' and 'discover new concepts'. Both cards include a duration (30-45 minutes), a group size (individual), and the language (English).

Click on an exercise title to view the specific exercise. Log in yourself on the platform. If you don't have an account, please register first. After login, you may view the exercises online. You may also download the exercise as a pdf file.

ABC Model

[Download as PDF](#)

Exercise Code: BLICK_1_EN

Focus Areas	Categories	Duration	Group Size	Languages
📁 getting grip of one's life 📁 orientation on solution and aims	📁 existing gifts and strengths: identify – mobilise – adapt and adopt	⌚ 30 – 45	👤 Individual	🇬🇧 English

Introduction

The **ABC** model explains the connection between our beliefs and our emotional reactions. Very often we can't immediately change or avoid certain circumstances, but we can change the way we think about them. Working on our beliefs is a very strong way to become more resilient and helps us to have more supportive emotional reactions when we face adversities in life: emotions are shaped by thinking. Emotional disturbance is removed by rethinking!

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the exercise individuals will:

- bear in mind that people have different reactions to adversity and stress
- bear in mind that our beliefs or thoughts about adversity cause our reactions—how we feel and what we do in stressful situations.
- recognize that our beliefs about adversity affect how we feel, and consequently what we do (the ABC model)
- be able to challenge their beliefs about why things happen - uncovering our thinking style
- be able to develop an awareness of common thinking traps or errors
- will understand that our core beliefs about the world may be preventing us from taking opportunities

How to select the right exercises based on their classification

To guide you in the selection and, if necessary, in the development of a curriculum reflecting your specific teaching or training situation, we have classified all exercises and materials based on form and content. A number of guiding markers or tags have been added as little helpers for selecting the right exercises for your setting and participant group.

Form based classification

The general and technical aspects used in the classification of exercises include **duration** for time frame and **group size**. The duration listed can, of course, be seen only as a general indicator and the actual time taken depends on your participant group and setting (see also “A few points to keep in mind”).

Content based classification

Content is classified based on two models:

- **the Focus Area (key aspects)**
and
- **Categories (didactical aspect).**

Focus areas

The first classification reflects the focus areas (key aspects) of the specific exercise:

Focus Area	
perception	how to focus on the present and make the best of “here and now” and find the balance between the past-oriented thinking, present-oriented thinking and future-oriented thinking
getting a grip on one’s life	how to manage one’s life, how to find one’s own coping strategies, how to master stress, obstacles and problems and become aware of positive aspects
forming relationships	resilience and wellbeing as a result of sharing with other people
acceptance and optimistic thinking (confidence in future)	thinking skills that foster resilience in daily life
orientation on solution and aims	getting away from problem thinking and developing thinking skills that enable solutions
healthy lifestyle	a “salutogenic” approach which keeps one physically and mentally healthy to empower one’s resilience
self-efficacy	getting to know one’s strengths and the possibility of using one’s own resources in everyday life

As a special “extra” we have also collected some exercises that you can use to start your seminar. These exercises are “warm up exercises” aiming at forming a productive group of participants. For these exercises we have created another search criterion in our database:

Focus Area	
getting to know each other	exercises to use at the very beginning of a seminar

Categories

The second model characterises exercises in a way that can guide you in building a didactical sequence of exercises based on a possible curriculum or on the needs of a specific group of participants.

Didactical aspect	
awareness - what is resilience and why is it relevant	Awareness is required to become aware of the concept and relevance of resilience, as it is not generally known.
experience resilience	Experiencing what resilience on a practical and emotional level can mean is a deeper form of knowledge than that limited to formal knowledge.
existing gifts and strengths: identify – mobilise – adapt and adopt	Most people are also not aware of their strengths and resources – realising, activating, and adapting them to different situations is the most important step in becoming resilient.
discover new concepts	Discovering new concepts – for example taken from models and examples – can extend the range of skills.
make a personal resilience-plan	Integrating all elements into a strategic plan to be embedded in everyday life is a necessary next step to make resilience a living part of life.
additional opportunities to learn about resilience	As a final step of lifelong learning, new skills can be integrated on a continuous basis if we open up and are active in searching for new knowledge and experience.

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Serious Game

You can easily start the online game by clicking on the following link on our project's website:



The main purpose of the game is to promote “awareness of resilience”, on the different dimensions and components and on their relevance for education and for life in general.

The user playing the game has to solve a problem: help the chosen avatar to become more resilient.

The user is asked to pick up, by clicking the mouse, positive keywords which refer to the concept of

resilience. The keywords appear on top of the screen and they fall down at different speeds and with different paths as leaves from trees.

The user is asked to pick up those positive keywords which refer to the concept of resilience and protect herself/himself with an umbrella from other keywords which do not refer to resilience.

For each positive keyword grasped, the user gets points / or positive energy life.

The positive keywords go into the “**resilience energy bar**”, showing in real time the progress made by the user in terms of increased energy/ higher level of resilience.

After a certain time, something new and unexpected happens: the user faces randomly a life challenge.



Figure 7: welcome screen of our online game

Content and text appearing in the game is based on and related to scientific research:

- » The list of keywords is based on the Signature Strengths¹⁰ made by Peterson and Seligman and organized according to the Resilience content structure.
- » The life challenges are chosen from the Holmes and Rahe stress scale.¹¹

The user is asked to think about the life challenge and pick up from the “resilience energy bar” the chosen keywords which are necessary to cope with and overcome the problem. Only keywords, which have previously been collected by the user, are available.

To be sure that users learn more about the resilience-keywords they have to allocate the right description (three optional descriptions are available for each keyword) to each keyword. If the user chooses the right description she/he can keep the collected keyword. If she/he chooses a wrong description the collected resilience-keyword is lost.

Once a life challenge is overcome a new cycle starts: (positive and negative) keywords may fall allowing the user to gain more resilience or lose it and then confronting the user with a second life challenge.

The game has:

- » 6 avatars to choose from, each with own characteristics, introduced by short profile description
- » Each avatar will have to accomplish 3 circles with peculiar 3 life challenges in total

The game ends showing the score gained by the user, based on the positive keywords collected and the reactions to the life challenges faced.

The game displays a final picture of how resilient the user is. The final picture can be saved and/or shared via social platforms like Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn.

10 Peterson, C; Seligman, M E. P. (2004). Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 106

11 Holmes TH, Rahe RH (1967). “The Social Readjustment Rating Scale”. J Psychosom Res 11 (2): 213–8.

The Personal Profile

The Personal Profile aims to offer a holistic and preventive approach for facilitators and other professionals to systematically examine the strengths of individuals who search for support after facing stressful situations in life. The Personal Profile is an interview scheme based on a theoretical framework using theories in educational career, group counselling and resilience. It is mainly based on storytelling, sharing positive past experiences and asking open-ended questions based on Glasser's¹² needs.

The interview scheme is a tool to use in order to make the individual feel safe and secure while working on enhancing resilience. It is both structured and visual. The dialogue between the facilitator and the individual is based on seven clusters. The clusters are symbols of various aspects of the individual's life. An illustrated diagram is used when discussing the clusters. It gives the individuals a better overview of the discussion and makes the approach holistic.

The facilitator and the individual discuss the clusters in order to examine his/her relationships and experiences and to receive a different perspective on specific issues. (The clusters to discuss are School/Career Development, Family, Peers, Strengths, Lifestyle, Hobbies and there is also one empty cluster.) The main idea is to have the individual tell a story about his/her life

related to the subject of the cluster. One cluster is left empty in order for the individual to select a specific matter in his/her life that is not mentioned in the other clusters.

The interview begins with the facilitator introducing a picture or diagram of the clusters and explaining that these are important factors in every person's life. The facilitator and the individual make an agreement to talk about the clusters and to select one after the other. The individual selects the first cluster then the counsellor and then the individual again and so on. The goal is to find resolutions to problems the individual is facing and perhaps to use one of the exercises in the selection box to help the individual to become more resilient.

During the conversation between the individual and the facilitator, the individual receives an opportunity to share short moments that explain a small part of his/her life. The aim is to share positive past experiences. Then the facilitator discusses the present and the future in order for the individual to make positive decisions for the future. Finally they make plans for the future and write down goals and an action plan.

A detailed description of the Personal Profile is available on our project website. You can download the Personal Profile on our project website:

¹² Glasser, W. (2001). *Counseling with Choice Theory, The New Reality Therapy*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers Inc.)

Self-evaluation for teachers/trainers

How resilient are you?

The self-evaluation questionnaire consists of 21 questions – 3 for each of the seven categories or areas of development in the selection box.

The seven categories are:

- » **perception**
- » **getting a grip of one's life**
- » **forming relationships**
- » **acceptance and optimistic thinking
(confidence in future)**
- » **orientation on solution and aims**
- » **healthy lifestyle**
- » **self-efficacy**

Therefore, if you discover you have a need for development or training in one of the categories, you can find exercises for this specific focus area in the selection box.

You can make use of the self-evaluation in different ways:

1. Participants in adult education can use it during resilience training for self-evaluation. You can give it to your group in all stages of the training: As an introduction to the topic, in combination with one or more exercises or at the end of the course. It has also proven efficient as an evaluation tool by using it at the start of a course and again at the end (status before and after the training).
2. Trainers can ask their participants to fill in the questionnaire at the beginning of a training session to find out more about the group's specific needs and select exercises accordingly.
3. In coaching, it can be used as a process-related instrument. Each statement is an important component of resilience that can be treated individually.
4. To give you an idea of where you stand at the moment, we recommend taking the self-evaluation test yourself before giving it to your participants, clients or patients.

We believe in Lifelong Learning and we want to underline the fact that also the teacher, trainer and counselor is learning while he or she is in the situation of teaching, training or counseling. We think that it is important for you to have a point or reference regarding your attitude to resilience. This questionnaire has no scientific approach, but we are sure that the questions can support you in reflecting your point of view on resilience and can

assist you further in choosing the materials which best suit your target group.

By clicking on this link on our project website you will get access to the Self-Evaluation Tool:



Part III:

Implementation of resilience exercises

The use of our exercises in different learning settings

Now, let's take a look at how you can incorporate exercises from positive psychology, specifically in the field of resilience research, in various teaching settings. Certainly, the specific kind of training/teaching plays a big role - the context, so to speak, in which you want to use one of our exercises. We're sure you'll agree: it definitely makes a huge difference whether you plan to use resilience exercises in a personality development course or if you want to incorporate resilience exercises for example in the curriculum of an ICT course. And most likely you will have to consider completely different things if you intend to include resilience as a topic in a language course.

Or not? Could it be that they all have something in common, that there is a general approach that can be applied in all kinds of different learning settings and forms of training? Of course, since one has even raised this question, the answer is a definite yes.

One of the biggest responsibilities of coaches/teachers in adult education is to provide a setting, a suitable environment, in which learning experiences become possible, in which the participants can literally be trained. An important principle of seminar planning - we also like to speak of seminar design in this context - is the concept of focusing attention. To what in particular do I want to draw the attention of my participants during a training session? What framework do I create by choosing a certain type of exercise so that my seminar participants will (can) experience a task from a certain viewpoint?

Do you already know where we're heading with this? As coaches/ teachers we have a certain influence on learning experiences, simply because we can focus the participants' attention on specific tasks by the selection and sequence of our methods.

We have used this fact to our advantage and developed three different levels for the use of our resilience exercises, aiming to address the topic either in a quite subtle or a very explicit way.

The three levels are:

- ❖ Level 1 - resilience along the way or "the secret resilience agent"
- ❖ Level 2 - resilience and emotional state as a driving force of effective learning
- ❖ Level 3 - resilience seminars

By using these three levels, our resilience exercises can be implemented in many different learning/training settings.

But why don't you just let us tell you a little bit about the experiences we had and collected during the testing of our resilience exercises in different contexts of learning and training.

Level 1 - Resilience along the way or the “secret resilience agent”

This method was named the “secret resilience agent” because it is an approach in which the participants are not explicitly told that their task is an exercise to enhance resilience. Resilience exercises or parts of resilience exercises are incorporated in the context of subject-specific exercises. We think a practical example will make this clearer.

Snowdon could prove empirically that there is a clear correlation between longevity and life satisfaction.

The participants/students were not explicitly informed that they were given food for thought about a topic connected to resilience while they were making progress in spreadsheet analysis at the same time. Still, we focused their attention on resilience through the content of the exercise.

We chose a similar approach for a training session/lesson on word-processing programs. The texts we gave our participants/students for formatting addressed the topic of resilience. In the training sessions about creating slideshows, we gave them the assignment to make a meaningful presentation about various topics that promote resilience. We simply used the structure of our database of resilience

exercises and asked the participants/students to illustrate and present these topics clearly. In both examples, we did not tell our participants explicitly that they were also working on a resilience exercise along the way. But besides their actual assignment of learning different skills in the ICT field, their attention was directed towards the topic of resilience by the texts and information they received – successfully. Talking to the participants during breaks, it became clear that they were in fact pondering the resilience related topics they had become acquainted with. So, you could say, tongue-in-cheek, that we made subliminal advertising for resilience in our ICT courses. We chose a similar approach for our language courses, selecting texts about positive psychology to talk about in conversation rounds

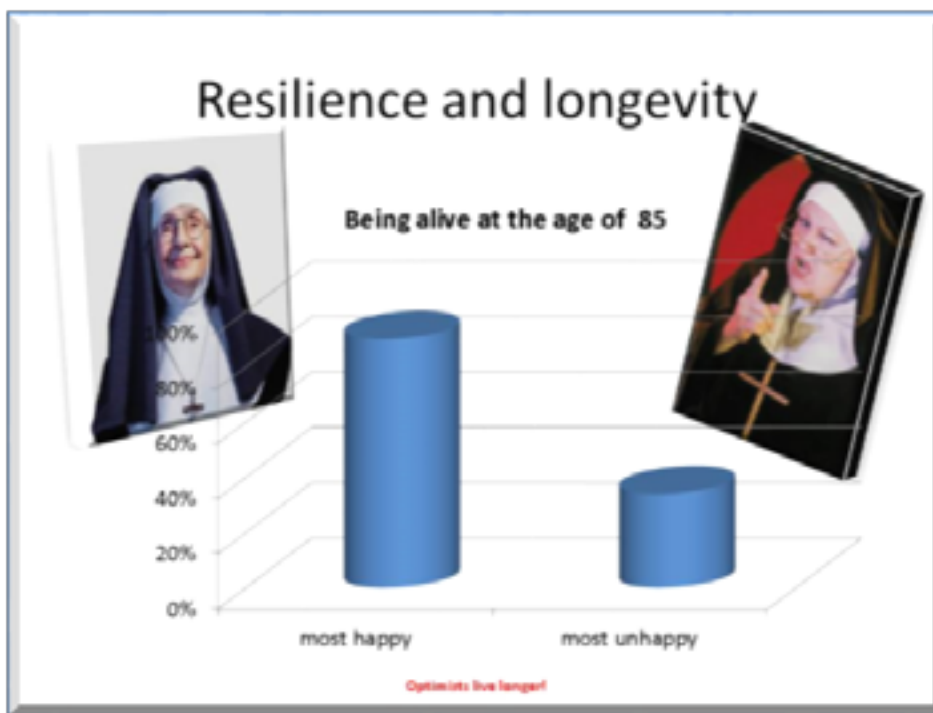


Figure 5: example of introducing resilience into ICT

Let's look at a training session/ lesson in an ICT course, for example. The participants/students are studying the topic of spreadsheet analysis, learning how to create tables and translate data from tables to meaningful graphs. In Level 1, the coach/teacher could give the participants data about the results of resilience research as material for their tables. In this very specific case, we have presented the results of the so-called “nun-study” and asked them to display the results as a bar chart.

The nun study¹³ was conducted by epidemiologist David Snowdon at the University of Kentucky (Sanders Brown Center). It ran from 1986 and about 600 American Catholic nuns participated.

¹³ Snowdon, David (2001): Aging with Grace: What the Nun Study Teaches Us About Leading Longer, Healthier, and More Meaningful Lives. Bantam

or translating one of our many resilience exercises with the participants/students.

If you take a detailed look at the texts of our resilience exercises or look at the texts of the general part of these guidelines, you'll surely find enough material to use in your training sessions/lessons for Level 1. Additionally, we've labelled the exercises that are particularly suitable for this level so you can get a quick overview of adequate exercises for your seminar/course planning.

Level 2 - Resilience and emotional state as a driving force of effective learning

In this approach, we explicitly point out to the participants that the following task is a resilience exercise. As we have emphasised at the start of this text, we as coaches/teachers are primarily responsible for the creation of a framework in which we enable our participants to make learning experiences.

We can offer suitable conditions for our participants to acquire new knowledge and consolidate content mainly through the selection and sequence of methods and our seminar design.

What factors promote the ability to concentrate in our participants? The relevant literature lists the following factors¹⁵ that contribute to the power of concentration: environmental conditions, nutrition, physical and **emotional state**, the latter being the **most significant**.

- ▶ **Emotional state:** Perceptiveness and concentration improve in a positive state of mind and decrease during negative states of mood.
- ▶ **Physical state:** mental and physical health benefits the power of concentration.
- ▶ **Nutrition** can influence the ability to concentrate.
- ▶ The **surrounding conditions** also influence concentration.

To summarise and round off the description of Level 1, we would like to add that the underlying idea is always that our mood follows our attention - a concept often used in the hypnotherapy approach.¹⁴ If we choose content that draws our participants' attention to aspects of resilience research, we contribute to the process of our participants starting to think more about resilience and how they can actively shape their own lives.

The factors interact with each other.

We coaches/teachers try to communicate openly with our participants/ students right from the start, telling them we feel responsible for the entire process of training/teaching and therefore want to offer the best possible conditions and framework to promote their concentration.

An important principle of "theme-centered interactions (TCI)"¹⁶ is the sentence: "Disturbances take priority." To convey the content that I want in my lessons effectively, I have to keep my focus on all three vertices of the triangle as well as the surrounding globe.

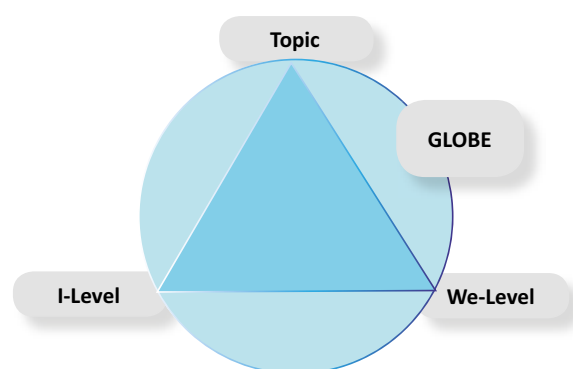


Figure 6: Theme centered interactions

¹⁴ Schmidt, Gunther (2006): Systemische und hypnotherapeutische Konzepte für Organisationsberatung, Coaching und Persönlichkeitsentwicklung, Verlag: Auditorium Netzwerk, Augsburg, Hörbuch

¹⁵ Brunner, R. & Zeltner, W. (1980): Lexikon zur Pädagogischen Psychologie und Schulpädagogik. München: Ernst Reinhardt, GmbH & Co, Verlag.

¹⁶ Cohn, Ruth (1975): Von der Psychoanalyse zur themenzentrierten Interaktion. Von der Behandlung einzelner zu einer Pädagogik für alle. Stuttgart

Ruth Cohn, founder of TCI, observed that the content level at specialized symposia had often suffered because too little attention was paid to the sensitivities and concerns of individuals (I – level), to the group dynamics (we - level) and to the influences of the surroundings (Globe), the conditions under which the event was held.

When we coaches/teachers, keep these two principles in mind

- » the emotional state of my participants/students has a large influence on their ability to concentrate during the training session/lesson
- » I always have to keep an eye not only on the content but also on the well-being of each individual, the current group dynamics and the surrounding influences.

It becomes possible, and in an authentic way, to briefly interrupt the actual content of your training session/lesson and try to increase the concentration of your participants/students through an appropriate intervention. A good way to do that is to use our resilience exercises.

It's obvious that in this context, rather short

exercises that can be integrated in the lesson quite easily due to their length, only parts of an exercise or extremely shortened exercises are suitable.

With this knowledge and inner attitude as a coach/teacher, it is also possible that, for example, ICT trainers specifically incorporate resilience exercises in their teaching because they can thereby increase the attention of the participants (emotional state as the most important factor influencing the ability to concentrate). Coaches/teachers that can make participants understand their own mandate for being responsible for the overall framework of the training/course usually have - and that is in fact our experience within this project - no problems in making the participants understand the usefulness of such interventions.

But how did we proceed practically?

In the beginning of our specialised training sessions, we often used exercises from the category “perception” because these exercises have a relaxing effect and are therefore adequate for “loosening up” the course. When our participants had become used to the incorporation of resilience exercises, we started to also use exercises from other categories of our database.

Level 3 - Resilience seminars

Level 3 is finally and ultimately about designated resilience seminars. In a school setting, project days devoted to this topic would be appropriate. In the training area, either individual training days, devoted exclusively to resilience within a long-term course or actual resilience seminars in the field of adult education are possible.

Coaches/teachers who want to offer this type of training need a profound knowledge of psychology and should also be familiar with the field of resilience. A good overview of resilience research can be found, of course, right here in these guidelines in the general part.

We propose two different options for planning these kinds of seminars.

- » **Option 1:** You want to improve one particular aspect of resilience, the one you deem most important for your participants in their current situation or you want to address selected topics of resilience in particular.
- » **Option 2:** You want to give your participants a good overview of resilience because you have the impression that they would benefit most from as much input on the topic as possible.

Depending on the available time, resources and conditions for the training session, you will choose one of the two options. In both cases, the structures we use in the exercise database will help you plan the individual components of your course.

Additionally, in these guidelines you will find a description of every topic in the field of resilience

that we have made use of in the compilation of our exercises. If you want to carry out training sessions at Level 3, dedicating them exclusively to resilience related topics, of course you can select the longer and more detailed exercises. You will also need to provide more input and guidance to your group so that they can carry them out. These especially long and detailed exercises are labelled in the database.

A few points to keep in mind

It is advisable to give more space if in doubt, as at least some of the exercises can lead to animated discussions or even strong emotional involvement.

Trying out exercises with friends or colleagues is usually helpful to feel confident and efficient when offering them to clients or participants.

Special care should be taken in this context when you are either working with traumatized clients or with groups that include participants suffering from post-traumatic stress. We have added a marker to keep you aware of exercises that might either have to be avoided with such groups whilst requiring special care, experience and time by the trainer to prevent undue distress or even re- (traumatisation).

Please bear in mind that training cannot replace treatment and in some cases you might have to identify those in need of treatment, helping them to contact the right health care expert.

As you will already know if you work with vulnerable groups, you also have to take special care of your own reactions and emotional health. Working on difficult subjects such as that of facing difficult or challenging situations, present or future traumatic environments, can lead to strong emotional reactions or burn-out even in experienced trainers or therapists.

Whichever strategy you decide to use in the end- the choice depends, we suppose, on your personal preferences as well as the framework within which your training/course takes place - may we now conclude by wishing you a lot of joy and success with our compilation of resilience exercises!

Using videos to introduce resilience to students/trainees

Videos are a strong instrument to raise the awareness of students/trainees for the topic of resilience. Witnessing someone who demonstrates that she/he was able to successfully overcome a big life-challenge can be the starting point for deeper discussions. It is the proof that often we are able to “bounce back” after adverse events. You will find a great number of videos in the internet. On our project website we have provided some links to videos which we think are perfect to introduce to trainees/students. You will find these links in the “Products” section.

When working with your target group you can discuss such videos by means of the following questions which refer to the “Focus Area” structure of our Selection Box:

Topic	Questions
Perception	How did the person in the video manage to focus on the present and make the best of “here and now”? How did she/he find the balance between past-oriented thinking, present-oriented thinking and future-oriented thinking?
getting a grip on one’s life	How did the person in the video manage her/his life? How did she/he master stress, obstacles and problems? How did she/he become aware of positive aspects in her/his life? Which coping strategies did the person develop?
forming relationships	What did the person in the video tell about her/his relationships to other people? How is the social background of this person? Is/was the person able to ask for support?
acceptance and optimistic thinking (confidence in future)	Which kind of optimistic thinking could we observe? What was the result of these thinking skills?
orientation on solution and aims	How did the person in the video overcome problems? Which kind of solutions did she/her generate?
healthy lifestyle	What did the person in the video do to stay physically and mentally healthy?
self-efficacy	Which kind of strengths and own resources did the person in the video use in her/his everyday life?



Further readings

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Editorial note: Selection based on books in print at the time of the finalisation of this manual. Books on the list do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editors.

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