

BUILDING BANDWIDTH • MINDFULNESS • EMERGENT REALITY • TEAM RESILIENCE

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Resilience

Life beyond disruption

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A photograph of a brown egg balanced on a rusty, industrial-looking metal stand. The egg is centered and appears stable despite the stand's rough, weathered appearance. The background is dark and textured, suggesting a workshop or industrial setting. The overall mood is one of strength and resilience.

Resilience

Life beyond disruption

What are the unexpected blessings and opportunities that have emerged as a result of recent world events? How do we now connect to our communities and our world differently and more deeply? How has our perception of reality changed? What is possible now as we explore our ongoing growth, learning and development? With this opportunity in our changing world, if we are creating a NEW world that embodies all we believe in, what would that world look like? Join us as we explore our emergent reality and how coaches can meet client needs in this time of rapid and unexpected change.

Building BANDWIDTH

7 ways to help your clients thrive under pressure and bounce forward faster

By Margie Warrell, PhD



Stretch and twist a rubber band out of shape and it will quickly bounce back. Assuming it's resilient.

That same resilience resides in every one of us. Wired into our psychological DNA is an innate capacity to bounce back from situations that can leave us

feeling bent out of shape. Except we're a bit more sophisticated than a rubber band, because those experiences that can test us the most can also teach us the most, helping us to grow and 'bounce forward' into an even better – more wholehearted – version of ourselves. Braver, kinder, humbler, and with an

enlarged capacity for life itself.

As coaches, we play a central role in facilitating this process for our clients. But first we must look within ourselves.

Each of us have had an abundance of opportunities for practicing resilience and building our 'capacity for life' in recent times as the Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted our sense of security and created new realms of stressors we could not have imagined. Personally, no irony was lost on me that my book *You've Got This!* was released the same week my husband was hospitalized for Covid-19, putting me into quarantine instead of a plane. Clearly the universe felt I needed practice at walking my talk!

Yet in forcing me to double down on my own advice (which, let's face it, is always easier to give than apply), it also reinforced my belief that resilience is not so much what we *have*, but what we *do*.

The opportunity we've been gifted with right now is learning how to respond to the stressors in our environment in ways that help us to handle them better – with less fear, more courage – and emerge from them better off. To that end, here are seven ways to guide yourself and your clients in doing just that.

1 Routinize Resiliency Rituals

Resilience isn't some genetic trait endowed upon the lucky few, but a learnable skill that sits along a continuum. As such, it can be built and bolstered by embedding rituals and habits into our routines that expand our bandwidth for thriving under pressure – physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

Ask your clients to identify the activities that help them feel stronger, more grounded in themselves, and more empowered in their lives. These may include exercise, journaling, uplifting books and media, meditation, prayer, gratitude lists, music, eating well, gardening, watching comedy (humor is a tonic for tough times), hiking, hobbies, etc.

Invite clients to prioritize whatever activities help them handle everything else better. This includes incorporating micro-rituals into their day, taking a “sacred pause” to reconnect and reset before moving on to the next thing.

2 Embrace Uncomfortable Emotions

Researchers at UCLA found that the simple act of labelling emotions helped to loosen their grip on people, liberating them to float on by like a storm cloud over head.

In other words, you’ve got to “name it to tame it.” Naming it not only helps to reel in the emotions that can, when left unchecked, hijack thinking, but also to extract the deep wisdom emotions hold.

Psychologist and emotional researcher Barbara Fredrickson says that difficult emotions are every bit as important for us to flourish as the more pleasurable emotions. “Positive-washing” negative emotions with “be happy” smiley faces denies the full spectrum of our humanity. Like every great masterpiece, our lives require the darkness to highlight the light. To quote Robert Frost, “the only way out is through.”

3 Nurture Self-compassion

We all have moments where we struggle to show up as the person we aspire to be (just ask my kids!). As coaches, we are not immune to beating up on ourselves when we fall short of scaling the high bar we set for ourselves. Yet as self-compassion researcher Dr. Kristen Neff shared on my podcast, beating yourself up for not having it *all* together, *all* the time, doesn’t serve anyone. Being kinder to ourselves in our fallen moments helps us be *more* resilient, not less so.

Ironically, women, who can be extremely compassionate with others, tend to be hardest on themselves. Regardless of gender, you can help your clients nurture self-compassion by inviting them to imagine what the most loving person they know would say to them in their current situation. You could invite them to journal on this question between sessions. My

own experience doing this has built my “self-compassion muscles” – which is helpful, given how often I fall short of being as patient, present or “together” as I’d like to be. I’m guessing you may feel the same.

4 Encourage Connection

Resilience is not a solo endeavor. Social connection not only helps us weather life’s storms better, but to emerge from them stronger and with a deeper sense of our shared humanity. It also strengthens our body’s natural immunity and speeds recovery from illness.

Yet in tough times, people often feel tempted to pull back from those who offer support, afraid of appearing weak or needy. Invite your clients to think about the people they’ve supported in the past and how that has served both the giver and receiver. Ask them to identify specific people who would value the opportunity to support them right now and how, by reaching out, they might make others feel safer in sharing their own

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struggles, all the while deepening bonds and cultivating collective wisdom.

As I’ve found so many times throughout my life – often in my moments of greatest struggle – we humans connect more deeply through our vulnerability than our victories.

5 Reframe & Relanguage Sources of Stress

Your clients may be looking to you to reduce their stress. All well and good except that, like hothouse plants which are continually exposed to increasingly variable temperatures to build resilience to thrive in the great outdoors, we humans need stress in order for us to become our “best selves” – to

learn, to grow, to create, to flourish, and to do our best work.

As such, your role is to help your clients distinguish the stress they are feeling inside from the external stressor(s) they are reacting to; then to reframe their stress not as something to be avoided, but as something to be managed and used to develop mastery, hone performance and flourish.

Cultivating self-awareness will help your clients to catch themselves before they are pulled into a downward stress spiral. Help them hone their “detached observer,” non-judgmentally observing when they begin to “talk up their stress” so they can reframe and re-language how they’re describing their stressors in more helpful ways. After all, words are not just descriptive, but generative.

When clients dwell on how stressed they feel and speak about their stressors in ways that cast them as a powerless victim of their circumstances, it inadvertently ratchets up stress and reduces their ability to respond constructively.

6 Ground in Self-certainty

When uncertainty abounds, we can nurture resilience by grounding in self-certainty – anchoring ourselves to the values and virtues we want to embody.

In my workshops and coaching, I invite people to write down in the present tense a list of three (max four) “Power Virtues” – or “ways of being” – they want to embody as they move forward in their work, leadership, relationships and lives.

For instance:

- “I am strong, focused and resilient.”
- “I am brave, persistent and gracious.”
- “I am purposeful, present and compassionate.”

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- “I am optimistic, calm and capable.”

I then ask them to verbalize their Power Virtues with conviction, write them onto sticky notes and place them in places they will see often. Then as they go about their day, they are reminded to ask themselves: “What would I do right now if I were being (insert virtue)?”

Ask them to notice how this simple exercise shifts their emotional state. If it loosens any negativity, even slightly, let that serve as a reminder that they alone hold the key to the confidence, calm and security they seek.

7 Facilitate Post-traumatic Growth

We can help our clients turn their adversities into a catalyst for growth by helping them to find meaning in them. This requires helping them to rise above their (often unconscious) negativity bias that drives them to dwell on what's wrong, what they *can't* do, *don't* want or whom they *can blame*.

Finding purpose in our setbacks, struggles and sorrows is central to facilitating Post-traumatic Growth (PTG), the phenomenon whereby people emerge from challenges with an enhanced sense of wellbeing, connection and meaning in their lives.

Breakdowns precede breakthroughs. As we emerge from the collective global breakdown of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have an invaluable opportunity to transform this turbulent time into a powerful catalyst for breakthroughs on the highest level.

If you do nothing else from reading this, take a moment to decide who it is you choose to be at this point along in your coaching journey and life:

- Connected, Compassionate, Curious, Courageous
- Grounded, Gracious, Generous, Grateful
- Patient, Present, Positive, Purposeful

By recommitting to how you want to show up – for yourself, your clients and the world – you will not only enlarge your own capacity for life, but help to unlock in your clients the resilience and resourcefulness, courage and creativity that their deepest fears may otherwise have kept dormant.

What a gift. •

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