








# Fostering Resilience

Strengthening student strategies for overcoming setbacks

**ACTING** | Perseverance and Resilience

## → What you will need:

-  4-28
-  Individual, Paired sharing, Group
-  30 mins preparation
-  3 hrs execution
-  Whiteboard

## → Menu:

- I. Overview
- II. Learning Activity
- III. Assessment
- IV. Key Advice
- V. References



## → Related Tools:



[Embracing Uncertainty](#)



[The Superhero in Me](#)



“Help students develop a strategy to cope with setbacks, bounce back from failure and remain resilient in the face of adversity. Students develop a Resilience Plan, try it out between sessions and reflect on ways to bolster their resilience going forward.”

—Penny Sheets Thibaut





## I. Overview

Resilience, the ability to bounce back quickly from failure and maintain enthusiasm for the task at hand, is a crucial skill for individuals, organisations and societies, particularly in times of global crises (Advani, 2021). However, there has been a concerning decline in resilience among college students, which has been further exacerbated by recent global challenges, leading to widespread disillusionment among young people (Gray, 2015; World Economic Forum, 2020).

Fortunately, resilience can be taught and nurtured through the development of specific skills and habits. This educational tool, based on the work of Poole & Alberts (2019), has been adapted for classroom use with the aim of equipping students with the necessary tools to navigate future challenges successfully. The tool guides students through a 4S matrix, which involves identifying Support systems, Strategies for moving forward, Sage wisdom to remember and Solution-seeking behaviours to consider.

By using this tool, students can cultivate their resilience and build the necessary skills to overcome obstacles, maintain a positive mindset and persevere towards their goals.

### Learning outcome



The student is able to strengthen their resilience by developing a strategy for themselves to bounce back from personal and professional setbacks





## II. Learning Activity

Students engage in collective learning as they reflect on past and current challenges. They develop a resilience strategy that empowers them to bounce back stronger from setbacks by using the 4S resources.



### 1. Resilience Unveiled 20 mins

Introduce the concept of resilience and explain its importance. Encourage students to think of a recent setback they overcame, such as an injury, negative feedback or an argument with a friend. Then, invite students to provide a brief description of this difficulty on Worksheet 1.

**Tip:** prior to engaging in this activity, encourage students to make their own decisions about sharing personal experiences. We recommend dedicating time to establish a safe and inclusive learning environment to foster collective learning and make students feel respected and understood.



### 2. Past Resilience Strategies 40 mins

Guide students through the 4S matrix on Worksheet 1 and encourage them to articulate their past resilience strategies based on the difficult situation described in Step 1.

Encourage students to be specific and detailed, providing clear actions or steps they undertook.





### 3. Sharing and Discovering Together 30 mins

Instruct students to pair up and discuss their individual 4S matrices, focusing on their past resilience experiences. Encourage exploration of each cell of their 4S matrix together. During the discussion, prompt pairs to choose two answers from each cell to share with the entire class.

Lead a plenary discussion where selected answers from each pair are collected, creating a joint 4S matrix for the class. Facilitate discussion by summarising common themes, patterns or insights that arise from the shared answers.

Encourage students to make connections between their own experiences and those shared by their peers. Use a whiteboard for visual representation and sharing with the whole class.

**Please note**, as part of assessment *as learning*, ask students to answer the peer-reflective questions.



### 4. Bridging Past and Present 45 mins

Invite students to describe a current difficulty or challenge that they are facing on Worksheet 2. Instruct students to fill in the 4S matrix. Prompt students to explore which of the previously identified resources can be used to bounce back from their current difficulty. Ask them to consider how these resources can be adapted or modified based on their reflections from Step 3.

Remind students to consider the relevance and effectiveness of each resource in the context of their current situation. They should tailor their responses to ensure that the plan is directly applicable to their specific difficulty or challenge.

**Homework Assignment:** ask students to practice their resilience plan in their daily lives and to answer the individual reflective questions. Encourage them to implement the identified resources and strategies from their resilience plan actively to navigate their current difficulty.



**Please note**, the self-reflection is part of assessment *as* learning.



## 5. Collective Wisdom 45 mins

Instruct students to pair up and share their experiences and their insights from the peer- and self-reflection. They can collaborate by thinking about whether they still lack aspects of their strategy to help with future challenges, or how it might need to be refined in response to their reflection.

Next, facilitate a plenary discussion where students can collectively identify best practices for fostering resilience. Guide the discussion by revisiting their tips and strategies from their joint 4S matrix from Step 3. Highlight what has worked well for different individuals and exploring potential areas for improvement.



### III. Assessment

Assessment encourages students to reflect on their experiences and learning, both individually and collectively. Furthermore, it provides them with the opportunity to immediately apply what they have learned by refining and improving their resilience strategies.



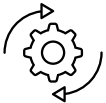
#### **Purpose**

Assessment *as* learning aims to strengthen the learning process and the development of metacognitive skills. It empowers students to direct their own learning and to become independent, critical self-assessors.



#### **Roles**

Peer-reflection and self-reflection



#### **Characteristics**

Self-regulated learning



#### **Materials**

Reflective questions



## Peer Reflection

### Reflective questions

1. How difficult or easy was it to fill in different parts of the matrix?
2. What similarities and differences did you notice between your own plan and those of your peers?
3. Based on your observations of your peer's plan, how might you adapt or refine your own resilience plan?





## Assessment

### Individual reflective questions

1. Reflect on the setback you faced this week and the 4S matrix you used to tackle it. Identify the strategies that were most helpful and those that were least helpful.

2. Think about any adaptations or adjustments needed for your resilience plan based on your recent experience. Are there any additional steps or tips you would like to share with others based on what you have learned from this experience?







## IV. Key Advice

**Seven golden guidelines to create a safe learning environment** (Step 1) and the **Resilience Plan Worksheets** (Steps 1, 2 and 4) can be downloaded below.





## Key Advice

### **Seven golden guidelines to create a safe learning environment**

Creating a safe and inclusive learning environment is an ongoing process. By implementing these guidelines, you can foster open communication, a sense of belonging and collective learning:

#### **1. Set clear expectations**

Clearly communicate your expectations and routines from the beginning. Ensure that students understand what behaviour is acceptable and what is not. Encourage them to participate in creating these expectations, promoting a sense of ownership and responsibility.

#### **2. Build trust**

Establish a trustworthy and secure environment by emphasising that anything shared within the group should remain confidential. Encourage students to make their own decisions about sharing personal experiences and respect their individual levels of comfort.

#### **3. Foster active listening**

Emphasise the importance of truly listening and understanding. Foster an environment where students feel free to express themselves without fear of judgment or criticism and discourage interruptions. Strengthen active listening skills by teaching non-verbal cues and using prompts.

#### **4. Encourage empathy**

Encourage students to consider the feelings and experiences of others and to respond with kindness, acceptance and understanding, even when perspectives differ from their own. Foster an inclusive and respectful environment where empathy is valued and embraced as an essential aspect of communication and mutual understanding.

#### **5. Be a role model**

Lead by example and embody the behaviour you expect from your students. Treat all students with respect, fairness and kindness, and appreciate their diverse backgrounds, individual strengths and contributions. Ensure the safety and well-being of all students by promptly and decisively addressing any form of harassment or discrimination. Reflect on mistakes and offer apologies when necessary.





## **6. Adapt the pace and intensity**

Recognise when emotions escalate and become overwhelming, adjusting the pace or intensity of the activity as necessary. For example, implement the "five-minute rule", where each student can express their controversial view in a respectful manner, or offer a short break for students to journal and reflect on their emotions, enabling them to regulate their feelings.

## **7. Follow up and check-in**

Encourage students to reflect on the impact of the experience on themselves as well as the group. Provide individual or group follow-up and inquire about the well-being of students. Offer the opportunity for further discussion or support if needed. If you believe that the emotional intensity or well-being of the students exceeds your expertise, do not hesitate to seek advice from a student advisor, mental health professional or the appropriate support services provided by your institution.





## Fostering Resilience Plan Worksheets<sup>1</sup>

### Worksheet 1: My Past Sources of Resilience

Difficult situation:

#### **Supportive** people I called on

Reflect on the people who provided support during this challenging time. It could be an old friend, a teacher or a grandparent who offered advice or encouragement.

#### **Strategies** I used to keep moving

Consider the strategies you used to cope with negative thoughts and emotions that arose from the difficulty. Did you meditate, go for a walk, cook, exercise or listen to music? Include any strategies that have helped you manage stress and emotions, regardless of how trivial they may seem.

#### **Sage wisdom** that inspired me

Think about the wisdom or advice that resonated with you during this challenging period. It could be from song lyrics, books, poetry, spiritual writings, famous quotes or learning from one's own experiences.

#### **Solution-seeking behaviors** I engaged in to tackle the problem

Consider the actions you took to actively address the problem or setback. Did you seek new information, brainstorm with a friend, develop a plan, negotiate, voice your opinion or ask for help?

<sup>1</sup> Adapted for the classroom from Alberts, H. & Poole, L., at PositivePsychology.com B.V. (2019)





## Worksheet 2: My Resilience Plan

**Difficult situation:**

**Supportive**  
people I can call on

**Strategies**  
I can use to keep moving

**Sage wisdom**  
that inspires me

**Solution-seeking behaviors**  
I can engage in to tackle the problem





## Sample Worksheet 2: My Resilience Plan

**Difficult situation:** *Screwed up an high-stake exam*

| <b>Supportive</b><br>people that kept me upright              | <b>Strategies</b><br>I used to keep moving                              |
|---|---|
| <i>Called my friend</i>                                       | <i>Went for a run, listening to my favorite album</i>                   |
| <i>Called my mom</i>  | <i>Practised yoga</i>   |
|   | <i>Used meditation app</i>  |
|   | <i>Binged a bit of Netflix to take my mind off it</i>                   |
|   | <i>Wrote in my journal</i>  |
|   | <i>Baked cookies</i>  |
| <b>Sage wisdom</b><br>that inspired me                        | <b>Solution-seeking behaviors</b><br>I engaged in to tackle the problem |
| <i>Remembered that growth comes from mistakes</i>             | <i>Emailed to ask for feedback from the teacher</i>                     |
| <i>"This too shall pass" – phrase I have stuck to my wall</i> | <i>Registered for the re-examination</i>                                |
| <i>"No pain, no glory" – phrase my brother always says</i>    | <i>Looked up coaching tips online for learning strategies</i>           |



## V. References

Advani, A. (2021, Jun 18). "Youth disillusionment is a global risk, but it can be mitigated. This study on Gen Z shows why." World Economic Forum, Youth Perspectives.  
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