


Know Yourself



Community Victoria

Resilience Training Program

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What strengths do you already have?

In Australia we tend to be quick at seeing our weaknesses. Seeing our strengths is more difficult.

Giving your thinking time

Impulse control is being able to stop, think through options and consequences and choose what is best.

Empathy

Empathy is the understanding of what it is like being in someone else's shoes. It is an important part of strong relationships.

Believing in your ability

Do we believe we can tackle most things head on and bounce back when things get tough? It is the belief that what we do does make a difference.

Recognizing your feelings

Being aware of your feelings is vital, because strong feelings of anxiety or sadness can make you feel powerless. Once you name the feeling, you have more chance of controlling it.

Reaching out

Reaching out has two parts. It is the ability to take on life's opportunities and not fear failure.

It is also about being willing to ask for help. Some people see asking for help as a weakness. It is a strength acknowledging that we all need support at times and that it is ok to ask for help.

Staying hopeful (optimistic)

Can we see things as they are and make the best out of any given situation? This does not ignore difficult things, but not getting locked into negativity. It's being able to be hopeful.

Analyzing the cause of problems

Analyzing the cause of problems Do we accurately decide the cause of problems? The word accurate is crucial. What we think about stressful events or problems affects how we feel and what we do.



Building on your strengths?

Self-knowledge is a good tool to help us see our strengths. We all have examples of when we use our strengths well. Not over reacting to critics, thinking through what went wrong in a situation, believing you will do better next time.

Even if you are not as strong you would like in any of these abilities, you can strengthen them.

As you go through these 7 abilities that support resilience, ask yourself these questions:

- Which would I be stronger in?
- Which would be challenging?
 1. Recognising your feelings
 2. Giving yourself thinking time

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3. Thinking through the cause of problems
 4. Staying hopeful (optimistic)
 5. Having empathy for others
 6. Believing in our abilities
 7. Reaching out

Write down two you see more as strengths.

Write down two you would not be as strong in.

Which one of these seven abilities would you like to be stronger in?

After you have worked through the rest of this workbook, look back over these seven abilities and go through these questions again.

If you keep working on these skills, putting in the effort and learning from experience, change is always possible!

The next step is to take a good close look at how thinking affects what we feel and do.



Our Thinking Affects What We Feel and Do

We don't just get upset or tense. It is what we are saying to ourselves (self-talk) about an event that causes us to get upset.

How does thinking affect what we do?

Something happens. We think about it. We respond.

EVENTS – THOUGHTS - RESPONSE

This thinking is a form of self talk that comes between what happens and our response. It happens in a flash. It can happen so quickly that we are not aware of what we are saying to ourselves.

- We tend to think to ourselves silently in words.
- As we talk to ourselves we react based on what we are thinking.

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- The problem is this self talk is like a radio playing in the background. It happens so much we just don't pay attention to it.

Picture yourself in a group and you are asked by the instructor to stand up. As you were on your feet, would you be aware of the clear decision you must have made to yourself, "ok, yes I will". That is a form of "self talk."

We can all learn to "tune that radio in and start listening to it."

Paying more attention to what you are saying to yourself is a key step in being in more control of your reactions. It also is important to listen to the tone. Do you tend to be harsh and critical or supportive in the things you say to yourself?

To help us, let's think of it as learning our ABC'S:

(A) Something bad happens (Adversity)

(B) We have certain thoughts (Beliefs)

(C) Feelings/behaviour follow (Consequences)

An example could be your friend walked past you without saying hello. You feel worried because you are saying to yourself, "I must have done something to make him really angry at me."

Briefly describe an event or situation (A) that made you feel upset.

What were you thinking? (B) Write down some of the things you were saying to yourself

Now, write down your feelings or what you did (C)

Do this several times over the next few days. The first step is to be listening to our thoughts. The next step is to examine what influences our thinking.

What Influences Our Thinking?

Most people don't spend a lot of time trying to listen to those messages they tell themselves between events and their reactions. It comes automatically. Do you find yourself over reacting or feeling worse than you think you should? Getting more control over what influences your thinking will help you gain more control of your reactions.

There are exceptions. Death of a loved one is an example. In a situation such as bereavement or other tragedies it is not your thinking, but the event itself that is more important. For most things, your thinking does have a powerful influence.

There are four things that influence our automatic reactions to situations:

1 Unhelpful thinking habits

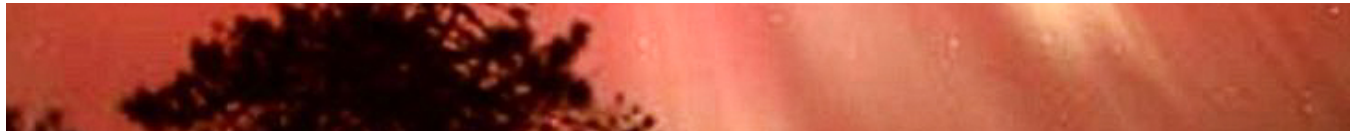
2 Our style of explaining things

3 Deep core beliefs

4 Our physical and mental well being

Start paying attention to your initial thoughts. Check if your thinking is helpful and constructive or destructive and damaging. It can be hard work. Being aware of what you are thinking helps you to challenge thoughts that aren't working for you.

That section on challenging comes later. For now, let's learn to listen!



1. Unhelpful thinking habits

When something happens, our first automatic thought may be more negative and unhelpful. Some psychologists believe the mind focuses on more negative details as a form of self protection. Our ancient ancestors had to prepare themselves for the worst as the world they lived in was full of danger. Modern living does not have the same levels of hazards, but that's the way our minds have evolved. It takes more effort to see the positive.

It helps to learn what kind of unhelpful thinking habits you have come to use automatically. Your moods might be a signal. They tend to make us make knee jerk conclusions based on inadequate or incomplete information. That is why they are unhelpful. Unhelpful thinking habits are learned. They can also be unlearned. Ten common unhelpful thinking habits

All or nothing thinking

You see things in extremes: good or bad, right or wrong

Jumping to conclusions has two types:

- Fortune telling: You predict things will turn out bad, even where there is no evidence saying it will.
- Mind reading: you think you know what people are thinking

Overgeneralising

Assuming something happened once; you think it will happen all the time. It is a never-ending pattern of defeat. Has something difficult happened in the morning and you say to yourself, “well that is today ruined” or “that’s the story of my life?”. Making a mountain out of a mole hill You exaggerate the importance of things or blow things out of proportion. It just won’t be bad. It will be a disaster.

Emotional reasoning

If I feel it, it must be true. We confuse feelings for facts. Should statements You tend to think in absolutes. Things or people should act in a certain, predictable way.

Words like should, must, have to dominate your thoughts. We live by fixed rules and unrealistic expectations for ourselves and others that can lead to guilt and disappointment. Taking things personally Blaming yourself when something is not at all connected to you. Wishful thinking “If only” thinking dominants. It is being locked into the past and regrets. Mental filter Pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it. Discounting the positive Anything positive does not count. You reject the possibility that there is something positive here or something good could come out of it.

Which ones do you recognise in you?

Think of examples of when these ways of thinking have caused problems for you.



Unhelpful thinking exercise: Let's identify what type of thinking is going on in each statement:

Putting a name on something helps us identify it as its happening. When we can see it, we are more able to change it.

The challenge of making use of these is being more comfortable with the words. It is like learning a new language. We only learn any new language by using it.

Name it so you can claim it. Claim it so you can tame it.

Read each of the following four statements. What type of unhelpful thinking (from the list) could be happening in each situation?

There can be more than one answer. It is just what type of unhelpful thinking you think is going on.

Having a friend tell you, you look well. You say “how can I look well with my hair like this?” You feel embarrassed that you don’t look your best.

You cook a meal and burn one thing “Well, this meal is ruined. I am such a lousy cook anyway. I can’t do anything right.”

There are road works and it means your journey will be 15 minutes longer. You think, “I am going to be late. This is such a mess up. They put those road works here just to mess up my day.”

You look around at your untidy house and feel overwhelmed by the prospect of cleaning it: “I should be able to keep things orderly, but it’s hopeless. Why even try?”



Types of unhelpful thinking

1. Over generalizing
2. Jumping to conclusions
3. Mind reading
4. Making a mountain out of a mole hill
5. Emotional reasoning
6. Should statements
7. Taking things personally
8. Wishful thinking
9. Ignoring the good

10. Dwelling on the bad

Think of a real situation that happened this week?

Accuracy and flexibility are the cornerstones of resilient thinking



2. Our style of explaining things

How people accurately explain a situation influences whether they stick at something or give up when faced with adversity. Dr. Martin Seligman of the University of Pennsylvania identified ways people tend to make sense of situations. He calls them our “explanatory styles”.

- Our explanatory style reactions are automatic, unconscious thoughts.
- They explain why things happen and what impact they will have.
- They are not necessarily an accurate view of the situation. It’s easy to see how our explanatory style affects the way we interpret events.
- It causes difficulties when we get locked into these explanations. If we see something as lasting forever and affecting our whole world, a sense of helplessness or hopelessness can follow.

There are three key ways people unconsciously explain things to themselves and have similarities to unhelpful thinking habits:

- I caused the problem, (taking things personally).
- It will never go away, (over generalizing).
- Everything is ruined because of it, (all or nothing thoughts).

A more helpful way to look at this is to ask yourself:

- Who caused the problem? Me / not me
- How long will it last? Always / not always
- How much of my life does this affect? Everything / not everything

Let's look an example -

Two friends have a similar dilemma when getting ready for a night out. Their best top/shirt is in the wash and they both get upset.

Negative Nick would think:

- It's my entire fault for putting it in the wash.
- I will never look well no matter what I wear.
- My night's ruined.

Positive Pete would think:

- Anyone can get behind in their washing.
- I am disappointed but that will change once I choose something else to wear.
- It's only a shirt and won't affect my night out.

What is the difference? Their thinking! Can you think of a stressful situation when the way you explained it to yourself made it more difficult than it needed to be?

Did it last forever? Did it affect everything? Did you have a part to play in it or was it completely due to someone or something else?



3. Deep core beliefs

Are you holding on to negative beliefs about yourself? Do the words failure, worthless, stupid, unlovable ever appear somewhere in your thinking? These core beliefs are like a lens or filter we look through that interpret beliefs about:

- yourself
- other people
- the world

Your core beliefs are called “core” because they are at the centre of what we believe. They are also called “Iceberg Beliefs”, as what you don’t see is what’s below the surface. They often start forming in childhood and can be passed without question from one generation to the next.

Have we learned to view life and every day situations with negative goggles on?

In order to cope with these core beliefs, we develop rules and assumptions that guide our behaviour. We don't consciously think about them but they are there all the same.

These beliefs and rules tend to fall into 3 categories associated with achievement, acceptance and control.

Achievement: I must always get it right. Mistakes are seen as failures. ("You forget someone's name you met once last year and you think you are stupid".)

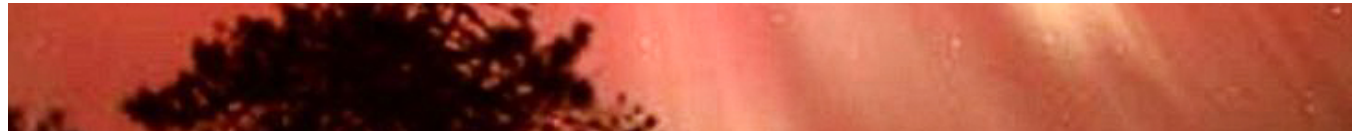
Acceptance: Is there a strong need to be liked, accepted, praised and included by others? ("I always want people to like me".)

Control: People can feel uncomfortable when things are not in their control. An unsuccessful thing is seen as failure. ("Being uncertain is absolutely awful".)

Why is it important to be aware of our core beliefs?

- Not all deeply held beliefs and rules are negative. Positive beliefs shape our values.

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- What we want to be able to address are the ones that don't work for us, the ones that trap us in destructive feelings or responses.
 - When we are not aware of the beliefs and rules that guide us, we can fall into the same emotional reaction to things over and over again.
 - They can contribute to emotions and behaviours that just don't match up with what is going on.



What are your unhelpful core beliefs and unhelpful rules?

Read through the following examples of common beliefs and rules. Which of these contribute to the way you think? Do they work for you? How do they affect your relationships and daily living?

What are your core beliefs and unhelpful rules? Are they working for you?

Understanding what your core beliefs and rules mean to you

While recognizing unhelpful core beliefs can be a difficult skill, it can be the most powerful you could learn. Take each belief. Ask yourself:

- What does it mean to me?

- Is it working for me?

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- Is there another way to see this?

Being able to identify our underlying core beliefs, explanatory styles and unhelpful thinking habits is the first step towards change and resilient thinking.

Asking these questions one by one helps us chip away at the frozen, inflexible beliefs that keep us stuck. They help us see beneath the surface of our reactions.

It may not be useful to use the extreme opposite about your belief. Just like a well trodden path in the woods, starting a new one will not be easy. At first the new path can feel awkward. With consistent effort it can become familiar and even automatic.

Just start chipping away with thoughts like, it's not 100% true. Generate arguments about the belief if it is not working for you. Is it too rigid, extreme or illogical? Is it a belief you would want your child or friend to have?



The following poem below sums it up well.

Attitude

The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude to me is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than giftedness, appearance, or skill.

The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitudes we will embrace for that day.

We cannot change our past. We cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude.

I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it. And so it is with you. We are in charge of our attitudes

As the poem says, “I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it. And so it is with you. We are in charge of our attitudes.”

What do you think of that statement?

How important is that statement in the way you want to live your life?

Our physical and mental wellbeing will also affect our thinking

People tend to have more resources within themselves when they look after themselves. Taking a positive and active approach to your health and wellbeing is your choice. It is within your control. Because this is so important, the final section of this workbook looks at:

- Positive steps to emotional health and wellbeing
- Eight steps towards a more satisfying life
- Using support



Part Two

Change Skills

Pillars of change

The first part of this booklet was to help you be aware of your thinking styles and habits. The second part discusses tools to help you build resilient thinking and support.

Before we look at these skills, there are three pillars that are crucial to make any change happen. They are called “pillars of change” because they are necessary to support change.

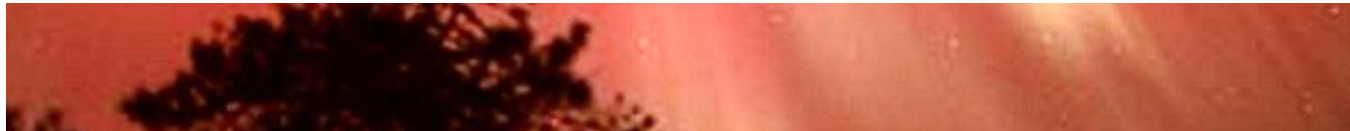
Pillar 1: Believe change is possible

Knowing you can change and having the confidence to change is vital.

This seems like such a simple thing. People can convince themselves they just can't change. So, right from the start, they're stuck. People are not trapped by their past or "not stuck with the cards they were dealt with". Do you agree with this?

Think of one thing you have changed before or a skill you have developed.

- Why was that important to do?
- How did you do it?
- How did making that change or learning that skill feel?



Pillar 2: Habits can be broken: even thinking habits

Everyone has habits. A habit is something you do without conscious thought and repeat over and over again. Keep repeating it and it seems normal. Not all habits are harmful. Habits can make life a little more convenient and easier. Do we need to think of a new way to tie our shoes?

But...you can also get stuck with unhelpful habits. The more you do things by habit, the less creativity you have. It can affect your sense of freedom.

The way we think and our automatic reactions can be a habit. Even though habits seem automatic, they can be changed if you put your mind and effort to it.



Pillar 3: Make a committed decision to change

How do you make a decision to change? Keep four points in mind. You must:

1. Want to change - an essential first step. This means your heart is in it. So many people think change may be good but don't go beyond thinking about it.
2. Make a determined and committed decision to change. Don't just read about the ideas in this workbook; use them!
3. Have clear goals. Get a plan on how you are going to achieve what you want.
4. Deal with setbacks. Slipping back to old ways is common and not a reason to give up. There is learning on what you could do differently if you are open to it.

The change skills: What does our first reaction to stressful events look like? When confronted with difficulties or challenges thoughts flood through our thinking in a flash. As discussed they are based on:

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- Our explanatory style
 - Unhelpful thinking habits
 - Core beliefs

The main question is: Is this thinking accurate? Does our explanatory style, unhelpful thinking habits or core beliefs make it bigger, nastier than it needs to be? If it does, it can freeze us in an unhealthy direction that just does not work for us.

People cannot get at your thoughts or change your mind unless we let them or want them to. You have control over what you think or say to yourself. What do you think of that statement? So how do you gain more control over your thinking?

We all have some situations that seem more difficult for us. It is like something is able to push our buttons and we react. Being criticized, dealing with authority, conflict etc. What type of situations “push your buttons”?

If thoughts tend to centre on certain things then the feeling that follows is predictable.

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- Feeling attacked, our rights violated - Anger
 - Loss or loss of self worth - Sadness
 - Future threat Fear. - Anxiety
 - Comparing yourself in a negative way to others - Embarrassment
 - Hurting someone else - Guilt

In looking back to our ABC's (Adversity, Beliefs and Consequences) the beliefs (our thinking) matter a great deal because they will shape the intensity of our feelings and what we do. When we are more resilient we are not saying we don't have strong feelings. We are able to regulate and control them to respond to situations in ways that work better for us.

The skills that help us move forward are:

- Catching that unhelpful, initial reaction.
- Putting on the brakes and stopping that chain of unhelpful self talk.

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- Create thinking time. Be a detective. Examine what is really going on.
 - Being flexible and creative in your thinking. Challenging negative thinking. Substitute more reasonable thinking.

Looking After Ourselves

Taking your health and
wellbeing into your own
hands helps
build resilience.

Accepting who you are

Our beliefs, background,
culture, religion, and
sexuality make us who
we are. Everyone is
entitled to respect.

Talking about it

Most people feel
overwhelmed by their
problems sometimes.

It can help to share
your feelings.

Keeping in touch with friends and family

You don't have to be strong and struggle on alone. Friends and family are important, especially at difficult times. Keep in touch.

Getting involved

Meeting new people and
getting involved in things
can make all the
difference for you.

Keeping active

Regular exercise really helps if you're feeling depressed or anxious. It can give you more energy too.

Learning new skills

Learning a new skill can
increase your confidence
whether it's for pleasure,
to make new friends or
improve your chances
of a job.

Doing **something** creative

Creative things can
help if you are anxious
or low and increase
your confidence..

Relaxing

Try and make time for yourself.

Fit things into your day that help you unwind - reading, listening to music, prayer or meditation - whatever you enjoy or find relaxing.

Asking for help

Everyone needs help from
time to time.

It's ok to ask
for help.

Surviving

When times are difficult, it is sometimes all we can do to survive. Take one day at a time and don't be too hard on yourself. Take time out if you need it.



Do you want to lift your level of happiness?

Here are some practical suggestions from University of California Psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky. These are not magical answers, but they do help.

1. Count your blessings.

One way to do this is to keep a “gratitude journal”. Write down things you are thankful for every day (you watch a nice sunset, a child’s first steps). You can do it daily or weekly. Keep it fresh by varying your entries as much as possible.

2. Practise acts of kindness.

These should be both random (let that harried mum go ahead of you in the checkout line) and planned (bring Sunday tea to an elderly neighbour). Being kind to others, whether friends or strangers, triggers a cascade of positive effects. It makes you feel generous and capable. It gives you a greater sense of connection with others.

3. Savour life's joys.

Pay close attention to momentary pleasures and wonders. Focus on the sweetness of a ripe strawberry or the warmth of the sun when you step out from the shade. Some psychologists suggest taking “mental photographs” of pleasurable moments to think about in less happy times.

4. Thank a mentor.

If there's someone whom you owe a debt of gratitude to for guiding you at one of life's crossroads, express your appreciation. Do it in detail and, if possible, in person.

5. Learn to forgive.

Letting go of anger and resentment allows you move on. This also can involve letting go of anger towards yourself for mistakes in the past.

6. Invest time and energy in friends and family.

Where you live, how much money you make, your job title and even your health have surprisingly small effects on your satisfaction with life. The biggest factor appears to be strong personal relationships.

7. Take care of your body.

Getting plenty of sleep, eating well, exercising, stretching, smiling and laughing can all enhance your mood in the short term. Practiced regularly, they can help make your daily life more satisfying. Don't misuse your body with chemicals; alcohol, nicotine or caffeine.

8. Develop strategies for coping with stress and hardships.

There are no avoiding hard times. Have a plan for emergencies. Religious faith has been shown to help people cope, but so do the secular beliefs enshrined in sayings like, “This too shall pass” and “One day at a time.” The important thing is that you have to believe the saying.

From these steps for building emotional health and a more satisfying life, keep a plan of how you are going to work on them daily.

Using support

Why should we ask for help? Have you ever heard a problem shared is a problem halved? Being able to ask for help strengthens our belief that we are not alone and that someone cares.

Some peoples’ core beliefs make asking for help difficult.

- Keep things to yourself
- People should be independent

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- People will think less of me if I ask for help

How can someone ask for help if they deep down believe only weak people ask for help? If you don't value yourself, you may think, "I don't want to bother anyone."

Another way to look at asking for help is to ask yourself this: How do I feel when someone turns to me for help? Do I feel valued? Is my opinion important? Asking for help is a way to make others feel valued as well as gaining support for ourselves.

Young men, in particular often have difficulty asking for help. Fathers have an important role to teach this skill by example. Being able to ask for help can be seen as strength. This sends out a powerful message. When faced with a problem, it's ok to ask for help.

Some kinds of help are easier to ask for than others. To ask someone to help move a cabinet is often easier than wanting to talk because we are hurt, sad or angry.

Building your supports involves not only being open to ask for help, but also being willing to give it.

Up for discussion:

- When did I ask for help and found that help really useful?
- What type of help do I find easier to ask for?
- What type of help do I find more difficult to ask for? Why is that?
- How do I feel when someone asks me for help?
- What are the benefits of being able to ask for help?

Types of help with examples:

Practical help: moving something heavy

Emotional help: talking over worries

Financial help: help with money worries

Emergency help: help in a crisis

Medical help: help with health issues

Mechanical help: help to fix something that is broken



Building Support

Supportive relationships are a strength that helps build resilience. Who are the important people in your life you feel able to talk to or ask for help from?

Make a list of people who are supportive and in what way.

Write your name inside a circle below. Next, use the list you have just made to draw other circles representing each person in your life. As you draw each circle, write the name of the person in it. Draw circles of those you consider most supportive nearest to you and people less supportive further away from you. Add more lines if you need to.

Some questions to ask:

- Do you need to use the support you already have more?
- Do you need to stop seeking support from people that you find unhelpful?
- Do you need some more positive support?
- Where can you go to find more people who could help you?

Taking the Work Forward: Action plan/tool kit

If you have reach the end of this workbook, well done. You have put the effort into it this far. But what are you going to do now? This is a way for you to decide your areas of strengths and needs.

Let's look at the key skills we looked at in this workbook. How would you see yourself now?

Put a score of 1-10 on each one on the lines that would rate the strength in each area for you. 10 is excellent 1 is poor Now join these points up and see what kind of diagram you have. A perfect and balanced life will have scores more towards 10. If your score is skewed in any way, then you've some more work to do!

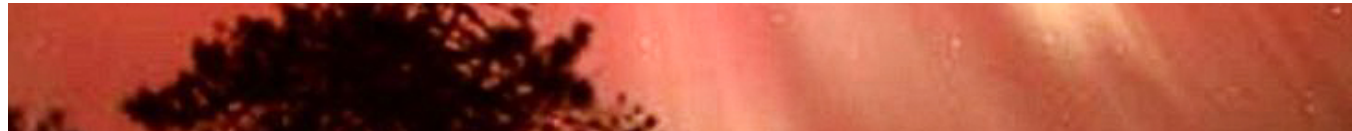
The good news is we know that by putting effort into this work, people can and do improve their skills, supports and resources.

My action plan

What skills do you already have that you can use?

What skills do you want to work on?

What steps will you take to work on them?



To sum it all up

As stated in the beginning of this booklet, new skills don't happen by themselves. They need to be practised until they become part of everyday life. To remind yourself of the steps to use this work use the word FRANKS

F = FEELINGS,

Our feelings are shaped by our thinking.

R = RELAX,

Being calm helps us 'listen' to what we are thinking.

A = ANALYSE,

What are we thinking? Is our thinking working for us?

N = NEGATIVE TO POSITIVE,

Change negative thoughts to more positive or neutral ones.

K = KIND,

Be kind to yourself. Have ways to look after yourself and your wellbeing.

S = SUPPORT,

We all need support – know who can help.



My Resiliency Plan

From this workbook I will include the following into my resiliency plan:

- Things I want to remain aware off as I build my resiliency preparedness.

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- Skills that will help me deal effectively with situations that call upon me to be resilient.

- Concepts that will assist me to understand the complexities of a situation.

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