

# ENHANCING RESILIENCE

## FINDING YOUR INNER STRENGTH



# ENHANCING RESILIENCE

## FINDING YOUR INNER STRENGTH



---

# ENHANCING RESILIENCE

## FINDING YOUR INNER STRENGTH

### Welcome!

We all face life hassles sometimes, but using resilience enhancement techniques could make facing them that bit easier. Hopefully this workbook will help you do so.

This **Enhancing Resilience: Finding Your Inner Strengths** workbook is based on an evidence-based psychological treatment known as ‘Strength-Based’ Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). An assumption with this approach is that people are already resilient in some areas of their lives they enjoy, value or are successful in. Even when these areas are considered to be quite small. If you don’t feel you have any strengths then maybe finding out if the University Wellbeing service has anything of interest to you may be helpful.

### What is Resilience?

Resilience is the ‘inner strength’ and flexibility that enables us to cope effectively when faced with the ‘challenges’ life throws at us from time to time. Being resilient can help minimise the impact these challenges have and help us cope with them better. It is therefore an asset or strength, a desirable quality or characteristic that’s likely to benefit our personal effectiveness, achievement, health and psychological wellbeing.

To help you know if **Enhancing Resilience: Finding Your Inner Strengths** is for you, it can be helpful to read the case study about Taylor who used the workbook to overcome a personal challenge. If after reading the case study you feel the workbook is not for you, that’s fine. However do look at the *Moving On* section at the end where you’ll find other suggestions and support you may find helpful.

## Taylor's Story



I'm a second-year English Literature student at the University of Exeter. Last term, I received a mark for an assignment and it had failed with marks on my other assignments also worse than expected. The Lecturer's feedback was very critical, including reference to a "Lack of understanding" and "Poor writing and expression". Although there were suggestions to help improve the work, I was disappointed because I need to get a good a degree. I have clear career goals in mind and want to make my family happy, not to mention manage the growing debt!

I became increasingly upset about my work and began to fear I was failing. This ended up with me spending too much time on every assignment with work mounting up as assignment deadlines approached. This pattern continued into my new academic year and the pressure on me was getting much worse. It got so bad at one point I even thought about leaving University, but didn't want to let myself or my family down, and what about that debt!

I needed to get on top of my academic challenges, but had no idea where to start. A meeting with Ellis whom I was told could provide support was very helpful. I was told about a self-help workbook called **Enhancing Resilience: Finding Your Inner Strengths** developed for students like me to become more resilient. At first, the idea of enhancing my resiliency sounded odd. However, Ellis explained how recognising our 'inner strengths', that are easier to identify in activities we do successfully, can help us become more resilient in areas of our lives we find more challenging. It was then suggested that working through the **Enhancing Resilience: Finding Your Inner Strengths** workbook in my own time could

help me and she'd support me every week to stay on track and overcome difficulties using the workbook if I ran in to them.

Over the next week, I started to work through the workbook. First of all I completed the *Successful Regular Activity Worksheet* where I identified an activity I was able to do successfully and recognised difficulties I'd faced in the past when trying to do it. Initially, the questions on the worksheet seemed a bit odd and I couldn't see how they were relevant to the academic challenges I was struggling with. However, I gave it a go and although it sounded stupid, something I really enjoyed to do on an evening in my room was to post a video on 'YouTube' about what I had been doing at University. That week I identified challenges I may have faced and how I overcame them.

Then based on this worksheet I started to construct my own *Personal Model of Resilience*. This helped me realise my strengths, identify the successful strategies I'd used when facing difficulties and even recognise some metaphors that helped me cope.

The workbook then helped me consider how my *Personal Model of Resilience* could

be used to generally improve my resiliency. I wrote down my current academic challenges in the *Resilience Application Worksheet*. I was encouraged to scan my *Personal Model of Resilience* to see if it could help me recognise some of the successful strategies I used when facing problems with my 'YouTube' channel to help overcome the academic challenges I was facing. However, I still wasn't confident that these strategies could be successfully applied to these challenges. The next step in the workbook therefore encouraged me to test if my *Personal Model of Resilience* could help me deal with my academic challenges.

So I moved on to complete the *Resilience Plan Worksheet* that asked me to identify a specific challenge where I wanted to become more resilient and described the details. Whilst I had a range of challenges in mind, the one I was struggling most with at the time was facing the critical feedback I'd received on my recent assignments. Using my *Personal Model of Resilience*, I was encouraged to apply some of the Strengths and Strategies I identified there to face that critical feedback on my assignments.

Finally, I applied my *Personal Model of Resilience* to face up to the critical feedback I'd received on recent assignments and reviewed how it went on a *Review worksheet*. I'm so pleased I did, because I realised how things have really started to improve and I've learnt a lot. I'm engaging more with my studies and have tried to improve my writing skills by reading more widely and seeking University study support. Although I'm still a 'bit up and

down' at times, the skills I've learnt using the **Enhancing Resilience: Finding your Inner Strengths** workbook has been a real turning point. Completing the *Review Worksheet* has helped me think about applying my strengths and successful strategies to other challenges I faced. Recognising these and writing them into a *Staying Resilient* worksheet for future reference has really helped me to become more resilient in other areas I've found challenging.

Although I'm still a bit overwhelmed with things at times, I now recognise my 'inner strengths'. Yes, I do feel more resilient, more in control and I'm back on track with my study again.

---

## **Time to Get Going!**

***If you think this workbook may help you, let's get going and start to work through the four stages to help you become more resilient. This may sound a bit challenging however you're in control of how much you do at any time. Sometimes progress will be slow, and setbacks will happen. This is perfectly normal and to be expected. However, at times like this, if you are being supported to work through Enhancing Resilience: Finding Your Inner Strengths, speak with them or anyone else you may believe may be able to help.***

---

## STAGE I: RECORDING YOUR SUCCESSFUL REGULAR ACTIVITY

First of all, we'll help you identify 'hidden strengths' in activities you already complete successfully. This will help to increase your awareness of some of the helpful strategies you have that may otherwise be taken for granted. If you're successfully able to do something over time, even if you consider it quite trivial, it means you have already demonstrated resilience in some areas.

- ▶ Use the *Successful Regular Activity* worksheet over the page to record an activity you're already able to complete on a regular basis.
  - ▶ It can be helpful if it's an activity you really enjoy or value such as hobbies, musical or sporting talents, supporting friends or being successful areas associated with your studies. It may even include routine activities you successfully achieve such as making it to lectures on time or living within a budget. Think about details of this activity and write them down on the worksheet.

- ▶ Now write down any difficulties you've encountered when completing this activity. Some people may face a single difficulty again and again, others may experience several.
  - ▶ If you find yourself facing various difficulties you don't need to write them all down. In this case just choose the most common difficulty you face and note how often you encounter it.
- ▶ Finally, think about things that help you complete your successful regular activity, even in the face of difficulty.

Before you begin to complete your own *Successful Regular Activity* worksheet, let's have a look at Taylor's worksheet related to a successful activity chosen.

---

## SUCCESSFUL REGULAR ACTIVITY WORKSHEET

---

### **My Successful Regular Activity**

Describe what it is, how you do it, how often do you do it and who is with you.

---

**What?** *Posting video updates on my YouTube channel to share with my followers.*

---

**How?** *Record videos I think are interesting and exciting on my phone and then upload them to post on my blog.*

---

**How often?** *Every day.*

---

**Who?** *I do it on my own.*

---

### **Difficulties You've Encountered Doing Your Regular Successful Activity**

Describe what they are, the most common difficulty and what helps you to keep going.

---

**What?** *Couldn't think of what to say in my video update. I'd start filming and say something really stupid or film it badly, so would have to film it over and over again to get it right.*

---

**Most common difficulty?** *Saying something stupid and ruining the video.*

---

**How often?** *Every two or three days.*

---

**What helps you complete this activity?** *Seeing my followers' comments and interacting with them as they clearly enjoy what I do. If I stop updating, I think my regular followers would worry about me.*

---



---

## SUCCESSFUL REGULAR ACTIVITY WORKSHEET

---

### **My Successful Regular Activity**

Describe what it is, how you do it, how often do you do it and who is with you.

---

**What?**

---

**How?**

---

**How often?**

---

**Who?**

---

---

### **Difficulties You've Encountered Doing Your Regular Successful Activity**

Describe what they are, the most common difficulty and what helps you to keep going.

---

**What?**

---

**Most common difficulty?**

---

**How often?**

---

**What helps you complete this activity?**

---

---

## STAGE 2:

# BUILDING YOUR PERSONAL MODEL OF RESILIENCE

Based on the regular successful activity you've identified, the next step is to build your own *Personal Model of Resilience* to help you identify strengths you've already got and build a model of resilience based on these. Strengths don't only influence activities you're already good at, but can help you become successful in other areas too.

▶ Search for strengths you already use to complete any activity you can successfully carry out. These can be personal qualities or even attitudes you already have.

▶ Strengths will be different for different people but if you have difficulty recognising those you already have, the following may help.

- Getting along with people
- Working well in a team
- Completing tasks even if struggling at first
- Getting a job done when you'd rather be doing something else
- Working to deadlines
- Asking for help if needed
- Reading and planning
- Solving problems
- Being creative
- Using humour appropriately
- Keeping yourself healthy

▶ Now identify specific strategies you've used when completing the successful regular activity on your *Successful Regular Activity* worksheet and add any more you feel could be helpful in other challenges you may face.

▶ Sometimes images or metaphors can have a positive impact on how we feel and behave more than words. So describe any that you may use to get through challenges and ways in which they help you.

Before you create your own *Personal Model of Resilience*, let's have a look at Taylor's worksheet.

## PERSONAL MODEL OF RESILIENCE WORKSHEET

---

### Strengths

List the strengths you identified in your successful regular activity

---

*I'm committed to my regular followers.*

*I've got a good sense of humour.*

*I can have good ideas and create interesting content for my channel.*

*I'm able to complete a task even when I'd rather be chatting to mates.*

*I can work a long time to get assignments done by the deadline most of the time.*

---

### General Strategies

Write down strategies you applied that helped you complete your successful regular activity

---

*Thinking about how I can help others and offer help to others when needed.*

*Trust in my ability to work hard.*

*Use humour.*

*Give myself time to think of good ideas.*

*Stick to the task until I get the results I want.*

*Use criticism or a mistake to learn, providing me with a chance to make things better.*

---

### Images or Metaphors

Write down images or metaphors you have for your successful regular activity and briefly describe them

---

*DJs can change the mood in a room very quickly by choosing different music and sometimes thinking of this helps me think about changing the way I'm studying if I'm struggling.*

*I sometimes say to myself "If the going gets tough the tough gets going" in hockey games I may find hard.*

---



---

## PERSONAL MODEL OF RESILIENCE WORKSHEET

---

### Strengths

List the strengths you identified in your successful regular activity

---

---

### General Strategies

Write down strategies you applied that helped you complete your successful regular activity

---

---

### Images or Metaphors

Write down images or metaphors you have for your successful regular activity and briefly describe them

---

## STAGE 3: APPLYING YOUR PERSONAL MODEL OF RESILIENCE TO AN AREA YOU FIND CHALLENGING

Well done on getting this far and completing your own *Personal Model of Resilience*. Consider ways you could apply it to other challenges you encounter to become more resilient.

- ▶ Think about areas you'd like to become more resilient in and write them down on the *Resilience Application* worksheet.
- ▶ Now look at your *Personal Model of Resilience* for strengths, strategies and metaphors or images you've already identified helps you keep going.

- ▶ Think about these and consider if any could be helpful if you applied them to areas you'd like to become more resilient in.
- ▶ Write these down in the second part of the *Resilience Application* worksheet. Looking back at those you've listed in your *Personal Model of Resilience* from time to time may help.

Before you start your own *Resilience Application* worksheet, let's have a look at what Taylor's has included.

---

## RESILIENCE APPLICATION WORKSHEET

---

### Areas where you'd like to enhance your resiliency

---

*Face the critical feedback from my lecturer rather than giving up.*

*Organise my time more efficiently to meet multiple assignment deadlines.*

*Build a good relationship with my flatmate which has been a bit strained at times.*

---

### Strategies you feel it would be helpful to apply

---

*Trust in my ability to work hard.*

*Give myself time to think of good ideas.*

*Stick to the task until I get the results I want.*

*Ask for help if needed.*

*Use humour.*

*Use criticism or a mistake to learn, providing me with a chance to make things better.*

*Say to myself "If the going gets tough the tough gets going" if I'm struggling.*

---



## RESILIENCE APPLICATION WORKSHEET

---

**Areas where you'd like to enhance your resiliency**

---

---

**Strategies you feel it would be helpful to apply**

---

## STAGE 4: PRACTICING RESILIENCE

You've completed your own *Resilience Application* worksheet, well done! Sometimes however, even though we may logically think our *Personal Model of Resilience* may help, we may not have enough belief in it to try it out. If this is the case, *Putting Your Personal Model of Resiliency Into Action* can help. This can be very powerful, as learning through experience may provide you with evidence you're becoming more resilient.

However, if developing your *Personal Model of Resilience* has been enough and you already feel more resilient that's great. The choice to continue through the workbook is up to you.

- ▶ Write down the area you'd like to enhance your resiliency in.
  - ▶ It's important to be as specific as possible by writing down the 4 W's (What, Where, When, Who) in the *Area You'd Like to Enhance Resiliency* section.

- ▶ Plan the *Strategies You Want to Test*.
- ▶ In the *Predicting Your Own Resilience* section write down what you think could happen, think about what you feel being resilient will look and feel like, and how long you'll be resilient for in that situation.
- ▶ Think about barriers that might get in the way or stop you from acting on your plan.
  - ▶ Write these down in the *Possible Barriers* section.
  - ▶ Make a plan in advance for overcoming them in the *Strategies to Overcome Barriers* section.
  - ▶ Planning in advance will make it much more likely you'll succeed in carrying your plan out.

Before we go any further, let's have a look at what Taylor has included *Putting Your Personal Model of Resiliency Into Action* worksheet.

## PUTTING YOUR PERSONAL MODEL OF RESILIENCY INTO ACTION

### The Area You'd Like to Enhance Your Resiliency

**What?** Facing up to my tutor's highly critical feedback.

**Where?** In my tutorial.

**When?** Next week.

**Who?** Myself and my tutor.

### Strategies You Feel it Would Be Helpful to Apply

Strategies to put into action	How will I apply the strategy to the challenge identified?
Use criticism or a mistake as an opportunity to learn and make things better.	When I receive critical feedback, I won't consider it as a personal flaw but use the feedback to try to make improvements in the future.
Give myself time to think of good ideas.	Before responding to the feedback too early, I'll take time to read more widely and discuss new ideas with my classmates and friends.
Stick to the task until I get the results I want.	I'll believe in my ability to begin with, identify things I need to do and if necessary ask for some help, but I'll stick at it. I'll say to myself "When the going gets tough.."

### Predicting Your Own Resilience

What would being resilient look like?	What would being resilient feel like?	How long?
I'd listen to my tutor's feedback and try to take it on board, before arguing or giving up.	My emotions will initially go up and down, but I'll feel better later.	20 mins

---

## Predicting Your Own Resilience after Encountering Difficulties

---

### My thoughts

---

What am I going to do now, this is so hard! But I can try other strategies.

### My emotions

---

I'll feel a little frustrated, however, I'll feel better in time.

---

## Possible Barriers

### The following things may get in the way

Whilst I can work on the feedback, two other deadlines are pending.

My tutor may be too busy to meet me.

---

## Strategies to Overcome the Barriers

---

### I may overcome these problems by

---

Seeking help from others, e.g. the University has support to improve study skills.

Describing the situation to the English School admin team and see if there's another member of staff that could help.



## PUTTING YOUR PERSONAL MODEL OF RESILIENCY INTO ACTION

---

### The Area You'd Like to Enhance Your Resiliency

---

**What?**

---

**Where?**

---

**When?**

---

**Who?**

---

### Strategies You Feel it Would Be Helpful to Apply

---

**Strategies to put into action**

**How will I apply the strategy to the challenge identified?**

---

---

---

---

---

### Predicting Your Own Resilience

---

**What would being resilient look like?**

**What would being resilient feel like?**

**How long?**

---

---



---

## Predicting Your Own Resilience after Encountering Difficulties

**My thoughts**

**My emotions**

---

## Possible Barriers

**The following things may get in the way**

---

## Strategies to Overcome the Barriers

**I may overcome these problems by**

---

***Now it's time to Put Your Personal Model of Resiliency Into Action to test your strengths and strategies out against challenges you face.***

## Review Your Personal Model of Resiliency

If you managed to put your personal model of resiliency into action, very well done. Finally, it's time to *Review* your *Personal Model of Resiliency* by completing the *Review* worksheet. It will help if you do this as close as possible to putting your personal model into action.

- ▶ Note how it went when you *Put Your Personal Model of Resiliency Into Action*.

- ▶ Think about anything you learned and write these down in the *My Learning* column.
- ▶ In the *Changing Behaviour* column make a note of anything you may do differently next time.

Before you complete your own *Review* worksheet, let's see what Taylor's *Review* worksheet looks like.

## REVIEW WORKSHEET

---

### Strategies You Planned to Put into Action

---

Use criticism or a mistake to learn, providing me with a chance to make things better.

Give myself time to think of good ideas.

Stick to the task until I get the results I want.

---

What you predict resilience will look like?	What you predict resilience will feel like?	How long you predict you will remain resilient?
---	---	---

---

I'll listen to my tutor's feedback rather than arguing or dismissing it.

My emotions will go up and down, but I'll feel better later.

20 mins

---

### The Results What happened was

---

Even though at times I felt like giving up, I considered my tutor's explanations. Although I still felt upset about the mark, I listened carefully to the feedback and learned something from it. At the end of the day I feel good about myself having listened to the feedback because I was able to use it to improve the mark.

---

### My Learning Putting strategies I have learned into action

---

Usually I would end up very frustrated and gaining nothing from the tutorial. But applying my personal model of resilience and applying relevant strategies can help. I found taking myself out of the situation and giving myself some time helped me think and apply myself more to the assignment and stay calmer, even if I didn't feel very good at the time. This makes me feel more confident that I can handle things like this again in the future and can move on to improve other assignments.

---

---

**Changing Behaviour** Based on my learning I'm going to do the following differently

---

*I'll use feedback from others as an opportunity to make things better and try other strategies that I've recognised as helpful if I need to.*

---

**Next Steps** Other strategies I may want to put into action

---

*I want to deal with problems when working on an assignment as part of a group.*

*Seek help earlier if I need to.*



---

## REVIEW WORKSHEET

---

**Strategies You Planned to Put into Action**

---

---

**What you predict  
resilience will look like?**

---

**What you predict  
resilience will feel like?**

---

**How long you predict you  
will remain resilient?**

---

---

**The Results** What happened was

---

---

**My Learning** Putting strategies I have learned into action

---



---

**Changing Behaviour** Based on my learning I'm going to do the following differently

---

---

**Next Steps** Other strategies I may want to put into action

---

## Moving On and Staying Resilient

Well done for getting this far. Hopefully by this point all your hard work is paying off and you're beginning to feel a little more resilient. If you find that completing the **Enhancing Resilience: Finding Your Inner Strengths** becomes easier, then it may be time to move to the final stage; *Staying Resilient*. Otherwise you can go back and try the approach on other challenges. To help you stay or become more resilient in the future, completing the *Staying Resilient Worksheet* can help. Write down the strengths and strategies you've found helpful whilst using this workbook. You can then refer back to this if you find yourself struggling with challenges or general 'life hassles' again in the future. Like us all, you will face these.





## STAYING RESILIENT WORKSHEET

---

**Strengths I now recognise I have**

---

**Strategies I already have found helpful in challenging situations**

---

**New strategies I have learnt working through this workbook**

---

**Things that helped me put these strategies into practice**

---

**Sources of support that can help me**

---

# Getting Other Sources of Support

You may have given the **Enhancing Resilience: Finding Your Inner Strengths** workbook a really good go and found it helped you become more resilient. However, you may still find yourself struggling in other areas, for example with your study skills, looking for a job after you finish University or finances. If this is the case then you may be able to find sources of support at University and should contact the Student Information Desk for more information. However, if you find yourself struggling more generally with your wellbeing or mental health, contact the Student Wellbeing Service to discuss your difficulties and see what they can offer.



# Authors

**Professor Paul Farrand** is Director of the Low-Intensity Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (LICBT) portfolio within Clinical Education Development and Research (CEDAR); Psychology at the University of Exeter. His main clinical and research interests are in LICBT, especially in a written self-help format. Based upon his research and clinical practice with people experiencing physical health problems, Paul has developed a wide range of written CBT self-help interventions for depression and anxiety and is the editor of the forthcoming *Low-Intensity CBT Skills and Interventions: A Practitioner's Manual* (2020), a training manual published by SAGE, to enhance the competency of a practitioner level mental health workforce in LICBT. Related to these areas, he is a member of several national level committees associated with the Department of Health Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme and developing a broader psychological therapies workforce and at an international level concerning worldwide developments in LICBT. Outside of work, Paul enjoys spending time with his family, particularly walks in the countryside with his two black Labrador dogs.

**Dr Siqi Fang, 'Joy'**, contributed to the development of this workbook whilst an Academic Visitor in CEDAR; Psychology at the University of Exeter on sabbatical from the Chinese University of Hong Kong whilst completing her PhD. Joy has an interest in improving access to psychological interventions for people with anxiety and depression, with a special interest in research on enhancing resilience among University students and wider groups of children and young people.

**Bryony Holmes** is a 3rd Year Undergraduate Student on the MSci Applied Psychology (Clinical) Programme at the University of Exeter. She contributed to the development of this workbook whilst undertaking an internship with Professor Paul Farrand. Bryony has an interest in practicing clinically in the future, especially within the realm of eating disorders in young people and adolescents.

---

Copyright © University of Exeter [2018] (acting through CEDAR; Psychology Department). All rights reserved.

Except as set out below, no part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored or transmitted in any medium by electronic means or otherwise, without the written permission of the owner. You may download a copy of the publication for your personal use and/or for your individual clinical use only, provided you acknowledge the source. Please be aware you will need a separate license if your organisation requires use of this publication across its entire service. This publication does not replace therapy, and is intended to be used by qualified professionals, to supplement treatment and is not a replacement for appropriate training. Neither the copyright holder, the authors, nor any other party who has been involved in the preparation or publication of this publication warrants that the information contained herein is in every respect accurate or complete, and they are not responsible for any errors or omissions or the results obtained from the use of such information.

## Acknowledgements

This workbook has been informed by the Strength-Based CBT protocol developed by Professor Christine Padesky and Dr Kathleen Mooney (2012). We thank the University of Exeter Alumni Fund for funding the development and preliminary evaluation of this *Enhancing Resilience: Finding Your Inner Strengths* CBT self-help intervention.