

A DIY resilience builder

In times of crisis, change and upheaval, the thing we all need is resilience – that seemingly magic ingredient that helps us bounce back.

The good news, as you'll know by now if you've checked out our other resilience resources is that



resilience isn't something we're born with; it's something that we can build, and (like a habit), strengthen and maintain.

“But how?”, we hear you ask. Fear not fellow creatives, we've put together a list of some of our favourite ways to do just that. Read on...

Identify your resources

We go into this in much more detail in our [Balance Your Books Resilience Toolbox resource](#), but often suggest to other creatives that they think of resilience in terms of resourcefulness. It helps you understand that it's not 'all on you' and that you have other people and things you can draw on to weather whatever storm you are facing. So, first up, a key recommendation is that you find a way of reminding yourself of all the resources you actually have. How do we do that? Well, first of all we break them down into categories (e.g. people who could help, equipment we have, skills and knowledge we have, those kinds of things) and then we go crazy with the pens and make ourselves a mind map of each set of resources, that then goes on the wall so we can look at it in subsequent moments of doubt. This might work for you, or you might find a different way works better. No matter how you do it, we'd just say 'do it'!

People power - seek out those who've got you

When it feels like the proverbial has hit the fan, there's nothing quite like knowing there are people out there who've 'got you'. As Covid ravaged the creative sector we're all part of, the monthly Balance talks we ran for our peers each month gave us all a real boost, and a lovely community sprung up around them, full of people ready to share their experiences, insights and tips.

Asking for, and accepting, the help of people around you who get it and get you is a real resilience booster; you'll get to share your feelings, and in return get feedback, new insights, support and maybe even some answers. Many a creative finds it difficult to ask for help, but as the very wise horse says in Charlie Mackesy's lovely book, 'The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse', asking for help could just be the bravest thing you can do, because "Asking for help isn't giving up. It's the opposite of giving up." And even though this might sound counter-intuitive, helping others in their moment of need can also give you a boost too, so we'll sneak that one in as a hidden top tip!

Embrace the change and focus on what's in your control

Flexibility is a key element of being resilient. Sometimes that simply means (or not so simply, right?) accepting letting go of certain goals, or 'the way things are'. If you're able to do that, experience tells us that you might find it easier to focus on the things you can change. For us, Reinhold Niebuhr had it nailed when he came up with the much quoted Serenity Prayer, back in the 1940s.

*"Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the **courage** to change the things I can, and the **wisdom** to know the difference."*

We also love the idea of 'affective forecasting' put forward more recently by psychologist Adam Grant in the 'Option B' book about resilience he wrote with Sheryl Sandberg. Affective forecasting is our ability to predict how we will feel in the future, and in the book he recommends replacing words like "always" with "sometimes" or "lately,". Doing so can help change your thoughts, and therefore your behaviour and the actions you take.

Find a sense of purpose, and then act

When things – or you – get knocked off course, finding a new sense of purpose – or reminding yourself of what your purpose is and always has been – can be a really important part of finding your way back. (For more on how to identify your professional purpose, check out our [‘What are you for’](#) resource, and if you need help working out what your professional values are head to our [‘V is for Values’](#) resource.) For instance, when Covid wiped out most of our consultancy work in March 2020, we went back to our mission and decided to double down on our efforts to help our fellow creatives. Fast forward to now, and here we are, making this top tips list for the toolkit that became part of that effort! But equally, this might be about looking at different areas of your life, as well as just work.

Having a sense of purpose (and feeling in control of it) gets you focused on taking action. It creates momentum and agency when you might feel things are otherwise out of control, and that can be really good for lowering your stress levels. Experience tells us that a key thing here is to break down the really big tasks into a series of smaller goals or mini-wins, so that you feel you are constantly moving forward.





Be your loudest cheerleader!

If you're anything like us, or most of the creatives we work with, when asked to do a SWOT analysis (see our ['It pays to be a SWOT'](#) resource for more on this), the chances are that your list of weaknesses will be way longer than the list of strengths you come up with.

But, in moments of change or crisis, taking time to reflect on your strengths and the skills you have to solve the problems you face is a sure fire resilience booster. At the same time, listen out for the negative committee that takes residence in all our heads at some time or other, and when you hear them pipe up, practice replacing their criticisms or barbs with positive statements about how you've got this, how you're dealing with it ok thank you very much. Be your own cheerleader!

Take care of yourself

When you're stressed out by change, or in a period of crisis, one of the first things that often drops off your to do list is taking care of yourself. You're so busy taking care of everything else, you forget to take care of yourself. And that – as the saying goes – is a recipe for disaster. How on earth can you expect to power through if you are depleting your energy levels and health reserves by not getting enough sleep or down time, or not eating well? So, remind yourself of all the things that help keep you well, and make some time in your calendar for them. Taking care of yourself may just be THE most important part of your resilience recipe; after all YOU are your biggest asset!

Find hope and be optimistic

Do all of the above, and hopefully (!) you'll feel more able to maintain a hopeful outlook. We know how difficult it can be to stay positive and find hope when you're in the middle of a storm, but finding ways to do this is another key element of being resilient. We're not suggesting that you stick your fingers in your ears and ignore everything, or bury your head in the sand; rather that you try to remember that what you're going through is very likely temporary and that you have a host of resources you can call on to see you through. (If you want some more tips on staying positive, do check out all our [Staying Positive resources](#).)

We hope this is a useful starting point! The key is to identify ways that are likely to work well for you as part of your own personal strategy for boosting your resilience, so why not grab a cuppa and some headspace and get started on putting together your own set of resilience boosters?!