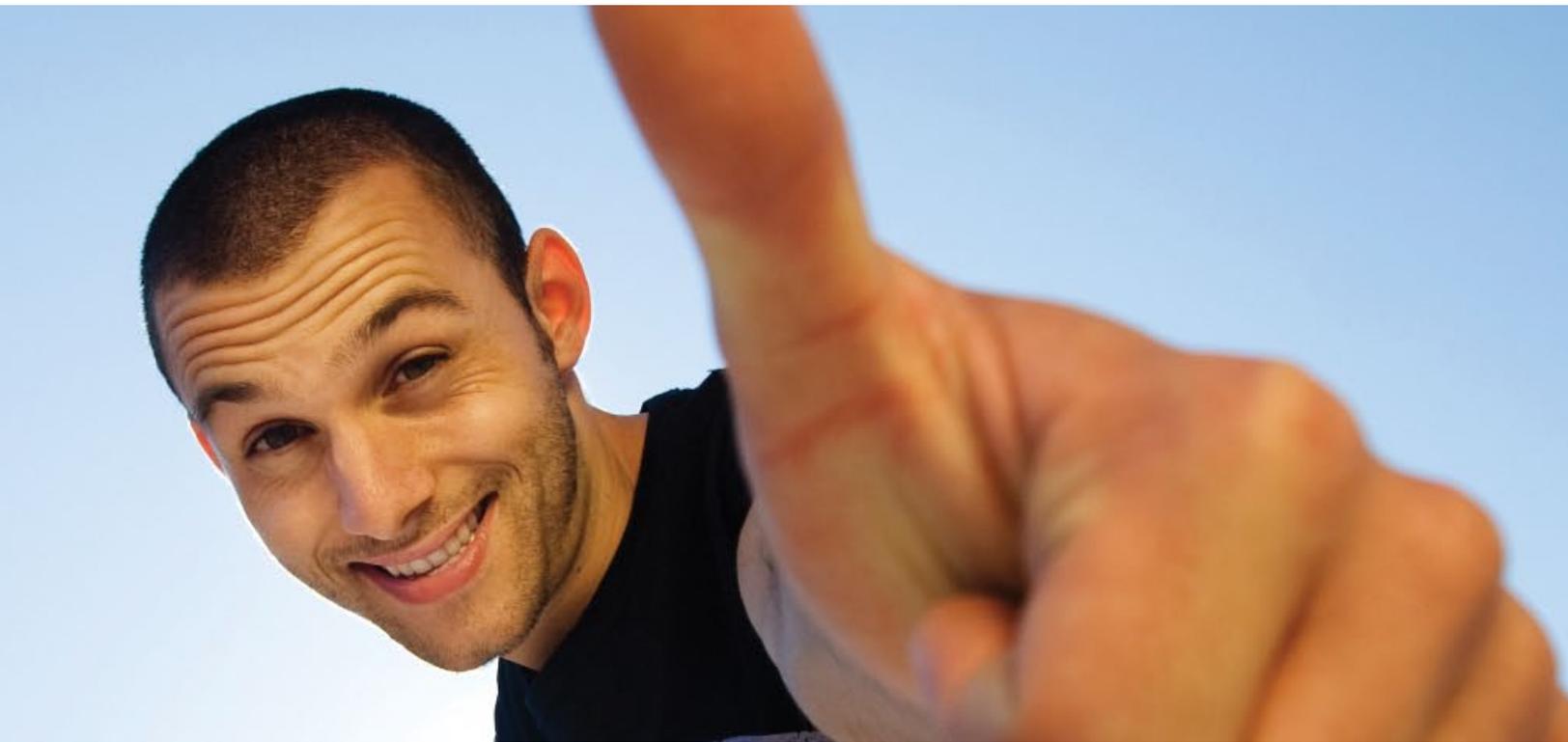


Resilience



Principle 1: What you think is what you get



Homewood
Health | Santé

Introduction

The quest for resilience is ongoing...It is a lifelong process that begins with insight and continues with action.

What follows is a series of quests...thoughts to ponder and tasks to pursue. By completing these quests you will begin to:

- translate knowledge into practice
- turn obstacles into opportunities, and
- reveal fresh possibilities for thinking, feeling, and behaving.

As you pursue each quest, try experimenting with combinations of strategies and principles. For example, to 'behave your way to success' you may need to change your thinking (principle 1) and learn from your feelings (principle 2).

Self-talk: Positive or negative?

Each of us has thoughts running through our mind nearly every waking moment. This is your "self-talk". Sometimes our self-talk is accurate and reflects exactly what we are experiencing. For example, we think "I feel very good about myself right now" when we successfully complete a challenging task. Sometimes, however, our self-talk is inaccurate, irrational, or unreasonable. For example, we think "I will never cope with this" or "I am a complete failure" when we face a minor setback.

Classify the thoughts listed below as positive (P) or negative (N). Check your answers with the scoring key that follows*.

1. This meeting sucks.
2. That guy is a real jerk!
3. The team is working really well today.
4. I'm never going to meet this deadline.
5. Mary has done really well at school this term.
6. I am a complete idiot for not seeing this coming.
7. I missed this deadline but I can make up time later.
8. We can help Billy get through this operation if we all pull together.
9. Putting a budget in place is going to help us get the things we want for our kids.
10. Susie's project is such a mess!

Positive thoughts...

- are optimistic about the future (e.g., "I'm going to succeed", "things will turn out okay.")
- positively evaluate a person or thing (e.g., "he's a fine person", "this is a great dinner.")
- offer a realistic evaluation about a state or condition of the self (e.g., "sometimes I make mistakes but I learn from them and decide what to do next.")

Negative thoughts...

- foretell failure, suffering, or disappointment (e.g., "things are only going to get worse... there's nothing I can do.")
- place a negative evaluation on a person or thing (e.g., "he's only out to hurt me", "her behavior is totally wrong.")
- generalize about a state or condition of the self (e.g., "I am a failure", "I am doomed by my family history.")

*Scoring: 1 (N) 2 (N) 3 (P) 4 (N) 5 (P) 6 (N) 7 (P) 8 (P) 9 (P) 10 (N)

Challenge self-talk

To move from negative to positive self-talk, try challenging your thinking.

First: Identify thoughts that contribute to distress or unhappiness.

Ask yourself:

- "What was I thinking just before I started feeling like this?"
- "What am I afraid might happen?"
- "What am I thinking about right now?"

Second: Check whether your thoughts are negative or positive. If they are negative, test their accuracy.

Ask yourself:

- "Have I ever experienced something that proves this thought is not completely true?"
- "Am I jumping to conclusions?"
- "What would my best friend say to me to show that this thought is not 100% true?"
- "Am I blaming myself for something over which I do not have complete control?"
- "How real are my fears and/or concerns?"

Third: replace your unreasonable, negative thoughts, with more positive, reasonable ones.

Ask yourself:

- "Based on what I now know, is there another way to think about this?"
- "If someone I loved was thinking this way, what would I tell them?"
- "Can someone I trust help me think of another way of looking at this situation?"

Do this exercise and then go through it with someone you trust, someone who knows you well.

Tell them what you are thinking in difficult situations and see how they respond.

- *What do they say?*
- *What is their reaction?*
- *Do they say things that contradict your thoughts?*

Use this information wisely.

Consider what they have to say and whether or not it is more accurate than what you are telling yourself. You may be surprised by their responses.

Inventory your self-talk

Your next quest is to inventory your own self-talk and identify positive and negative thoughts.

Use the following chart.

- Identify situations in which you experience a strong feeling (e.g. fear, despair).
- Identify your self-talk.
- Evaluate whether these thoughts are positive or negative.

Afterwards, look at your chart. What does it tell you about your self-talk? Are you more positive or negative about the situation and events that you experience?

What is your self-talk?

To reveal your self-talk, take note of what goes through your mind when you have a strong feeling or a strong reaction to something.

Ask yourself these kinds of questions:

- “what was I thinking just before I started feeling like this?”
- “what am I afraid might happen?”
- “what am I thinking about right now?”

Situation	Identify your self-talk	Positive or negative?

Counter self-fulfilling prophecies

If you say to yourself “I can’t” or “I’ll never get through this” then you just might end up like George first did—experiencing the very thing you are trying to avoid. This is called a self-fulfilling prophecy.

1. To counter self-fulfilling prophecies, use coping statements and positive affirmations. For example, say to yourself “I will get through this” or “I can cope with this” or “if I have trouble with this, I know where to turn for help.”
2. Another means of countering self-fulfilling prophecies is to list negative judgments about yourself (some examples below) and write the positive form of these judgments. Take two of these negatives and start affirming the positive.

Keep affirmations focused and realistic.

Positive, affirming statements can counter self-fulfilling prophecies. Here are some examples:

Anticipating a distressing event:

- “I will take this one step at a time”
- “I’m going to be all right”

During the distressing event:

- “Relax, keep yourself calm”
- “I’ve survived worse than this before...I’ll be okay”
- “It’s okay to make mistakes”

After the distressing event:

- “I handled that very well”
- “Yay! I did it” “I can turn off my worry now”

Negative	Positive
<p><i>“I am not smart enough to be truly successful”</i></p> <p><i>“I am lazy”</i></p> <p><i>“I will never lose all this weight”</i></p>	<p><i>“I am learning to be more effective at what I do”</i></p> <p><i>“I have energy and dedication”</i></p> <p><i>“I can and will lose weight one pound at a time”</i></p>

Get out of your ruts

We get stuck in our ruts (i.e. we do the same things over and over). We have the same thoughts, ideas, and attitudes. We don't take a fresh look at the world and gain new experiences and insights.

Consider these examples of activities that can help you get out of your own perspective:

- Go to a movie you wouldn't ordinarily see and find something good to say about it
- Argue against a position you would normally agree with
- Listen to music you don't usually like. Try to identify its appeal
- Attend a lecture on something you know nothing about
- Rent a motor scooter and visit a new part of town
- Go to an art gallery and compare techniques
- Visit a factory to learn how something is made
- Dress up in your best outfit and go shopping or go to work
- Stop reading the newspaper over breakfast or dinner
- Eat a meal without watching TV or reading or talking about work
- Spend time doing something enjoyable for you alone/with your partner/that your partner enjoys
- Drive to a work a different way
- Shop for groceries at a different store

Put knowledge into practice

At this point you should have a good grasp of your self-talk and have attained more flexible thinking. Now take all that you've learned and apply it towards this final exercise.

Let's take a problem you face:

My negative self-talk that impedes resilience:

My positive self-talk that aids resilience:

Possible solutions (Make a list of different approaches. Don't worry if some sound stupid or crazy).

1.

2.

3.

4.

Have you seen a new possibility? If not, keep looking. Don't worry about failure. If you only get a few and you've run out of ideas, take a break and come back to it.

This is about letting your mind play.

Try this quest with a partner

- *Ask a trusted friend or your partner to help with an exercise in problem-solving*
- *Find a comfortable space and allow some time, about an hour*
- *Write out a problem you are dealing with and show it to them*
- *Ask them to take a few minutes to think about solutions*
- *After you have discussed their ideas, show your solutions (Don't show them before they think of theirs or you'll intrude on their creative thinking.)*
- *See what new solutions arise and write them down*
- *Seek to come up with another new solution that the two of you create.*
- *Thank your partner!*