



Resilience

DISABILITY SERVICES

RESOURCE CARD #6

Resilience refers to our ability to bounce back from challenges in life and how well we adapt under pressure. Being resilient can have a positive impact on how well you manage the stressors in your life, especially when you have two assignments due and a mid-term test to study for!

During your time at Victoria you will strengthen your academic skills while increasing your knowledge of the subjects you have chosen. Building resilience is a similar concept – you can learn ways to develop it and practice makes perfect!

Resilience can be displayed in many ways, including:

- ⊕ Flexible thinking
- ⊕ Optimistic outlook when challenged
- ⊕ Having strong relationships that enable positive emotions and experiences
- ⊕ Remaining calm when stressed or under pressure

Students today face many challenges: academic expectations, and the current job and economic climate just to name a few. Resilient people still experience stress and worry but they do less 'what if' or pessimistic thinking and are more able to recognise their emotions and take charge of them.

How do you build resilience?

You can build resilience by being proactive with the things that help you to cope and manage your life; feeling good and enjoying things; being flexible in how you think and what you do. Remember resilience is about how well you bounce back from challenging times.

Coping Well

We cope better when we have several options or a strategy to choose from, if options are limited then so is our resiliency or ability to cope.

Being proactive with problems when they arise rather than avoiding them is a good strategy for resilience. Acknowledging and taking steps to address the problem with a practical approach can help to break it down into manageable steps and seem less daunting.

Identify your emotions. Notice your emotions when you feel better or worse. Experiencing positive emotions can help calm us and reduce stress & anxiety. Positive emotions are genuine and heartfelt experiences like joy, hope, gratitude, love, interest, excitement, etc.

Decreasing unhelpful (negative) emotions

Reduce repetitive unhelpful thoughts, experiences or emotions, which can intensify the negative experience.

Identify your triggers for negative thoughts and emotions. Once identified you are more able to assess the feeling or situation and change your experience of it.

Be mindful of negativity around you. By being aware of how some people or environments can be stressful for you, you can prepare ahead of time with strategies to manage, i.e. being selective about your time in those stressful settings.

Increasing helpful (positive) emotions

Practice **mindfulness or awareness** in your day to day life. Meditation, relaxation, grounding and breathing exercises allow your mind and body to slow down and sense where you are in the moment.

On a daily basis **do something for yourself** for no other reason than you deserve it! This could be treating yourself to a coffee from your favourite cafe, or noticing and enjoying the natural elements on your way to class/work.

Laugh, sing, dance, exercise! Watch that funny movie, sing along to your favourite song, break out the dance moves in the middle of your lounge, do a gym class or workout – enjoy!

American researcher Dr Barbara Fredrickson says we don't need to be positive 100% of the time for it to be productive; a ratio of 3:1 encourages resilience. If you have 3+ positive experiences to every 1 negative experience you will have a more positive and resilient outlook on life.

Set goals for your future, follow your dreams and passions and seek opportunities to make them possible. Work to your strengths and look at ways to build areas of development, connect with others who can support you in this.

Notice what you're **grateful** for on a regular basis and share your thoughts with others.

Connect with others. Genuine relationships with others not only make you feel cared for and included, they also allow you to care about others and give to those who care for you. Consider who you feel supported by and how – make time to prioritise those people and build a network of support across all areas of your life.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information on resilience can be found at: www.calm.auckland.ac.nz

Thank you to the University of Auckland for creating this resource.

This resource was produced by Disability Services at Victoria University of Wellington to provide self-help information and guidance for tertiary students.

DISABILITY SERVICES

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