

Resilience Diagnostic and Developmental Framework

The Resilience Spiral describes the richness of life available to us. The goal is to enrich your experience – to be a better version of yourself. To succeed we must be able to see (insight) where we are and make the adjustment needed (mastery) to self-correct. It helps you understand and influence others more skilfully.

We can be captured in downward spirals leading to anger, anxiety and depression. We may also spiral up into hyperactivity and mania. Both can be frightening and destructive. If we map ourselves in this spiral and make skilful, practical adjustments we master the ability to bounce, grow, connect and discover flow.

The Resilience Spiral shows organisations or communities their strengths and risks. Using this insight, leaders can shape the necessary training and development to improve physical, emotional and mental wellbeing. This leads to happier and more productive people. Second, as we progress upward, it enables us to understand and influence others. Resilient people are the foundation for a successful and agile organisation or community.

Comprised of 11 categories and 60 factors, the Resilience Spiral can be applied both to individuals and groups. This is why the [Resilience Diagnostic](#) is the foundation for much of our training. The tool enables individuals to construct their own resilience blueprint, while organisations gain insight into all 60 factors of resilience, wellbeing and mental fitness across their workforce.

We explore the philosophical foundations and evidence for the Spiral, how to deal with resilience failure (bounce), lay out the layers of strength we can build as humans (grow), define a path for development, demonstrate how it works, and explain how leaders are using it to create the future.

ORGANISATIONAL

INDIVIDUAL



Resilience Spiral © Resilience Institute

Philosophy and Evidence

Everyone recognises the difference between being up (enjoyable) or down (miserable). We call this altitude. There is no pill or magical solution. Raising yourself up the spiral is deliberate, sustained work.

The wisdom traditions recognised this 2,500 years ago. The journey of enlightenment (wisdom, freedom, love and joy) is progressive and disciplined.

For the first time ever, humanity has access to all of these philosophies. The themes are surprisingly consistent. Consider the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism, Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and Kabbalah of Jewish Mystics.

Over the past fifty years, modern approaches have made efforts to integrate these ancient truths and link them to modern science. [Spiral Dynamics](#) (Clare Graves, Don Beck and Chris Cowan) has already been applied successfully in global negotiation, politics, medicine and business. [Integral Theory](#) (Ken Wilber) is perhaps the most comprehensive and inclusive. It is also my favourite for a comprehensive model.

Our goal is to build a contemporary, evidence-based model that can be tested with our modern scientific method and yet remain accessible to the multiple perspectives of different schools of thought, religions and academic disciplines. We call this integral and encourage you to shape this to your own philosophy. Remember that our genetic code is a spiral.

And it works. With a database of over 50,000 participants in the Resilience Diagnostic, we continue to assess how the model maps in hundreds of organisations across the world.



[Spiral Dynamics](#)

Risks – the downward spiral

The lower half describes the progressive failure of resilience. This is what the philosophers call suffering or dukkha. As you slide down the spiral, you lose altitude. Mind, then emotion, and then body fail progressively. To be on the lower rungs is a sorry situation.

The first step of bounce is to recognise where you are. The second is to act decisively and skilfully to drive bounce. Remember that even in extreme personal distress, 77% of people experience post traumatic growth. We don't "bounce back". We learn, adapt and grow. Bounce up and forwards.

1. Rapid bounce



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Bounce practices © Resilience Institute

The Resilience Journey can show you how to do this. [Mental Fitness for Leaders](#) helps leaders build their own resilience and counter mental health risks by supporting the bounce of their people.

Strength – the upward journey

The top half of the spiral shows how to build resilience (grow, connect and flow) in a proposed order of progression. Life energy expands. Choices and freedom increase. From a calm base, we build physical vitality, expand our hearts and train our minds. When body, heart and mind align our consciousness, capability and influence peak. We have learned how to live at a higher altitude. It feels good and we naturally want more of it.

Remember, life is always a mixed experience. Even in flow, we have to deal with difficulty. In the worst adversity there is always hope and gratitude. When we can bring these category disciplines into play we can be more confident, playful and joyous. Securing them takes time and deliberate effort. Let's look at each level.

A framework designed to build insight, mastery, empathy and altruism (influence)

Master Stress

Perhaps better called “master calm”, this is the ability to restore a state of calm in a crisis or sustained adversity. If we don’t, freeze (collapse), fight (attack) or flight (run) reactions lead us into further difficulty. When this happens our reptilian brain and body reflexes take control. In modern life and leadership this is potentially disastrous.

Here, we learn to recognise threats to our resilience, to bounce fast, and to regain a calm, present and engaged state. This level is built on our physiology. Heart rate and blood pressure reduce. We breathe low and slow, activating heart rate variability (coherence or vagal tone). We are attuned to the feeling of being, noticing muscle tone, emotion and thought.

Our modern lives are chaotic. The endless interruptions and uncertainty trigger anxiety (flight), anger (fight) and grief (freeze). To be effective in our world this level of capability has become more important than ever. It demands daily attention.

Energise Body

Here we build energy, strength and flexibility. The body is complex and self-regulating. It follows laws of physics, chemistry and biology. With the right training, we can achieve quick, powerful gains in physical vitality. Left to run riot on bad habits, in time it will self-destruct. We ignore it at our peril.

The body is our organ of perception, using the five senses of taste, touch, hearing, sight and smell. It is the canvas of emotion and a context for thought. The body communicates and receives the richness of social interaction. The global healthcare crisis is a failure at this level. We can take responsibility for practices that extend and enhance a healthy, productive life. Simple steps = rapid movement up.

Engage Emotion

This level embraces the awareness, regulation and alignment of our emotions with what we seek to achieve. Emotion (EQ, emotional quotient, or emotional intelligence) is an old idea reawakened. Emotion was neglected for most of the 20th century.

It has been a surprising revelation that the gushy, 'soft' world of emotion is, in fact, a crucial determinant of our ability to thrive and perform. All cultures use 'the heart' as powerfully symbolic. Most believed consciousness and thought originated in the heart.

Emotion is central to alertness, attention, creativity, decision-making and execution. As poets know and science now demonstrates, the heart leads. When the links between emotion and the executive brain are destroyed, a person drifts into chaos, unable to make effective decisions about personal wellbeing, activities or relationships.

Emotion is the most neglected aspect of our being causing most suffering. We have been designed not to be aware of emotion, so this is a particularly challenging component. However, the payback from small wins is huge.

Train Mind

Mind embraces the world of thoughts, attention, attitude and decision. It cannot be separated from emotion, which in turn cannot be separated from body. As Antonio Damasio reminds us: "no body, no feeling, no feeling, never mind."

The higher functions of mind, intellect and creativity can operate only through the older and more primitive structures of the brain. Even the purest thought is brought into being with the assistance of animal instinct and a complex emotional milieu. Small shifts in physical and emotional state can cause wild fluctuations in the performance of mind.

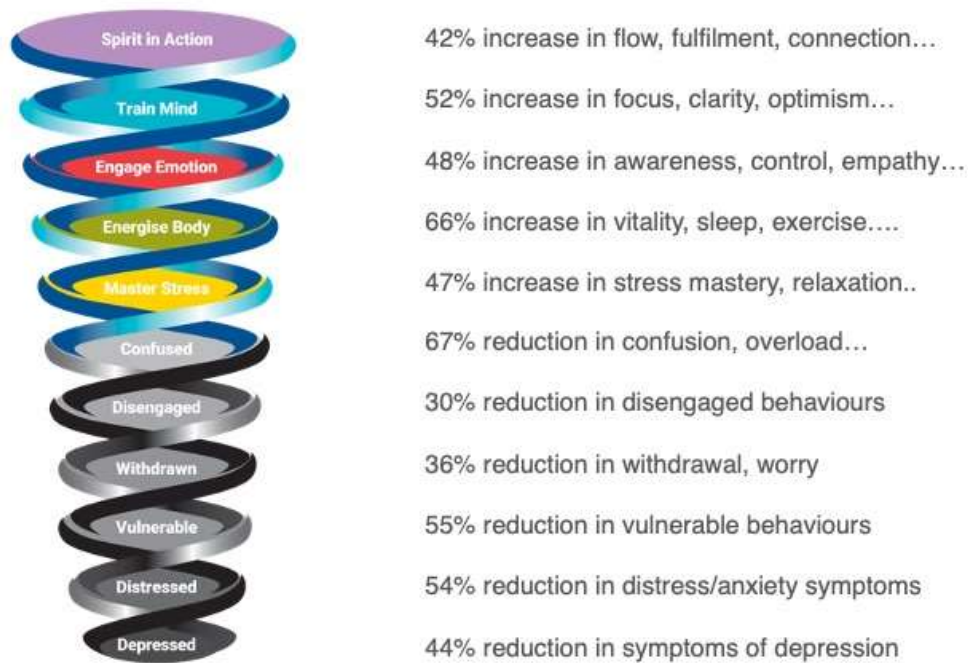
Proving to be surprisingly plastic, the brain gives us enormous scope for self-improvement. The cognitive decline of ageing can be slowed. Many functions within the brain can be improved throughout life.

Spirit in Action

Spirit embraces meaning, altruism and joy. We recognise it when skill matches a good challenge (flow) and we achieve peak experiences. This may be in nature, on stage, in sport, at work, on canvas, or in contemplation. These are the times that body, heart and mind work together to achieve, relate or experience in extraordinary ways.

In these times we are able to measure positive changes in blood pressure, pulse, immunity and hormones. The emotions felt are positive and the mind is measured as calm, focused, synchronised and in the flow state.

Antonio Damasio uses the metaphor of the actress about to step through the curtains into the light of her first gala performance. It is in these moments that we feel the full alignment of self: our preparation and the challenge emerge as spiritual. We can participate in life with the lights of consciousness ablaze to show the way. These flow states have been extensively studied. From inside-out, body, heart, mind and spirit align and engage. It is a good altitude to set your sights on.



Results from a group of 115 entrepreneurs

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Resilience Delivers at every level.

Practical Application of the Model

Simplifying the model down to the basics allows us to explore it from four clear perspectives: insight, mastery, empathy and altruism (constructive influence). Each perspective is an opportunity for specific and lifelong practice. These are the keys to a good life, successful work and leadership, a good marriage and good parenting.

Let's understand the basics of each lens.

INSIGHT

Insight, which is also referred to as self-awareness, self-knowledge or mindsight, is the ability to look inwards and sense ourselves in action. This can be both in the moment and over time. The question to ask of ourselves is, "Where am I on the spiral?" As we will learn, we can all improve our ability to sense our breathing, heart rate, posture, energy levels, emotions, thoughts and consciousness.

MASTERY

Mastery, or self-regulation, is the ability to know what to do to improve your position and how to do it. The question to ask is, "What do I need to do to calm myself?" You can replace 'calm' with 'energise', 'engage emotion', 'train my mind'. Then we need to work on our speed of mastery.

EMPATHY

Empathy, or social awareness, is the ability to tune in to those around us. The question is, "How does this look or feel to her/him/them?" Frans de Waal describes the empathy portal as a neural system that we can open or close. Closely related is situational awareness, which is the ability to sense and understand the context within which action happens — human, technical and kinetic. Experts in every field become accomplished at this.

ALTRUISM (CONSTRUCTIVE INFLUENCE)

Influence, social skill or leadership is the ability to interact in a way that helps others be happier, healthier and successful. The question to ask is, "How do we behave in a way that he/she feels respected, cared for and enabled?"

Simple to understand. Devilishly difficult to master on a consistent basis. The earlier we start, the more skilful we become. It is never too late. Each lens requires effort, energy and skill. To be resilient over time we have to build our fitness for resilience. For example:

At first we have no idea that we have slumped in the chair during a meeting. As the body slumps, we feel tired and despondent. This sends a 'closed' signal to others. We present disengaged and ineffective.

Leadership development at this level requires that we devote energy to a series of steps. Energy is limited so we might work in small steps. Ideally:

- insight switched on and we notice our posture slump
- correct our posture, lengthening the spine and opening the shoulders
- takes physical/muscular effort, but we will immediately feel better
- with open posture it is easier to attend fully to others
- they notice this immediately
- within minutes testosterone increases and cortisol reduces
- you are more energised, focused, confident and relaxed
- your impact on others is positive

For example this can be applied in strategic agility and in crisis leadership.

Deep Leadership Inputs

1. Purpose to fight for
2. Scenario visualisation
3. Altruism
4. Situational agility
5. Decisiveness
6. Optimistic language
7. Self discipline



Deep Leadership Impact

1. Willpower
2. Wisdom
3. Collaboration
4. Agility
5. Speed
6. Motivation
7. Energy



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Building Resilience

Just as an athlete must build the basics of flexibility, strength, endurance, balance and speed, so we need to build the capacity to hold the lenses and skills of insight, mastery, empathy and influence.