

The 7Cs Overview — Core Factors in Resilience and Adaptability

In this overview of resilience and its practical application, we explore a simple resilience framework called the **7Cs of Resilience**. Through consistent, habitual application of these 7Cs, we can more readily respond to adversity and crises with measured, impactful, and mutually supportive actions.

Staying calm, composed, resilient, and adaptable during any crisis is essential to our survival — even more so in our world today and for the foreseeable future. When our natural panic-buttons are pushed almost every day, and as we get triggered into fight-flight-freeze, we can lose our ability to think, plan and act in rational, adaptive, and mutually beneficial ways.

Resilience is largely a social phenomenon. We each can either have a calming, regenerative effect on others through our own resilient and positive coping, or we can have the undesired impact of adding to others' stress and worry through our own fear-driven words and deeds. Think of those around whom you feel calm, centered, and whole. Now think of those around whom you feel anxious, frustrated, or other uncomfortable emotions. Can you feel the difference?

The call to resilience is real and ever-present. It is one of our greatest resources in surviving and thriving through all our current and future crises and rising to meet the myriad challenges that lay ahead in creating a sustainable world for ourselves and future generations.

Change is the only constant in our universe; the rest is optional. Think about your own life with its many ups and downs. To each of those, you responded somewhere along the spectrum from fear and overwhelm to resilience and adaptability, sometimes rising to the challenge with grace and grit and other times succumbing to fear, anxiety, and frustration. What made the difference for you in those different responses? Ultimately, resilience and adaptability are born of the choices you make in how to respond to change and adversity. And for those choices, it's helpful to think of the 7Cs.

The 7Cs. These seven resilience factors have their roots in neuroscience and the broader field of the behavioral sciences. On the following slides, for each of these 7Cs, we provide one or more “resilience reflection” questions to facilitate your own mental and emotional shifts, to help you shift and bounce back from the “below-the-line” state of stress and overwhelm to the more helpful “above-the-line” state of resilience and adaptability.

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1 Calm. When we find ourselves reacting to stress in an overly emotional, unhelpful way it's important to give ourselves a moment (or more) to regain our composure. (There's a reason why it really does help to "count to 10.") This usually starts with our awareness that we are having an emotional reaction and then pausing before we say or do something that we might later regret.

Resilience reflection: After pausing for a few slow deep breaths, bring yourself into the present moment by asking yourself:

- ▶ What thoughts and feelings are you having about this?
- ▶ What's going on in your body and physical sensations now?
- ▶ How might you just sit with it all, observing without judgment?
- ▶ What can you do to remain responsive, calm, and helpful here?
- ▶ What would your resilience role model do in this situation?

Naming your negative emotions is a very effective way to lessen their intensity and energy. And shifting into the "here and now" quiets down our reactive, emotional brain, bringing us into more centered presence.

NOTE: We have written these reframing questions as if you are talking to another person (you, your). Research shows that this has a more powerful impact on influencing yourself and motivating more helpful behavior.

2 Compassion. When feeling self-critical or overly critical of others while facing some stressful issue, one of the most effective and wisest opening moves is compassion for yourself and others. When our mammalian brain gets hijacked by stress, our more rational prefrontal cortex doesn't function well — and all too often, we look for something or someone to blame. In these states, we need to quiet our self-critical voice to regain the resilient voice of empowerment and self-care.

Resilience reflection: When triggered like this, ask yourself:

- ▶ What would your own best friend do or say to help you here?
- ▶ What is unhelpful about the way you are talking to yourself in this situation?
- ▶ What might you say to yourself that would be more helpful and understanding?
- ▶ How might it help here to show some compassion and understanding for others?

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3 Challenge. When we feel stressed, it often comes with a sense of threat or danger. And while some threats are indeed real, requiring an urgent response, the threat we feel is usually driven more by how we're interpreting the situation than by the objective reality of the situation. So, when we feel that sense of threat, we can pause and reframe it more as a challenge or opportunity.

Resilience reflection: When you feel that sense of danger or threat, try shifting it by asking yourself:

- ▶ What positive challenge does this present?
- ▶ What opportunities might there be in this situation?
- ▶ How might you be your best self in this situation?
- ▶ What is the hidden gift, the silver lining in this problem or situation?

4 Capability. When overwhelmed in stressful situations, it's common to feel as if we won't be able to handle it, lacking the required skills, knowledge or experience. But this, too, is largely a matter of interpretation.

Author and Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck distinguishes between fixed and growth mindsets:

- ▶ With a fixed mindset, people think of their skills and talents as being fixed with no opportunity for development.
- ▶ With a growth mindset, people think of their skills and talents as being amenable to development. And that growth mindset is predictive of resilience and adaptability.

Resilience reflection: Facing problems, we can remind ourselves that we might not YET have the skills and abilities to master the challenge but that we can certainly get better at them. Ask yourself:

- ▶ What might you learn here?
- ▶ What might you need to learn to better deal with this?
How might you learn that?
- ▶ How might this make you bigger-better-stronger?
- ▶ Which of your core strengths and talents might you apply here and how?

Cap this reflection by identifying 1-2 small steps you can take to begin developing the skills and knowledge needed to tackle this challenge.



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5 Control. Mastering change and adversity requires us to understand and act upon what we have control over and what we can influence, while also letting go of those things out of our control or influence. And even when we think we have no control in a given situation, we can still control our attitudes and our interpretations.

Resilience reflection: When facing some stressful challenge, try asking yourself these questions:

- ▶ What do you have control over in this situation? What direct actions can you take?
- ▶ What or whom might you be able to influence to help with this situation?
- ▶ What do you NOT have control over in this situation? What do you need to let go?
- ▶ What kind of attitude shift might help you here?

6 Connection. When stressed, many people pull in and isolate themselves. Combined with our tendency to be hard on ourselves during stress, this can cause us to shut down, go radio-silent or worse. When we choose instead to reach out for help and to help others, we leverage the greatest resource known for well-being: building and maintaining meaningful personal relationships. We also build social and political capital, crucial for both current adversity and future challenges.

Resilience reflection: Boost your connectivity during hard times by asking yourself:

- ▶ Who might be able to help you here? How might they help you?
- ▶ Who else might be having this problem now? How might you help them?
- ▶ What relationship issues or conflicts might it help to resolve or work through in this situation?
- ▶ How might forgiveness help you in this situation?

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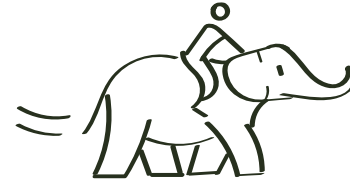
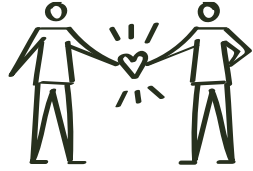
7 Commitment. When we are more oriented to the WHY (the deeper meaning that a challenge holds for us), we are more willing and open to dealing with the WHAT and the HOW. You feel it yourself when you really care about some purpose or goal greater than yourself.

Resilience reflection: Boost your own sense of WHY in a difficult situation by asking yourself:

- ▶ What is your bigger-than-self goal in this situation?
- ▶ What might you commit to that would reflect you at your best?
- ▶ What might be the best possible outcome for this situation?
- ▶ What might you commit to here that is good for you AND for others?
- ▶ Which of your core values might you want to apply here?

Applying the 7Cs in your own life. Life presents myriad ongoing opportunities to deal with change and adversity. Experiment. Play with different resilience reflections when facing adversity. See what works for you. And while we might find these challenges at times overwhelming and frustrating, in the long run it's through facing and surmounting these challenges that we grow in our capacity, our capabilities, our connections, and our character.

Resilience reflections. On the next slide you will find the 7Cs Resilience Reflection questions all together. You can print and post those questions where you will see them regularly. You can also trim and fold the sheet of questions to fit inside a wallet or purse, ready to remind you of these positive reflections in the heat of your next overwhelming problem, change or challenge.



Calm	Compassion	Challenge	Capability	Control	Connection	Commitment
What thoughts and feelings are you having about this?	What would your own best friend do or say to help you here?	What positive challenge does this present?	What might you learn here?	What do you have control over in this situation? What direct actions can you take?	Who might be able to help you here? How might they help you?	What is your bigger-than-self goal in this situation?
What's going on in your body and physical sensations now?	What is unhelpful about the way you are talking to yourself in this situation?	What opportunities might there be in this situation?	What might you need to learn to better deal with this? How might you learn that?	What or whom might you be able to influence to help with this situation?	Who else might be having this problem now? How might you help them?	What might you commit to that would reflect you at your best?
How might you just sit with it all, observing without judgment?	What might you say to yourself that would be more helpful and understanding?	How might you be your best self in this situation?	How might this make you bigger-better-stronger?	What do you NOT have control over in this situation? What do you need to let go?	What relationship issues or conflicts might it help to resolve or work through in this situation?	What might be the best possible outcome for this situation?
What can you do to remain responsive, calm, and helpful here?	How might it help here to show some compassion and understanding for others?	What is the hidden gift, the silver lining in this problem or situation?	Which of your core strengths and talents might you apply here and how?	What kind of attitude change or mindset shift might help you here?	How might forgiveness help you in this situation?	What might you commit to here that is good for you AND for others?
What would your resilience role model do in this situation?						Which of your core values might you want to apply here?



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