



## Module 4: Resilience

### Goal

As necessary as it is for service providers to understand and address the issues of trauma and mental health and wellness with their students, it is equally necessary to offer hope and simple steps forward toward healing. The concept of resilience is very important to grasp—the very experiences that cause stress, anxiety, depression, etc. often are the experiences that result in a greater ability for that individual to adapt and overcome in all circumstances throughout their lifetime.

This module focuses on resilience—the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threat, or overwhelming amounts of stress. Adversity can include family and relationship problems, serious health problems, workplace/financial stressors, or unanticipated tragedy. While resilience does involve “bouncing back”, it is important to realize that someone who experiences a traumatic event will not retain all of the same outlooks and opinions after that experience. However, that change can actually be seen as growth—moving forward and creating a better fit.

Service providers should point out that different factors might make some individuals naturally more resilient than others, but resilience is not a personality trait that only certain people possess. On the contrary, resilience is an active choice involving behavior, thoughts, and actions that anyone can learn and continue to develop. Although increasing resilience takes time and intentionality, the universal ability of people to learn and adopt the necessary skills is why research states that resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary.

When focusing on improving mental health and wellness, learning resilience skills is extremely important in order to create a life within which one can grow and improve in the midst of life’s challenges. The foundational principles of resilience—relationships, self-care, self-awareness, purpose, and mindfulness—all offer that opportunity for personal growth.

### Objectives

- Define the ability of the brain to adapt and grow even in the face of adversity.
- Recognize the role of resilience and associated skills in coping with and healing from stress and trauma-related effects.
- Assess personal resilience and find opportunities for growth.



## What to Know Before Presenting the Resilience PowerPoint

### 1. Introduce the concept of resilience.

Explain that resilience is more than an optimistic outlook and an ability to “bounce back”. Resilience is a skill that can be honed to help individuals successfully emerge from failure, tragedy, or other life challenges.

### 2. Identify the qualities of resilient people.

Resilient people remain open, flexible, and willing to adapt to change. They look at what they can control in order to make good choices related to their situation, their own ability to cope, and to control their future. Strong problem-solving skills are essential to strengthening resilience and resilient individuals are able to calmly and rationally look at a problem and envision a successful solution. Resilient people have strong social connections. It is important to have people who can offer support because talking about one’s challenges can be a valuable way to gain perspective, look for new solutions, or simply express emotions. Friends, family members, co-workers, and online support groups can all be potential sources of social connectivity. Resilient people also see themselves as survivors, rather than victims, and focus on positive resolutions to their problems.

### 3. Discuss the importance of seeking help.

While being personally resourceful is an important key to resilience, it is also essential to know when to ask for help. People dealing with a traumatic event can often benefit from the help of professionals who are specially trained to deal with crisis situations. Other potential sources of assistance include support groups or specialized hotlines—key supports to assist in confronting the problem, identifying strengths to resolve it, and developing new skills for the future.

### 4. Stress that everyone can learn the skills to become more resilient.

Increasing resilience takes time and intentionality, but there is a specific set of skills that can help all individuals become more resilient. The results are worth the effort of practice. Resilient individuals can more effectively commit to goals and life balance; stay calm under pressure and focus on only that which they can control; think positively, see challenges, and not blame themselves.



The messages in the Resilience PowerPoint emphasize an individual's ability to:

- **Accept and embrace change.**
  - Find ways to become more comfortable with change.
    - Practice authenticity.
    - Manage stress and avoid burnout.
- **Learn continuously.**
  - Learn new skills, gain new understandings, and apply them during times of change.
- **Take charge.**
  - Embrace self-empowerment.
  - Take charge of one's career and development, gain new understandings, and apply them during times of change.
    - Manage change and setbacks.
- **Define purpose.**
  - Develop a "personal why" that gives one's work meaning and helps put it into a larger context.
    - Focus on what one can control and take small steps.
- **Create balance.**
  - Form your identity apart from your job.
    - Have moments of play
    - Get (and stay) inspired
- **Cultivate relationships.**
  - Develop and nurture a broad network of personal and professional relationships.
    - Develop quality relationships.
    - Build trust.
    - Spend face-to-face time with loved ones.
    - Engage respectfully with others by communicating supportively and being an effective listener.
    - Facilitate another person's success with guidance, recognition, and support.
- **Practice reflection.**
  - Reflection fosters learning, new perspectives, and a degree of self-awareness that can enhance resilience.
    - Practice gratitude daily.
    - Gain perspective by stepping out of one's own box.
    - Reframe one's thoughts with a positive mindset.
- **Reframe skills.**
  - Question, and even change, one's definition of self or career.
  - Seek support to help build and maintain positivity.