The Resilient Growth™ Model for Transformational Resilience

A Framework for Building Psychological and Psycho-Social-Spiritual Resilience for the Traumas and Toxic Stresses Generated by Climate Change

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Website: http://www.theresourceinnovationgroup.org/transformational-resilience/
A Serious Ecological--Turned Mental Health--Turned Psycho-Social-Spiritual—
Turned Humanitarian Crisis is Growing...

The Harmful Human Reactions to Climate Impacts!

Building Widespread Capacity for Transformational Resilience Can:

• Minimize the problems
• Quickly reverse them when they appear
• Greatly increase individual, social, and ecological wellbeing
Summary of Risks If Left Unaddressed

**Stress Reaction From Release of Cortisol & Adrenaline**
- Physical Reaction:
  Increased blood pressure, pulse rate, difficult breathing, cold sweats, muscle tension, aches & pains, sleep disorders
- Mental Reaction:
  Excessive fear, worry, guilt, lost trust, shattered assumptions and lost meaning

If not discharged, what began as a helpful protective reaction can become harmful

**Maladaptive Coping**
- Self-numbing via legal or illegal substance, food, tobacco abuse
- Seeking relief via diversions like hyperactivity or overworking
- Seeking relief by inflicting our distress on others via aggression or violence
- Dissociation, denial, reenactment
- Less ability to cope, problem solve, and enhance wellbeing

If It Continues

**Group/Social Breakdown**
(Trauma-Organized Orgs & Communities)
- Distrust, despair, meaninglessness
- Low empathy and compassion
- More authoritarianism and extremism
- ‘We vs. Them’ polarization
- Acting out: aggression, violence, crime
- Less ability to cope, problem solve, and enhance wellbeing

If many people experience these reactions

**All Encompassing Personal Breakdown**
- Physical health problems (e.g. cancer, heart)
- Psycho-emotion problems (e.g. anxiety, depression)
- Spiritual problems (e.g. hopelessness)
- Cognitive problems (e.g. memory loss)
- Behavioral problems (aggression or withdrawal)
- Less ability to cope, problem solve, and enhance wellbeing
The Resilient Growth™ Model

It is framed around the knowledge that humans are

Pushed by drives

and

Pulled by meaning and purpose!

(Quote by Viktor Frankl)
**The Resilient Growth™ Model**

**Focus: Presencing skills to calm your emotions and thoughts**

*Ground* — and center yourself by stabilizing your nervous system.

*Remember* — your personal skills as well as internal and external resources.

*Observe* — your reactions to and thoughts about the situation non-judgmentally with self-compassion.

**Focus: Purposing skills to find meaning, direction & hope in adversity**

*Watch* — for insight and meaning in climate-enhanced and related hardships.

*Tap* — into your purpose & the values you want to live by in the midst of adversity.

*Harvest* — hope for new possibilities by making choices that increase personal, social, and environmental wellbeing.
The Resilient Growth™ Model

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Presencing Goals:

* Develop Skills to Moderate the "Push" of our Psychobiological Drives

- Learn skills to stabilize our nervous system and calm the mind and body in the midst of stress and adversity.

- Learn skills to create psychological flexibility by observing thoughts about the past and future non-judgmentally without being captured by them.

The knowledge that we can manage our emotions and thoughts in any situation provides enormous confidence and peace of mind.
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Ground—and center yourself by stabilizing your nervous system

**Body-Based Skills**
(Trauma Resource Institute)

- Tracking
- Resourcing
- Grounding

**Breath-Based Skills**

- Controlled breathing
- Six-Second breathing

**Awareness-Based Skills**

- Mindfulness of breath, thoughts and emotions
- Mindful eating, walking, movement

**Culturally-Based Skills**

- Music
- Dance
- Eating/food

**Combo Skills**

- Reset Button
The Resilient Growth™ Model

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Robust Social Support Systems are Essential

Population-based research shows that individuals with 2 or more people they can rely on for emotional support and/or practical help when needed are:

• 65% less likely to go hungry because they don’t have enough money to buy food.

• 94% less likely to be depressed for all or most of the month.

• 62% are less likely to experience symptoms of serious and persistent mental illnesses.

• 59% less likely to report poor physical health.

This indicates robust social support systems improves not just personal health—but the health of the entire community!

(Foundation for Healthy Generations 2014)
CIRCLES OF SUPPORT
Identifying the skills & internal & external resources you have to deal with adversity.

My External Physical Resources

My True Allies

My Internal Resources

My Personal Skills

Me
The Resilient Growth ™ Model

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**Observe**—your reactions to and thoughts about the situation non-judgmentally

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**The ABC Model of Observing Your Thoughts and Emotions**  
(G. Schiraldi)

![Diagram of the ABC Model](image)

- **A**  
  Activating event—the situation that a video camera would record

- **B**  
  Our beliefs and self-talk about the event

- **C**  
  Consequences: Our emotions, body sensations, and impulses to act

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**But We Are Often Not Aware of B: Our Beliefs and Automatic Self-Talk**

We think the event caused our reaction, when it was our *interpretation of it* that did, which usually includes some true and *many* erroneous beliefs and stories.
TEN COMMON "THINKING DISTORTIONS"

1. Fixated on Flaws
2. Dismissing the Positive
3. Assuming
4. Labeling
5. Over-generalizing
6. All-Or-Nothing Thinking
7. Catastrophizing
8. "Should" and "ought" statements
9. Personalizing
10. Blaming
## ABC Thought and Emotion Record

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event (Describe)</th>
<th>Consequence (For you, others or the environment)</th>
<th>Belief (Self-Talk)</th>
<th>Is It Really True? (Yes/No)</th>
<th>Possible Thinking Distortion</th>
<th>Write An Alternative Belief/Self-Talk</th>
<th>What Would You Be Like With The Alternative?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example</strong></td>
<td>Worked in rush mode long after regular work hours to complete project</td>
<td>Me: bought fast food for dinner, was tense and irritable when got home, yelled at kids, ate and drank too much, felt bad about self afterwards. Kids: Felt like second priority, angry for being yelled at. Environment: needless consumption of packaging, chemicals, energy.</td>
<td>I am the only one in the organization that can do this work. If I don't do it climate change will grow worse. I'm too tired and stressed to cook.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Personalizing</td>
<td>Others are skilled-- next time I'm running late I'll ask for help. I alone can't prevent CC &amp; I'll be more effective if I care for myself and my family.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Observe—your reactions to and thoughts about the situation non-judgmentally with self-compassion.

When Observing Your Thoughts, Emotions, and Reactions

Self-Compassion Is Essential!

Self-Compassion Exercise
# My Presencing Safety Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I Will Watch For These Signs That I Am Outside of My Resilient Growth Zone</th>
<th>When I See These Signs I Will Take These Actions</th>
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| **Examples**  
*Physical Signs:* rapid breathing, heart beat, or pulse; head or stomach ache; muscle tension.  
*Mental Signs:* racing mind, anxiety, fear, excessive worry, sleep troubles. | **Examples**  
Practice tracking, grounding, controlled breathing, mindfulness of breath, thoughts & emotions, Circles of Support, ABC Model of Thinking Distortions, Self-Compassion |

1.  
2.  
3.  
4.  
5.
Remember, humans are not only

Pushed by psychobiological drives

We Are Also

Pulled by meaning and purpose!

Quote by Viktor Frankl
The Resilient Growth™ Model

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**Purposing Goals**

*Develop Skills To Intensify The "Pull" of Meaning and Purpose*

- *Presencing* is necessary, but insufficient, because it *doesn't guarantee a principled, vital, or meaningful life* in the midst of ongoing climate traumas and toxic stresses.

- *Purposing* is about developing positive meaning, direction & hope in life by making values-based choices that enhance personal, collective and ecological wellbeing.

- Research shows that using adversity as a *catalyst to adopt a mission greater than ourselves* is good for others, increases our *mental health*, and enhances our capacity to deal with future negative events.
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Exercise

Identify a time when you used adversity as a catalyst to learn, grow, and find new purpose and meaning in your life or saw others that did?

Examples

• Eating better, getting more exercise, or in other ways taking better care of yourself after illness

• Greater empathy for others after your own tragedy

• Identify new personal strengths by observing your response to hardship

• More desire to help others due to help you got when distressed

• Start of a new spiritual quest after trauma

If you were able to identify an example—you already know how to do it!
The Choices We Make In Midst Of Adversity Determine Our Pathway

- Level of Functioning
- Adverse Event
- Time

**Transformational Resilience:** moving well beyond previous levels of functioning while holding the pain of trauma for insight and meaning in climate-enhanced and related hardships.

**Requires a Choice:** Continue to suffer, or use the experience to learn & grow—often via self-transcendence (helping others to help ourselves)

Adapted from S. Joseph, *What Doesn't Kill Us* (pp. 69)
Famous Example: Nelson Mandela

Spent 27 years in prison

Refused release because he would be required to stay silent.

Led transition from apartheid with empathy, equity, and strength.
Common Changes Seen In Post-Traumatic or Stress-Based Growth
(Tedeschi, Calhoun, Joseph)

- Personal
- Philosophical
- Relational

Leading to These Common Benefits

- Better mental health
- Improved positivity
- Improved physical health
- Shift from "Me to We"
Deeper Exercise: Learning, Growing and Finding Meaning in Adversity

• Describe a stressful situation and how you normal react to it.

• Describe how your reaction affects other people, you, and also the natural environment.

• Re-imagine the situation and answer these questions:
  
  ✓ What insights about myself and the world can I gain if I use this as an opportunity to learn rather than react by fighting, fleeing or freezing?

  ✓ How can I increase the wellbeing of other people and the environment through this experience rather than diminishing them?

  ✓ How can I find new meaning and purpose in my life through this experience?
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Living Out The Values We Hold Dear Gives Our Life Purpose

• Values refer to **Actions**—not ideals, morals, or goals.

• Values are about **how you act** during life, **not what you accomplish**.

• Because our **values tend to remain constant** they can **serve as a compass to guide our actions during climate related and other types of adversities**.
1. Go through the list of values & identify the top 3 values that would allow you to be the person you want to be and live with meaning and purpose in the midst of adversity.

- Personal responsibility
- Honesty
- Fairness
- Patience
- Compassion
- Simplicity
- Protection of nature/climate
- Generosity
- Gratitude
- Independence
- Family
- Community
- Professional achievement
- God
- Reverence for human life
- Honor
- Loyalty
- Social justice
- Respect for authority
- Humility
- Self-sufficiency
- Kindness
- Personal safety
- Rank and power
- Self-awareness
- Diligence
- Public recognition
- Love
- Social equity
- Integrity
- Charity
- Mercy
- Respect for others
- Status
- Brotherhood
- Selflessness
- Wealth
- Forgiveness
- Open mindedness
- Success
- Insert other

2. Look back at the distressing event you described and consider what might have changed if you focused on living out your core values during that time?
Humor & Gratitude Are Key To Finding Purpose and Living Our Values

In the midst of serious or ongoing adversity we often only see bad things.

Focusing on gratitude reminds us of positive things in our lives that are forgotten which creates a more complete life narrative.

We often “Play Selma’s Game”

Confessions of a Jewish Mother
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRbL46mWx9w)
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Sample Exercise

Note a time when you helped someone else or offered your services—without any concern for yourself or feeling of obligation. (or knew someone who did).

Share the experience and describe how you (or they) felt afterwards.
One of the best ways to harvest hope in the midst of climate adversity is to take concrete steps with others to help other people or nature.

This activates the release of oxytocin, which makes us more “empathetic” which produces more “altruism”
Hope for new possibilities by making choices that increase personal, social, and environmental wellbeing.
Research Shows That When People Become More Empathetic & Altruistic They Exhibit More:

- Honesty
- Kindness
- Love
- Gratitude
- Fairness
- Forgiveness
- Modesty
- Prudence
- Leadership skills
- Social intelligence
- Bravery
- Creativity
- Good Judgment

Leading To:

More hopeful and positive attitude; Better mental health; Better physical health; Extended life-expectancy; and Greater capacity to deal with future adversities.

(From: Paul Zak, The Moral Molecule: How Trust Works, and many others)
Researchers Have Found that Hope Emerges Most Readily When Three Closely Related Factors Are Present:

1. People have a vision of a place they want to arrive at or condition they want to achieve
   What is your vision?

2. A sense of how to get to their destination
   What is your approach?

3. And the commitment to work toward that end even when obstacles block their way
   What commitments are you willing to make?
# My Purposing Action Plan

**My Strengths and Passions:**

**My Core Values:**

**Goals To Enhance My Personal Wellbeing:**

**Goals to Enhance the Wellbeing of Other People and The Natural Environment:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate Actions (within 30 days) to Achieve My Goals</th>
<th>* Barriers I Will Experience</th>
<th>Strategies For Barriers</th>
<th># Benefits of Action</th>
<th>Date(s) Done</th>
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<tr>
<th>Mid-Term Actions (within 3 Months) To Achieve My Goals</th>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Strategies for Barriers</th>
<th>Benefits of Action</th>
<th>Date(s) Done</th>
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* Barriers include internal challenges as well as external barriers.
At Individual Level The Resilient Growth™ Model Involves Cultivating a Resilient Mindset

I understand how trauma and toxic stress can affect my mind & body (I’m trauma-informed)

I have skills, a social support network, and other resources I can use in the midst of adversities to calm my mind & body (Presencing skills)

I have skills to use adversities as catalysts to learn, grow, and find meaning and hope by joining with others to help people and/or nature (Purposing skills)
The Resilient Growth™ Model Shifts Groups and Organizations From ‘Trauma-Organized’ to ‘Resilience-Enhancing’ Social Systems

Adapted from *Destroying Sanctuary & Restoring Sanctuary* (S. Bloom); & *Leading Change Toward Sustainability* (B. Doppelt, 2003)
The Three Pillars of Trauma-Informed Resilience-Enhancing Communities

- Trauma-Informed and Skilled Residents
- Healthy Social Environment
- Enabling Culture
Pillar I

Trauma-Informed and Resilience Skilled Residents

• Build widespread understanding of how the trauma and toxic stress can affect the thinking, emotions, behaviors, safety, and health of individuals and groups.

• Give every adult and youth the opportunity to learn and continually improve “Presencing” & “Purposing” skills and tools.

• Help all business, non-profit, government, and civic leaders understand how groups can become trauma-organized and learn how to transition them to trauma-informed human resilience-enhancing social systems.
Pillar II

Healthy Social Environment

• Community leaders jointly role model and promote social narratives that foster positive cultural and social norms and encourage safe, healthy, and ecologically sustainable behaviors.

• Establish ongoing opportunities for people to build, rebuild, and maintain robust social support networks (bonding, bridging, and linking).

• Develop strong working coalitions and ongoing communications among diverse public, private, non-profit and civic organizations.

• Establish opportunities for all people to engage in activities that benefit the common good through regular neighborhood and community projects.

• Employ Restorative Justice as much or more than criminal justice.

• Offer Healing Circles and other venues for people to share their distress and/or grieve after loss.
Pillar III

Enabling Culture

• Norms focused on using locally-designed and supported approaches to prevent and resolve problems rather than siloed programs that use “standardized” models.

• Continual willingness to honestly examine long standing assumptions and practices that constrain or undermine social justice, health and resiliency.

• Continual willingness to learn, grow, and innovate, even if it means disrupting or ending long-standing approaches.

• Shared norms, standards, and practices focused on social justice, equity, health, safety, and resilience.

• Collective actions used to resolve problems with democratic decision-making.

• Norms ensure that people have active say and control over decisions that affect their lives—especially preparing for and responding during and after disasters.
The Three Pillars of a Trauma-Informed Resilience-Enhancing Community

Trauma-Informed and Resilience Skilled Residents

- Widespread knowledge of how trauma and toxic stress can affect individuals and groups.
- Every adult and youth has opportunity to learn & continually improve Presencing & Purposing skills.
- All business & civic leaders know how to shift from trauma-organized to resilience-enhancing entities.

Healthy Social Environment

- Community leaders jointly role model and promote social narratives encouraging safe, healthy, socially just and equitable, ecologically sustainable behaviors.
- Robust promotion of social support networks.
- Strong coalitions & communications among diverse community organizations.
- Opportunities for people to engage in activities that benefit the common good through regular neighborhood and community projects.
- Restorative justice used as much or more than criminal justice.
- Healing circles & other venues exist for people to share distress and grieve after loss.

Enabling Culture

- Norms that demand locally-designed & supported approaches to prevent and resolve problems rather than siloed programs that use “standard” models.
- Continual willingness to honestly examine long standing assumptions, practices, and policies.
- Continued willingness to learn, grow and innovate even if it means abandoning long standing approaches.
- Shared norms, standards, and practices focused on social justice, equity, health, safety, and resilience.
- Collective actions used to resolve problems with democratic decision making.
- Norms ensure that people have active say and control over decisions that affect their lives—especially in disasters.
1. Form "Resilience Leadership Councils" (RLCs) to plan, establish, coordinate, evaluate, and continually improve preventative human resilience building programs. (A modification of IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergencies)

2. RLCs assess current levels of local resilience (e.g. skills, social norms, levels of social connection), the existing human resilience building programs, populations served, & gaps.

3. RLCs then strengthen knowledge and skills by expanding existing programs and/or developing new ones to ensure that all adults and youth as well as organizational and civic leaders gain information and learn resilience skills and tools.

4. RLCs foster organizational coalitions and communications to strengthen the economic, educational, and religious/spiritual protective systems that influence human resilience.

5. RLCs jointly identify and promote social narratives focused on safe, healthy, and resilient behaviors and activities.

6. RLCs continually monitor, evaluate, and improve the initiatives.

7. RLCs seek opportunities and promote policies to support and fund the initiatives.
The Resilient Growth™ Model

- **Is evidence-based and emphasizes prevention---**
  not therapy, but can be very therapeutic

- **Is based on the biology of our nervous system---**
  not mental or moral weakness

- **With practice, can be instantly self-administered---**
  and skills are dose-based--the more you practice the greater the effects