



Using Climate Adversities as Transformational Catalysts to Increase Personal, Social, and Ecological Wellbeing

“Purposing”:

Telling a New Story About the World and Ourselves

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

Examples

- Re-dedicated yourself to a goal or mission after a setback
- Developed new priorities in your life after trauma
- Eat better, get more exercise, or in other ways take better care of yourself after an illness
- Developed greater empathy for others after your own tragedy
- Identified new personal strengths by observing your response to hardship
- Started a new spiritual quest after a trauma



If you identified an example, you already know how to use adversity as a catalyst to learn, grow, and increase your sense of wellbeing!

Why did you decide to do it -- and **how** did you make it happen?

Can you envision a way to **expand that capacity** to other **aspects of your life**, including your response to rising global temperatures?

Can you envision a way to help people in your **organization** or **community** become aware of their **capacity to do the same**?

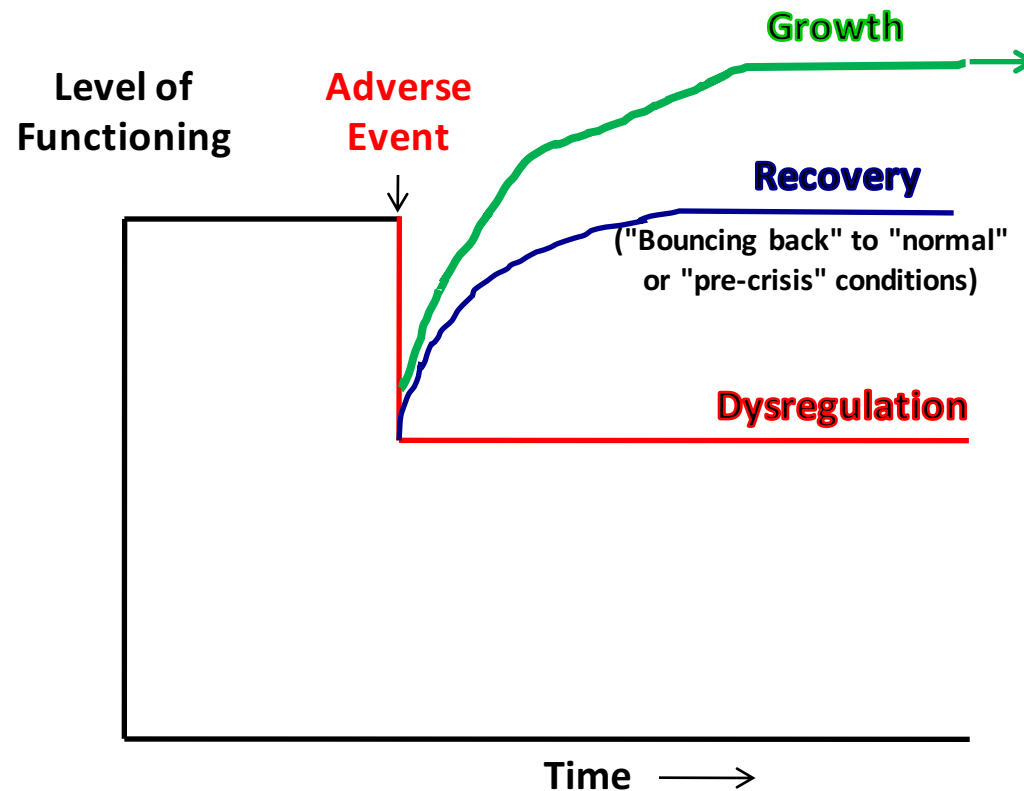
Transformational Resilience Is Much More Than “Bouncing Back”

It is about changing how we respond to trauma and toxic stress by searching for underlying significance in it that makes our suffering bearable and turns it into learning, growth, and caring for others and our environment.



When we turn toward rather than denying or avoiding our suffering we expand the boundaries of our self-interest which can motivate us to help others and nature as a way to help ourselves.

The Choices We Make In Midst Of Adversity Determine Our Pathway



Transformational Resilience:
increasing your sense of wellbeing substantially above previous levels while holding the pain of trauma in different way



Requires a Choice:
continue to suffer, or decide to use the experience to learn, grow, and develop a new sense of self that leads to new sources of meaning, purpose, and hope

Steps in Using Adversities as Transformational Catalysts To Learn, Grow & Increase Wellbeing

(Adapted From *What Doesn't Kill Us*, S. Joseph; and *Transformational Resilience* B. Doppelt)

1. Honest Appraisal

2. Seek Refuge and Support

3. Ask “What Can I Learn?”

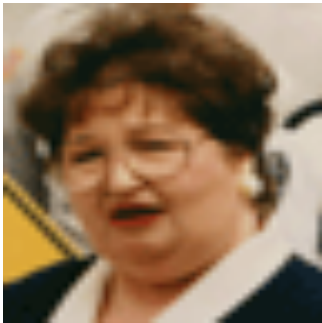
4. Tell a New Story

5. Realize You Control How You Respond

Examples of Transformational Resilience: MADD Founders



Candy Lightner turned her grief into a higher purpose by starting Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD) after her 13-year-old daughter Cari was killed by a drunken driver walking to a church carnival.



Beckie Brown channeled her suffering into a new mission in life by establishing the first MADD chapter in Northern Florida after her son Marcus was killed at age 18 in a car crash involving a 19-year old drunk driver.

Both Women:

- **Turned toward and honestly assessed what happened**
- **Were consoled by family and friends—and remembered they had skills and resources to respond**
- **Kept asking what lessons they could take from the tragedy**
- **Told themselves a new story about the world and themselves and found new meaning and purpose in life**
- **Realized they could continue to suffer, or take control of their response, and decided to help others as a way to help themselves—and in doing so found great hope.**

Step 1: Honest Appraisal

1. Describe a recent distressing experience you recently had and how you reacted to it.
 - How did it affect your body?
 - How did it affect your mind?
 - How did it affect your behavior?
2. Describe how your reaction likely effected the people involved & those who observed
3. Describe how your reaction might have affected the natural environment.
4. If others were involved or observed, how would they have described the situation?
5. Can you describe the distressing situation any differently now depicting all aspects?

Step 2: Seek Refuge and Support

Surround ourselves with people who offer unconditional support and connect with our key internal and external resources can provide the support needed to turn toward rather than deny or ignore our distress.



Step 2: Seek Refuge and Support

Personal Skills

Ability to use healthy methods to stay calm, get exercise, eat well, be assertive, reach out to others

Internal Resources

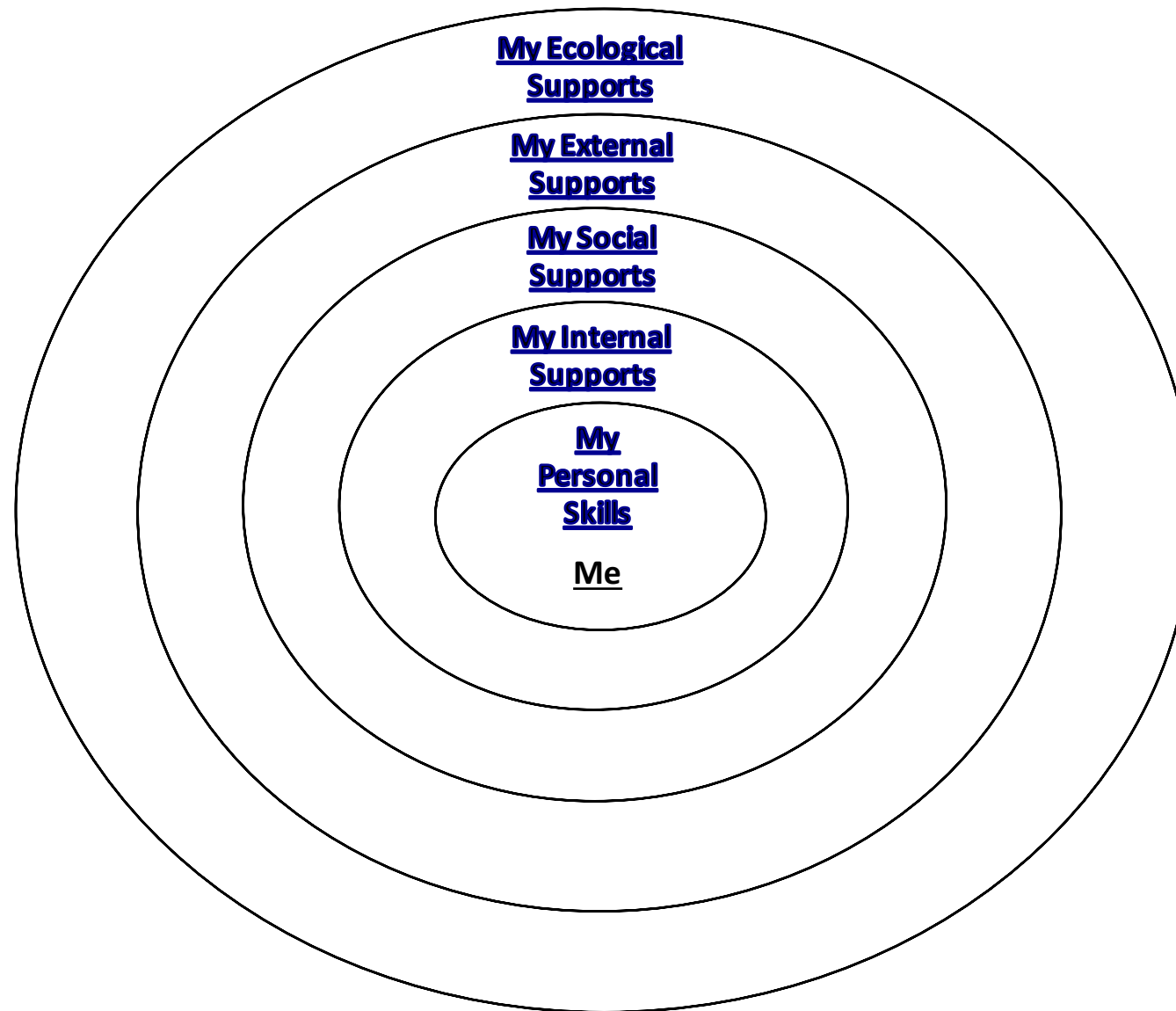
Mental images of experiences, places, role models that bring peace and calm

Social Supports

Family and friends who provide unconditional emotional support and practical assistance.

External Supports

Physical places like a room in the house, garden, place in town, emergency kit, that bring peace and calm



Ecological Supports

The sun's rays, air you breathe, water you drink

Does your residence have a:

- Yard
- Trees
- Garden
- House plants
- Pets

Does your community have:

- Green space
- Trees
- Walkways/trails
- Plants
- Wildlife
- Streams
- Watershed

How aware are you of these & other ecological systems?

Can you find a way to connect with them?



What do you see in the picture?

What does it means to you that other people saw other scenes?

Step 3: Ask "What Can I Learn?"

Everything outside you is a reflection of your own perceptions and thoughts.

You are the storyteller, and the world you see is a projection of your own thoughts.

Learning is an ornament in
prosperity, a refuge in adversity,
and a provision in old age.

Aristotle

Thinking about adversity in different ways — reframing it -- can change how you experience and react

Asking "What I can learn from the situation?" is a Powerful Way to Reframe distressing events!

Step 3: Ask “What Can I Learn?”

Creating a vision of your *Best Possible Self* helps you learn from adversity!

Answer the “Miracle Question”

Imagine that you go to sleep tonight and something magical happens: You are suddenly able to think and respond to distressing events in the ideal way you would like to respond: the way that helps you to avoid harming yourself, others, or the natural environment, and allows you to live with dignity and pride.

When you wake up in the morning you find yourself in the exact same difficult situation as before.

1. How would you respond to the difficult situation now in the ideal?

2. How could you bring that ideal response to fruition?

Living out the Values We Hold Dear increases our Self-esteem and helps us move toward our ideal self and learn through adversity.



- Values refer to Actions--- not ideals, morals, or goals.
- Values are about how you act during life, not what you accomplish.

1. Go through the list of values and identify the top 3 values that would allow you to be the person you want to be and live with dignity 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 experience?

Step 3: Ask "What Can I Learn?"

If you can envision yourself responding in the ideal way you want might you learn:

- **"You are stronger than you thought?"**: New personal strengths you are not previously aware of.
- **"Friends can become family?"**: Deeper or new relationships
- **"Life is a precious gift?"**: Greater appreciation of being alive and/or of the natural environment.
- **"What is truly important in your life?"**: New priorities such as different profession or spirituality
- **"New doors are open to you?"**: New opportunities or possibilities in your life.

Practicing Transformational Resilience

Step 4: Tell a New Story

Is there a New Story you can tell yourself now about other people, the world, or yourself as a result of this experience?



Step 5: Realize You Control How You Respond

The realization that you control how you respond to adversity helps overcome helplessness and hopelessness.



Taking concrete steps to help other people and nature often provides the greatest sense of control — and the most hope.

Step 5: Realize You Control How You Respond

Research has 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
2. A sense of the initial steps they can take and an overall approach to move toward their vision
3. A commitment to work with others to move toward that vision even when obstacles arise

Step 5: Realize You Control How You Respond

Identify a recent time when you **did something helpful** for another **person**— or **nature** -- without a sense of obligation or expected payoff.

How did you feel afterwards?

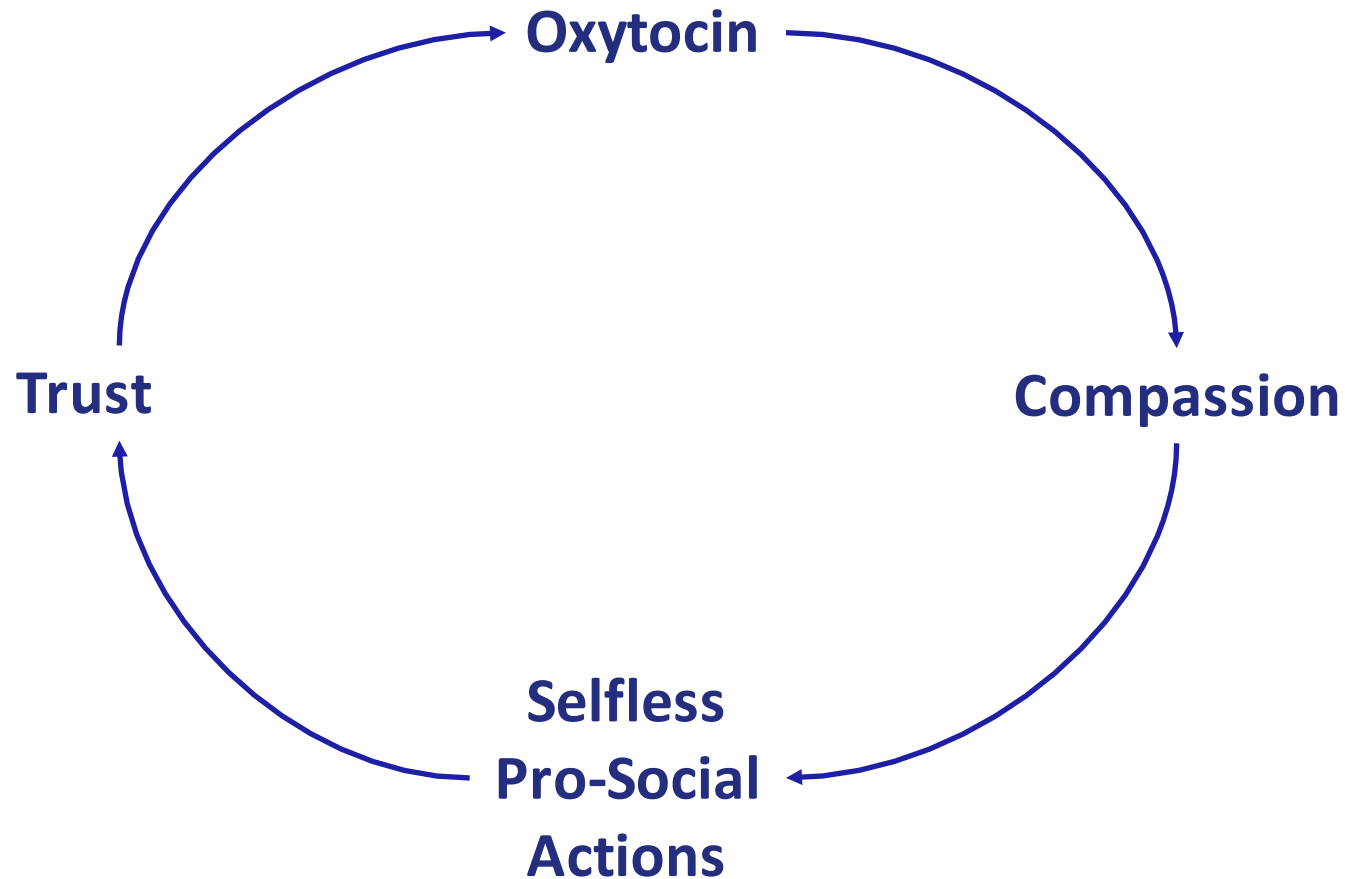


When we do **good things for others**—or **help the world be a better place**— without obligation
(engage in selfless pro-social behaviors)

We enhance our self-esteem

The Oxytocin Virtuous Cycle

Selfless pro-social actions **feel good** ... which triggers the **release of oxytocin**... which generates **more compassion**... which drives **more selfless behaviors**... which **inspires more trust**... which causes the release of **more oxytocin** producing a **virtuous cycle!**



- This is not about being nice or moralism
- It is an expanded notion of self-interest

Step 5: Realize You Control How You Respond

Research Shows That When People Become More
Compassionate & Selfless They Exhibit Greater:

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
- Greater capacity to deal with future adversities

Step 5: Realize You Control How You Respond

- What **selfless pro-social** things do you **do now** that help **other people** or **nature**?
- How could you **increase** those activities or **start new ones**, without obligation or any expected payoff?
- How you could **help** your **colleagues** and **community members** engage in **similar selfless pro-social activities**?

Transformational Resilience Should Become a Central Part of Climate Solutions

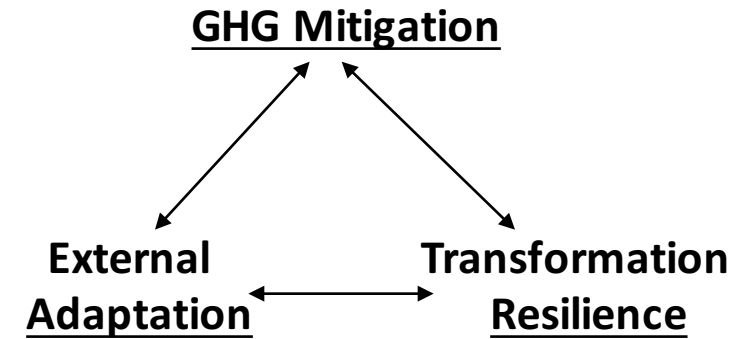
Helping People Learn How To Practice “Purposing”:

- Turn toward and honestly assessing distressing situations
- While seeking refuge and support
- Asking “What can I learn”?
- Telling a new story that leads to new meaning, purpose & hope
- Realizing they control how they respond

Should Be A Top Priority

of all efforts to address the climate crisis!

The 3 Necessary Elements of Climate Solutions





**Can you see a way to help your organization & community
learn and practice Transformational Resilience?**

About the Presenter

Bob Doppelt founded and coordinates the International Transformational Resilience Coalition (ITRC). He is the director of The Resource Innovation Group (TRIG), which is affiliated with Willamette University. He also teaches part-time at the University of Oregon. He is trained in both counseling psychology and environmental science. He is a mindfulness teacher (Spirit Rock Meditation Center), and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Instructor (U. Mass. Medical School Center for Mindfulness).

His book *Transformational Resilience* (March 2016) describes these and other “Presencing” and “Purposing” skills for building personal and psychosocial resilience.

