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

Bob Doppelt, Coordinator, International Transformational Resilience Coalition

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Website: http://www.theresourceinnovationgroup.org/transformational-resilience/
Building Widespread Capacity for Transformational Resilience Can:

• Minimize the problems
• Quickly reverse them when they appear
• Greatly increase individual, social, and ecological wellbeing
Climate Adversities Can:

Undermine our **sense of self** by severely threatening or shattering our **core beliefs** about the **world** and **ourselves** and what gives our lives **meaning, purpose, and hope**.

Helping People Learn to Grow from the Adversities is Vital To:

Develop a **new sense of self** – new **meaning, purpose, and hope in life** – that:

- Promotes **healthy thinking and behaviors** even in unhealthy conditions, and
- Moves people to **increase** their sense of **wellbeing**, that of **others**, and the condition of **environment** as well!
It Is Framed Around The Knowledge That Humans Are

Pushed by drives

and

Pulled by meaning and purpose!

(Quote by Viktor Frankl)
The Autonomic Nervous System Is Key to Both Dysregulation and Resilience

- **Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS) operates like a gas peddle:**
  Generates burst of energy to prepare for threats by activating fight or flee reactions.

- **Parasympathetic Nervous System (PNS) acts like a brake system:**
  Promotes rest and digest response that calms the body—and also the freeze response (helplessness and dissociation).
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**Two Focuses**

*Presencing* skills to calm the body and mind in adversity

*Purposing* skills to find meaning, direction and hope in adversity
Stress is created from the belief that we are under threat and cannot cope.

It occurs when a gap exists between the reality we got and the reality we want.

The bigger the gap, the greater our stress & suffering
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 trauma and toxic stress.

• 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.
The Resilient Growth™ Model

Focus: *Presencing* skills to calm the body and mind in adversity

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

**Remember**—your personal skills, resources, and social support network.

**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 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.
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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Trauma and toxic stress often lead to a restricted view of self.

Not only can we forget the skills and resources we have to deal with adversity, we also increase our sense of separation from our true allies and nature.

Deliberately remembering our skills, resources, and social and ecological connections helps us overcome this tendency.
Robust Social Support Networks Can Help You

• Determine if you are actually under threat

• If so, think through how significant it is & how to respond

• While providing vital emotional support and practical assistance when needed
Growing Research Shows Connecting with Nature Is Also Vital

Nature Heals Us

- Research shows that being in nature, or even viewing scenes of nature reduces anger, fear, and stress and increases pleasant feelings.

- Connecting with nature also contributes to physical wellbeing, reducing blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension, and the production of stress hormones.

- Research in hospitals, offices, and schools has found that even a simple plant in a room can have a significant impact on stress and anxiety.

Nature Soothes Us

- Humans are genetically programmed to find trees, plants, water, and other nature elements engrossing so are absorbed by nature scenes and distracted from our pain and discomfort.

Nature Restores Us

- Studies show that time spent in nature or even viewing scenes of nature generate a positive mood, enhanced psychological wellbeing, meaningfulness, hope, and vitality.
Nature Connects Us

For example, research shows people with trees and green space around their residence are more likely to:

- Know more people
- Have stronger feelings of unity with neighbors
- Be more concerned with helping and supporting each other
- Experience less street crime, violence, and aggression between domestic partners.

The experience of connection is explained by studies using fMRI to measure brain activity.

- When people view nature scenes, the parts of the brain associated with empathy and love light up.
- When they view desolate scenes, the parts of the brain associated with fear & anxiety activate.
**Circles of Support™**
Identifying the skills, resources, and social supports you have to cope with adversity

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

**Internal Supports**
Images of experiences, places, role models that bring peace and calm

**Social Supports**
Friends and family who provide unconditional emotional support or 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 and species?
Can you find a way to connect with them?
The Resilient Growth™ Model

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Harvest—hope for new possibilities by making choices that increase personal, social, and environmental wellbeing.
What do you see in the picture?

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

First published as "My wife and My Mother-in-Law" in Puck, 1915.
Designed by the American Psychologist E. G. Boring.
Everything outside you is a reflection of your own perceptions & thoughts.
You are the storyteller & the world you see is a projection of your own thoughts.

Trauma & toxic stress are often the result of attachments to beliefs, ideas, and desires that conflict with reality.
**Observe**—your reactions to and thoughts about the situation non-judgmentally

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

We often see A and C clearly

- **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

**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><strong>Me</strong>: 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</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Kids</strong>: Felt like second priority, angry for being yelled at</td>
<td><strong>I am the only one in the organization that can do this work.</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Environment</strong>: needless consumption of packaging, chemicals, energy</td>
<td><strong>If I don't do it climate change will grow worse.</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td><strong>I'm too tired and stressed to cook.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Personalizing</strong></td>
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<td><strong>No</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Over-generalization</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Catastrophizing</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Others are skilled-- next time I'm running late I'll ask for help</td>
<td>More calm, thoughtful, and effective at work</td>
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<td>I alone can't prevent CC &amp; I'll be more effective if I care for myself and my family</td>
<td>A more caring parent.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I can cook a simple meal &amp; it might relax me</td>
<td>More at ease with myself and the world</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Feel good about less impact on the environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Event (Describe)</td>
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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

I Will Watch For These Signs That I Am Outside of My Resilient Growth Zone

**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.

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When I See These Signs I Will Take These Actions

**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.  
6.  
7.
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

Focus: *Presencing* skills to calm the body and mind in adversity

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

**Remember**—your personal skills, resources, and social support network.

**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 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 well-being.
• Presencing is essential, 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 and 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 adversities.
The Choices We Make In Midst of Adversity Determine Our Path

Transformational Resilience: moving well beyond previous levels of functioning while holding the pain of trauma

Requires a Choice:
Continue to suffer, or use the experience to honestly examine and learn about the world and self and find new sources of meaning, purpose and hope in life

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 When People Use Adversity to Learn and Grow
(Tedeschi, Calhoun, and Joseph)

- Personal
- Philosophical
- Relational

Leading to These Common Benefits

- Better mental health
- Improved positivity
- Improved physical health
- Shift from "Me to We"
Key Steps
(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
The Resilient Growth™ Model

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Watching

for insight and meaning in climate-enhanced and related hardships

involves Honest Appraisal of both the situation and your interpretation of it.

Staying connected to your social and ecological supports is vital throughout.
**Exercise: Learning, Growing, and Finding Meaning in Adversity**

- Describe a recent distressing situation and how you reacted to it.

- Describe how your reaction affected your mind, body and behavior, as well as other people, and also the natural environment.

**Now, Re-imagine the Situation and Answer These Questions:**

- What insights about myself and the world could I gain if I use this as a learning opportunity rather than reacting by fighting, fleeing or freezing?

- How could I increase the wellbeing of other people and even the environment through this experience rather than diminishing them?

- How could I find new meaning and purpose in my life through this experience?
Creating an Ideal Vision is Helpful

The “Miracle Question” can help people develop a vision.

Imagine that you go to sleep tonight and during the night something miraculous happens. When you wake up in the morning you suddenly have the ability to interpret and respond to adversity in the ideal way you have always dreamed of: The way that allows you to live with dignity, self-esteem, meaning & purpose.

What would that ideal way of thinking and responding look and feel like?

What would you do differently if you applied it to the distressing situation just discussed?
The Resilient Growth™ Model

Focus: *Presencing skills to calm your body and mind in adversity*

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Tapping

into the values you want to live by in the midst of adversity helps you honestly assess and learn from adversity, live with dignity, and
tell a new story about the world and yourself.

Staying connected to your social and ecological supports is vital throughout.
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 & 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.

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

2. Look back at the distressing event you described and consider what you might do differently if you focused on living out your core values during that time?
When we honestly assess our situation and learn from it, surprising benefits often appear in 1 or more of these areas:

- Awareness of new **personal strengths**
- Deeper connections with existing or new **relationships**
- New or deeper **appreciation of life** and **new priorities**
- Altered **beliefs**
- Seeing **new opportunities** or **possibilities for your life**

Might you experience any of these beneficial effects if you responded to the distressing situation by living out your ideal?
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)
Is there a new, more

Honest and Complete Story

you can tell now about the world and yourself?
The Resilient Growth™ Model

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**Harvest** — hope for new possibilities by making choices that increase personal, social, and environmental wellbeing.
Harvesting

hope for new possibilities by making choices that increase personal, social, and environmental wellbeing

allows you to tell yourself a new story and take control of how you respond it.

Staying connected to your social and ecological supports is vital throughout.
Researchers Have Found that Overcoming Helplessness and Finding 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 **initial steps** they can take & an **overall approach** to move toward their vision

3. A **commitment to work with others** to move toward that vision even when **obstacles arise**
**Exercise**

Can you note a time when you **helped someone else, animals, or nature**—without **any concern for yourself** or feeling of **obligation**?

**How did you feel 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 and nature.

This activates the release of oxytocin, which makes us more “compassionate” which produces even more “selfless pro-social actions,” which generates a virtuous cycle!
The Oxytocin Virtuous Cycle

- Trust
- Oxytocin
- Compassion
- Selfless Pro-social Actions

Harvest—hope for new possibilities by making choices that increase personal, social, and environmental wellbeing.

The Moral Molecule: How Trust Works, Paul Zak P. 64
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)
1. What is your ideal vision of how you will respond to the traumas and toxic stresses of climate change?

2. What steps do you intend to take in the near term and what is your approach to moving toward that vision?

3. Who can you join with and what commitments are you willing to make to keep your momentum even when barriers arise?

This is about taking control of how you respond to adversity!
# 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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<thead>
<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.
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, social & ecological supports, and other resources I can use to calm my mind & body and think and act in healthy ways even in unhealthy conditions (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 nature (Purposing skills)
The Three Pillars of Transformational Resilience in Organizations and Communities

- **Trauma-Informed & Resilience-Skilled Members**
- **Healthy Social Environment**
- **Enabling Culture**

See ITRC Library on the website for research basis of this model.
Climate Solutions Must Include Building Transformational Resilience!

Every adult and youth should have the opportunity to learn Presencing and Purposing skills!
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
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 as a counseling psychologist and in 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* (Greenleaf Publishing 2016) describes these and other “Presencing” and “Purposing” skills for building personal and psychosocial resilience.

The book is available at Amazon.com, Greenleaf Publishing, and many online book sellers.