The Resilient Growth Model ™ For Building Transformational Resilience for Climate Traumas & Stresses

A Framework for Coping with Distress and Building Psychological and Emotional Resilience for the Continual, Intense, Cascading & Cumulative Adversities Generated by Climate Change

Bob Doppelt, Coordinator, International Transformational Resilience Coalition (ITRC)

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Website: http://www.theresourceinnovationgroup.org/intl-tr-coalition/
Even More than the Pandemic, the Climate-Ecosystem-Biodiversity Crisis is a Civilization Changing Event!

Even with aggressive emissions cuts and ecosystem restoration efforts:

- It will **continually worsen** and **intermix acute disasters** with **cascading disruptions** to the ecological, social, and economic systems **we rely on for basic life needs**.

- The adversities will **traumatize and severely stress millions of people**, disrupt **social support networks**, **aggravate racism** and **other systemic oppressions**, and undermine the **social determinants of health**.

- Left unaddressed, the resulting **tsunami of mental health & psycho-social-spiritual maladies** will be **as bad** as the physical impacts **and derail** emissions reductions.
Despite These Threats, Little Has Been Done to Prepare *People* for the Profound Traumatic Stressors to Come!

The Adverse Psychological & Psycho-Social-Spiritual Reactions to Climate-Generated Traumas & Toxic Stresses
This is Very Unfortunate Because the Climate Crisis Also Offers The Opportunity for Profound Transformation!

It is a primal truth that, as painful as it can be, adversity is often our greatest impetus for learning, growth, and transformation.
Building *Universal Capacity for Transformational Resilience* Can:

- Prevent harmful mental health & psycho-social-spiritual reactions

- More easily heal them when they occur

- *And* be a catalyst to new meaning, purpose, and hope by helping others and restoring the natural environment!
Pre-Disaster

Warning (years/days/hours)

Impact

“Community Cohesion”
Honeymoon phase can last a few days to a few months:
Transformation Resilience vital here

“Heroic Phase”
Occurs during and right after impact: often thought of as “resilience”

“Disillusionment”
Can last months to years and generate severe mental, social,
and spiritual distresses:
Transformation Resilience vital here

“Recovery”
Coming to terms and working through grief can take years:
Transformation Resilience vital here

“Bounce Back”
If sufficient time exists for recovery, many eventually return to some semblance
of pre-crisis levels

Some People
Remain
Dysregulated

Another Disaster
or Anniversary Reactions
Can Cause Regression

Imagine the Benefits of a Global Preventative Transformational Resilience Movement That Helps:

- **All adults & youth** become **trauma-informed**, and **build on strengths** so they can think and act in **healthy ways** even in **unhealthy conditions**.

- **All leaders** learn to **promote social narratives**, shift cultural norms and practices & make their groups **safe, healthy, just, and equitable resilience-enhancing entities**.

- **Everyone** learn how to use adversities as **transformational catalysts** to find new **meaning, purpose, and hope** by increasing **social and ecological wellbeing** as a way to increase their **own sense of wellbeing**.
The Resilient Growth Model™
for Building Transformational Resilience

Core Assumptions

• It is **conditions** that are sick—**not** individuals or groups.

• Helping people understand **why they feel the way they do**—and that they **can manage their distress** and **find meaning** and **purpose** enhances **self-efficacy** and **hope**.

• Emphasizing dealing with **Stress** and enhancing **Wellness and Resilience**, not mental illness, engages far more people.
Formed Around The Knowledge That Humans Are

Pushed by drives

and

Pulled by meaning and purpose!

(Quote by Viktor Frankl)
The Resilient Growth Model™

**Presencing** (or self-regulation) skills to regulate the “push” of our psychobiological drives

**Purposing** (or adversity-based growth) skills to intensify the “Pull” of meaning and purpose
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.
Presencing Goals:
To regulate the "Push" of our psychobiological drives

• Learn how trauma and toxic stress can affect our **body, mind, and emotions**.

• Learn knowledge and skills to **notice symptoms** of distress, **stabilize the nervous system** & **calm** the **mind, body & emotions**.

• 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

Presencing skills to calm the body and mind in midst of 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.
Step 1: Help Everyone Become “Trauma-Informed”

Use simple age, culturally, and demographically-appropriate ways to help all adults and youth develop a basic understanding of:

- How trauma and toxic stress affect their body, mind and behavior (the neurobiology of trauma and toxic stress)

- The long-term effects of trauma & stress on mental & physical health (affects on child brain development, adult disorders, and many cancers, heart diseases etc.)

- How trauma and toxic stress affect the thinking & behavior of groups (how fearful parties can adopt GroupThink, make poor decisions, and blame or attack others)
- **Body-Based Skills** *(Trauma Resource Institute)*
  - Tracking
  - Resourcing
  - Grounding

- **Breath-Based Skills**
  - Controlled breathing
  - Six-Second breathing

- **Awareness-Based Skills**
  - Mindfulness of breath & thoughts
  - Mindful eating, walking, movement

- **Culturally-Based Skills**
  - Music
  - Dance
  - Food & eating together
  - Song and music

- **Physically-Based Skills**
  - Exercise
  - Yoga

- **Combo Skills**
  - Reset Button

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**Step 2: Teach Simple Age and Culturally Appropriate Skills to Calm the Mind, Body, & Emotions**

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**Ground**—and center yourself by stabilizing your nervous system.
**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.
Remembering Your Personal Strengths and Skills Helps

• Increase **internal locus of control**

• Enhance **self-efficacy**
Remembering to Reach Out to Your Social Supports 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
Connecting with Nature Is Also a Vital Resource

Research Shows Nature Reduces Stress and Strengthens Our Immune System

• When in nature we **inhale a cocktail of bioactive substances** from vegetation (e.g. anti-cancer terpenes) that **reduces stress** and **fear** and enhances **physical health** due to reduced blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension, and stress hormones.

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**.

Functional MRIs Explain These Responses

• When people view nature scenes, the parts of the **brain** associated with **empathy and compassion** light up.

• When they view desolate scenes, the **brain parts** associated with **fear & anxiety** activate.
**Circles of Support™**
To identify the skills, resources, and social supports people have to cope w/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?
**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.
**Observe**—your reactions to and thoughts about the situation non-judgmentally

### The ABC Model of Observing Your Thoughts and Emotions

(G. Schiraldi)

- **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

We often see A and C clearly.

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

When Observing Our Thoughts, Emotions, and Reactions

**Self-Compassion Is Essential!**

Engage people in age and culturally appropriate processes to **Normalize** their reactions
Observe—your reactions to and thoughts about the situation non-judgmentally with self-compassion.

In Addition:

- Support **Grieving** when needed
- Use **Humor**: Laugh with others, at yourself, and the human condition!
# 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.

## 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

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Presencing is Necessary--But *Insufficient* for the Climate Emergency

because it doesn’t mean we will live a

*principled, vital, and meaningful* life!
Remember that humans are not only Pushed by psychobiological drives

We Are Also Pulled by meaning and purpose!

Quote by Viktor Frankl
Purposing Goals

To Intensify The "Pull" of Purpose

Purposing is about developing positive meaning, direction and hope in life by learning from adversities and making values-based choices that enhance personal, social and ecological wellbeing.
“Meaning makes a great many things endurable—perhaps everything.”

Psychiatrist Carl Jung
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)
Purposing Examples: MADD Founders

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 they could use.
- Kept asking what lessons they could learn 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.

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.
The Resilient Growth Model™

*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.
Watching

for insight and meaning in adversity involves

Honest Appraisal of both the situation and your interpretation of it.
Watch for Insight and Meaning In Adversities

Step 1: Honest Appraisal

1. Describe a **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**?
Thinking about adversity in different ways — *reframing it* — can help you find *meaning in it* rather than simply reacting to it.

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

Aristotle

Asking *“What I can learn from the situation?”* is a very *powerful way* to *reframe* our thinking about distressing events!

Ask people to write a short summary of what they can learn.
**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.
Tapping

into the values you want to live by in the midst of adversity helps you
tell a new story about the world and yourself.
Tap into the values you want to live by in the midst of adversity

Creating a **Vision** of your **Best Possible Self** helps Clarify Your Values!

**Ask People to 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--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 same difficult situation as before**:

1. How could 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** in the midst of adversity increases our **Self-Esteem**, moves us toward our **Ideal Self**, and helps us **Tell a New Story About Self**

1. Go through the list 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**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal responsibility</th>
<th>Reverence for human life</th>
<th>Social equity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>Honor</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
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<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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<td>Compassion</td>
<td>Respect for authority</td>
<td>Respect for others</td>
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<td>Simplicity</td>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>Status</td>
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<td>Protection of nature/climate</td>
<td>Self-sufficiency</td>
<td>Brotherhood</td>
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<td>Generosity</td>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>Selflessness</td>
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<td>Gratitude</td>
<td>Personal safety</td>
<td>Wealth</td>
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<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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<tr>
<td>Professional achievement</td>
<td>Public recognition</td>
<td>Insert other______</td>
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<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>Love</td>
<td>____________</td>
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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?
Many people find meaning, strength, and purpose in adversity by tapping into their spiritual beliefs and values.

If appropriate, ask people how they might have responded to the distressing situation if they had lived in accordance with their spiritual values.
Tap into the values you want to live by in the midst of adversity

Is there a **New Story** you can tell now about the world, other people, or yourself with these new perspectives?
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.
The Climate Emergency Can Generate Profound Hopelessness

Hopelessness is a powerful emotion that can adversely affect the way one perceives the self, others, circumstances, and the world.

Hopelessness can lead people to harm themselves, others, and the natural environment.
Harvesting Hope

for new possibilities allows you to

Overcome despair and helplessness

and

Realize that how we respond is up to us!
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 move toward that vision even when **obstacles arise**.

Hope Theory, Snyder 1994
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**—(engage in pro-social behaviors)

**We enhance our Self-Esteem**
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!

Engaging in Pro-Social Activities

- Is not just about being nice or moralism
- It is an expanded notion of self-interest
- Helping others and the environment will now benefit each of us.

From The Moral Molecule: How Trust Works, Paul Zak
Help People Craft a “Purposing” Action Plan!

1. Create a **vision** of a **place they want to arrive at** or **condition they want to achieve**.

2. Identify the **initial steps they can take** and an **overall approach** to move toward their vision.

3. Make a **commitment** to work **with others** to move toward that vision even when **obstacles arise**.
# 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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<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>
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* Barriers include internal challenges as well as external barriers.
Summary

To help people live with the continual disasters and cascading ecological, social, and economic disruptions during the climate crisis

- Don’t expect rational explanations for what will often be unexplainable—or for your actions to generate guaranteed outcome

- Instead, stay present and maintain mastery over the self, and...

- Do something purposeful to give your life meaning, direction, and hope by doing something to help others and the natural environment
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 weakness or moral deficits

• **With practice, can be instantly self-administered**---
  and skills are dose-based--the more you practice the greater the effects
Next Week:
Applying The Resilient Growth Model™ for Transformational Resilience in *Organizations* and *Communities*

The ‘Wheel of Change’ for Building a Local Culture of Transformational Resilience for the Climate Emergency
Again--Imagine the Benefits of a Global Preventative Transformational Resilience Movement That Helps:

- **Everyone** become *trauma-informed, and build on strengths* so they can *think & act in healthy ways* even in unhealthy conditions.

- **All leaders** learn to *promote social narratives, shift cultural norms* and *practices* & make their groups *safe, healthy, just, and equitable* resilience-enhancing entities.

- **Everyone** learn how to use adversities as *transformational catalysts* to find new *meaning, purpose, and hope* in ways that motivate them to increase *social and ecological wellbeing* as a way of increasing their *own sense of wellbeing*. 
Let’s Use the Resilient Growth Model™ to Launch a Movement to...

Build a Global Culture of Transformational Resilience for Climate Traumas and Toxic Stresses!
About the International Transformational Resilience Coalition (ITRC)

A global network of mental health, social service, education, climate, faith and other leaders working to raise awareness of the urgent need, methods, and benefits of proactively building universal capacity for Transformational Resilience for climate impacts.

- Led by national steering committee and regional steering committees in the PNW and CA.
- Webpage on ACEs Connection Network site and private Basecamp site for ITRC members
- Major conferences held in different parts of the U.S. (2016, 2017, 2018)
- Ongoing workshops held in the EU and throughout the U.S.
- Free webinar series twice a year with participants often from nations worldwide.
- In 2018 inventoried and assessed resilience building programs across the west coast.
- In 2019 had SB 1037 introduced in Oregon leg. to make resilience education universal
- Recently issued Call to Action on the Climate Mental Health and Psycho-Social-Spiritual Emergency – we ask individuals and organizations to sign on!

This information and more found at: http://www.theresourceinnovationgroup.org/
About the Presenter

Bob Doppelt founded and coordinates the International Transformational Resilience Coalition (ITRC). He is the director of The Resource Innovation Group. For almost a decade he directed the Climate Leadership Initiative (CLI) and taught systems thinking and global warming policy at the University of Oregon. Prior to that he ran a research institute and taught at Portland State University. His academic training is in both counseling psychology and environmental science. He is also a mindfulness teacher (Spirit Rock Meditation Center), and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Instructor (U. Mass. Medical School Center for Mindfulness). In 2015 he was named one of the world’s “50 Most Talented Social Innovators” by the World CRS Congress.

Bob is the author of a number of best-selling books on the process of systems-based individual, organizational, and community change.

His book *Transformational Resilience* (Greenleaf Publishing 2016) describes these and other “Presencing” and “Purposing” principles and skills for building personal and psycho-social-spiritual resilience for the impacts of climate change. His other books include *Leading Change Toward Sustainability* (2003), *The Power of Sustainable Thinking* (2008), *From Me to We* (2012), and *Entering the Watershed* (1993).