

# **RESILIENCE IN STRESSFUL OR HIGH PRESSURE SITUATIONS AT WORK**

**MODELLING PROJECT BY  
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# 1. ABSTRACT

This document describes a study to model three people who work in stressful occupations and who show evidence of resilient behaviour. This being one or more of the following:

- They are so comfortable in fast-paced and stressful environments that they actively seek out and thrive on high-pressure situations.
- They bounce back after setbacks
- They maintain their self-belief and focus in the face of doubts
- They show a sober and down-to-earth view of reality

The purpose of this study was to model this behaviour to understand it more fully and use the learning to help others in a coaching and training context.

I believe that resilience – whether evident in organisations or individuals – is a key skill in the world today. Stress is a modern day disease, and today is the highest cause of absence at work with 12.8 million working days lost in Britain in 2003/4 due to stress. There is a duty of care on employers to introduce measures to help prevent and cope with stress (resilience training etc). Legislation will increasingly put pressure on employers (HSE) to do this. Resilient attitudes and behaviour can be learnt and the benefits to the individual are immense: allowing them to cope, even thrive, under pressure in the face of adversity and maximize their performance and stay healthier and happier.

I wanted to model multiple people for this study to facilitate a deeper understanding of resilient behaviours and gain awareness of the differences between people.

The results show that resilience has common factors, all of which I believe can be learnt as new behaviours.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

To draw up the methodology of this program I used techniques that I have applied in years of qualitative and quantitative market research.

I wrote a clear brief (see appendices) to cover:

- Objectives of the program
- Context of who and where
- Criteria – what I am looking for as evidence of resilience in chosen models
- Goals of the project and wider use of the results
- What evidence will tell me I've achieved this
- Plan of action – methodology and tools
- Contingency plan and risk assessment
- Success and output

Following on from this, I designed a discussion guide to help with the interview process. This utilised a range of NLP modelling techniques in a structured way, covering:

- Meta programs
- TOTE
- Multi level modelling
- Metaphor
- SCORE
- Microstrategies

The primary deliverable was the practical application – Resilience at Work – in the form of a short article. The secondary application was a model and process to use in coaching and training for resilience in others. So the findings would be incorporated into a coaching program and short training course.

I chose people in stressful or high pressure occupations for the study, three in total:

- A Sales and Marketing Director of a large company
- A marketing coordinator in a high pressure marketing department
- A teacher

These were people who I had identified as having clear evidence of resilient behaviour:

- They are so comfortable in fast-paced and stressful environments that they actively seek out and thrive on high-pressure situations.
- They bounce back after setbacks
- They maintain their self-belief and focus in the face of doubts
- They show a sober and down-to-earth view of reality

I used the following methodology:

1. Implicit modelling – use of 2<sup>nd</sup> positioning in real contexts:
  - a. These were informal and 'opportunistic' and I took a notebook with me to note observations
2. Explicit modelling – conduct a formal 1 hour interview using a discussion guide for the interviews to gather data, and to record the interviews on my Dictaphone

In order to help categorise and classify the results I also collected basic metaprogram information:

- External vs. Internal frame of reference (locus of control)
- Options verses procedures (approach to problem solving)
- Active or reflective
- Towards or away from motivation traits

### 3. RESULTS

#### a. Implicit Modelling

Sales and Marketing Director	Marketing Coordinator
<p>I modelled Greg at the Sales Conference I picked up a <b>sense of marshalling of energy</b> – of him inflating himself for the show – as he walked around during coffee pre-conference start. I sensed springiness a <b>coiled tension</b> – so that he could be <b>prepared to react to changes</b> or if things went wrong. During the presentation opener I got a sense of <b>focused energy</b>. Prior to this I had a sense of him in <b>reflection and an inner work of preparation</b>. A sense of having his <b>'arms around the team'</b> as in a rugby huddle – that sense of focussed and aggressive energy. Being in control in the driving seat with a team around him, that he was aware of and using. <b>Reaching out to others and receiving support</b> and encouragement from them. As sense of him seeking out feedback and wanting <b>honesty</b> and looking to grow from it. He showed <b>commitment</b> – of wanting to stay close to the happenings of the day. He showed and exuded <b>self belief and focus</b> – almost like a pigeon strutting and sticking his chest out. And <b>Control</b> – taking the driving the wheel and throwing himself at the challenge, with a coiled tension of anticipation in case of what might go awry with the day. I had a sense that he was running the show – he had the reins – but he was not alone, not in isolation, with <b>broad awareness and inclusion of those around him</b>. I noticed a willingness to <b>challenge</b> himself – to accept that there might be better ways of doing things and that he would be <b>willing to learn</b> from the team.</p>	<p>I modelled Jo at the IMHX show and the sales conference. Observations: a strong <b>sense of exterior calm</b>, even though I sensed a turmoil inside at times, Jo works hard to present exterior façade of calm. A sense of <b>rationality and realism</b> – preparing for all eventualities (realistic thinking) , down to earth reality. <b>A sense of energy being conserved</b> and not wasted, calmness and reserved ... a sense of energy being managed. A sense of reserving judgement on things – not stepping right in <b>but holding back</b> for other eventualities or options. A easy ability to <b>reach out to others</b> at crucial moments (trucks needed cleaning, sound system problems), but not in a panicky sense ... a maturity and sensibility. An <b>unshakable belief in herself</b> and her own preparation and work ... not an arrogance or even an overt confidence – but a <b>strong inner core</b>. A <b>refusal to let doubt</b> get in there ... while still keeping an <b>open mind for learning</b> (ie over the criticism of the stand). And always a sense that the mind – logical and rational – <b>was working away in the background</b>, making sure things were being thought of, things were being done. An astuteness and broad <b>awareness and assessment of others</b> – noticing and remarking internally on others and their behaviour and making her own opinions on them, not letting others invade her sense of confidence or calm.</p>
<p><b>Teacher</b></p>	
<p>I have modelling Dave in a couple of stressful, though non teaching situations. I know him to be very auditory with little visual in his representational system. From observing him in stressful situations where he showed strong coping skills, I sensed an <b>external calmness</b>, albeit with tension inside. I had a sense of him <b>making himself larger</b> – he is a large man anyway (6'3") – but somehow he inflates his physical presence. I had a sense of him <b>rigid like a rock, and a strong determination to persevere</b> inside. Perhaps this comes at the expense of some flexibility –ie he sacrifices flexibility for strength that this strategy gives him. This means he is less prepared for the unexpected. He manifests a <b>determined resolve</b> to get through the situation. He keeps a close eye on others around him – with a part of his awareness he remains more <b>externally focussed</b>. He has a very <b>sober sense of reality</b>. And a sense of having to just <b>face up to it</b>.</p>	<p>Commonalities:            They have a <b>sober sense of reality</b>            They view their work as <b>worthwhile</b>            They use adversity to their <b>advantage</b> – ie for learning. They find <b>meaning in it</b>.            They all believe they can <b>control</b> the events in some way – even the teacher. Yet gracefully accept those areas out of their control.            They have a great sense <b>of perspective</b>.            They (generally) interact by <b>engaging others</b>.            They have strong <b>self-belief</b>.            They remain <b>calm</b> despite frustrations around them.            They have <b>personal discipline</b> and focus their energy.            They <b>expect things to turn out well</b>.            They show <b>tenacity</b> and <b>control of their own state</b>.            They make their own decisions, they are <b>independent thinkers</b> and have <b>an internal locus of control</b>.</p>

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**b) Meta Programs**

	<b>Sales and Marketing Director</b>	<b>Marketing Coordinator</b>	<b>Teacher</b>
External/Internal	Both E and I with more leaning towards I (with E as a final check)	External/internal (with a slightly stronger leaning towards external)	Quite strongly Internal (though some external comes out later)
Options/Procedures	A strong options	Options	Options
Towards/Away from	A strong Towards	Towards	Towards
Active/Reflective	Strongly active	Active with some reflective	Somewhat reflective

c) **TOTE**

	<b>Director</b>	<b>Coordinator</b>	<b>Teacher</b>
Context	Use it everywhere. Can't switch off from that resilient way.	At work	At work in the classroom
Goals	My goals are around where I want to be and what I want to achieve at certain ages, Salary etc	Getting the project done, reaching the end goal that needs to be achieved - the completed project. I look forward to the end knowing its something that's got to be done	To do the lesson. Making sure I teach it and kids understand. Effective learning and evidence of progress made. I want to be effective at what I do. I want to do the job I'm in there to do.
Evidence	I <b>get feedback</b> , I have the right people around me, the people around me are starting to achieve what they want to achieve.	I set myself a day <b>task list, and if don't complete</b> it by that day know I'm not on track. I'm always catching up with myself, <b>achieving the tasks and hence the plan</b> . On the outside I know I've got a lot on, inside I get kind of an <b>adrenaline feeling, kinda buzzin</b> - I got to do this and I gotta do that ...	Verbal <b>responses</b> I'm getting. Questions and <b>feedback</b> from the kids. Looking at their exercise books.
Steps	I <b>identify what needs doing</b> , I then push back on what can be done (pushing the boundaries).	I <b>set myself tasks</b> within the project that I want to achieve. ... I can tell that sometimes the pressures on and to get <b>through I don't panic</b> , I kinda sit back and say to myself its got to be done, I think logically what's the best way to tackle it and best to put <b>first and prioritise</b> ... something inside like oh god how am I gonna do this ... then I think 'Jo, its got to be done' ... I kinda get an anxiety feeling god I've got loads to do but I will just <b>sit there and get on with it</b> , get it done ... go home and breathe a sigh of relief that I've done it or think I've got to get in early to do it next day .... I don't wanna fail ....i want everyone to see I am coping .. rather <b>be seen as someone cool and calm</b> and not flappin ... if I am flappin I'm not gonna let anyone see that	Make sure I'm well <b>prepared. Maintain my plan</b> for the lesson. Make sure I <b>keep on task</b> and on target.
Recovery	I have <b>a lot of balls in the air</b> all the time – it means I have more failures but also more successes. <b>I check myself</b> . I am realistic and I know when its getting too much. I will <b>ask for help</b> . I breathe and stop, work out what I need to do – maybe	If it slippin away ... <b>think of reserves</b> to help me ... <b>another avenue, a quicker way</b> of doing something ... if nothing comes to mind, I shut it out and think its got to be done ... tryin to work it out and <b>then discuss with boss</b> ... go home and breathe a sigh of relief that I've done it or think I've got to get in early to do it next day ....	I tend to react to the situation. I <b>use the skills</b> I've been taught – body language, raising my voice to control them. Threaten them with sanctions. Making eye contact with troublesome individuals. Having quiet words. Issue consequences.

	extra hours on a sat am to clear my desk – this gives me space.		
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**d) Multi Level Modelling**

	<b>Director</b>	<b>Coordinator</b>	<b>Teacher</b>
Capabilities	I'm <b>realistic</b> . I have <b>empathy</b> . <b>I listen and I observe</b> what's going on around me. I have a lot of <b>experience</b> . My pace is 2 <sup>nd</sup> to none. I <b>challenge</b> the status quo. I have <b>my feet on the ground</b> . I attract the people who want to work with me. <b>I like people to challenge me.</b>	a <b>calm personality</b> ... I'm <b>open</b> to a lot of things ... I do <b>have an opinion</b> but am quite reserved ... will step back and <b>listen</b> .. I'm laid back person ,, know what I want but won't step straight in ... I'm an <b>optimist</b> ... see what happens .. a laid back personality <b>things don't phase me so much</b> ... see it as <b>part of process</b> things to be done, <b>don't panic</b> about things to be done .. i think ive always been like that ... it does come with time <b>and experience</b> ... and being in past situations where you not always in control of what happens but then learn to <b>go with the flow a bit</b>	I have a <b>loud voice</b> . <b>I make myself big</b> . I use <b>the procedures I have been taught</b> through my training.
Beliefs and Values	I believe things will find a <b>natural course</b> . <b>Things will come right in the end</b> . I believe there are different people in this world – the hole pluggers (9 to 5ers) / the up and coming challengers / and the out and out stars who can push past what they think they can do – I believe that there is a place for them all. <b>I respect other people</b> . <b>I keep the goals of the business in mind</b> . I believe that strong people keep me in check. <b>It takes as much effort to fail as it does to succeed</b> – I want to find the fine line and work hard and smart – to push past the boundaries. You can work hard everyday and fail, I don't want to waste any time.	I like to do a job and I like to do it well – <b>want to perform for others the best that I can</b> ... <b>don't want to let myself down</b> ... if I don't achieve something I <b>am letting myself down</b> ... its important not to let anybody down	<b>I believe that everyone is sat there to learn something</b> . They are not sat there to make my life easier (I don't expect it to be easy – realistic). <b>I believe that I am there to make sure the kids learn</b> .
Identity	Extremely driven, <b>a winner</b> with a strong team with me. I am very success oriented. I want to punch the air not on my own but with my team. (Who he is in relation to others)	Care about what other people think – seeing a job through ... <b>a person who likes to follow things through and not walk away from it</b> ... (responsibility and ownership)	I'm a teacher. I'm there to teach something. <b>I'm there to facilitate their learning</b> (shows a sense of control – affecting change).

### e) Metaphor

<b>Sales and Marketing Director</b>	<b>Marketing Coordinator</b>
<p>I'm the driver of a high performance car. I press the accelerator pedal, that's my job. I need someone in the passenger seat who's applying the brake - a right hand man who checks and challenges me – take that bend, take it flat out, take care here and brake. I need someone in the back who knows where we are going who is reading the map and making sure the road ahead is not closed. I need somebody watching my back in the back seat, looking out, making sure no-one pulls out, making sure that the fuel is checked, the brakes and tyres are checked.</p> <p>I need all of these people in my car – as soon as I'm in my car I'm dangerous.</p>	<p>A reliable car – one that won't let you down ... that wouldn't run out of petrol and leave you at the side of the motorway ... on the outside a Porsche but inside reliable and solid</p>
<b>Teacher</b>	
<p>If it's going well it's positive – I don't feel pressure – sometimes I wonder whether I'm showing them the right path. They're on top of the understanding that I'm transmitting.</p> <p>The pressure comes with the discipline – with difficult groups it feels like a weight on my shoulders. It's like I'm in the trenches in WW1. All shell shocked and besieged.</p>	

**f) SCORE**

	<b>Director</b>
Situation	getting this job.
Cause	– I became a pawn, <b>lost my ability to drive the car</b> , I was not important. They didn't see my value, I lost all the things I stood for – I was <b>not in control</b> of my career.
Symptom	the <b>pressure was huge</b> when I decided to stay at Finning, initially without a job role lined up. It was a sideways /downwards move, I felt like Finning had shafted me. Then I <b>created a plan</b> on how to woo Briggs. I was at a real low point in my life. My relationship had ended. I had just committed and invested in a new property, <b>I was on my own now</b> . I thought I'm on my own in this now – <b>asking myself 'what the hell is it all about?'</b> . I had a <b>great lack of confidence</b> – it was chewing away at me. <b>I was at a huge low</b> – I was stressed, knackered, I wasn't sleeping, I was tired, I couldn't think straight. The team here fell apart – my own team knew I was going.
Resources	I still had <b>a commitment to my team</b> – I was a role model for them. I still had to <b>put a good face on it</b> . I thought I don't like this anymore. <b>I've got to reinvent myself</b> – I've got no-one in my life so this is about me. <b>How do I want to play this?</b> I started to <b>feel real hatred</b> for Finning. I thought <b>'where can my strengths work here?'</b> I <b>took a week off work</b> and decorated the kitchen. I took <b>the space</b> to reinvent myself – to <b>stop spinning and took the time to think</b> . <b>I believe 'things come right in the end'</b> . I reinvented myself on the basis of (reality check) 'I'm in a good position here, with a good package' What's <b>the worst thing that could happen?</b> Nothing ... I'll just get on with it, whilst I regroup. I decided to watch and observe Briggs and asked myself what does the business need? I started to think about what I do during this week. I also explored the Hewden option. I raised my game here – I was seen. <b>I pushed past what I could push</b> . I <b>explored other options</b> and pushed them too. I looked at <b>the best case scenario</b> – what could be the best of all worlds option for me . I put my own deal together - I thought they'll never give me that ... and they did!
Outcome	– I <b>knew the repercussions</b> and was prepared for them – every manager in this business turned against me. 1 or 2 quite vehemently. One later remarked he could now see what I had achieved and congratulated me, was impressed.

	<b>Coordinator</b>
Situation	Last minute changes to an important conference
Cause	I see my to do list and few unexpected things have jumped on and not been planned for – or something that I thought had been done – got a lot of work on and got timeframes to achieve it all planned out ... <b>something unexpected crops up</b>
Symptom	just having a look at what's there and what's got to be done – not necessarily in happier place but know what needs to be done ...taking it through in my head what needs to be done and in what order and if I have planned my time right – or if I need to budget extra hours ... I give myself time schedules ... I will give them a priority of achieving.
Resources-Outcome	goal achieved – satisfaction and relief ... everything that has happened 9 times

	<p>out 10 of it has happened has planned ... thinking about what could have been done better ... something that was could be learnt from and improved ... you get there and beat myself up sometimes over the minor bits that someone picked up and kinda don't like myself for that and it registers and I will make sure that never happens again .. so I move onto my next project but not taking that with me as a black cloud ... the past experience reminds me of the learning. The project is over and that sense of completion around that</p>
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	<b>Teacher</b>
Situation	Giving a new class to a new group
Cause	– I'm outside the classroom and see the kids inside. I'm nervous and apprehensive. It's a new group for me and a new topic. I'm thinking I have to keep them interested for an hour.
Symptom	– I start talking. I'm <b>not being too self conscious</b> . I'm <b>in the moment</b> of doing (being). I'm not reflecting on it, <b>I'm flowing with it</b> . I have <b>a sense of calm</b> . There's a naturalness about it. <b>I'm in flow</b> – there's no falsity. I'm introducing something and talking about it with confidence. The words are just coming out. I'm not listening to what I'm saying. I'm doing it off the top of my head.
Resources-Outcome	<p><b>I have confidence</b>. My body language is [congruent]. I'm talking about key skills. I'm asking questions of them and <b>getting them involved</b>. I'm engrossed in what I'm doing. <b>I'm interacting</b> with the kids and being positive about key skills. I'm <b>gauging their response</b> as I'm going along – asking questions, noting their body language, and noticing their willingness to contribute (external reference). [I believe] The kids <b>think that what they're doing is valuable and worthwhile</b>. We have a shared sense of confidence. I tasked them to work in pairs and share ideas. I'm talking them through the task they have to do ( a presentation as part of coursework) and showing them examples of evidence needed.</p> <p>Struggled to cope well: I felt more nervous – it was a bad group (from past experience). I'm not in control. I'm getting annoyed with myself. <b>I get through it, I always do, but I don't feel I've achieved as much as I should</b>. Not created something of satisfaction. My <b>bloody-mindedness is getting me through</b> it. It comes from within. <b>I want to achieve something</b> and I force it through. <b>I stick to my guns and try my best to keep it going</b>. I use my physical presence – size, voice, give them a lecture. Good planning helps me in these situations – keeping a variety of learning experiences going.</p>

## Summary

**Cause:** this seems to be a common real or perceived loss of control of a situation – whether through change, a new, unforeseen issue coming up, or a crisis.

**Symptoms:** common here was a sense of pressure, and time constraints.

**Resources:** The following are resources used by the individuals – confidence, focus on other people, being in the moment, risk taking, calm, commitment to staying with it, state management, using negative emotions as 'fuel', space, flow state, positive beliefs, flexibility in thinking and being able to generate options, learning from the adversity (taking meaning from it), not dwelling on past events but moving on, a sense of perspective, expecting things to turn out well, thinking of worst case scenario (and best case) and then doing a reality check (what's likely to happen), tenacity, muddling through sometimes and not expecting perfection.

## **g) Micro Strategies**

The micro strategy study shows the detail of a strategy. Each individual's strategy is included in detail in the appendices. Please note that the Teacher was a more difficult subject in the micro strategy section and did not feel comfortable doing the exercise – hence the results are less useful than the other two. Here is a summary of the commonalities:

- a) When faced with a challenging or stressful situation, each individual finds a way to connect to themselves either auditory (internal dialogue) or kinaesthetically. Often they would ask themselves something like 'How am I going to do this?'. Each assumed that they had a choice, that they could exercise control over the situation, somehow.
- b) There was a point where they reached out to others (overtly or covertly) for help in some way – either taking sustenance from another's kind words, or using their awareness and observing skills to take feedback from the audience around them about how they were doing.
- c) They are willing to accept responsibility – ie the 51% rule where we always have some responsibility for a situation but not totally responsible.
- d) They were realistic about the situation. They accepted the situation – they saw or heard what was going on and accepted this. They found some way to retain a sense of control, or to regain a sense of control of elements of the situation, and yet part of them was aware that things could still change for the worse (like they were holding a 'best case' and 'worst case' scenario in their heads at the same time).
- e) They usually gave themselves a pep talk or asked themselves questions or told themselves things. They were aware of their internal dialogue and were able to use their internal dialogue in a positive way:
  - a. "how am I going to do this?"
  - b. "You've just got to get on with and carry on"
  - c. "Its got to be done"
  - d. "What do they want to hear?"
  - e. "I'll be there at the front taking the arrows and the shots, but making sure no arrows come to me."
- f) They stay open. They are able to take in what others are saying/doing and feedback from others and use it to their advantage. They are willing to listen and see different points of view even when under pressure. They then use this to learn or to change something.
- g) They find a way to 'buy time'. Whether this be to think or plan on the hoof, or to relax and regroup. This space seems to be important and they achieve in various ways: breathing, relaxing, removing themselves temporarily from the situation.
- h) They manage their emotional state and their energy.

## 4. SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

### Meta Programs

Resilient personalities seem to have a strong Internal locus of control. And a strong towards motivation – a sense of setting and achieving goals that they are working towards. They also seem to be more options oriented and are better able to keep generating options, and be flexible in their reactions. It doesn't appear that whether the person is active or reflective has much effect on the consequences.

### TOTE strategy

There is a clear TOTE Strategy. Firstly they all set clear goals – some long term, others more immediate, task focussed.

They have clear evidence:

- Setting themselves clear milestones and identifying steps along the way which they need to achieve, so that they know if they are 'on track' or not
- They also identify and seek out the feedback they need from others

They have clear steps by which they then start to achieve their goals:

- Identify the milestones and tasks that need doing
- Making sure they are well prepared
- Have a clear plan
- They recognise when they are starting to think more negatively and have a strategy for talking themselves out of it – ignoring it, positive self talk via internal dialogue – they stay in control of the gremlin (or rather don't let the gremlin run the show!)
- Set themselves measures so that they know they are on track
- A conscious ability to manage their state and stay calm and think logically – sometimes through giving themselves a pep talk, or tapping into deeply held beliefs, or taking time out
- An awareness of taking up the stretch, of taking themselves out of a comfort zone, of challenging themselves in some way

If their evidence is telling them that their strategy is not working, they have various recovery strategies:

- They juggle and prioritise and re-prioritise
- They ask for help or seek guidance
- They use their influence over others as necessary to take control of the situation
- They take time to create space for themselves, where they can work out their contingency plan
- They are able to generate and consider different options
- They are able to check their state or how they are coping, and know when it is getting too much and when to take time out
- They react to the situation – have the courage to face it head on and deal with what's in front of them

### Multi Level Modelling

These resilient people have the following skills and capabilities:

- A high EQ – empathy, self awareness, listening skills, and awareness of others, ability to connect to others, able to use discontent in a constructive way
- A willingness to challenge themselves or the situation – an independence of thought and action
- Experience
- A level headed calmness inside
- They are optimistic
- Personal discipline – ie preparation, holding back not jumping straight in
- Seeing the situation as a process – not a fixed, unchangeable thing
- Open to be challenged and flexible
- They are realistic – have a strong sense of realism
- They have a high threshold for frustration – they are not easily phased
- They have an ability to influence and challenge

- They go with the flow to some extent – they are not too rigid
- They consciously apply the skills they have learnt to help them deal with it – ie project management, classroom management

They have beliefs about:

- Their work being meaningful and worthwhile
- They believe that things will work out well in the end
- Strong beliefs in themselves – “I am a winner”

They share a common trait of saving or marshalling energy:

- Three of them know how to relax and enjoy themselves and switch off outside of work
- They take time out to slow down and gain a clearer perspective when faced with adversity. This helps them to make adjustments and regain composure.

also have strong sense of identity that hangs on a strong identity of succeeding and being a winner or serving a bigger purpose for others. In short, they seem to have faith – in themselves, in others, in the universe, in things working out.

### **Metaphor**

These resilient individuals all have a strong metaphor, which they seem to use as part of their coping strategy – it is part of the story they tell themselves and use it to get through.

## 5. RESILIENCE AT WORK (A Practical application)

This study demonstrates that for the individuals modelled, there are both similarities and differences in their approach to resilience. The purpose of this work is to provide individuals who are looking to improve this skill with approaches and options to help them do this. It will also provide coaches and trainers who are looking to develop this trait in their clients with some food for thought.

### How to use the Results

If you are someone who is interested in improving your resilience, work through the following sections taking time to reflect on your current situation and consider the questions within each section. Alternatively, if you intend to coach or train another individual in this behaviour, you may wish to use the following sections as a framework.

### ASSESS YOUR META PROGRAMS

Use the questionnaire in the appendices and those tools provided by the coach/trainer to assess your tendency for:

- Internal or External reference
- Towards or away from motivation
- Options or procedures orientation

If you are a strong External referenced person, work on developing your internal frame of reference, for example through:

- Looking at times when you knew yourself when you had done a good job and accessing the submodalities of that experience
- Keeping a diary of examples of external reference and reflecting on how you can develop more self reliance
- Recognise the importance of External referencing, ie as a final check that you are doing the right thing and use it intentionally to this effect.
- Modelling someone who is strongly internally referenced and gaining some insight into how they 'do' this.

If you are strongly 'Away from' motivated become aware of this and work to understand what does motivate you in a positive way and build on this. Your preference may remain as Away from but you will be building awareness of Towards motivation traits. For coaches/trainers – timeline and perceptual positioning may also help.

For strongly procedures oriented people, work on developing your creativity. Think of times when you have been creative – perhaps even as a child – what did you do? What context? What skills did you have? The process that Disney used to create and critically apply new ideas (the Disney strategy) will help with developing this area.

### ESTABLISH CLEAR GOALS

When and where do you want to be resilient? People who have goals are more successful – at anything. Work on improving your goal setting abilities. Use the SMART technique – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timeframes for action. As well as the Well Formed Outcome approach –

- Defined in positive terms
- Defined and evaluated according to sensory based evidence
- Initiated and determined by you
- Made to preserve the positive by-products of the negative state
- Contextualised to fit the ecology

It will be useful to understand your current strategies for coping.

- Look at times of struggle and adversity in your life :



- Which adverse situations have you struggled well with? What were the key factors that helped you overcome the adversity?
- What adverse situations have you fared less well with? What are the key factors that mitigated against a more resilient response?

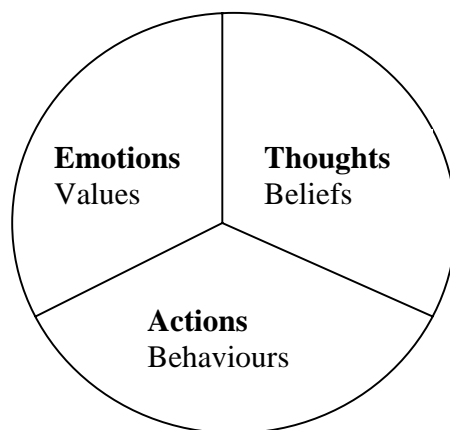
## **BELIEF WORK**

It is clear from this study that in times of adversity, our beliefs affect the consequences and the outcome of the situation. What fundamental beliefs and values do you hold that might serve you well? These are empowering beliefs. And what beliefs and values do you hold that might serve you less well? These will be limiting or interfering beliefs. They may serve you to build in 'immunity' – for example, "[adversity x] won't ever happen to a nice person like me" – but they make it all the more difficult to cope when life throws this curve ball at you.

Empowering beliefs shown by the individuals in this exercise included beliefs about:

- Their work being meaningful and worthwhile
- They believe that things will work out well in the end
- Strong beliefs in themselves – "I am a winner"

Use of the TEA model here will be useful. This recognises the three components of existence interact in the following way: Emotions (values) drive our Thoughts which drive our Actions and behaviour.



So if someone is behaving/behaved in a certain way when faced with adversity, this can be broken down back to underlying values and beliefs:

- How are you behaving?
- What thoughts are driving this?
- What values are behind this?

Performance interfering thoughts (PITs) can be challenged and turned into Performance enhancing thoughts (PETs), a thought diary can be helpful with this – writing the adversity situation down and listing the thoughts out. The meta model and thinking skills can be used to raise awareness of generalisations, deletions and distortions etc and build more resilient thinking habits.

It is important to develop a sense of perspective. Think of the worst that could happen (99% of time this won't be as bad as you thought and you know you can still deal with it) and also the best that could happen – what is the likelihood of each of these? What, in reality, is probably going to happen?

## **CHANGE PROCESSES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

This would include:

- State management techniques such as anchoring
- Developing emotional intelligence – listening, empathy, widening awareness

- Use of metaphor and developing powerful operating metaphors that can help your story
- Freeze frame and other techniques for stress management

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

This project made a detailed analysis of the way that three individuals, each a resilient person, cope with adversity. The results show that there are a lot of similarities in how these individuals are resilient, and also some differences. This forms a continuum of behavioural styles and traits that can be used to form resilient strategies. These cover: meta programs, values and beliefs, skills and capabilities, behaviours, identity as well as stories and metaphors. It also looks at traits, resources and strategies that resilient people exhibit and use and what they do to recover if they are struggling to cope well.

The section 'Resilience at Work' combines and summarises the common features and strategies identified from this modelling exercise.

However, I also tend to agree with Michael Neenan, a director of the Centre for Stress Management and a UK leading expert on resilience, when he says "We will never completely understand the nature of resilience. It has a certain mystery. It is too great [a topic] to understand fully."

## **7. APPENDICES**

- A. PROJECT BRIEF**
- B. DISCUSSION GUIDE**
- C. MICROSTRATEGY TEMPLATES**

## **NLP Modelling Project – Brief**

### **Objective**

To Model resilient attitudes and behaviours in stressful or high pressure situations at work – ‘Maximising Performance Under Pressure’.

### **Context**

To be done with 3 people identified as having these skills: 2 senior managers and a junior executive. I will interview each of these people once and informally observe them at work in relevant situations – and possibly go back to fill any gaps.

### **Criteria**

What am I looking for in my models? What will be the evidence that they have resilience?

- They are so comfortable in fast-paced and stressful environments that they actively seek out and thrive on high-pressure situations.
- They bounce back after setbacks
- They maintain their self-belief and focus in the face of doubts
- They show a sober and down-to-earth view of reality

### **What are my goals as I do this project?**

- To keep close to the situation in a live context
- To use 3 very different people (overt personality-wise) and look for common patterns
- To identify how I can use the skills learnt from the modelling in my coaching/stress management business
- To help others in the Briggs organisation develop these skills
- To be as scientific as possible in conducting the project.

### **What evidence will tell me I’ve achieved this?**

- I will have done at least 1 interview and observed each person in a pressure/stress context.
- I will have ticked off as having used all my planned tools.
- I will have written the report and know that it is good:
  - A feeling of pride – a lump in the throat
  - A feeling of achievement – energy in my belly

### **What do I plan to do?**

a) Methodology:

6. Implicit modelling – use of 2<sup>nd</sup> positioning in real contexts:
  - a. IMHX exhibition, Sales Conference etc
  - b. These will be informal and ‘opportunistic’ and I will carry my ‘detectives’ notebook with me to note observations!
7. Explicit modelling – conduct a formal 1 hour interview using a discussion guide for the interviews to gather data, and to record the interviews on my Dictaphone

b) Tools

- TOTE
- MultiLevel Modelling
- Metaphor
- SCORE – walking

- Microstrategies

**What will I do if I experience problems or difficulties?**

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Weighting (out of 5)	Contingency Plan
I get rejected by my 'clients'	30%	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I rehearse my approach until I'm congruent</li> <li>• I accept fewer people</li> <li>• I find other (s)</li> </ul>
Time pressures on the 'clients' mean they can't meet me	20%	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer to buy them a sarnie and do it over lunch</li> <li>• Do it before or after work – ie at their convenience</li> </ul>
Interviews don't work well	20%	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modify or tweak after first one</li> </ul>

**What will success be like?**

1. Production of a written report that is simple yet thorough and scientific.
2. Experience and knowledge that I can build into a training course.
3. I have acquired a tool by which I can coach others.

## **NLP Modelling Project – Discussion Guide**

Name:

Date:

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### **1. Welcome**

Thanks ..... for giving me an hour of your time. As you know I'm here to learn more about how you do resilience and cope well under pressure.

Firstly I have few questions which will help me to calibrate my assessment:

1. Are you usually left or right handed? .....  
(think about writing, football, racket sports, using a mouse)
  2. In a work context, how do you know when you've done a good job?(E/I)  
.....
  3. Why did you choose your present job? (O/P)
  4. What is important to you in your job? (T/A)
- 

### **2. TOTE**

1. Thinking about when you are coping well under pressure, in what context do you most commonly use the skills? When and where are you?
  2. What goals, objectives or purposes guide your actions as you apply the skills in this context?
  3. How do you know when you are achieving these goals? What evidence do you have? (sensory based)
  4. What do you do to get those goals? What are some specific steps and activities that you use to achieve your goals in this context? What strengths do you have?
  5. When you experience unexpected problems or difficulties in achieving your goals in this context, what specific activities or steps do you take to correct them?
- 

### **3. Multi Level Modelling**

1. (Cap) Thinking back to what you do, How do you use your skills to carry out those behaviours? What capabilities do you have/need to do those actions in those situations?
2. (Belief) Why do you use those particular skills to accomplish those activities? What do you value about what you do? What's important to you about that? What do you have to believe or what beliefs guide you when you are doing them?
3. (ID) What type of person are you when you are engaged in these beliefs, capabilities and behaviours in these situations?
4. What is your mission? What is the vision you are pursuing or representing?

[Useful Questions: What else? Is there anything else about why you do that? If you don't know, take a guess. If you/someone did know, what might they say it was?]

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#### **4. Metaphor**

1. What is your story as you do this behaviour?
2. What is it like for you as you do this behaviour?
  - [If it were a car/animal/journey/ fairytale what would it be?]

[Useful Questions: Tell me more .... What else?]

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#### **5. SCORE**

I would like to bring some energy into this interview. We will be experiencing how you do this in real time. I'm going to ask you to do a little exercise with me. Are you willing to try this?

As you know time is linear, running from past to future (mark on the floor) with now – the present – about here. (Calibrate that they can relate to that). If time could be represented by a line of the floor, where would it run for you?

I want you to imagine this line, a situation where the pressure is on and you are coping well under pressure, now. See that point on the line. Just behind you will be the point that you decide to behave in this way, the trigger or cause, if you like. And just beyond or after you will be your goal being achieved and after that the results of that in your life.

I want you step onto this line at the trigger point where it starts – what is happening? How do you experience this?

Now walk forward slowly, moment by moment, experiencing what is happening as you are coping under pressure, showing a strong, resilient attitude ... gathering the resources that you need to do this ...  
What is happening now? How do you experience that?

Now move forward towards your end goal or purpose of [ ] ...  
What is happening now? How do you experience that?

Finally, step back to the trigger point and think of times when you have struggled to cope well under pressure, when it has been difficult.  
What is happening now? How do you experience that?

And as you start to work through that and find yourself being resilient and coping under pressure... how is that the same or different than before?

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#### **6. Microstrategies**

The last exercise was about your broad experience of this skill you have. Now we will look at the detail of how you do it?

I want you to think back to the last time you had this strong, resilient attitude and were coping well under pressure. It needs to be a specific activity in a defined time frame – ie a start and end point.

How do you know when you achieved your goal – what was the end point of the activity?

When did it start? And what about the steps in between?

[Useful Questions: what happened just before? And what happened after that? Is there anything in between?]

(Interviewer to complete Microstrategies template).

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## **7. Wrap UP**

Thanks for time. I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did, and learnt something about how you 'do' such a useful skill!

You can certainly have a copy of my final report if you want it.

I may also use the results of this in my M3 change management plan, will that be ok?