Resilience Boosters

with “Ask and Task” Helps

Relational Resilience Boosters

Surrender the One-up Relationship
ASK: Think about a time you were “one down” in an interaction. What emotions did you experience during this interaction? Who may feel “one down” in their interactions with you?
TASK: Tomorrow, approach every interaction -- with colleagues, family members, friends, and service workers -- with an attitude of “surrendering the one-up.” Make sure that person walks away from you feeling better about themselves.

Strengthen Emotional Intimacy
ASK: What is your most significant relationship? What are some ways you may be emotionally disengaging yourself from this relationship? For example, do you find yourself tuning out everyday conversations with this person? Do you ever feel lonely in this person's company? Are there any areas that may be lacking your complete attention, effort, and care?
TASK: Identify one weak point in the significant relationship identified above and commit to make a conscious effort in the next week to improve in this area. Pay attention to him or her. Don’t go overboard and hyper-focus; simply ask yourself how you might make a slight change from prior emotionally disengaging actions. Try doing something you both enjoy, or say or write something that’s truly heartfelt about their admirable qualities. Don’t be afraid to be vulnerable—ask this person what areas you could improve in, or share your new goal with them. Other ways to increase your emotional engagement include:
• Forgive a past grievance, whether real or imagined.
• Don’t complain—about anything.
• Don’t criticize.
• Find a simple way to serve this person that requires you to exert effort, not just spend money. Do something for him or her that inconveniences you.
• Don’t isolate—stay available physically and emotionally.
• Look past an annoying behavior and remind yourself that you have your own that surely make you less than ideal company at all times.
• Monitor your use of the pronoun “I” and reduce it as much as you can. Start using “we” more often.
**Foster True Friendship**
ASK: Do you have more or fewer true friendships today than you did five years ago? What do you think has made the difference between now and then? In what ways can you become a better friend?
TASK: Make a list of individuals who once played an important part of your life but with whom you’ve not had contact for some time. Reach out to each person in some meaningful way.

**Turn Outward**
ASK: When was the last time you went out of your way to acknowledge the people in your path who help your day go smoothly? This includes janitors, bus drivers, security workers, store clerks, postal workers, and any other service work position. How do you feel when you make this small effort?
TASK: Cheerfully acknowledge everyone you encounter in a service position today by expressing gratitude or paying sincere compliments. While you’re at it, find simple ways to serve others around you “in the moment.” Make small talk while standing in line. Hold the door for someone else. Try to really see the people around you.

**Put Down that Device!**
ASK: Have you ever felt disrespected due to another’s use of electronic devices? Do you feel others could feel the same way about your own use of electronic devices?
TASK: Set aside time this week to spend at least one hour in solitude—completely free of interruptions and devices. Go for a walk, spend time in nature, or find a quiet place to read a book. If at all possible, plan another day that you will spend completely electronic-device free, focusing instead on nurturing the important relationships in your life. If you observe others who are spending too much time in front of a screen, invite them to join you.

**Drop the Facade**
ASK: Who are you around on a somewhat regular basis where there is a sense of discomfort or unease and with whom you rarely, if ever, share your vulnerable self?
TASK: Take a risk and share something you normally wouldn’t say that’s appropriate to the situation and the relationship, and that puts you outside your comfort zone. Share something about yourself that shows the other person more of “the real you” and less of your superficial exterior. Do you feel this interaction improved your relationship? If so, try to find appropriate ways to “drop the façade” in other relationships as well.

**Connect with Something Bigger Than You**
ASK: Who or what would you identify as your “higher power,” your “something bigger”? Is there anything you can be doing to strengthen this connection in your life? Is there a limitation or weakness you are currently facing that your higher power can help you confront more easily?
TASK: Start your day reading something that motivates you and inspires you. Write down all of your life’s most amazing experiences. What was the best day of your life and why? Ask yourself, “How can I have more days like this?”
Street Resilience Boosters

Get the Whole Picture
ASK: When was the last time you had a disagreement with someone that went unresolved? What was your opinion, and what was the other person’s opinion? What could you have done differently to gain a better understanding of their point of view?
TASK: The next time you interact with someone whose opinion is different than your own, make a conscious effort not to argue, and instead seek a more complete understanding of that person’s point of view.

Convert Pain into a Cause
ASK: In what areas of your life do you currently feel the most pain? What is one personal struggle you can start channeling in a positive direction?
TASK: Now, identify a cause that you can begin channeling this pain into. It can be an inward cause (like reducing procrastination), or it could be an outward cause—something that benefits the wider community. Think of what you can do to begin converting pain into a cause today.

Reframe Your Limitations as Potential Strengths
ASK: What’s one of your weaknesses or limitations in your professional or personal life? It can be anything, large or small.
TASK: Now, think of a situation in which this perceived limitation could be used in a positive way. You may want to ask friends or family members for help. In the next week, try to put yourself in a situation where you can put this new strength to use.

Focus on What You’re Doing Right
ASK: What did you do right today? How can you do more of that tomorrow?
TASK: Think over the events of your day. Instead of dwelling on the things you did wrong, take a mental note of all the things you did right. When you wake up tomorrow, make a conscious effort to repeat these positive behaviors and add a few more.

Look Fear in the Eye
ASK: Which of the “Big Six” fears—fear of failure, fear of embarrassment, fear of death or loss, fear of rejection, fear of loneliness, or fear of pain—do you think about or worry about the most?
TASK: Take a moment to think of strategies that could help you cope with your fear the next time you encounter it. Think about small, incremental steps you could take to actually confront this fear. Recall how a person with a snake phobia must go through a series of small, guided steps to eventually overcome his or her fear of snakes. If there’s a way to expose yourself to your fear in a small way in the next week, do so, practicing the coping strategies you came up with.
Resource Resilience Boosters

Cultivate a Worthy Mindset
ASK: Is there a goal or activity you feel unworthy of in your life? Where do you think these feelings of unworthiness came from? Are they logical? What have you given up or forfeited because of these feelings?
TASK: Now shift your mindset. Think of all the reasons you are worthy. Finish your list with the following items:

- I’m worthy because I’m part of the human family.
- I’m worthy because I’m no different than anyone else. I have a heart, a mind, and emotions, the same as everyone else, and we’re all deserving.
- I’m worthy because I have the same needs that other people have.
- I’m worthy because I’ve done all I could. I tried my best.
- I’m worthy because if I access this resource, I can use it to do good and help other people.

Tap into the Power of People
ASK: Who has recently served as a resource for you? How did you connect with this person? Who else do you know that could serve as a resource? Who do you know that is what you aspire to become?
TASK: Write a letter of gratitude to the person who helped you in the past, then make a list of all the people in your life who could serve as valuable resources. For the next week, make a sincere effort to reach out to at least one of these people each day. Write an email, meet for lunch, or give them a call. Show sincere gratitude and follow through with any suggestions or advice they’re willing to share, doing more than what they expected. On the flip side, do whatever you can to assist others in connecting with people, finding potential jobs, and developing their talents.

Action, Action, Action!
ASK: What’s a task you’ve been avoiding due to a lack of experience, motivation, or resources? Do you tend to procrastinate tackling the task, waiting for the ideal moment that never seems to come?
TASK: Take immediate action today by tackling one of the problems around you. You can start small: Maybe there’s a light bulb that you’ve been putting off changing or a colleague you’ve been needing to talk to about a project. Flip the Switch and just do it. Next time a more serious problem arises, dive in immediately, regardless of how giant, stressful, or outside of your realm of expertise it may appear.

Fight Resignation with Spontaneity
ASK: Is there an assignment or task currently confronting you that’s uninspiring or menial but yet has to get done?
TASK: With that task in mind, get creative! Use spontaneity to bring some life to this project. Make a game out of the process, and instead of going about the task half-heartedly, go all in! Give the job everything you’ve got until it’s done. Feel free to reward yourself at various milestones along the way. Find the humor (if there is any) in the pure boredom of it all. Make up a song about the job!

Go to War Against Complacency
ASK: Have you fallen prey to the “complacency epidemic” in your personal or professional life? Are you telling yourself you’re satisfied with areas of your life that could actually use improvement? Have you allowed yourself to become smug or self-satisfied, taking for granted successes you may have enjoyed?
TASK: In the next 24 hours, do one thing to fight complacency in your life. Instead of kicking back to watch TV, try spending thirty minutes developing a skill, reconnecting with an old friend, registering for a free online course, or researching things that will help you move forward from where you are now.
Get Some Production Therapy
ASK: What is an activity you enjoy doing that creates a feeling of “flow,” or being “in the zone”? On the flip side, is there a task you’ve been avoiding because it seems overwhelming or tedious? On an average day, how much time are you spending engaged in productive tasks or activities? What may be keeping you from being more productive and less stagnant?
TASK: Give yourself some production therapy. Start by replacing one stagnant habit with one productive activity today. Production therapy means we produce something of value. It could be sharing something new with a child, temporarily inconveniencing ourselves by meeting another’s needs, or making something in a physical or creative sense.

Don’t Accept No
ASK: What was your response the last time you were told no? Looking back at the list of common reasons people say no, which one do you think may apply most to your situation? What could you have done or said differently to get a yes?
TASK: The next time you’re told no and decide it’s worth the effort to turn the no into a yes, make a sincere attempt to understand the reason behind the no. Using the four tips for turning a yes into a no, see if you can turn the situation around.
Initiate Damage Control
ASK: Can you think of a time when your reaction to a rock bottom situation improved the situation rather than making it worse? (Maybe you calmly confronted the person responsible, reacted sincerely rather than aggressively, or were quick to forgive.) Is this your usual response to such situations? Can this reaction be repeated in other potentially damaging situations?
TASK: By the end of today, do two specific things to apply damage control even if no crisis exists. For example, if you find yourself having negative thoughts, commit to spending one hour when you are around others not saying or doing anything negative.

Go for a Small Win
ASK: Is there a problem in your work or personal life that seems too oppressive to overcome? Would achieving a small victory lift your spirits?
TASK: Break your task down into as many smaller “to-dos” as you can think of, then sort the list into “easy” and “hard” tasks. Make a timeline for when each task will be accomplished, beginning today with the easiest.

Radically Accept Your Circumstances
ASK: Do you have a tendency to ask “Why me?” or “How could this happen?” when confronted with painful or difficult circumstances?
TASK: In the next week, work on breaking free of denial and accepting the reality of your situation. Abandon the “why me?” philosophy. Accept the truth that your suffering has a cause, even though it may not be obvious. Adopt the belief that in spite of the circumstances you’re facing, life can be worth living—as the chapter stated, unendurable agony can be converted to endurable pain, and a meaningful, satisfying life can result. This is a big assignment, so start by radically accepting small things in your life. Put a note on your mirror or another prominent place that says “Radically accept!” so you remember to practice this principle on a daily basis.

Fix a Broken Window
ASK: View yourself from the perspective of an outside observer: How do you and your physical and emotional circumstances appear to others? Place yourself in another’s shoes and view yourself objectively. What areas of your life could be in better order or more in control?
TASK: Think over the physical and emotional areas of your life that could use some repair. Stop putting off the repair process! If your problem is in your control, set aside a specific time to tackle it. If your problem has spun out of control, research ways you can get help. If it involves another person, formulate a plan to “fix a broken window” between you.

Tear Off Labels
ASK: Have you ever given yourself a negative label? What caused you to do so? Are you aware of the potential negative effects of such a label? That you might live up (or down) to it? If you have a tendency to place negative labels on yourself, can you envision yourself making mistakes and avoiding self-condemnation?
TASK: Write down all the traits or labels others perceive in you or that you perceive in yourself. Don’t just write down the negative—include positive things that others have said about you or that you see in your-
self. Cross out all the labels that you don’t want to live up to, and circle the ones that characterize who you really are and that you’d like others to see more of. From the moment you wake up tomorrow morning, choose one trait to radiate all day.

**Discover the Power of a Future Promise**

ASK: Is there a project, goal, or circumstance in your life that is proving difficult or unpleasant? What do you usually look forward to (remember, it can’t hurt yourself or others) when you’re trying to push through such a circumstance? Could you use this reward or future promise as motivation to be resilient? TASK: Do whatever it takes to push through on your project, goal, or circumstance, promising yourself that if you do, you’ll present yourself with your reward or promise. You earned it!

**Be Illogical**

ASK: Have you ever faced a difficult reality that had no apparent solution or logical way out? How did it get resolved? Was there an element of the illogical in the resolution? TASK: Read this statement: “Unforeseen options are more likely to take place if I don’t give up.” In other words, the next time you’re in a rock bottom situation that doesn’t seem to have a way out, take a leap of faith. Believe that your plight will improve as you put forth effort. The effort can seem illogical, but at least you’re putting yourself out there, giving yourself the opportunity for the unforeseen to show up.

**Forgive Self and Others**

ASK: Is there a person in your life who you are struggling to forgive? Would it be beneficial for you to forgive this person? Are you struggling to forgive yourself for a past mistake? Do you have a belief that “letting go” could eventually be possible? TASK: Carrying the pain and anger of not forgiving is an unnecessary weight in your life. Use the two skills of forgiveness to get started. First, create scenarios. Consider the reasons behind this person’s actions toward you. Understand that the person who caused your suffering may not have had malicious intent. They may have been incredibly selfish or stupid, but their motive may not have been to cause harm. Even if their intentions were evil, holding on to bitterness and resentment only hurts you and those closest to you. Second, write a letter to the person who offended you. Sort your thoughts out, and if it is possible and safe, have a conversation with this person. (Remember, however, that there is no guarantee your effort will be reciprocated. People are good at justifying their behavior!) The desire for revenge is a natural reaction. Forgiveness, however, is a chosen response. Right now, choose to forgive. And each time the desire for revenge or feelings of bitterness begin to resurface, choose to forgive again.

If you’re struggling to forgive yourself, write a letter to the person you’ve offended (if it’s safe, appropriate, and won’t cause harm to them or others). Do everything you can to make amends, then let go. Focus your energy on moving forward. It won’t be an overnight process, but you can start the journey today.