



Coping Strategies



Resilience Training Program

Michael Auden

Community Victoria

www.communityvictoria.com.au

moned@iprimus.com.au

1 Wedge Court

Glen Waverley Victoria 3150

The logo for Community Victoria features the text "Community Victoria" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The text is centered and overlaid on a horizontal, wavy blue brushstroke that spans the width of the logo area.

Community Victoria



Coping Strategies and Applications

Coping with everyday adversity

Step 1 Identify erroneous beliefs

First, you should try to identify any erroneous internal beliefs that may be preventing you from resolving your issue. Now that you are familiar with the most prevalent thinking traps that sabotage resilience, you will have an easier time pinpointing the false assumptions you may be making around an adverse event. After checking in with any assumptions that may be exacerbating the adversity, you should be able to remove much of the anger, guilty and anxiety that is preventing you from moving forward.



How to do this

One of the most powerful approaches to challenging these beliefs and formulating productive responses to them is a technique we will refer to as “ABCDE.” This application is a core strategy promoted both by positive psychologists and cognitive-behavioral therapists. A fundamental aim of the ABCDE exercise is to challenge the erroneous assumptions that may be causing us undue pain and preventing our ability to generate effective outcomes to the issues that confront us. It works like this:

The “A” stands for Adversity. This is the stimulus or event that causes distress. The “B” stands for Beliefs. These are the assumptions that we make around the causes of the adversity. In our previous section, we discussed the thinking traps, or the forms in which these assumptions can take shape.

The “C” stands for the Consequences of holding these beliefs about the adversity. Once we examine the assumptions surrounding the event, then it is helpful to consider what are the ultimate consequences of trusting these assumptions. The “D” stands for Disputation. In this step of the process, we question whether our beliefs are the only plausible explanations for the adversity, and in the process start offering alternative possible reasons as to why the offending event might have occurred. We want to challenge our thinking here, examining if it may be distorted in any way. For example, we may ask:

* What is the evidence for my assumed beliefs about the adversity? *
What are other possible explanations for what happened? * What are the implications, or consequences, of believing this way, and
do they make it beneficial or worthwhile to hold onto these beliefs?

And finally, the “E” stands for Energization. In this last step of the ABCDE process, we are energized by successfully freeing our minds

from the negative assumptions around the adversity. Open to the possibility that our initial beliefs may have been off-base, we now have the freedom to more constructively approach the situation--- and move toward an outcome that works for us, rather than against us.



Step 2 Deal with external issues

The second step will be to address the external factors that may be causing the problem. These are the issues like time management, friction with others at work, financial debt, among many potential obstacles. So, first we look within to see if we can identify the source of the problem. Then, we look without.



How to do this

ADAPT Model

To manage the external factors that are causing our distress we turn to another application model, called ADAPT, that was developed by psychologists Arthur Nezu, Christine Nezu, and Thomas D’Zurilla. They presented the ADAPT strategy in their powerful book, *Solving Life’s Problems: a 5-step guide to enhanced well-being*. Let’s continue with the example of Dan to bring this model to life. Up to this point in the story, Dan has exposed his self-defeating beliefs. Yet the fact remains that he still has to address the issue of changing the perception of his not being a team player.

The first “A” stands for Attitude. This means cultivating a capable and optimistic mindset to move forward through the adversity. Dan says

to himself, “Now that I have exposed those thinking traps and have my emotions under control, I am better prepared to deal with the issue of my performance review. I now feel optimistic about making a plan to get past this all and change perceptions about me in the office.”

The “D” stands for Defining the problem and setting a realistic goal. With a clearer picture of things in his head, Dan thinks to himself, “Okay, as I see it, I need to demonstrate to my boss that I am a team player. I will ask her for an interim review in three months with the aim of reversing her perception.

The next “A” stands for generating Alternative solutions. Dan sits down with a notebook and brainstorms different ways he can go about accomplishing this goal of changing the boss’ perception of him. He jots down the following ideas:

I can volunteer for a special project and gather a small team of people to work on it. I can offer to mentor the new guy in the department

until he gets adjusted. I can make a point of sharing at least two good ideas in every meeting we have I can work on my positivity ratio in our meetings—making sure that I deliver 5 positive comments for every one negative.

The next step, the “P,” stands for Predicting the consequences and coming up with a solution plan. This entails that Dan examines these alternative solutions he just generated, and evaluates their possible effectiveness. Dan thinks, “Well, I could see how all of these strategies could work to improve my performance within the department with the exception of the mentoring idea. The problem is that the new guy actually has a good deal of experience in this industry. It might come off as bit patronizing for me to offer to be his confidant and show him the ropes. As far as the other three ideas, what I am going to do is keep a journal of my progress, and check in daily with how well they are working out.”

And finally, the “T” stands for Testing it. The time has come for Dan to

implement his plan. He has given himself three months to turn the teamwork aspect of his job performance from a negative to a positive. With the ABCDE tool, he has exposed and confronted the thinking traps that were causing his anger. And now, with the ADAPT model, he has created an action plan to address the external factors that were fueling his adversity. In this last step, Dan will test out his new plan, replacing ineffectual strategies with new ones along the way until he reaches his goal of changing his image at the office.



Part 3 Dealing with life-altering adversities

Take time

Give yourself time to heal. Remember, after all, that post-traumatic growth is not an instantaneous process. But rather it takes time. You should realize that this will be a painful and difficult phase in your life. So be patient and allow yourself to fully mourn the losses you have incurred. And don't be hard on yourself about the changing emotional states you may be experiencing.

Ask for support

Ask for support from people who truly care about you and whom you feel will be able to empathize well with your situation. There are no

extra points for valor for going through tragedies like this alone. But do make sure to keep in mind that your traditional support system may be weakened if those who are close to you are also suffering the loss.

Join support groups

Look into local support groups that may be available in your area. These can be especially helpful for those people with limited personal support systems in their own lives. Ideally, if you do choose to join a group, try to find one that is led by an appropriately trained and experienced professional. In all, these groups can help you to realize that others in the same circumstances are struggling with similar reactions and emotions.

Talk about it

Communicate your experience during your recovery process. If you don't have a close support system and you don't feel comfortable

participating in groups, you may even want to put your thoughts and feelings down into a journal. The key point is to be able to have a release valve for your emotions and thoughts as you work your way through the trauma.

Focus on healthy behaviours

Try to engage in as many healthy behaviours as possible to help you cope with the inevitable stress. Simple lifestyle choices like eating well-balanced meals, exercising, and making sure you get enough rest will significantly enhance your ability to cope with stress. If you are experiencing ongoing difficulties sleeping, a practice of meditation or other relaxation techniques may prove to be of great help.

Reestablish routines

A major life-altering trauma has the ability to throw off any sense of rhythm in life. So make an effort to establish, or reestablish, routines such as eating meals at regular times, or following a regimented

exercise program.

Avoid alcohol and drugs

But do try to avoid alcohol and drugs. These are some of the most popular crutches and distractions that people tend to rely on to diminish their pain in times of great distress. As we mentioned earlier, the goal of post-traumatic growth is not to escape the pain. Rather it is to feel it, and through it, to emerge transformed for the better. So instead of alcohol and drugs, try to find other enjoyable hobbies or activities that will keep you present and not distracted from what you need to be feeling in order to truly heal.

Avoid major life decisions for a while

In addition, try to avoid making major life decisions in these times of deep distress. Thoughts of whether to switch careers or move cities can just add to the substantial stress that you are already experiencing. Put off contemplating those kinds of decisions until you

have recovered sufficiently to consider them with a clearer mindset.

Look for meaning and purpose in your life

And finally, through this process, look to discover and connect with the inherent meaning that may be found in major adversity. This is the last, and perhaps most profound, recommendation. Potential meaning can be gleaned from even the most despairing situations.



Personal Action Plan

What are your key takeaways from this lesson?

What can you do to ensure you remember them?

How can you incorporate your learning into your work life?

What specifically will you do differently with those you work with?



My Resiliency Plan

From this workbook I will include the following into my resiliency plan:

- Things I want to remain aware off as I build my resiliency preparedness.

- Skills that will help me deal effectively with situations that call upon me to be resilient.

- Concepts that will assist me to understand the complexities of a situation.

Resilience Training Program

Michael Auden

Community Victoria

www.communityvictoria.com.au

moned@iprimus.com.au

1 Wedge Court

Glen Waverley Victoria 3150

The logo for Community Victoria features the text "Community Victoria" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The text is centered and overlaid on a horizontal, wavy blue brushstroke that spans the width of the text. The brushstroke has a textured, painterly appearance with varying shades of blue.

Community Victoria