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About this guide

This guide provides tips and suggested wording to facilitate Plan for Resilience (for employees, leaders and the self-employed) and/or From Surviving to Thriving (for post-secondary students). The free, printable PDFs of each of these resources can be found in English and French at www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com.

Some points to note about the content:

Suggested wording – indicates this is wording you can use to speak directly to the group. This content will be identified by the use of this icon.

Facilitator notes – these are tips and suggestions the facilitator may want to build into their session.
Preparing for the session

Initial contact to discuss a session:
- Complete the Pre-planning worksheet in the Appendix to be prepared and organized for the session.

1 month prior to session:
- Connect with the organizer to review and confirm all session details in the Pre-planning worksheet and to get an update on the number of attendees.
- Ask the organizer to complete the Be Aware of Potential Resources section for each of the resources you will use and print one copy for each participant.
- Have the organizer appoint someone from the organization who is knowledgeable to review the list and answer any questions about it near the end of your planned session.
- Ask the organizer to print enough copies of Plan for Resilience and/or From Surviving to Thriving for all participants.

2 weeks prior to session:
- Connect with the organizer to ask that they send out an email to each participant 1 week in advance of the session to complete the www.viame.org survey. The suggested email to the participant can be found in the Pre-planning worksheet in the Appendix.
- Ensure there will be a projector and screen, microphone (if needed) and decide if you will be bringing your own laptop. If you will use theirs, bring the presentation file on a USB or find a way to send it in advance.
- Review the evidence and Queen’s study in the Appendix so you can respond to any questions around the validity of the tool.

2 days before session:
- Check with the organizer that everything is set for the day of the session including:
  - A volunteer (or the organizer) to distribute the resources as participants arrive
  - Audio/visual equipment – projector, screen, microphone
  - A seating plan that includes tables to write on
  - Parking directions for any participants coming from outside the organization as well as parking instructions for you
  - A place and time to meet the organizer when you will be given access to set up
  - Any security requirements such as signing in or obtaining authorization
  - Wi-Fi username and password

1 hour before the session (or whenever you can get into the room):
- Set up your slide presentation with the title slide showing on the screen
- Write the Wi-Fi username and password somewhere that participants can see it
- Put the booklets on a registration table and ask the volunteer or organizer to distribute them to participants as they arrive; share the criteria from the slide Choose Your Option to help them decide which resource is most relevant
- Have the person at the registration table ask each participant if they have completed the www.viame.org survey. If they haven’t, ask that they complete it before the session begins. The website and instructions will be on the slide on the screen. It will take approximately 15 minutes. There is no need to purchase the full report to learn about their top strengths. This survey is part of a research project, so they will need to provide personal information, including their name and email address for research purposes.
Suggested agenda for the day

There are different options you can use depending on the time you have available:

3 hours
This is the ideal time for the session when you want the participants to complete most or all of the resources. It is recommended that you include one or two stretch breaks.

2 hours
If you only have 2 hours, go through the background slides (4-11) briefly and skip the Coping Strategies Planner and Be Aware of Resources. Ask participants to complete these sections on their own time. Be sure you leave enough time for participants to complete the Commitment/Committing sections near the end of the resource.

1 hour
If you only have 1 hour, you may want to skip the background slides (4-11) as well as Coping Strategies Planner and Be Aware of Resources. Just briefly mention that participants can complete these sections on their own time. Explain how to use the 4 A’s but leave that section to be done on their own time as well. Use as much of your time as possible to allow the participants to complete the rest of the sections but be sure to leave enough time to have them choose one of the Commitments for themselves before wrapping up. This helps participants to leave with a concrete action strategy to build resilience.
Welcome and introductions – Slides 1-3 – 15 minutes
• After you are introduced by yourself or the organizer, welcome the participants.
• Usually with a large audience you would skip introductions of participants, but if you have a very small group of less than 12 or if participants are at table groups you may want them to state their name and the reason why they chose to attend this session to those at their table.
• See section in this guide called Starting the Session

Slides 4-11 – 20 minutes
• Briefly describe resilience, burnout, trauma, conflict or bullying, common elements that break us down, common elements that help build resilience, and post traumatic growth

Slide 12 – 10 minutes (5 minutes to explain and wrap up; up to 5 minutes for workbook activity)
• Identify automatic responses to stress

Slide 13 – 10 minutes (5 minutes to explain and wrap up; up to 5 minutes for workbook activity)
• Identify healthier responses to stress

Slide 14 – 10 minutes (5 minutes to explain and wrap up; up to 5 minutes to complete activity)
• Recognize and explore your stressors

Slides 15–19 – 15 minutes (up to 3 min. per slide)
• Describing 4 A’s (Accept, Avoid, Alter, Adapt)

Slide 20 – 5 minutes
• Apply 4 A’s to the one stressor they previously identified

Stretch Break – 10 minutes

Slide 21 – 10 minutes (5 minutes to explain and wrap up; up to 5 minutes for workbook activity)
• Balancing your support network

Slide 22 – 10 minutes (5 minutes to explain and 5 minutes to complete the exercise)
• Identify top 3 strengths and how to use them in different situations

Slide 23 – 6 minutes (3 minutes to explain and 3 minutes to complete)
• Describe work resilience

Slide 24 – 10 minutes
• Briefly describe the different options and ask each person to identify a commitment they will make to themselves for building resilience and the person who will hold them accountable after 3 weeks

Slide 25 – 4 minutes
• Talk to the group about the Coping Strategies Planner and how they can use it as a visual they post somewhere they will see it daily

Stretch Break – 15 minutes (tell participants it is 10 minutes)

Slide 26 – 5 minutes
• Talk about the resources available to the participants. Invite the person assigned by the organizer to come up and talk to the group about what is available, or if you obtained this information in advance, you can review the list with everyone

Slide 27 – 3 minutes
• Talk to the group about what is available on Workplace Strategies for Mental Health and where they can find this resource on our website

Slide 28 – 10 minutes
• Provide time for questions or comments
• Provide closing comments

Total time: About 3 hours
Starting the session

Determine beforehand if the organizer is doing the welcome (including acknowledgement of territorial lands) or if you prefer to do it yourself.

The following is sample acknowledgement wording for Winnipeg and Toronto with a link to many more territories.

Acknowledgement of territorial lands

In Winnipeg
We’re pleased to host you on original lands of Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation. We respect the treaties that were made on these territories. We acknowledge the harms and mistakes of the past. And, we dedicate ourselves to moving forward in partnership with Indigenous communities in a spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

In Toronto
We acknowledge the land we are meeting on is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

To look up other locations
www.caut.ca/content/guide-acknowledging-first-peoples-traditional-territory

Suggested welcome wording
I would like to welcome you all here today and thank [name of organization] for choosing to support this session on helping to improve the quality of your life by building resilience.

My name is _____ and I would like to acknowledge (the organizer, assigned counselor or other representative in the room) who have/has been instrumental in making this session happen.

In the next short while we will explore how you currently respond to stress, consider other options, and help you choose strategies that can make it easier to bounce back from whatever life throws at you.

Here are a few housekeeping items before we begin:

- We’ll take breaks at…
- We’ll break for lunch from… (if applicable)
- We’ll end by…
- The washrooms are located…
- In the unlikely event of an emergency, exits are located at…
- Feel free to ask questions at any time throughout the presentation

Before we start, I want to remind you that later in the session we’ll be working with your top 3 strengths. If you haven’t already completed the Via Survey, please copy down the URL here and you can do it at break. If you aren’t able to do that, have a look in the Appendix and choose what you think are your top 3 strengths from the list there.

Any questions before we get started?
Facilitator notes

Once the introductions are complete, you may want to start with a story, perhaps one where you know of someone (including yourself) who bounced back after adversity. Explain that the core purpose of this resource is to prevent unnecessary suffering by helping us recover from whatever life throws at us. Remember to avoid mentioning suicide at all when presenting unless responding to a direct question.

Ensure you instruct the participants

During this session I want to ask you to keep what you are writing confidential. This is meant to be a time of self-reflection. Some of you will be reflecting on personal information you are not yet ready to share. To create a safe space where everyone can be honest with themselves, we ask that you only share if you want to after the session is over.

Notes

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Choose your version

Facilitator notes
This slide may not be required if everyone in your session is using the same resource, but you can use this opportunity to share that another version is available.

/embed Suggested wording
Both versions are very similar in nature; however, there are language and examples specific to the intended user, whether students or employees. You should have selected a workbook at the registration table that’s most relevant to you. Just to check:

• If you are under the age of 20 or if you are full-time student, From Surviving to Thriving is likely more relevant
• If you are working, or over the age of 30, Planning for Resilience is probably more relevant
• If you’re between the ages of 20 and 30 and not a full-time student – you can choose the one that feels best for you

If you feel you would like a different workbook from the one you have, please put up your hand and we will arrange to get you the other version.

Notes
This is not a medical or crisis intervention tool

**Facilitator notes**
Please provide a text, phone, or location of someone available throughout this session who can help those who currently need assistance or support.

Important distinction – this is not therapy or a medical intervention. If you are in crisis now or very unwell, our suggestion is to take this to your treating professional to complete together when you are well enough to do so.

**Suggested wording**
This session and the resources we’re using aren’t for anyone who’s currently experiencing significant emotional distress. It’s intended to explore how you cope with stress now and help you choose strategies to build resilience going forward.

You’re more than welcome to still take part in this session, but it’s not fair to expect yourself to develop healthier coping strategies when you’re struggling to get through the day. It’s like asking you to develop new math skills during a math exam. It’s not great for your stress levels! So, if this is your situation, just relax and take from this whatever resonates with you.

On the other hand, we also have someone who’s available for you to talk to if you wish. _________ (name of support person given to you by the organizer) is available up to 20 minutes after our session is over to talk to you. You can contact them by ________________ (Give phone, email, text and/or office location).

**Suggested wording if someone questions the validity of the tool**
Plan for Resilience was informed by a literature review on resilience, burnout, trauma, and emotional intelligence. The list is available online. From Surviving to Thriving built on that base of evidence by adding in student-specific research also included in the list. In 2017, McMaster University did a pilot and in 2018, Queen’s University did an evaluation study on the student version of the resource. The results of that study are also available online for anyone who’s interested. [Note that a copy of the evidence is also included in the Appendix of this guide.]

**Notes**

__________

__________

__________

__________

__________

12

Workplace Strategies for Mental Health
Is resilience just a way to blame the victim?

Some used to think so because of the way it was applied in some organizations. For example: "We'll continue to have a toxic relationship or workplace, or classroom and you just need to become more resilient to put up with it." This was sometimes said to people who were bullied, teased, humiliated or pressured with unreasonable demands. The message was, "You need to suck it up or toughen up. You need to be more resilient and less sensitive."

In other words – let's blame the victim. But those who used this approach may have missed the real point of resilience.
SLIDE 5

Resilience is the capacity to adapt or recover

Resilience is the capacity to adapt or recover in the face of:
- adversity
- trauma or tragedy
- threats or harassment
- stress or overwhelm
- relationship problems
- financial problems
- health problems
- work or school issues

Suggested wording

Many of these things are part of life. We won’t be able to avoid them all. So, rather than see resilience as blaming the victim, begin to see it as empowering the human. Resilience empowers the individual – you can’t always choose what happens to you, but you can choose the response.

Resilience isn’t going to help you avoid stress but helps you recover from it. Life is a series of events where we make choices and decisions related to our quality of life and well-being. Resilience helps us choose positively rather than negatively. There’s no doubt we’ll suffer loss and trauma, but resilience allows us to feel it, experience it and move beyond it.

Regardless of your life circumstances or your workplace, building your own resilience will allow you to have a better quality of life. You deserve that.
Burnout

• No mental reserve
• Lack of appreciation
• Blindsided by betrayal

Suggested wording
As we reviewed the research around resilience, we understood that it could also help prevent burnout, which can be characterized as depletion of mental, physical and emotional energy.

In hearing the stories of those who experienced burnout, certain patterns became evident:
• Many individuals didn’t have good personal boundaries and/or were overachievers.
• Many people who burned out were literally burning the candle at both ends by constantly overextending themselves.
• Most felt they were neither recognized nor appreciated for their efforts.
• Those closest to them may have resented the energy they spent on work or other activities that did not include them. This can lead to the added stress and strain of conflict in personal relationships.

This is why at some point they had no reserve of energy to deal with even a moderate challenge or obstacle. In fact, many people who burned out had continually pushed their limits for years or even decades, leading them to believe it could continue indefinitely. The crash point often came when they felt blindsided by what feels like a betrayal or someone questioning their integrity. That sense of having worked, trained or studied so hard for so long, having your identity wrapped up with that and then having it questioned, can be devastating at a time when you have no energy reserve.

Notes
Facilitator notes

Include a story if possible. Example:

A soldier was asked why he thinks every soldier doesn’t have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). His belief was that soldiers that go into war expecting to be a hero were more likely to end up with PTSD because their expectations were different than someone who knows in advance that they may be compromising their values by fighting, killing and engaging in war as part of their job. The difference is they understand and plan for conflict of emotions and expect that bad things will happen to good people. This managing of expectations can allow them to put the incident in perspective when it happens.

Suggested wording

We then looked at research related to who is more likely to experience PTSD. It explored why some people seem to be able to face horrific trauma but bounce back from that. You guessed it — having the skills related to resilience were a big factor.

Those who become disabled with PTSD or overwhelming anxiety after exposure to a traumatic incident often report feeling powerless in the moment. This is made worse when they perceive that someone was being intentionally cruel in causing the trauma. This may lead to the unsettling fear that intentional cruelty is everywhere.

Another common experience for those experiencing PTSD is being blamed — either directly for the traumatic incident or indirectly through a poorly worded question such as: “Why didn’t you do this or that?”

The impact of this blame can be devastating if internalized. An example might be a paramedic who is used to seeing trauma but wasn’t expecting to come upon an accident scene where they were unable to save a child who may even have reminded them of their own child. If upon return to the station they are asked why they didn’t follow standard operating procedure, they may internalize that as blame, when in fact the question might just be a standard debrief question that discovers they did everything to the best of their ability in the situation.
We also looked at the many people who are shaken to the core by conflict, a breakup or bullying. Some are so affected by this situation they are off work or miss classes due to stress-related illness.

We know from WorkSafeBC, who cover some claims for bullying, and from Workers Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB in Ontario), who cover some claims for chronic mental stress at work, that the majority of claims are denied.

This is because even though the situation was so unbearable that a claim was filed, they were not able to confirm the actions of the accused were the main reason or the only reason for the development of a mental health condition or because the motives of the accused may not have been clear. In any case, this denial of claim can leave both the accused and the accuser without a healthy resolution.

What might have changed this negative outcome for these claimants? Learning how to resolve conflict successfully and/or to reduce the negative impact on yourself is also related to the skills that contribute to resilience.
Common elements that can break us down

Suggested wording

When we put all the negative elements of burnout, trauma, and conflict together, we can see their commonalities.

And we can see how these things have the potential to break any of us down over time – especially if we are already vulnerable due to health, family, financial, work or school pressures.
But there's good news. Resilience also has common elements that can be protective. We can learn and develop resilience to help us bounce back from most, if not all, of these things.

Resilience won't prevent us from being exposed to stress, conflict or trauma – but it can help us recover faster and with less emotional or physical damage.
You have likely heard about post traumatic stress disorder, but how many have heard about post traumatic growth? People don’t talk about it much, but it’s part of the end goal of resilience. 

I bet you’ve seen it – that person who seems to have dealt with extraordinary loss or tragedy, yet still seems to embrace and be grateful and joyful for their lives. (Add example here – Nelson Mandela was an example, but a locally-known average person is a better example if you have one. The average person is more relatable than a celebrity.)

So, let’s build resilience – not to put up with toxic situations, but to have the ability to move beyond them or at least prevent them from destroying our ability to enjoy life between the challenges. When you are unfortunate enough to go through a horrible experience and are unable to move beyond bitterness and anger, the pain stays with you long after the horrible experience is over. In fact, resilience can help you to feel the pain more completely in the moment and then move more effectively beyond it when you are healed. Resilience can help us to learn and grow from life’s challenges.

Facilitator notes
Include examples and/or stories where the person bounced back and moved forward with a better quality of life after a horrible experience:

Nelson Mandela – his attitude while he was in prison was that he still believed life/he had value.

Mother Theresa – she continued to move forward even against the odds.

Yes, even Monica Lewinsky – she was an intern who had the Whitehouse affair with Bill Clinton. She was publicly shamed around the world. The point is this person suffered public humiliation, but she got through it with those people who supported her. It’s not the magnitude of the trauma – it’s the amount of resilient skills that are applied afterwards.

Story about someone who lost 3 children but she was eventually able to embrace life and be grateful for it. How do you recover from that? She said it would be a disservice to her children if she didn’t go on, and that she needed to make a difference in the world for them.
Recognizing your automatic responses to stress

Facilitator notes
This workbook exercise should take about 10 minutes: 5 minutes to discuss and wrap up, 5 minutes for the participants to complete the workbook exercise.

Suggested wording
Next, we’re going to have you open your workbook to the page entitled Recognizing Your Automatic Responses to Stress. You’ll begin completing it based on your own situation, but before you begin:

• UNLESS INSTRUCTED TO DO SO, PLEASE DON’T SHARE YOUR ANSWERS. It is purposefully meant to allow you time for quiet and private reflection about you!

• Of course, you can share whatever you wish with whoever you wish when we are done, but during the session some people will want to keep theirs private, so we want to respect that. We’ll have time to share and talk about strategies later.

• Think about this exercise as reflection and journaling. This helps you increase your own self-awareness.

I have a brief story about a friend who was breaking out in hives but didn’t know why. The allergist said it was due to stress and asked her where and when it would occur. She said it was usually in the evenings at home. It turns out the hives were the result of relationship issues. She eventually left the situation and no longer gets hives.

This person was able to manage and avoid her stressors by identifying both the cause and effect. Whatever your automatic responses to stress might be, if you can recognize them as soon as they occur, you act and reduce the negative impact of prolonged stress.

Please note that it’s important to rule out any underlying physical problem before you assume a response is purely related to stress. Get any identified responses checked out by a doctor.

(Stand the group through Why this matters instructions in their workbook)

Why this matters (content taken directly from the Plan for Resilience workbook)

• For most of us, stress is a daily occurrence. Often, our responses to stress are automatic. This means we don’t choose them or plan them. However, if we can identify some of our immediate responses to stress, we are more likely to recognize and address them before they create a major life or health concern. Most of us will have automatic physical responses as well as changes in our behaviours and emotions.

• Always eliminate the possibility that any of your responses may indicate an unrelated or underlying health issue that should be checked out with your doctor. Once you know it is stress related only, you can use that information to help identify the source of stress earlier and make changes sooner.
Recognizing your automatic responses to stress  CONT.

- Understanding the automatic stress responses of others can be very important information for us, as well. When we recognize a stress response in others, we are less likely to take their behaviour personally. In recognizing the response as their defence mechanism to deal with their own stress, we’re less likely to feel the need to defend ourselves. In fact, we may be able to help them deal with it. For example, you may have a friend who needs personal space, or they become agitated. Once you know that, you can see the agitation and step back to give them space or help them move to a better location.

Instructions

- Read each of the responses and potential impacts on the following pages. Check off your usual responses when you’re experiencing stress and think about the responses you may have seen with others. It may be in the very first moment of stress or after prolonged or chronic exposure.

- The following categories include physical, emotional, and behavioural responses. If you have a response that isn’t listed, please add it under the heading "Other.”

### Suggested wording – wrap up:

You may have noticed:

- Identifying your potential physical, behavioural, and emotional responses to stress before they happen can help increase your ability to recognize when you’re having a stress response.

- This can enable you to reach out for help earlier, which may lessen the negative impact of stress on your work and health.

- You may also have noticed that some of these automatic responses are things other people do that you may have attributed to their personality or character when, in fact, it may be a stress response for them. Often what we do is assume that this person is simply always negative or agitated or withdrawn. Instead, look at problematic behaviour in others and wonder if there’s something more going on with that person.

Part of what we’ll learn is what we can do about our stressors. If we’re in this stress response for days, weeks or even years, burnout and other illnesses are more likely to come into play. All sorts of illnesses are exacerbated by stress.

Choosing healthier responses to stress

Facilitator notes
This workbook exercise should take about 10 minutes - 5 minutes to explain & wrap up; up to 5 minutes for workbook activity.

If you have people sitting in small groups, they could take a few minutes to share the responses that work best for them, which allows them to learn from others. You can ask people to share with one or two people who are sitting near them, but this will depend on whether everyone has someone seated next to them. If it is challenging to do, skip the discussion part of this exercise.

Why this matters (content taken directly from the Plan for Resilience workbook)
• There are many strategies that can help reduce the negative impact of stressors. The following list includes potential strategies to help prevent or manage stress. Many are evidence-based approaches, such as mindfulness, practicing gratitude, and deep breathing. Others are practice-based approaches shared by those who used them successfully to manage their own life stressors.
• Not all of these strategies will work for everyone. In fact, some may cause you stress because they aren’t calming or enjoyable to you. Others may have neither a positive nor a negative impact.

Instructions
• Check off the strategies below that you know work for you.
• Put a checkmark by the strategies you think might be helpful and that you are willing to try. Pick some key ones for you – many strategies may look interesting, but focus on those you feel you’ll have time to work on.
• When you’re done, share with the people at your table the ones you already use successfully and learn the strategies that have worked for them.

---

Suggested wording
We’re now going to complete the section Choosing Healthier Responses to Stress.

Even after we have identified them, our automatic and involuntary responses to stress will happen. But we can choose healthier responses to help prevent stress and to reduce stress once it has happened. Go through the list, choose what you already know works for you and circle those that you might want to try out. These are not crisis responses, but responses that can help you over time or to deal with stress in the moment.

(Walk the group through the Why This Matters instructions in their workbook.)
Choosing healthier responses to stress  CONT.

**Suggested wording – wrap up**

By including healthier responses into your regular activities, you not only help build resilience, you may be able to help alleviate stress in many different situations.

Challenge yourself to put some of these in play over the next few months to see if they help. If not, go back to the list to see if there are other strategies that might work.

**Take Your Break** offers healthy activities you can do alone or with others in 15 minutes or less in most settings. Check out the link at the bottom of the page:

[www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/newsletter/Healthy-Break-Activities](http://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/newsletter/Healthy-Break-Activities)
Recognizing and exploring your stressors

Facilitator notes
This workbook exercise should take approx. 10 minutes - 5 minutes to explain and wrap up; up to 5 minutes to complete activity.

This section needs to carefully be set up and debriefed. Please include the intent of the following wording, even if you say it in your own style. Also remind everyone at the end that the occupational health nurse or counselor is available to anyone who might be feeling overwhelmed.

Next, we'll be looking at the section Recognizing and Exploring Your Stressors.

Why this matters
• Resilience is the ability to bounce back after being blindsided or overwhelmed by adversity. One of the ways to improve our ability to bounce back is to be fully aware that challenging and difficult events could happen to any of us at any time and proactively consider how we might cope with them.
• This is not intended to increase anxiety about what could go wrong, but to recognize that many people have experienced these life events and successfully moved forward with their lives.
• For example, most of us know individuals who have experienced serious illness, disability or loss and then bounced back to enjoy and appreciate life more than ever. We probably also know people who experienced a setback or disappointment many years ago yet continue to experience anger or hurt about it every day. Our quality of life is directly affected by our ability to move forward from a crisis in a way that supports our own mental well-being.

Instructions
• The items listed on the following pages can be significant life stressors. They could happen to you or someone you care about.
• There may be times in life when we have many different stressors but are managing quite well. There may be other times when we only have one stressor but it’s overwhelming. There’s no ideal number of stressors and no right or wrong way to feel about them.
• Check any items that you’re dealing with now or know you will be in the very near future.
• At the end, choose one of your stressors to explore further for potential solutions later in this session.

Complete right up to the end and then read the section titled Please Don’t Compare Your Stressors To Anyone Else’s. This isn’t a competition – we don’t win for having the most stressors. I want you to go through to identify them so they become issues you can address rather than a source of anxiety for you.
Recognizing and exploring your stressors CONT.

Suggested wording – wrap up
Life is very fluid and can change at any time. We want to build resiliency to cope with any and all of life’s stressors, but this is a lifelong learning activity. We’ll start with whatever is most relevant to you right now.
Facilitator notes
This slide should take about 1 minute and the next 4 slides that explain the concept more fully would take about 2 minutes each.

Suggested wording
We have choices when it comes to dealing with stress and adversity. These choices can usually be classified as one of the four A’s: **Accept, Avoid, Alter, or Adapt**.

The following is adapted from [https://wellness.uchicago.edu/healthy-living/health-information/stress/](https://wellness.uchicago.edu/healthy-living/health-information/stress/). (Note that this link is an update to a previous version.)

Some less helpful strategies might include problematic use of alcohol, cannabis, or other substances like junk food or sugar. It can also include binge watching television or anything else that’s not good for your well-being. These strategies can help distract us from whatever is causing the stress, but they rarely make things better and can often make things worse.

If, on the other hand, you can step back at a time of stress and objectively consider potential approaches, you may gain perspective about what can be done.

We can use the 4 A’s shown here to help us do just that with any of the stressors we’ve identified. Each of them could potentially make things better or worse for you. The exercise is intended to help you identify options that could eliminate or significantly reduce your stress without causing other stressors.
Accept the things and people you really cannot change

- Don't try to control the uncontrollable
- Look at challenges as opportunities for personal growth and learning
- Share your feelings to help reduce their power over your emotions
- Learn to forgive and move on

Suggested wording

(Insert your story) My friend wanted to be 20 pounds lighter. She used to beat herself up about it. At one point she decided to accept that is who she was. If she really saw being thinner as important to her health or happiness, she would do something about it. But instead she wanted to focus on enjoying life. She made the decision to accept the way she was and stop wasting energy on it.

Sometimes the best way to deal with a stressor is to accept it. As hard as it may be, accepting what is not possible to change in the moment (rather than desperately or hopelessly wishing it were different) allows you to manage your stress more effectively.

It can also help to see our ability to accept and rise above a challenge to learn and grow. So, you didn’t get that special assignment you’d hoped for? What did you learn from the process of applying that you could do differently the next time?

Talking about it helps. Simply telling someone you’re not at your best is a way to start the conversation and reduce the hold your emotions might have on you.

For more on forgiving someone who has hurt you, check out the late Dr. Wayne Dyer’s blog at the link provided: www.drwaynedyer.com/blog/category/forgiveness/
Avoid unnecessary stress

- Learn to say “no” and have boundaries
- Avoid people who create a stressful environment whenever possible
- Establish a low-stress work space
- Prioritize your “to-do” list and dropping tasks or activities that aren’t truly necessary

Suggested wording

Some may think avoidance is never an effective way to deal with a stressor, but sometimes it may be the healthiest coping strategy. For example, if someone causes you significant anxiety, avoiding that person, if you can, might not be a bad thing. Another example is if you’re a recovering alcoholic. Calling ahead to a hotel you are going to be staying at and asking them to remove alcohol from the minibar in your room can reduce your stress. Sure, you may be avoiding the temptation, but you are also saving your willpower for things you cannot avoid.

Not all stress can be avoided. You may have financial or health issues that can get much worse if you avoid dealing with them. But when looking at the 4 A’s in relation to your stressors, don’t discount avoiding as an option.

Saying no to a potential stressor, like attending an event you really don’t want to go to, can be incredibly empowering. Consider how good you feel once you’ve made the decision to not do something that wasn’t serving you in some way.

Avoiding is also about setting healthy boundaries for yourself, such as deciding to eliminate or reduce the time spent doing things, or hanging out with people, that are a constant drain on your energy.

Avoiding stress may also mean avoiding places that raise your stress level. One student found a corner in the highest floor of the library where almost no one ever went. She used this hiding place as a sanctuary whenever she had to focus on difficult tasks. The rest of the time she studied with her friends in a fun, noisy environment and loved it.

Write and stick to your to-do list. Make sure the tasks are what you really need to do and drop the rest. We often tell ourselves it’s all important, but that’s rarely true.

Notes
Alter the external environment

Look for ways to alter or change how you communicate and operate in your daily life to minimize stressors. (Insert a story.)

You can alter how you operate in your home, work or study environments by clearing away unnecessary clutter. Then, surround yourself as best you can with things that are neutral or positive for you. For example, someone delivered a freezer chest to a friend’s home and put it in her kitchen. She didn’t want it there but couldn’t move it herself. After realizing she was ticked off every day it was there, she decided to hire someone to move it. By altering this daily stressor, she was better able to cope with some of the more serious and difficult stressors in her life.

Another example of altering a situation is if you have road rage due to traffic congestion. Consider taking a different route. Even if it takes a bit longer, it could reduce your stress.

Find safe people and places where you can open up about your stress. Take a walk with a trusted colleague or friend and let it out — but try not to just make it a complaining session. What’s the positive spin you can put on this?

Take pressure off yourself in intentional ways. What’s the worst thing that will happen if you don’t spend another hour on that report tonight?

Tell people when a situation is causing you stress. Tell them what you need for it to be healthier for you. That may mean you need to close your office door or barricade the entrance to your cubicle for a while. Or maybe you need people to move their talking and socializing out of your hearing range, so you can focus and relax in your own way.

While many of us will continue to work around the clock, planning just five-minute breaks every hour can make a world of difference. Think about how you can plan your day to allow for this. Avoid getting sucked into time-wasting conversations or email trails.

Notes
Adapt to the stressor

Adapting is about modifying the way we interact with our stressor. (Insert a story.)

How might you adapt to the stress of sleep deprivation if you don’t have the luxury of sleeping longer? Focus on ways to improve the quality of your sleep even if you can’t improve the quantity – darken your room, have no electronics nearby, stop eating or watching screens for 3 hours before you go sleep – or whatever will work for you. Find solutions to reduce stress rather than focusing on problems, like not enough hours in the day, that you can’t solve.

We ask how each of the 4 A’s can make your stress better or worse because sometimes when we’re stressed, we spring into action but fail to see that certain actions can create new stressors. For example, angrily confronting someone may seem reasonable when you’re stressed by their words or actions. However, this action may ultimately break down the relationship in ways that are even more difficult to fix later.

Sometimes we need to adapt our own high standards or self-imposed demands. Lowering the bar to a more realistic level can sometimes have astonishing results. Keeping work or studying within reasonable daily limits can allow you to engage much more fully in the rest of your life, making you better at work and school.
Each “A” is a potential option

Facilitator notes
This workbook exercise should take approximately 12 minutes.

Some possible questions you may get
What is the difference between alter and adapt? Adapt applies to you personally changing the way you interact with a stressor. Alter focuses more on changing the stressor. For example, in relationships, you may alter the relationship by changing how often, when, or where you meet. You can adapt to the relationship by modifying how you communicate or interact with the other person.

Here is a quick example of the difference between alter and adapt if the stressor is difficult communication with your parents. To alter the situation, you may prefer text, email, or a phone call at specific times. You might say to your parents: “I’m working really hard right now and need to focus during these hours. Let’s plan to connect at this time on this day.”

If you can’t alter the communication, you may need to adapt by saying to yourself, “I won’t answer the call when I’m in the middle of something. When I do answer, I’ll take a deep breath, be polite and just allow my parents to speak without reacting to them.”

Suggested wording
Take the stressor you identified earlier and think of its pros and cons. Use the chart under BRIEFLY DESCRIBE THE STRESSOR FOR WHICH YOU WILL EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS to consider how each of the 4 A’s – Accept, Avoid, Alter, Adapt – might make your stress better or worse.

Suggested wording – wrap up
Perhaps you use a coping strategy that’s more damaging than healthy or helpful. Considering all the four A’s might help you manage your perspective of the situation and reducing your stress level. The 4 A’s are used by many schools, businesses and organizations because they work.

Notes
Balancing your support network

Facilitator Notes
This workbook exercise should take about 8 minutes: 3 minutes to discuss, 5 minutes for the participants to complete the workbook exercise.

Suggested wording
We're now going to complete the section Balancing Your Support Network

Let me ask you a few questions…

• How do you feel after you help someone?
• If you’re happy to help others and feel good doing it, do you also feel good about asking for help? If not, why not?

Some of us were raised to believe that helping others was a sign of strength but asking for help was one of weakness. But do you actually think people who ask for help are weak? Probably not. Resilience involves our ability to connect with one another.

(Insert a story) I was good at giving help, but I sucked at asking for it.

Someone asked me, “Why do you help people?” I said I want to make a difference; I care about people.

They asked, “How does it make you feel?” I responded that it makes me feel good.

They said, “So why don’t you reach out?” I said, “Because I don’t want to be a burden.”

They responded, “So you think people who reach out are a burden?”

I replied. “No, that wasn’t what I thought about others.”

They asked how I could have two different standards – feeling good about offering help by denying others the opportunity to feel good about helping me.

That conversation turned my thinking around. Asking for help is a way to connect with people. What was surprising is it improved my ability to solve problems effectively and it reduced my overall stress levels. The important point is you aren’t actually resilient if you can’t both give and receive social support.

All of us will have times when we can offer help and times when we should reach out for help.

There are times we need to be supported and times we need to be supportive. Asking for help in our personal or work lives is one of the ways we can improve our resilience.

You may discover there are more people than you were aware of who would be willing to help you. But not everyone can help with every issue. If the first person you reach out to is unable or unwilling to help, try someone else.

If you feel hesitant to reach out, think about how you feel when you can help someone. Many people welcome the opportunity to help and are relieved to find out we all need help from time to time.

Instructions:
• Think about family, friends, associates, colleagues, neighbours, or services you could reach out to for help.
• On the left side of this chart, list the names of people whom you can or do support for each specific task that’s listed in the centre column. For example, some
Balancing your support network CONT.

might make you laugh, while others might call you on your stuff. Some might just agree with you, and others might do errands for you. Try not to limit everything to one person as that might put a lot of pressure on them.

• On the right side, list the names of people who could provide that support to you.

• Try to include a variety of names so you can create a diverse network of support for yourself.

Suggested wording – wrap up

• You never have to be alone when you need support: there’s always someone who really wants to help, including a professional or volunteer, or organizational and community resources that can be found in person, online, and over the phone. Take time to find these supports now so they’ll be available when you need them. Then, when you need them, reach out.


• You may have more support than you first thought. You might also notice your support network isn’t as large as it could be.

• This isn’t a popularity contest. We are fortunate if we have a few good people in our lives who will be there to help us.

• If you don’t have enough supports in place, you can find them. This can include joining a group, collaborating online or in person, volunteering, or finding one person who needs your help. You might be surprised. The worst thing they can say is “no”, but give people the opportunity to be supportive.

• International students may have difficulty finding supports due to language barriers and other challenges. If they’re introverted, they could perhaps have a buddy system or tutor. (The host might have some ideas.)

• To help develop your network, look for opportunities to use your strengths to assist others.

• However you choose to build a support network, as you support more people, you may find more people are there when you need help.

Notes

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________

Workplace Strategies for Mental Health

34
Facilitator notes:
This workbook exercise will take approximately 5 minutes.
Please ensure everyone has either:
2. Or written down what they think are their top 3 strengths, choosing from the list from Appendix A.

Suggested wording
We’re now going to complete the section Identifying and Using Your Strengths.
This section is about knowing our strengths and understanding in advance how to use or leverage that strength in a time of crisis. Look at your top 3 strengths from VIA and how you might use them when dealing with a crisis.
- If you are running out of time, just get them to talk about it – share your strength and how you could use it at work.
- We want to encourage discussion about the positive and reflection on the negative.
(Insert a story about your own strength.) For example, my friend’s top strength was forgiveness. She was thinking, “Great – I’m a doormat.” She wasn’t thrilled with her top strength but when she read about what it meant, she realized it isn’t about her, it’s about others. It’s critical for her to forgive because she works with people who have depression or anxiety who might be more judgmental and critical. Forgiveness is a way of understanding that people have their own reasons for behaving in ways that seem hurtful or unkind. Understanding that it’s less about you and much more about their current state of mind makes it easier to forgive. Now when she is in a challenging situation, she explores how she can use this strength to consider why those involved in the situation may have responded the way they did. Forgiveness allows her to be more objective and less stressed.

Why this matters
- When we talk about a person’s character, we’re talking about the sum total of who that person is. This means considering how their thoughts, feelings and behaviours shape who they are, how they see the world, and how they interact with the people around them.
- Every person has character strengths. These positive qualities are part of who we are and come naturally to us.
- It’s much easier for us to use our strengths during times of adversity than to try to manage our weaknesses. For example, if patience isn’t your strength, it won’t be easy to try being patient when faced with a delay in a work project. On the other hand, if creativity is a strength, distracting yourself from the stress and frustration of waiting while you begin a new creative project might be helpful.
Using strengths vs. fighting weaknesses  CONT.

Suggested wording – Wrap up

We all have many character strengths, but we don’t all have the same strengths to the same degree. For example, while everyone has curiosity, it will be stronger in some people than in others.

Also, any strength can be overused to the point where it becomes a problem. Using the example of curiosity, not enough can make life boring – too much can make you seem nosy or intrusive.

Recognizing strengths in ourselves and using them wisely can help us improve our own self-confidence and build connections with other people.

More information and tools to help you use your strengths to thrive in all areas of your life can be found in the link at the bottom of the page: www.viacharacter.org/www/Reports-Courses-Resources/Resources/Character-Strength-Fact-Sheets
Suggested wording

If one of your stressors is concern about being unable to complete your work due to illness or injury, you may want to fill out the appropriate section for you: Work Resilience for Leaders, Work Resilience for Employees, or Work Resilience for Self-Employed or Academic Resilience for Students.

This section is to help those overachievers with poor personal boundaries to learn they can put things in place so that when they need to take a day off for health purposes, it won’t create a disaster of epic proportions.

Each page has slightly different questions, but they’re there for you to develop your own plan. We don’t have time today, so you may fill it out at your leisure. For those who think I may be talking about you, please return to this section when you can.
What is your commitment to yourself?

In school – pg. 27 - 28
At work – pg. 26 - 27

Facilitator notes
This workbook exercise should take approximately 3 minutes to discuss and 3 minutes for participants to complete the worksheet.

Suggested wording
We'll now look at Commitment to Myself.

At this point, we've explored how you might automatically respond in the face of adversity and have considered alternative responses or daily habits that could be more beneficial. Now you can commit to one thing you're willing to do differently for at least 3 weeks to improve your resilience. Each one of these is based on the evidence of what builds resilience, but each are micro changes that will be relatively easy for anyone to fit into a busy day. Just choose one at a time and don't add the next one until you feel the first one has become part of your routine.

Instructions
Choose one of the 7 options listed below on the page or create your own. I will briefly describe them to you:

1. Take time after every disappointment, challenge or frustration and consider what you’ve learned or how you might grow because of it.

2. Use Mel Robbins’ 5-4-3-2-1 technique (author of the 5 Second Rule). She suggests you forget waiting for motivation to do what you know you should do and just count down – 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 – and take off to do it. If you have trouble with procrastination, this may be the one for you. (Insert a story.) For example, I don’t like talking on the phone, but I have elderly family who really want me to call. I wait for the motivation to do it, but it doesn’t come. So, when the thought pops into my head that I should call, rather than waiting to feel motivated, I simply count down 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 and make the call.

3. Use the 4 A's we discussed earlier and apply them to your stressors as they come up. They'll make you stop and reflect. Then you can choose what you want to do to solve the problem.

4. Express appreciation as often as you can, whether it’s thanking someone for opening a door or expressing appreciation for sunlight. Be on the lookout for what's positive in your day. Your brain eventually becomes trained to look for opportunities to express appreciation rather than only seeing the challenges and disappointments. If your thoughts have been rather negative lately, this might be the commitment for you.
5. Spend time examining your mistakes and recording what you learned to do or not do the next time. You’ll find you likely don’t mess up as much as you think, and that you can see mistakes as learning opportunities and not as failures. Nelson Mandela didn’t use the phrase “trial and error.” He used “trial and learn.”

6. Just say yes – for 3 weeks say yes every time someone offers to help you, whether that is at work, school, home, or out in the community. Learning to accept help is an important element of resilience and if you are uncomfortable or unaccustomed to doing this you may wish to consider this one.

7. Finally, you could also choose to monitor and correct your own self-talk. If someone said some of the things we say to ourselves all day – like, “You idiot, how could you be so stupid?” – we’d probably have them up on harassment charges. As you learn to be gentler to yourself, you learn to speak to others better. We are often the harshest critic to ourselves. If you do this to yourself a lot, this may be the one for you.

Suggested wording – wrap up

Committing to a challenge and sharing your plans with someone may help keep you accountable to your goals.

Limit your stress by choosing only 1 change to work on at a time. Find someone who will follow up with you in 3 weeks and ask that person to ask you how you did on that task.

Notes
Facilitator notes
If you have time, you can ask the group to complete it. If not, leave it for them to complete on their own time.

Suggested wording
The Coping Strategies Planner is provided for you to add in your most likely or existing stressors and the coping strategies or strengths you will use to deal with them. The first one is an example to help get you started.

We’ll leave this for you to do on your own time, but it’s a great visual reminder of the strategies you believe will work. Put it up somewhere where you’ll see it every day. At the time of extreme stress, it’s not unusual to forget what works. This can help remind you.
SLIDE 26

Be aware of resources before you need them

Facilitator notes
Please ask the organization to fill in as much of this as possible in advance. Ask for copies of the page to hand out and review with the participants. A separate form should be done for students and employees.

Suggested wording
We’ve provided a chart to help you to fill in potential resources available to you should you need to refer to them in the future.

(If you are an external facilitator, request that someone familiar with the organizational resources take 3-5 minutes to review the resources with the group.)

I would like to ask ______________ to speak to you about resources that are available within your own organization.

If this is not possible, you can say:

• Fill this in on your own or obtain a list of resources available to you within your organization, community, or other associations before you need them. When we’re stressed out or in a state of crisis it’s much less likely we’ll have the presence of mind to find effective resources. Doing this in advance will make it much easier when it’s needed. Doing this will also mean that when someone else needs help, you’ll be aware of where they might go to get it.

Notes
_____________________________________
_____________________________________
_____________________________________
Yes, these resources are free!

This resource you completed today is available for free online. Please feel free to check out all our resources available through Workplace Strategies for Mental Health at www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com.
Questions? Comments?

Facilitator notes:
Provide about 10 minutes at the end for questions or comments.

Suggested wording
(For large group discussion) Does anyone have any questions or comments they would like to share?

(For table or small group discussion – you can ask for some answers after they have had a chance to share at their table) What was your ‘aha’ moment? What will you do differently going forward because of what you learned?

Suggested wording – ending
Thank you for taking the time to build your own resilience. Remember that this resource is free, and you are encouraged to revisit it yearly as your stressors change and you become ready to try new coping strategies.
Evidence

Plan for Resilience was informed by the following evidence:


From Surviving to Thriving included additional evidence:


From Surviving to Thriving:
Developing Personal and Academic Resilience

Pilot Program Evaluation Report

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Disclaimer
The Queen’s University research team has provided this third-party, independent evaluation of Great-West Life’s Surviving to Thriving Guide for post-secondary students. While funding support for this project was provided by Great-West Life, the views conveyed in this report are entirely the authors’ and were not influenced in any way by Great-West Life.
Background

On Workplace Strategies for Mental Health (www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com), an initiative of the Great-West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace, free resources are provided for all employers and employees who want to protect psychological safety at work. In the development of the free resource Plan for Resilience: Workplace Edition, it became apparent to the experts involved that developing these resilience skills could also be important as students made the transition to post-secondary school (1). The identified resilience skills were known to help prevent suicidal ideation, burnout, and the worst effects from exposure to trauma (2,3). Of course, the approach taken in developing the workplace resource had to be refined for the age and stage of a different audience.

An initial draft of the Guide, now adapted for a post-secondary setting, was then provided to researchers and students at McMaster University, University of British Columbia Okanagan, and University of Waterloo for review. Subsequently, Dr. James Gillet supervised the use of the resource with an analysis of the first draft with students at McMaster University. Once the results were available, a roundtable with a variety of experts was held to consider next steps.

All participants of the roundtable acknowledged the importance of ensuring that the resource would do no harm and would provide benefit to the intended users – post-secondary students. A new draft incorporating the analysis from McMaster University and feedback from the roundtable, was titled, From Surviving to Thriving: Developing Personal and Academic Resilience. Dr. Heather Stuart, who participated in the roundtable, was asked to conduct a third party, independent evaluation of the resources through a pilot study conducted among Queen’s University students before the final version would be made freely available to the public.
Purpose

The Great-West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace’s Guide, *From Surviving to Thriving: Developing Personal and Academic Resilience*, was designed to assist post-secondary students with developing the skills required to effectively mediate and respond to stress. The overall goals of the Guide are to reduce short-term distress with the long-term goal of improving students’ personal resilience.

The Guide assists students in identifying their personal strengths and encourages them to reflect on frequently experienced stressors and their impacts. Students learn about automatic behavioural and emotional responses to stress and are encouraged to articulate how they might manage these context-based challenges, be it through the use of personal strategies, or by seeking help from various sources. Major sections of the Guide include:

- Recognizing and understanding responses to common stressors;
- Identifying healthy coping strategies;
- Recognizing and understanding personal triggers for a stress response;
- Outlining personal social support networks, as well as available mental health resources;
- Identifying personal strengths; and
- Designing a plan of action for managing commonly experienced stressors.

*It is important to note that the Guide was not intended as an intervention for someone in crisis.*
Figure 1. Logic Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Content</th>
<th>Short-Term Outcomes</th>
<th>Medium-Term Outcomes</th>
<th>Long-Term Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognize triggers for stress reactions</td>
<td>Identify stress responses</td>
<td>Reduce immediate distress</td>
<td>Improve resiliency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify healthy coping strategies</td>
<td>Identify personal support network</td>
<td>Utilize healthy coping mechanisms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify available mental health resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** The short-term outcomes shown on the logic model mirror the objectives of the program, while the overall goal of the program is expressed through the long-term impact. See definitions for these concepts below (4).

**OBJECTIVE**
Statements describing the results to be achieved, and the manner in which they will be achieved. You usually need multiple objectives to address a single goal.

**GOAL**
The long-term expectation of what should happen as a result of your program (the desired result). Serves as the foundation for developing your program objectives.
Methods

Figure 1 depicts the theory of change we developed to assist with the evaluation of the Guide. This theory of change, which allows us to highlight the mechanisms of action, is expressed through the use of a logic model. A logic model shows the logical series of events through which the desired outcomes of a program or service are expected to be reached (5).

Study Design

The efficacy (6) of the Guide was assessed through the use of a randomized controlled trial conducted among students at Queen’s university during the fall semester of 2018. This study design randomly splits the sample into two “arms” – one arm receives the intervention (e.g., the Guide), while the other arm (referred to as the “control arm”) does not. All participants were invited to complete the evaluation survey at pre- and post-test (e.g., before and after the intervention group received the Guide). Including a control arm in our study allowed us to separate any “background noise” and improved our confidence that the observed results could be directly attributed to the Guide and not to external factors.

Sampling and Participants

A random sample of 3,000 undergraduate and graduate students was drawn. The initial sample of students were invited to participate in the pre-test survey. Following receipt of the pre-test surveys, the research team randomized respondents into to either the intervention or the control arm of the study using an online, unbiased randomizer (Figure 2). Students randomized into the intervention arm of the study were e-mailed the Guide and asked to complete it within the next 4 weeks. A follow-up, the post-test survey was sent to both the control and intervention groups in early December 2018.
Procedure

Both the control and intervention groups completed online surveys at pre- and post-test (e.g., before and after the intervention group received the Guide). The survey was distributed to students through the Qualtrics Surveys platform. Students’ pre- and post-test responses were linked through the use of a unique identification code in order to preserve anonymity and confidentiality of responses. In order to maximize participation rates, participants were invited to enter their e-mail into a draw for a chance to win one of several $100 grocery gift cards to Metro. This project was reviewed and approved for ethical compliance by the Queen’s University Health Sciences and Affiliated Teaching Hospitals Research Ethics Board (HSREB).
Measures

Demographics

Demographic information was collected from students in order to understand the variability of our sample and assess the equivalence of our study groups. Students were asked to share the following information: sex, age, year of study, faculty of study, level of study, number of children, relationship status, living arrangement, location of residence, and estimated grade point average (GPA). Students were also asked to rate their current quality of social support received from friends/family on a scale of 1 to 10.

Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K6)

The K6 is a brief, 6-item scale designed to detect serious emotional disturbance among youth. It is comprised of symptoms of depression and anxiety, which are strong predictors of mental illness. Response options range on a 5-point scale from ‘never’ to ‘all of the time’. Responses are scored from 0 to 4, generating a scale with a total score ranging from 0-24, with higher values indicating a higher level of distress. A score of 13 or higher discriminates between respondents with and without a serious mental illness, though we used a continuous scoring scheme, as recommended by the developers, to assess changes in overall distress (7). If the guide were efficacious, we would expect to see a statistically significant decrease in distress scores from pre- to post-test in the intervention group and no or minor improvements in the control group.

Connor-Davidson Resiliency Scale (CD-RISC)

The 10-item CD-RISC is a brief scale designed to measure a person’s ability to cope with adversity (e.g., resiliency). Examples include being able to adapt to change, achieving goals despite obstacles, and staying focused under pressure. Respondents rate items on a scale
ranging from 0 (not true at all) to 4 (true nearly all of the time). Responses are then summed to provide a score ranging from 0 to 40, with higher scores reflecting a greater level of resilience (8,9). The scale has been demonstrated to have good psychometric properties among samples of university students. Given the short time window of this pilot test (four weeks), we were uncertain whether we would be able to detect a significant change in resilience. However, if a change was detected, a statistically significant improvement in resilience from pre- to post-test in the intervention group would be desired.

**Impressions of the Guide**

In addition to the measures outlined above, the post-test survey asked intervention arm participants for their impressions of and opinions about the Guide and its utility. Additionally, in order to determine whether there were any unanticipated negative consequences resulting from the Guide, students were asked if there was anything in its contents that caused them distress or made them think more negatively about their current situation.
Results

Demographics

A total of 519 participants completed the pre-test survey (17% response rate). Of these, 259 were randomized into the control arm, and 260 were randomized to the intervention. Of the 260 students who were sent the Guide, 133 returned a completed post-test survey. A total of 159 controls completed the post-test survey (Figure 3).

The majority of participants who completed the post-test survey were female (72%), with an average age of 25 years. The majority were in their second (40%) or third (30%) year of fulltime (98%) study. Most students were single (83%), did not have children (93%), and lived in off-campus housing (98%) with friends (41%) or roommates (26%). The sample showed good diversity across levels of study (e.g., undergraduate, graduate, etc.) and department of study. The majority of participants reported their GPA to be in the 80-100% range (69%). Participants rated their quality of social support to be an 8 on a scale from 1 to 10 (where ten was high).

Figure 3. Participation Flow Chart

Table 1 shows the demographic breakdown for the total sample of participants who completed the post-test survey, as well as the breakdown by control and intervention groups.

Demographic comparisons between participants in the control and intervention groups were not statistically significant, indicating that randomization was successful (e.g., the groups shared similar demographics, with an equal distribution of confounding factors).
Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristics</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Controls</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Valid %</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Female</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>71.6%</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Male</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Single and not dating</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Single and dating</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Married/common-law</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Location</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Off campus housing</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>97.9%</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• On campus in residence</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Situation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Living with friends</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Living with roommates</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Live alone</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Live with spouse/partner</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Live with family</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of Study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 1</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 2</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 3</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 5+</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Studies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Undergraduate</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Masters</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Doctoral</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Professional Degree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Full time</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>97.6%</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Part time</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA Last Academic Term</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 90-100%</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 80-89%</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 70-79%</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 60-69%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 50-59%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 0-49%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Prefer not to answer</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Distress

Table 2 shows the improvements among the intervention group\(^1\) for individual scale items from pre- to post-test (where a decrease in distress, and therefore a positive percent difference is considered to be an improvement). Participants demonstrated improvements on all but one item, with the largest change being 11.3% fewer participants reporting feeling “nervous.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>Percent Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That everything was an effort</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopeless</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So depressed that nothing could cheer you up</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worthless</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restless or fidgety</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>-0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Distress determined by the percent of participants who reported experiencing these symptoms “most of the time” or “all of the time”. A decrease in score is an improvement.

---

\(^1\) All results in the body of this document are primarily reported for the intervention group. The same analyses for the control group can be found in Appendix A.
Figure 4 shows a box and whisker plot for the distribution of distress scale scores at pre- and post-test for the intervention group. The shaded box shows the 25th to 75th percentiles, with the line showing the median (50th percentile). The whiskers extend out to the extreme values on either end of the distribution of scores. The figure shows an improvement from an average score of 9.29 to 8.29. A paired t-test was statistically significant (p<0.001). Cohen’s $d$ for the standardized effect size was 0.31 (95% CI 0.05, 0.56), indicating a small effect (10,11). No statistically significant differences were observed in the control arm (See Appendix A).

**Resilience**

Table 3 shows the improvements among the intervention group for individual scale items from pre- to post-test, with an increase in the proportion of participants reporting that each item was true “often” or “nearly all of the time”. Participants demonstrated improvements on all but two items. The largest improvement was observed for the first two items, feeling “that coping with stress could strengthen you” (+11.0%) and “that you think of yourself as a strong person” (+10.6%).
Table 3. Proportion of Intervention Group Reporting “Resiliency” at Pre- and Post-Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Over the past 4 weeks, how often have you felt...</th>
<th>Pre-Test Resiliency</th>
<th>Post-Test Resiliency</th>
<th>Percent Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>That coping with stress could strengthen you</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That you think of yourself as a strong person</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You could deal with whatever comes</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That you are not easily discouraged by failure</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That you can stay focused under pressure</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
<td>57.0%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That you can achieve goals despite obstacles</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
<td>65.3%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That you can handle unpleasant feelings</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You tried to see the humorous side of problems</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td>62.0%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That you tend to bounce back after illness or hardship</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>-5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You were able to adapt to change</td>
<td>67.2%</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
<td>-6.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. “Resiliency” determined by percent reporting items true “often” or “nearly all the time”

Figure 5. Boxplot for Resiliency Scores in Intervention Group at Pre- and Post-Test
Figure 5 shows a box and whisker plot for the distribution of resilience scale scores at pre- and post-test for the intervention group. The figure shows an improvement from an average score of 24.89 to 25.60, however, a paired t-test did not demonstrate statistical significance (p>0.5) for differences in scores. Additionally, Cohen’s d for the standardized effect size was -0.16 (95% CI -0.41, 0.10), indicating no effect (10,11). Similarly, no statistically significant difference was observed among the control arm.

Response to the Guide

Of the students who received the Guide, approximately sixty-five provided qualitative feedback regarding its utility. The following results are based on this sub-sample of participants.

Table 4 shows the main competencies (objectives) of the Guide. Across all categories, the majority of participants indicated feeling that they better understood each of these competencies following receipt and completion of the Guide. This demonstrates that the short-term objectives of the Guide were met.

Table 4. Guide Competencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Since receiving the Guide, do you feel you better understand...</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Maybe</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your personal strengths</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of social supports in your life</td>
<td>58.2%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your stressors and their impacts</td>
<td>65.5%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy coping strategies that work for you</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your stressors and their triggers</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where you can go on campus for help</td>
<td>61.8%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the fact that no statistically significant change was observed in aggregated resiliency scores between pre- and post-test, over a quarter (26%) of participants reported that they felt better about their personal resiliency after having received and reviewed the Guide (Figure 6).
Similarly, the majority of students reported that they found the Guide to be useful either all of the time (42.8%) or sometimes (37.5%) (Figure 7).

**Figure 6. How do you feel about your personal resiliency after completing the Guide?**

- Better: 25.5%
- No difference: 72.7%
- Worse: 1.8%

**Figure 7. Did you find the Guide to be useful?**

- Yes: 42.8%
- Sometimes: 37.5%
- No: 19.7%

We provided respondents with a list of on-campus mental health resources. About 31% of participants indicated that they became more aware of these resources after completing the Guide, while 44% reported becoming moderately more aware (Figure 8). Nearly half of participants indicated that they had looked into these resources since receiving the Guide (23.6%) or planned to do so in the future (20.0%) (Figure 9).

**Figure 8. Did you become more aware of campus mental health resources after receiving the Guide?**

- Yes: 25.5%
- Sometimes: 30.9%
- No: 43.6%

**Figure 9. Have you looked into these resources since receiving the Guide?**

- Yes: 29.1%
- No, but I plan to: 23.6%
- No, I already knew about them: 27.3%
- No, I don't plan to: 20.0%
Discussion

Based on the results of this analysis, there is evidence to suggest that the Guide achieved its intended short-term objectives, which were considered to be the key stepping stones for longer term improvements in resilience. The Guide appeared to improve students’ ability to recognize common stressors in their lives, triggers for these stressors, as well as typical emotional responses they experienced as a result. Additionally, data suggested that students’ understanding of and ability to apply healthy coping strategies was greatly bolstered by the Guide. Students learned how to map out healthy emotional responses to stress by gaining a better understanding of the social supports and formal resources available to them on their campus.

In terms of outcomes, the Guide improved students’ immediate level of distress. We observed a statistically significant improvement in students’ self-report distress scores before and after receiving and completing the Guide. However, we did not observe a statistically significant change in resiliency scores at the aggregated (group) level. This may suggest that the period of study was not long enough to detect a significant change. Due to the time and scope restraints of this study, participants were asked to complete the Guide and provide feedback within just four weeks. It is possible that one month is not long enough for an individual to make or experience a significant improvement in their personal resiliency.

The construct of resiliency is complex and has been defined and evaluated in a multitude of ways within the academic literature over the past decade (12). Many define resiliency simply as the ability to bounce back through adversity; this conceptualization of resiliency implies that “resilience” is something that can be easily developed when given the right tools. It also suggests that we can all be resilient, if we choose to make the effort. Many others have defined resiliency more narrowly as an individual, intrinsic trait, that takes work and personal growth to develop, and can vary over the course of one’s lifespan at both individual and cultural levels (12,13). Studies focusing on the determinants of resilience have found a number of important predictors of an individual’s resiliency, including genetic, psychologic, and socio-cultural vulnerabilities. While this demonstrates the complexity of the concept of resiliency, is also explains the difficulty in attempting to measure such a complex
(and potentially, personal) construct in a short time frame. However, there may be components of “resilience” that can be assessed in an attempt to understand individuals’ progress.

In some studies, positive, effective coping has been conceptualized as a facet, or component, of resiliency (14), which can be drawn on “as a buffer against a wide range of future adversities” (5, p.481). “Coping” is also a more straightforward concept that is much easier to operationalize and evaluate. In this study, while we did not observe a statistically significant improvement in aggregate resiliency scores, we did observe substantial improvements on many of the individual items within the CD-RISC scale, several of which assessed coping directly. For example, the largest improvement was observed in the proportion of participants who reported that “coping with stress could strengthen [them]” (+11%). A similarly large improvement was observed in the proportion who felt “[they] could deal with whatever comes” (+8.4%). Additionally, three of the six main competencies of the Guide directly targeted improvements in coping ability: 1) identifying sources of social supports in your life, 2) understanding healthy coping strategies that work for you, and 3) knowing where you can go on campus for help. For all three of these, 60% or more of the respondents indicated that they felt their understanding of these things had improved.

Improved understanding of one’s stressors and their triggers, as well as the knowledge of how best to mediate them through the use of effective and positive coping mechanisms (e.g., social support, formal resources) are key components of developing or improving resilience. Therefore, we concluded that “From Surviving to Thriving: Developing Personal and Academic Resilience” provided students with an important toolkit to take the first steps towards becoming more resilient individuals.
References


4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Developing Program Goals and Measurable Objectives [Internet]. Atlanta, USA; Available from: http://www.cdc.gov/


Appendix A

Control Group Analyses

Analyses for the participants in the control arm of the study are presented here.

Table A-1. Proportion of Control Group Reporting “Resiliency” at Pre- and Post-Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>During the past 4 weeks, how often have you felt...</th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>Percent Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You tried to see the humorous side of problems</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>6.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You could deal with whatever comes</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>5.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That you tend to bounce back after illness or hardship</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
<td>4.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That you are not easily discouraged by failure</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>2.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That coping with stress could strengthen you</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>1.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That you can achieve goals despite obstacles</td>
<td>65.2%</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
<td>-0.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That you can stay focused under pressure</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td>-1.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That you think of yourself as a strong person</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
<td>-1.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That you could handle unpleasant feelings</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
<td>-3.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You were able to adapt to change</td>
<td>62.7%</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
<td>-3.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You tried to see the humorous side of problems</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>6.40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A-2. Proportion of Control Group Reporting “Distress” at Pre- and Post-Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>During the past 4 weeks, how often have you felt...</th>
<th>Pre-Test Distress</th>
<th>Post-Test Distress</th>
<th>Percent Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hopeless</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>5.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That everything was an effort</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>3.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restless or fidgety</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>1.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>0.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So depressed that nothing could cheer you up</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>-0.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worthless</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>-1.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure A-1. Boxplot for Distress Scores in Control Group at Pre- and Post-Test

Figure A-2. Boxplot for Resiliency Scores in Control Group at Pre- and Post-Test
Appendix B

Qualitative Feedback

Three questions asked participants what they found to be useful, what (if anything) they found to be harmful, as well as what they would suggest for improvement (Tables B1-B3).

Table B-1. Did you find anything in the Guide that caused you distress?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentions</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Stressors Checklist</td>
<td>• Helpful to identify stressors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Variability of stressors including non-school related stressors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Knowing the stressors were common.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Resiliency Skills</td>
<td>• More confident in their resiliency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Having plans to accept and avoid certain stressors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Being proactive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Resource List</td>
<td>• Good to know about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Guide Quality</td>
<td>• The guide was comprehensive, easy to understand,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• honest, and well researched.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Recognize Automatic Stress Behaviours</td>
<td>• Knowing their automatic behaviours helped them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• better understand their stressors, themselves, and the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• impacts of these behaviours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Thriving from Stress</td>
<td>• Being taken out of their comfort zone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• The focus on self-improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Stress is normal</td>
<td>• Felt comforted knowing it was normal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reaching out is not Weakness</td>
<td>• Felt supported by the guide and not weak when needing help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Guide was Interactive</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Practical</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>• The guide was an overview, not just dispersed information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Relax Item List</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Personal Strength</td>
<td>• Being able to identify their person strength.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table B-2. Did you find anything in the Guide that caused distress or made you more stressed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentions</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>More Stressed</td>
<td>• Checklist made them see their situation more negatively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Made them feel overwhelmed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Negative Impacts</td>
<td>• Worried that they had already triggered some of the negative impacts of behaviours to stress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unavailable Services</td>
<td>• They were unable to reach some of the services.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table B-3. Having completed the Guide, do you have any suggestions for improvement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentions</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 6        | More Interactive              | • Be able to ‘click’ the checkboxes on the pdf.  
• Include more activities or videos.  
• Better pictures, not just smiling/happy people. |
| 4        | Lengthy                       | • Guide was too long.                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 4        | Campus Information            | • Include contact information for support on their campus.                                                                                                                                              |
| 3        | System Approach               | • The intervention should address the school/system, not just individuals that are suffering. Identified as ‘victim’-blaming.                                                                      |
| 3        | Accessibility                 | • Make the format mobile-friendly.  
• Make the URLs direct link instead of text.                                                                                                                                                           |
| 3        | Specific Stressor Tips        | • Include information on how to approach specific stressors, not just a general overview.  
• Identify how the tips help/benefit                                                                                                            |
| 1        | Resiliency or Resilient       | • Choose one or the other. Using both was confusing.                                                                                                                                                   |
| 1        | Define Resiliency             | • Define resiliency at the start of the guide.                                                                                                                                                         |
| 1        | Meditation                   | • Include how to meditate as a coping skill.                                                                                                                                                           |
| 1        | Case Studies                  | • Include case studies as an example of how these behaviours work.                                                                                                                                     |
| 1        | Repetition                    | • Include a repetition element that can reiterate the information when the person is distressed.                                                                                                        |
| 1        | Ask for Help                  | • Better explain how to ‘ask for help’.                                                                                                                                                                |
| 1        | Spelling                      | • Found at least 2 spelling errors.                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1        | Timing                        | • Give the guide at the start of the semester.                                                                                                                                                         |
| 1        | Mental Health Input           | • Need more input from mental health experts. Felt too ‘common sense’.                                                                                                                                |
| 1        | Common Stressors              | • List only common stressors, not all stressors, to decrease the size of the guide.                                                                                                                   |
| 1        | Coping Strategies             | • Add more coping strategies.                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 1        | Information Density           | • Spread the information over more pages to decrease the density of information and making it easier to read.                                                                                         |
| 1        | Table of Content              | • Make information easier to find by having more detail in the table of contents and overview.                                                                                                         |
| 1        | Include Disabilities          | • Make the guide more inclusive by including people with disabilities.                                                                                                                                   |
| 1        | Great-West Life               | • Great-West Life is attached to this intervention, but they have poor coverage for psychologists and psychotherapists.                                                                               |
Pre-planning worksheet

Confirm the following with the organizer

Organizer contact information
Name: ____________________________
Email: ____________________________
Text: ____________________________ Phone: ____________________________
Address: ____________________________

Date of workshop: ____________________________
Start time: ____________________________ End time: ____________________________
Number of expected employee participants: _________ Number of expected student participants: _________
Room name/number: ____________________________
Seating arrangement (need desks/tables to write on): ____________________________
Maximum seating capacity of room based on seating arrangement: ____________________________
Time you will have access to set up: ____________________________
A/V details including projector, screen, microphone, podium, laptop or need for USB: ____________________________
Is there Wi-Fi available?  Y / N   If so, what is the password? ____________________________
Contact person for the day of the workshop: ____________________________
Contact person name and address information where to ship the materials: ____________________________

Host for the session
Is host introducing the trainer?  Y / N
Is host doing the land acknowledgment?  Y / N   (If no, refer to Acknowledgment of territorial lands/Welcome page)

Contact information for counselor available for those who may need support during the entire length of the session
Name: ____________________________
Email: ____________________________
Text: ____________________________ Phone: ____________________________
Office location: ____________________________

Have there been any significant incidents in the last 2 months such as suicide, death, violence or rape that may be on the minds of the participants?

______________________________
______________________________
______________________________

Workplace Strategies for Mental Health
Ask the organizer

• To have someone complete the Be Aware of Potential Resources section of the resource.
  ▷ Have someone from the organization prepared to run through them for 5-10 minutes near the end of the session.
  ▷ Provide the completed forms by email or in printed form for each participant.

• To contact each participant 6 working days in advance of the session (with the sample email below) and request they complete the Character Strengths Inventory at www.viame.org:

Dear Participant:

Please complete a VIA Strengths Inventory before our session. You can find the survey at www.viame.org.

Click on Take the Free VIA Survey. You will be prompted to register before you can get started.

Once you have registered, it takes less than 15 minutes to complete the survey. If you log out before you have completed the survey, your answers will be saved so you can log back in and complete it at any time.

Once completed, you will receive a free inventory of your strengths. Please note there are options to pay for additional reporting which you do not need to pursue.

Please bring your report (digitally, as a photo on your phone, or printed out) or write down your top 3 strengths and bring it to the session which will begin at [time] on [date] and run until [time].

If you have any questions, please feel free to respond directly to this email.

Thank you,

[Organizer]

• Ensure enough resources will be provided for each employee and/or student participating in the session.
Q&A

Q: What’s the difference between the different strengths surveys such as Strengths Finder and VIA?
A: Strengths Finder is about work skills; VIA is about character strengths. The intent is for you to become more self-aware. Training on traits doesn’t matter if you disagree with your findings – that’s your choice, you know yourself best. The survey is only as good as how you answer.

Q: How do I find out more about Mel Robbins?
A: Check out her videos on YouTube. She also wrote a book.

Q: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 didn’t resonate with me. What other strategies are available to address procrastination?
A: Discuss different approaches and strategies to find out what works best for them.