

MASTER YOUR MINDSET AND BUILD MENTAL RESILIENCE

Maintaining a positive mindset in a world in continuous turmoil can be challenging, to say the least. However, when you do, you'll cope better.

We asked Victoria Fitchett-Hall, psychologist and mental-health specialist, to share some practical and useful ways to build mental resilience

Q: In 2021, we need to find new ways to stay positive and motivated amid the stresses and mounting strain of an unpredictable life. How would you recommend we do that, practically?

A: There is an appropriate time for every emotion – shock and outrage, grief and fear. These are not unhealthy; they're just not the emotional states you want to remain stuck in for extended periods. In a time when people are feeling powerless against broader forces, “mental health” is about becoming comfortable with a full range of emotions, and coming to terms with that which is not in your control, as much as that which is.

You usually have power over three things that can help you to remain optimistic and motivated, even during challenging times:

- **Attitude:** *What lens do I usually use to evaluate circumstances? Does it serve me?*

If the answer is “no”, it's time to think about adjusting your attitude to one that feels more helpful in your life. For most people, this means aiming for realistic optimism. This doesn't mean denying the bad. It means seeking out the good in spite of the bad.

- **Attention:** *What do I focus on? Where do I invest my time and energy?*

If I fill these spaces with information/things/people that are encouraging and energising, I'm more likely to feel encouraged and energised.

- **Purpose:** *Why does this matter to me?*

On some days, when we're drained and feeling fragile, the only thing that can keep us motivated to persevere is being clear on our “why”. If you have no idea why anything matters to you, these days are likely to be much harder.

Q: How can we work to build our mental resilience in these times?

A: While one technique may be life-changing for the better for some, it may make things more stressful or just feel fruitless for others.



That said, here are a few of the more common recommendations. It's worth considering:

- Which of these would have the greatest positive impact on my mental health if I were to try it now?
- Which of these can I realistically integrate into my life?

01

Find a routine that fits. Life is stressful enough as it is, so don't add to the load unnecessarily. Set up some form of daily routine that you can lean on most days for a degree of predictability, efficiency and order amid the chaos. Consider a quiet early-morning routine to give yourself time to plan and prioritise, to think/meditate/pray/play/journal/exercise, before the demands of others start to encroach on your day.

02

Value your time, and prioritise according to your values. If you don't treat your time as precious, why do you expect others to?

03

Apply thoughtful boundaries (at work and outside of work). Not everything is just "all yes" or "all no". Sometimes the difference is in the finer detail.

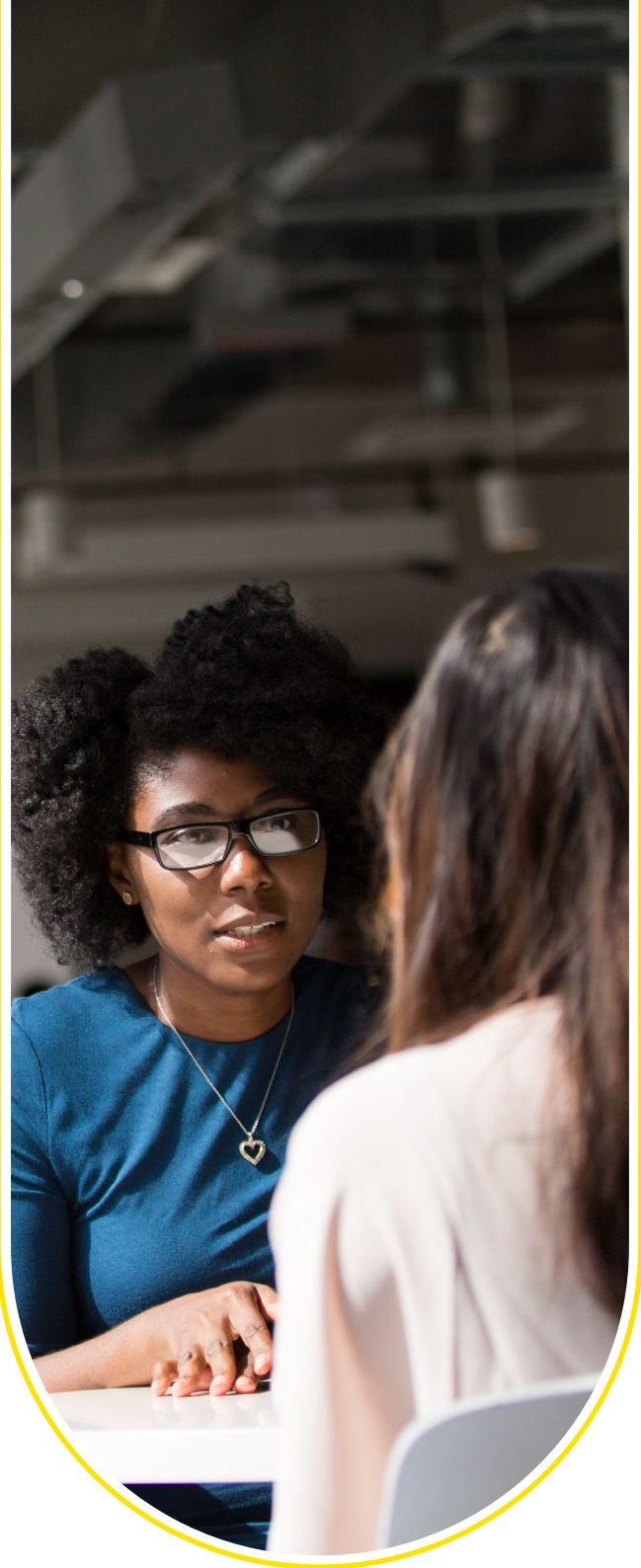
- Ask for clarity about what is more important to do first
- Sometimes things are "nice to have", not "need to have" - decide which is which
- Agree on realistic timelines and deadlines
- Share the load: negotiate within a team to "take turns" carrying the extra demand at different times

04

Negotiate schedules with your family to include times for self-care. Self-care isn't the same as self-indulgence. In the long term, it actually serves others better for you to take care of your needs.

05

Take breaks. Take leave. Research has shown time and again that we perform better when we give our brain and body a chance to recover from exertion. We're also less likely to hit burn-out, and more likely to protect our mental health through stress.



06

Converse. Humans are social by nature (even introverts). Conversation is how we process, make sense of and move forward from experiences. Invest in your energy-giving relationships and avoid those that drain you of energy, if possible. And if your social support spaces can't meet the need adequately right now, consider professional help.

07

Reflect on your triggers. What gets me angry? What gets me despondent? What makes my heart race with anxiety? Learn to recognise and name these feelings, so they don't make decisions for you. And try to adopt behaviours that help you to respond from a thinking place, rather than an emotional one (eg breathing exercises, meditation/prayer, stretching/exercising).

08

Take care of the vessel. Our body and mind are not separate entities. Our mental and physical health have a direct impact on each other – think about how irritable you feel if you're in pain, or how stress can leave you with a migraine. This means that, in order to take care of your mental health, you also need to take care of your nutrition, sleep, movement or disease exposure.

Remember to apply as much compassion to yourself as you would give to a good friend who is struggling to cope, and don't just throw in the towel because you don't get it right all the time.



If you or your loved one needs support during this time, reach out to your ICAS EHWP via your toll-free number or the ICAS On-the-Go App to seek counselling support.

Toll-free:
(from land and mobile phones)

Or request a call back: ***134*905#**

Company App Code:

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