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A note on confidentiality: Case studies included here are grounded in the author's clinical experience. She has, however, taken all possible precautions to disguise individuals' identity. Occasionally a case study is a composite of experiences from several different clients who presented with similar challenges so that any one individual client is unidentifiable.

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1. Introduction: The need for resilience

Life-changing events can happen anywhere. As a therapist who works online and in-person, my clients come from around the world. I've listened to voices from almost every continent and heard stories from those who live just a short train ride away. Although each client's story is unique, I've found a common thread that often begins in childhood.

People typically come to therapy to resolve issues like anxiety, panic attacks or depression. However, my long-term interest is in working with those who struggle with self-sabotaging behaviours and limiting beliefs that originated when they felt powerless as children.

Through therapeutic techniques, clients discover their negative self-judgements began when young and didn't comprehend situations fully. They may have wrongly assumed guilt or shame. Many subconsciously decided they didn't deserve happiness or success, so they undermined themselves. This manifests as addictions or self-harm, but also in emotional eating, workaholism, overspending, hoarding or poor money management.

Everyone faces adversity, and sometimes there is little we can do to prevent harm. However, research shows the judgements people make about those events often cause the most enduring damage.

When young, we make sense of negative events through an incomplete worldview. With limited resources, children may wrongly blame themselves, incorporating shame and self-blame into their identity. This colours choices for decades.

While each story differs, a common thread for many clients is an inner scared, isolated child who desperately seeks love and acceptance. To get those needs met, people may use addictions or poor choices to distract from feeling empty inside. The most powerful intervention helps clients authentically accept themselves. With courage, years of self-hate can transform into self-love through therapy.

Examining resilience reveals popular definitions are inaccurate. We shouldn't expect to easily overcome any hardship. Challenges make everyone feel vulnerable. However, some find inner strength like magic. Resilience varies based on how childhood and family dynamics encouraged helpful or harmful thought patterns about oneself.

This book examines how the family you grew up in can impact your ability to develop resilience. It shares therapy tools to develop resilience, so you can trust yourself through adversity. With simple steps, you can change unhelpful thoughts and behaviours learned when young. The aim is to build resilience for life's challenges.

Bad things happen

A unifying theme of all my work is that negative things happen to pretty much everyone and, of course, there are often times when there is little anyone can do to stop bad things from happening. The repercussions of those adverse events and the direct harm people experience can be considerable. It is, however, often the judgement a person makes about themselves in relation to those events that can go on to cause them the most significant and enduring long-term harm.

Negative self-judgements are often made from these adverse events when a person is very young, and are processed emotionally through an incomplete worldview. With limited resources and immature comprehension, young people may well internalise events and wrongly blame themselves. Misappropriated self-blame and shame become a part of how they think and feel about themselves and can colour their choices, behaviours and decisions for decades.

Just as one might expect, everyone's story is unique. When a person seeks out someone like me, a therapist, to help them make sense of their life, they share their circumstances, which embody a broad spectrum of situations, memories and events. However, they often get caught up more in their own story than exploring and focusing on how they responded to their experience.

Having worked with thousands of clients over the years and listened as they

shared their stories, I have grown increasingly aware of similarities in experiences, ways of thinking and even behaviour. A sort of common thread or universal human truth has evolved for me and it is this. It is not what happens to a person in their life that ultimately matters; it is the judgements they tell themselves about those events that will aid their ability to bounce back or leave them stuck, stumbling and bloodied. I've come to recognise this variable as resilience. And that's the thing about resilience: you might not call it that or even know the role it plays in your life, but the concept shows up, hidden in plain sight, influencing all of the responses to whatever life throws in your path.

A human commonality

My clients who share their hearts and minds with me, whatever their presenting issue, frequently have one thing in common. It is that, inside almost every one of them, is a scared and isolated child, terrified of being alone and desperate to be loved and accepted. For many, everything they say or do is to satisfy that need.

Ideally, resilience is created in childhood out of the experience of feeling loved and accepted; those raised in ways that did not encourage the development of healthy self-esteem often search for love and acceptance externally to themselves. They can find substitutes such as addictive behaviour, including comfort eating or drugs or alcohol. They frequently do anything to distract themselves, even temporarily, from the void they feel inside. Or, they make questionable life choices that sabotage their ability to thrive and fulfil their true potential.

The most enduring way to heal the inner child and transform how anyone thinks and feels about themselves is to give them what their heart desires – to feel authentic love and acceptance for who they are.

Freedom from emotional pain arising from the worst of times can be achieved by trusting the therapeutic process. It takes courage to turn years of self-hate and well-practised negative self-talk into authentic self-acceptance and love, but it is a crucial step in making peace with oneself and one's past, and it can be done.

And that is the work.

Common misconceptions about resilience

Taking a closer look at resilience, it is clear that several interpretations of the word and many of the popular definitions aren't helpful or accurate. The idea that we should all 'be resilient' and overcome any new challenges with ease and fortitude, whatever they are, isn't valid. We naturally feel vulnerable and unsure of ourselves in the face of hardship and adversity.

When faced with a challenging time, you might know someone who seemed to access some inner strength, almost like a magical internal source of power, that helped them pull through. An example could be when an under-prepared amateur runs a marathon and struggles towards the finish line despite being exhausted. You can also see it when some people face an unexpected health crisis. With the odds stacked against them, they find the emotional reserves to move themselves towards recovery.

The extent to which you can overcome adversities is not determined simply by luck, personality traits or some subjective concept of having the 'right' character. So, how do some people access their inner strength or resilience when needed, and other people struggle with feeling overwhelmed and out of control? To a large degree, your responses are predetermined by several factors, often beyond your control, including how you were raised as a child and the family dynamic you experienced. I look at the role of the family in the up-and-coming chapter called 'The family and other players', exploring some of the critical family dynamics that can encourage unhelpful ways of thinking about oneself that can undermine your ability to develop resilience.

The very nature of resilience is that not everyone has it to call upon. Each person has a unique way of facing and interpreting the world. In the mind of the resilient person, they automatically have a conviction that allows them to find meaning in any challenge they face. Instead of experiencing feelings of being overwhelmed, they are quickly able to adapt to whatever situation occurs and shift to plan B, or even plan X, Y or Z, for that matter. They come up with solutions almost out of thin air. They do all of this while others do not.

The opposite happens in the mind of a person with an underdeveloped sense of resilience. The ability to be adaptive and responsive to different circumstances can feel very challenging. Changes and unexpected events can make a person feel like the world has suddenly switched to Mandarin Chinese, and all understanding and ability are lost.

It's worth bearing in mind that resilience is also not a case of 'having resilience or not'. Resilience is a spectrum response, often stronger or weaker in different areas of your life. For instance, many people feel more resilient in their work and less resilient in their relationships. In therapy, I call these different ways of thinking and feeling about yourself as being defined by arenas. For instance, people with low self-esteem often excel in their work. When properly organised and run fairly, work generally operates within a recognised structure with principles about how people should behave and speak to each other. The rules of work, either formal or implied, provide a paradigm, a system which offers clarity, and when you do well, your efforts are acknowledged and even rewarded.

Sport is another arena that works to increase self-esteem. Again, team or solo sports offer validation of achievement can provide respite and a boost if you often feel beleaguered and lost.

What we learnt about resilience in the time of Covid

The global Covid-19 pandemic was in full swing when I started researching this book. Here in the United Kingdom, we held our breath and braced ourselves for the impact of the double-whammy of an encroaching winter and the forecast second wave of the virus. At that point, it was impossible to foresee how the pandemic would play out nationally and throughout the world over the next few years. The ongoing uncertainty inevitably took its toll, making the situation difficult for everyone. Many people struggled with increased anxiety and stress and found themselves unable to sleep or focus as well as they used to.

It's no surprise that psychologists already acknowledge that living for an extended period of time with chronic stress, such as a pandemic, can harm people's mental

health, yet not everyone experienced the same emotional fall-out from those real-life stressors. For some people, the feelings of being overwhelmed coupled with a loss of autonomy because of the imposition of Covid-19 restrictions, plunged them back into their old, familiar feelings of powerlessness they had experienced in childhood. Many people may not have initially made a conscious connection between their youth and their feelings about Covid-19. Still, clients showed up in their droves for therapy feeling fearful, with heightened anxiety levels. When I explored a client's anxiety, it became clear that, like the layers of an onion, at its heart were unresolved emotional challenges from childhood making it more difficult, or even impossible, to manage the negative emotions triggered by the unprecedented challenges of a pandemic.

During this same period, other people successfully managed the practical and emotional turmoil of lockdown and adapted to the restrictions imposed on how they lived and worked. This latter group exhibited signs of feeling more emotionally robust and better able to flourish at times, even when the circumstances were not their choice.

Same boat, different storm

The reasons for the spectrum of responses to the hardships of the pandemic were, of course, complex. However, according to the media, this was supposedly a collective experience, and we were all in the same boat. But, to keep the metaphor going, some people's boats were akin to well-equipped ocean-going liners while other people felt as though they were adrift in a barely water-tight dinghy that threatened to take on water. The pandemic experience may have been universal, but how you responded to it was deeply personal and individual.

Your ability to hunker down and dig deep into your emotional resources during the pandemic was foretold to a large degree. To be able to respond in a resourceful way, a few key markers would have indicated if your abilities were hampered or improved — for instance, the ability to recall previous successful coping strategies. We know the pandemic was unprecedented, so you had never faced the entirety of this challenge before but being able to remember facing other difficulties in the past and how you overcame them could well have been crucial in deciding the ease with which you faced the pandemic versus the

depth of suffering you experienced from anxiety, depression and other negative emotions.

Human connection is key

Another marker that would indicate some people could maintain emotional balance while living through those unprecedented times was feeling emotionally supported. Interestingly, adequate emotional support wasn't dependent on proximity for it to be advantageous. It certainly didn't mean that those living alone were automatically at a disadvantage compared to those living in households. Many people living in busy families reported that they were just as prone to feelings of loneliness as those who physically lived alone. However, what made the difference was the quality of human connection to friends and family members, where individuals felt heard and valued. This provided a sense of succour and support even over great geographical distances.

Emotional life-lines came from surprising sources in those unusual circumstances. The simple kindness and care of other adults, neighbours and friends helped to build self-esteem and self-reliance. People believed more in themselves when met with kindness or encouraged to talk and were listened to.

What Covid-19 taught us was a challenging but valuable lesson. Many of us collectively learnt insights that could stand us in good stead for future outbreaks of contagious disease, horrific wars or massive economic downturns. We learnt that the power of human connection, more than any other strategy, could help us deal with challenges beyond our control. We learnt that in the face of great personal hardship, we rarely hankered for 'stuff' or to acquire new things. We knew that what we were drawn towards to heal and salve our panicky minds and fearful hearts was contact with our people, our tribe.

Human connection is strengthened by our sharing our vulnerability and our truth. So, I urge you to reach out and share your truth with people you can trust to stand with you and be on your side.

How you can develop resilience

During therapy, I frequently introduce the idea of arenas, as already mentioned in this chapter. This is a simplified way of defining different aspects of the client's life. For instance, people can frequently understand what is meant by a work arena, including both the positive and negative aspects they experience in the workplace. Within the work arena they might also focus on their ambitions for their career and any stumbling blocks or issues that feel challenging.

A personal life arena could include family, friends and romantic interests. This arena most closely reflects your current life stage. Is your personal life arena occupied by the trials and tribulations of dating, or are you trying to balance your emotional needs while raising a young family or coming to terms with loss after a partner dies or your key relationship has broken down?

You can see that within these various arenas, your attention shifts and refocuses on whatever your current concerns are.

You might agree that the transparency of a healthy work arena, or your much-loved sports/hobby arena, feels more manageable and easier to navigate than the 'Wild West' of your personal life arena, where frequently there are no rules. In your personal life arena, you can be confronted by other people's unpredictable behaviour or lack of personal accountability. Compared to a work arena where you feel you are thriving and your achievements are recognised, your personal relationship arena can feel hard to navigate. It's easy to understand why many people focus more on their careers than on finding their life partner. This is especially true when someone has a poorly developed sense of resilience; building personal relationships or forming friendships can be triggering and distressing when met with casual thoughtlessness or a lack of care.

Dealing with these challenges can frequently lead to a person developing a pattern of self-sabotaging behaviour or negative limiting beliefs that hinder their ability to meet a significant other to whom they can commit. For instance, it might feel safer to hold back or not be authentic with a new love interest. It might be an unconscious strategy for keeping yourself emotionally secure but could also hamper you from deeply connecting with another person?

It is common for many people with an underdeveloped sense of self-worth to experience heightened anxiety, people-pleasing behaviour including avoiding confrontation, and the helpful catch-all, 'Adult failure to thrive', especially when meeting and getting to know people in their personal arena. Add into this a tendency to rely on alcohol or illegal drug use to boost confidence, and this makes for a potentially complex mix of maladaptive strategies to cope with or hide their vulnerability.

So, strengthening one's innate sense of resilience is crucial for emotional wellbeing. The great news is that, with the fantastic adaptability of humans, if you didn't learn to be resilient in your childhood you can learn the key attributes for being resilient now, as an adult. Life is easier with resilience at your core, and this book teaches you how to develop, perhaps for the first time, new ways of thinking and feeling about yourself. You need no longer feel buffeted by the vagaries of what life throws at you. You will feel equipped and believe you have traction and influence over your own life. The way to build resilience is detailed in the up-and-coming sections, starting with 'How to use this book' below, providing you with a pathway of easy-to-action steps to make the changes that will benefit you the most.

How to use this book

This book is a practical guide to developing the skills you need to increase your sense of resilience and ability to trust your instincts in the face of adversity. It also provides a deeper understanding of the environment and circumstances that resilience needs in which to be nurtured naturally in childhood. It offers powerful therapy tools and processes to help develop in adulthood a resourceful mental attitude, however poor and unfavourable your early years' experience may have been.

Setting yourself up to succeed

To give yourself the best chance of succeeding with the tasks in this book, it's important to prepare yourself for victory. Think of yourself as a dedicated Ninja warrior in training. To give yourself the best chance to change how you think

and feel about yourself, consider first that working through this book will take between 10 and 12 weeks, with you dedicating a minimum of 30 minutes per week. During this time, prioritise your self-care strategies, such as regular exercise, healthy eating, enough sleep and reducing alcohol intake to support your overall wellbeing. All of this will help as you work through the challenges ahead.

Choosing the right time to start your self-help journey is crucial. If you're already feeling overwhelmed at work or emotionally drained at home, it's best to wait until you have more mental and emotional capacity. Working consistently through the book, even if it is for less than an hour a week, is key. Avoid trying to fit your self-help time into an already jam-packed schedule. Rushing through the exercises may lead you to discover emotions or insights you don't have time to fully process or integrate.

On the next page is a draft contract you could consider signing. It clearly outlines the self-care considerations that it would be helpful for you to adopt and it succinctly outlines the pledge you are making to yourself.

Once you're ready to begin, you can use the dedicated pages in this book to record your notes. Alternatively, buy yourself a notebook if you prefer to record your reflections and insights separately. Use your handwritten notes to record your feelings and also to give yourself credit for your a-ha moments and the progress you make. Taking the time to note down and celebrate your progress, no matter how small it may seem, demonstrates compassion for yourself, one of the keystones this book wants you to achieve.

You will need to find a private and comfortable space where you can dedicate uninterrupted time for at least 30 minutes a week to exploring your thoughts and feelings. While focusing on the exercises in the book, taking regular breaks is essential to process any emotions that come to the fore. Many people successfully resolve past trauma and transform their thinking and feelings about themselves by taking things in incremental stages. Be kind to yourself every step of the way. Remember, the results from therapeutic work are not always immediately apparent, and this is particularly true in self-guided work like this. Once you have committed to starting, you need to trust the process and give yourself the time and space to benefit fully from this period of exploration.

Commitment contract for increasing my resilience

I, ……., recognise that I am ready to prioritise my mental and emotional wellbeing. As I embark on this self-help journey using The Getting of Resilience, I acknowledge that real change requires commitment and consistency.

I hereby commit to setting aside at least 30 minutes each week for 10 weeks to work through *The Getting of Resilience* using the tools and exercises for self-reflection.

For my sessions, I will find a quiet, private space to tune into my inner experience without distraction or judgement.

I understand that some weeks, I may not feel like making time for self-care. However, I accept that transformation emerges from small, regular steps forward. By signing below, I affirm my dedication to caring for myself during this pivotal time of personal growth. I deserve to feel empowered from within.

I also recognise that this exploration can sometimes bring up challenging emotions. I commit to approaching this work with gentleness, patience and compassion towards myself. I cannot expect to change lifelong patterns overnight. If this programme is overwhelming, I will consider breaking the work into smaller steps or reducing the frequency. Should any exceptionally painful issues arise, I will also consider working with a therapist to heal past wounds with professional support. My wellbeing involves honouring my limits while regularly devoting time to positive change.

Signature ……..

Date……

Order of work

The real work begins with gathering information and insights in Chapter 2: The impact of family on resilience. This is a chance to become a detective of your psychology by learning some common characteristics of dysfunctional families and seeing if any of the characteristics resonate with your own experience. You may want to read through parts of this chapter a couple of times and use the first Worksheet, 'Worksheet 1: Family stories' on page 24, or use its prompts to handwrite in your notebook your reflections on your family story and the story you tell yourself.

There is a second worksheet at the end of this section (page 32) called 'Worksheet 2: The impact of the family on resilience – having your needs met', that invites you to explore the theory of an important psychological construct called Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs for child development and to consider if your needs were adequately met as a child.

Chapter 3: The biology of resilience, explores how trauma and labelling young people can cause them to act out or to become submissive 'people-pleasers' as strategies for survival. Again, the book asks you to be information-gathering and open to insights and a-ha moments in this section. The Worksheet at the end of this chapter, 'Worksheet 3: The biology of resilience – memories and recollections', asks you to recall and note down what challenges you faced growing up. If you remember these events, memories or conclusions about yourself as an adult, then they were influential to you as a child, so they count.

In Chapter 4: The timeline protocol, you are introduced to a way of using some of your insights and recollections from Chapters 1 and 2 and to plot them along a simple timeline that can help give you clarity when you look back over your life. You will discover times in your life when you felt in balance and other times when you felt overwhelmed or even self-sabotaged in your relationships or your working life. You can discover from this process that events were not coincidental, but you might work out a pattern of behaviour that you've been repeating.

The Timeline is a rich seam to explore. The details of how to create your own Timeline are at the end of this chapter in Worksheet 4: Timeline protocol –

instructions (page 48). To access the powerful insights that result from this might require you dedicating several of your work sessions over a few weeks to doing this. In fact, the Timeline protocol benefits from being revisited. It is almost as if, once you allow yourself to explore your past milestones and any emotional load those events still carry for you, then other memories pop up too.

When you've reached this point in the book, you will have worked through three Chapters all designed with the aim of gathering information, experiencing a-ha moments and being a detective of your own psychology. Hopefully you will have several pages of notes at this point, many of which may include events, memories or conclusions about yourself that feel negative or uncomfortable. So, with that in mind, now would be the perfect time to turn to Chapter 8: Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT). All the therapy approaches included in this book and the additional resources available with the website links (see page 135) have been tested over many years in my one-to-one work with clients, training sessions and group work.

Although I rarely work exclusively with EFT, sometimes aka 'Tapping', I value this approach as a gateway modality to help shift clients from their analytical left-brain thinking into their more intuitive, emotionally-connected right-brain thinking. EFT itself is part of a wider group of therapy approaches called Meridian Energy Therapies, all of which are highly effective and valuable for use in therapy sessions and for self-help when dealing with uncomfortable emotions. By including EFT in this book, I encourage you to learn how to use it as a tool for life. If you become distressed or overwhelmed by any of the emotions you are trying to unpick in connection with events and memories, you'll be able to 'tap' as a way of helping you feel more grounded and calmer.

As well as using tapping to work through difficult emotions, EFT is also a powerful tool for discovering deeply buried emotions. This therapy approach is fully explained here (page 93), along with a picture guide to help you learn how to do EFT yourself in How to practise EFT or 'Tapping' on pages 94-95, and there is a worksheet at the end of this section called Worksheet 8: EFT primer, which can help you establish what issue you want to tap on and how to get the best results from this therapy approach.

Looping back to regular content order, now we come to Chapter 5: Improving your self-belief. Here, you have an opportunity to explore the role of your inner voice and its impact on your self-esteem. In Worksheet 5: Transforming your inner voice at the end of the chapter (page 56), you will learn how to interrupt those negative thoughts that have been influencing how you think and feel about yourself. And, remember, if you have already leapt to Chapter 8, you can use EFT as a powerful therapeutic technique to transform negative self-talk.

Chapter 6: Resolving unhelpful thinking styles gives you an opportunity for further detective work into your psychology, allowing you to explore which of the 10 unhelpful thinking styles described most resonate with you. Then use Worksheet 6: Changing your thinking style to change how you think about yourself, on page 72.

Chapter 7: How to implement change, provides an opportunity, with Worksheet 7: Strategy focus (page 90), to identify where you need to focus your attention to build your resilience by choosing from the included strategies the ones that resonate the most with you. The key is to take actionable steps, however small, in the right direction today.

Chapter 8: Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) has then already been described above. If you haven't already dived into learning EFT, now is the time.

Chapter 9: Hypnotherapy, refers to three MP3 audio recordings you will be able to access following the instructions in the resource section at the rear of the book (page 135). You can rotate listening to these three recordings or keep to one for at least a week before swapping. Hypnosis is also called 'suggestion therapy' and works most effectively when repeated for at least 21 days to embed powerful suggestions. After this period, choosing a recording to listen to every other day would be beneficial. There is no worksheet for this section; you must let your subconscious mind do the work.

Chapter 10: The power of forgiving, then includes the powerful mantra of Ho'oponopono (see page 113) and gives easy-to-follow instructions on how to use this ancient Polynesian method of forgiveness to free yourself. Worksheet 9: The list of unforgiven people at the end of that chapter (page 116) is a place to

compile a list of all those you are currently refusing to forgive.

Chapter 11: The power of fierce gratitude, is an introduction to gratitude work, but not the timid, namby-pamby gratitude work you may have already come across. The act of fierce gratitude lifts the work from platitude to being life-changing. At the end of Chapter 11, Worksheet 10: Fierce gratitude list (page 124), is where you start to compile your personalised list.