

Coronavirus: Supporting staff resilience

 boingboing.org.uk/coronavirus-supporting-staff-resilience

7 April 2020



Coronavirus: Supporting staff resilience – Professor Angie Hart

Angie was asked about how best to support staff at the University of Brighton, so she put together some information for their staff pages. But since we felt these ideas were useful for staff everywhere, we thought we would share the information here as well. As always, our thoughts are with those facing the greatest disadvantage and we recognise that not all staff will have the same needs or will fit into a one-size-fits-all approach. We will therefore continue to think about staff who might be facing additional challenges, how their resilience can best be supported and encourage you to do the same. Keep an eye on our [Coronavirus: supporting resilience blog series](#) for updates and more information. But in the meantime, here are some ideas from Angie:

I'm sure you must have heard all the talk about 'resilience' and 'being resilient' in relation to the coronavirus, both in the media and at the University. I've always felt that taking ideas from resilience research can be helpful to support our wellbeing, and this is certainly the case at these especially troubling times. Myself and other members of our [Centre of Resilience for Social Justice \(CRSJ\)](#), here at the University of Brighton have been working on resilience for many years in collaboration with the social enterprise [Boingboing](#). We have developed some practical tools that might be useful for university staff whether in relation to your family life or work situation. Take a look at some of our [tools](#) and [approaches](#). And it isn't just we academics who have developed these ideas. I know some of you might think academics are a bit, let us say kindly, 'unconnected' to the realities of many people's everyday life. That might make you feel a bit cynical about reading this and looking at our tools. Just to reassure you, we are a community of people who have always struggled more than most, including facing major challenges in life right

now. Some of us are bringing up young people with very complex needs and/or supporting elderly or disabled adults living in poverty. And some of us have worked for many years in mental health, education or social services. So, we do have our feet on the ground.

One tool we have developed is The Resilience Framework. This is based on Resilient Therapy (RT), the name given to the set of ideas and practices I originally developed with adults and children facing especially tough challenges. It includes lots of research on what helps people get through tough times. I included my own perspectives of bringing up three children I adopted from foster care, all of whom have complex needs. My experience as a mental health practitioner in the NHS went into the mix too. The Resilience Framework suggests practical things that people and communities can do when times are especially tough. And for sure, the coronavirus crisis certainly counts as a tough time that may go on for a long while and for which the end point is not certain.

For many of us, at this time, depending on our own personal experiences and circumstances, we have or will be experiencing in the future, elements of what is called 'post-traumatic stress' or 'disaster shock'. Some things that might be happening to you include:

- Forgetting the names of people you know really well and other things you could easily remember before
- Having little accidents
- Worrying so much about other family members, friends or colleagues that you struggle to think about other things
- Becoming more tearful than usual
- Feeling numb
- Talking more quickly than normal
- Feeling anxious
- Feeling angry or irritable
- Thinking something terrible is going to happen to you or to your loved ones
- Feeling helpless
- Feeling guilty about being better off than other people
- Re-experiencing earlier traumatic events
- Constant pre-occupation with financial worries to the point that you can't think of anything else much
- Loss of joy in doing things at home that you used to find joy in
- Struggling to sleep
- Loss of appetite
- Physical discomforts like headaches, muscles cramps, tension in your jaw
- Extreme tiredness

An important thing to say is that if some of these are happening to you then that is perfectly normal in this situation. We are going through such an incredibly difficult time. Sure, many of us will have experienced really dreadful things in our lives, but this coronavirus pandemic is something new for all of us. In fact I would say that it might be a

bit odd if you aren't experiencing some of the things on the above list. And for those of you with extra burdens like many of our own CRSJ and Boingboing folk, I know all the different challenges must feel like they are piling on top of each other.

It's really a matter of considering if they are affecting you so much over the course of weeks, months (or maybe more) that you can't function very well at all. If that is the case, some simple things can certainly help and doing some of the things I write about below are already helping members of our community to get through this very challenging time. Our resilience frameworks offer a structure to help you think through your own personal situation and how you might build resilience for yourself and/or others during, and beyond, this coronavirus crisis. Of course we don't have control over many aspects of the current situation, and organisations/governments as well as individuals have to do their part in developing resilience across a whole population – this is why the definition of resilience we use in our Centre is not just about beating the odds for individuals, but about changing the odds so that as many dreadful things as possible don't happen in the first place. However, in relation to the coronavirus there is still lots we can do to help ourselves and others, rather than hoping the government or organisations will fix everything, so this is what I am concentrating on here.

You might find it helpful to take a look at one of the different versions of the resilience framework and think about what you can do in relation to the statements in each of the boxes to help yourself and others at this incredibly difficult time. There are children, family and adult versions available which you can see below, or click on the links and they will pop up. In our Centre we use the language of 'resilient moves'. Ask yourself what 'resilient moves' you can make to help yourself and/or on behalf of others. Some people like to colour in the box to gauge how much they already think they are doing to build their resilience or that of others. So for example, in relation to one of the boxes on the young people's framework, I've been making a lot of resilient moves to organise myself and support other people who are especially vulnerable at the moment to get organised. So I coloured that box, and others where I've been making lots of resilient moves, bright pink.

Resilience Framework (Children & Young People) Oct 2015 – adapted from Hart & Blincow 2007 www.boingboing.org.uk					
	BASICS	BELONGING	LEARNING	COPING	CORE SELF
SPECIFIC APPROACHES	Good enough housing	Find somewhere for the child/YP to belong	Make school/college life work as well as possible	Understanding boundaries and keeping within them	Instil a sense of hope
	Enough money to live	Help child/YP understand their place in the world		Being brave	
		Tap into good influences	Engage mentors for children/YP		Solving problems
	Being safe	Keep relationships going		Putting on rose-tinted glasses	
	Access & transport	The more healthy relationships the better	Map out career or life plan		Fostering their interests
		Take what you can from relationships where there is some hope		Help the child/YP to organise her/himself	
	Healthy diet	Get together people the child/YP can count on	Remember tomorrow is another day		Foster their talents
	Exercise and fresh air	Responsibilities & obligations		Highlight achievements	
		Focus on good times and places	Develop life skills		Have a laugh
	Enough sleep	Make sense of where child/YP has come from			
	Play & leisure	Predict a good experience of someone or something new			
	Being free from prejudice & discrimination	Make friends and mix with other children/YPs			
NOBLE TRUTHS					
ACCEPTING	CONSERVING	COMMITMENT	ENLISTING		

All the tables and frameworks are available as PDFs and can be downloaded and used for free from the Boingboing website. Have a look at the [Resilient Therapy background](#) page for a quick overview and a few ideas to get you started with this approach.

In relation to the coronavirus, here are some ideas that people can be doing to support their resilience and that of their community right now. Some of them are things that I've done myself, things that other staff members and others in my networks have done or ideas that I've made up for you to read about and try! Most of these 'resilient moves' are what Ann Masten called 'Ordinary Magic', not rocket science. Many of them relate to one or more of the columns or statements on the resilience framework. Also I know that some of them have actually made people feel and function better already:

'Putting on a lovely outfit for working at home at least one day a week. I did that today and it felt good even if it was only going to be seen by me and a bit by my colleagues beaming into my messy kitchen on Microsoft Teams.'

'I have dug out my walking pole and will take it out with me anywhere I go for a walk near my house so I can easily judge what 2 metres look like (will be about double the pole) and then I can ensure I don't get close to anyone. Makes me feel safer and also helps me be more assertive with people about keeping their distance.'

'At the weekend I will be potting up my dahlias to put on my window sill in anticipation of a nice summer garden. Cheers me up to think of the summer and what my little garden will look like then.'

'I'm advising all colleagues and students to get organised and ensure they acquire the best possible internet connection so we aren't screaming over the airways to each other and I end up with a sore throat and major frustrations.'

'I watched your TEDx talk on resilience again last night. Gave me a laugh and some ideas that I can transfer to this coronavirus situation. Good to see you going through the framework with the audience and I admired your hair do. It doesn't usually look that posh.'

'I'm putting in some structure and boundaries, making sure I take screen breaks and will be careful to not let technology take over my life now that I'm having to socially isolate.'

'I can't go into work now and the university hasn't got anything that I can do at home. I was feeling useless. But I want to be helpful and I am young, fit and strong. So I've signed up to do voluntary work in the community. I know that helping others is a really important way to help myself manage my loneliness and anxiety.'

'I have decided to grow some rocket and salad leaves in small pots. I've never done it before and it will teach me a new skill. Makes me feel good to see things grow and will come in useful if it gets difficult getting fresh veg.'

'Neighbours in our street who have never even spoken to each other before have pushed notes through doors offering help and support. I have done the same, offering to do some weeding for people if they are too poorly to garden as long as they promise to let me do it in isolation!'

'Every time I get so anxious that my heart pounds and I feel faint I get some hand cream out and give my hands a gentle, relaxing rub, breathing deeply and counting in and out slowly. It makes me feel calmer and is so good for my dry hands, now that I have to wash them so often.'

'Being socially isolated completely on my own makes me really miss human physical contact. I'm using my poshest shower gel now and making sure I really stroke my arms with it in the shower. Feels comforting to me.'

'Rather than moaning about having to work remotely I'm catching myself and saying something more positive. I can be quite negative at the best of times so this has really brought out the worst in me. So I am forcing myself to say to others that I am feeling such gratitude for having a job and working for a university with pretty good terms and conditions compared to some of my friends who are out of work now. This isn't about glossy over difficulties. I am a proud member of our union and will always fight for our rights. But at times like this you need to pull together.'

'I've stopped watching the Ten O'Clock News. I realised I needed to limit my news intake to just once a day as I didn't sleep at all after watching it and I know sleep is one of the most important things to help my immunity and I struggle with it at the best of times.'

'I'm taking the dog for a walk really early in the morning when nobody else is around. Helps me cope with my massive anxiety about being outside and catching something but I am mostly on my own at that time.'

'I'm worried I will never have sex again being cooped up with my partner for the next 3 months running. So we've agreed to have a date night and stick to it. That's the night we will drink a bit of wine, put on our glad rags and they will cook me an especially nice dinner before having an early night.'

'I'm noticing every single thing that is good in my life every day. I'm writing it down before I go to bed. Makes me feel calmer as I go to sleep.'

'My MP has coronavirus and he really is a great MP working tirelessly for the community. He has underlying conditions too so I worry about him. I emailed him to thank him for all the work he does for us. I'm sure he will appreciate it and it made me feel good to do that too.'

'Rather than talking about 'social isolation' which makes me panic, I am calling it 'physical isolation'.'

'I'm helping my kids to keep on top of their anxieties. I've got a little paper bag that they have labelled their 'worry bag' and they write their worries on bits of paper and put them in there. We have a set time each day in the morning when the worry bag comes out and we discuss their fears.'

'I know we shouldn't be using loads of drink and fags to dull our feelings for a bit at this time, but not doing that is easier said than done. I went from panicking loads about the virus and how it affects people who smoke so much that I could hardly breathe, to downing a bottle of wine and a puffing a load of fags to calm myself down! Some of my friends have had the same reaction so we have re-instigated a form of 'Dry January' calling it 'Calmer CoronaV'.'

'Little acts of kindness seem more important now than ever. I go out for a self-isolated walk but always knock on my 93 year old neighbour's window (with a tissue that I then throw away) to say to a cheery hello when I pass. She puts on her coat and comes to the door for a chat at a two metre distance. Even though it's the window I'm touching not the door, I still sanitise my hands and am especially careful not to touch my face until I'm home and have washed my hands. '

'I'm concentrating on having a laugh. So important at these times especially. Before I go up for the night I watch an old comedy programme that makes me and my husband snigger. Then I leave my phone downstairs so I don't sneakily look for more news about the virus. Much better to go to bed with the antics of the 'Darling Buds of May' ringing in my ears.'

'I'm 'reframing' not being able to go out and do anything much for 3 months or whatever it is. I think you call it on your framework 'putting on rose tinted glasses'. So I'm thinking what a fab opportunity to learn some new skills and sort the clothes in my wardrobe out. '

'Emailing my MP to add my voice to those who are calling for more NHS workers to be tested and to have proper equipment to work with felt important in terms of doing my bit to support wider community resilience. '

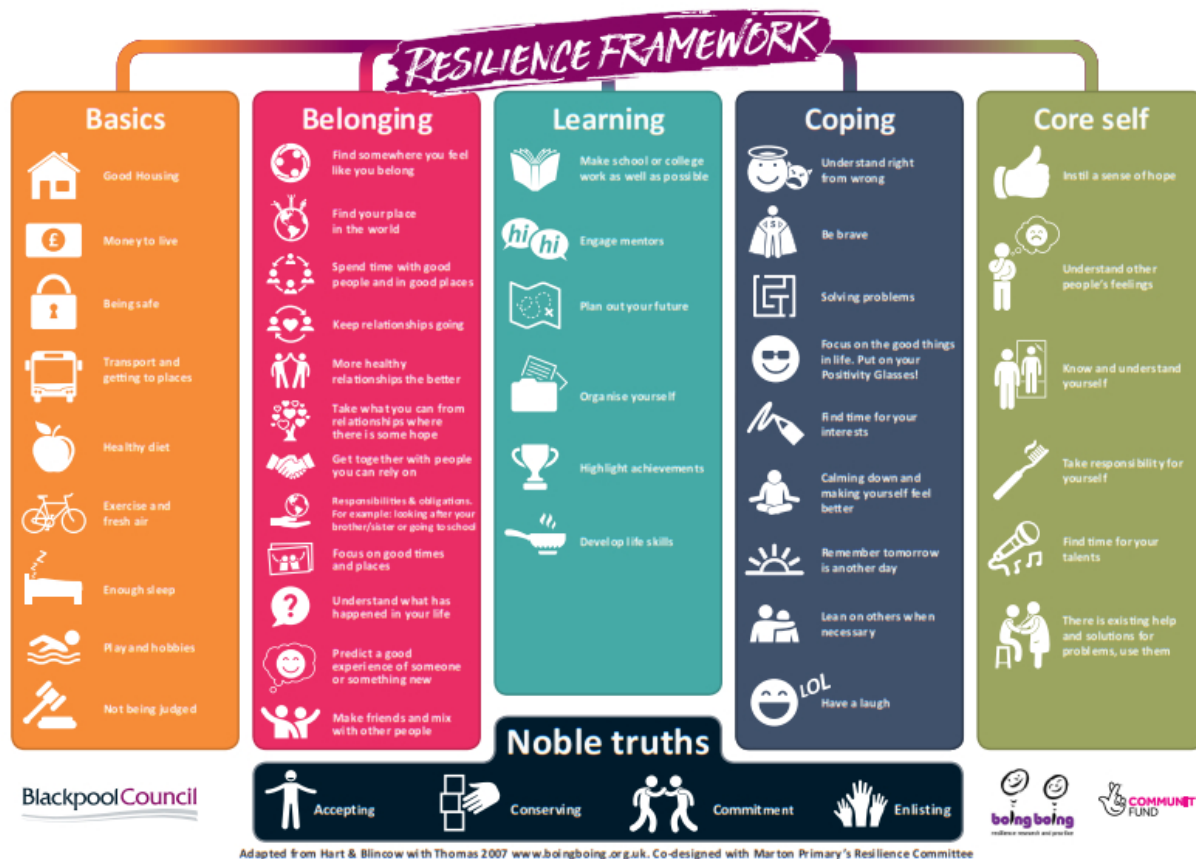
Versions of the Resilience Framework

There are quite a few different versions of our Framework, and we also have them in lots of languages on [our Resilience Frameworks page](#).

The [Resilience Framework for Adults](#) applies ideas from the resilience evidence base to adult mental health, drawing on concepts more usually applied in this context, for example the recovery approach. The adult framework was developed as part of Josh Cameron's PhD research into the work-related needs and experiences of people recovering from mental health problems.

We've designed an [Interactive Resilience Framework](#) especially for schools, which is designed to be user-friendly, allowing you to click on areas that interest you to find out more. Even if children aren't in school, or if there are fewer children there, it could be useful for ideas. For those of you trying to teach your kids at home you might get some ideas from it on how to help your children make resilient moves. It is one of the free suite of resources from the [Academic Resilience Approach](#). Each link takes you to a glossary section with further information about that particular approach, including expanding on what it is, why it is important and how it could be achieved, what young people themselves think about it, and examples of relevant research evidence with further references. We've tried to keep it short and sweet, allowing people to dip in and out depending on what they want to know.

We also have a version of our framework co-produced with primary school children. The [Resilience Framework for Primary School children](#) was co-produced by the Resilience Committee at Marton Primary School, Blackpool, with the support of Stephen Donnelly, Graphic Designer from Blackpool Council, and Nathan Parker, Youth Engagement Lead for HeadStart Blackpool. The Marton Primary School children learned some valuable resilience and technological skills during the process, which involved rewording some of the items in a more meaningful way for the children, and we think it looks fab.



The Family Resilience Framework was designed to support members of the wider family (parents, siblings, carers etc.) and was developed by Rhian Adams, Tiffany Bales, Laura Brown and Sarah Henderson from Newport Mind, with the support of the participants of the Newport Mind Community of Practice. The need for a Family Resilience Framework became apparent when resilience workers recognised that members of the wider family also needed to improve their own resilience. A family approach to resilience was needed in order to provide seamless family intervention which would ensure self-sufficiency once support workers withdrew. The Family Resilience Framework emerged from a series of Community of Practice (CoP) meetings involving health professionals, social workers, young people and parents who had previously received support, in order to gather input on how the Framework categories could be utilised in a family context. Discussions within the CoP took place around how each area of the Framework could be adapted to apply to everyday family life. The terminology was determined by all members of the CoP, ensuring that language and content was universally understandable.

A group of parents and carers from Blackpool, known as the 'Parents of the Revolution', have co-produced another family version, building on previous work by Newport Mind and the Framework graphics created as part of Blackpool's town-wide Resilience Revolution. The group are rightly proud to be from Blackpool and have chosen landmarks from their town to represent the ideas within the Framework, which could easily be adapted for another area. The Blackpool Co-produced Family Resilience Framework contains a short description and some suggestions. You can also download a one-page version that just contains the Framework.

Good luck with your resilient moves

Thanks so much for reading this and I do hope that you develop some personal 'resilient moves' that will be helpful to you at this astonishing time. Sounds like we will be in this if not for the long haul at least for the medium haul, which for many of us will feel very long in any case. Please do [sign up for our CRSJ/Boingboing newsletter](#) and we will bring you more resilient moves in our next newsletter. Or if you would like to email resilience@brighton.ac.uk you can let us know how you have been getting on with using the Framework. If you have any top tips for others we will certainly share them.



Supporting children and young people's mental health – A guide for schools

Supporting children and young people's mental health: A guide for schools using a resilience based approach, and Supporting children and young people's mental health during Covid-19 pandemic: A supplementary section.



Living online: The long term impact on wellbeing – Submission of evidence

In this submission to The House of Lords a bunch of us with different experiences shared our thoughts around how individuals and groups can better access online environments. We suggested the government may potentially help people access the digital world by improving digital inclusivity, accessibility, and data accountability.



Disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on people with disabilities: Follow up

In a follow up to our previous submission, we draw on our collective organisational and personal experiences, relating them to policy and practices associated with COVID-19, disabilities and equalities more generally.



Youth activism in Newham; reflections on a co-produced research project undertaken during a global health pandemic

In this blog Ishrat and Amanda share their reflections on taking part in co-produced research working alongside co-research teams in Blackpool, Cornwall, Newham and Brighton as part of the wider 'Nothing About Us Without Us' research project.



Reflections on a co-research project into civic activism – nothing about us without us!

In this blog the co-leaders of the Resilience Revolution's pilot in Blackpool share news about how things are going with the exciting new 'Nothing about us without us' project that a group of us including Boingboing, Brighton Uni and the Centre of Resilience for Social Justice (CRSJ) were lucky enough to win funding for in September 2020.



Building organisational resilience with the Noble Truths during COVID-19

This blog by Mental Health Nursing Lecturer and PhD student Lucy Colwell describes how the social enterprise Eggtooth has used the Noble Truths of the Resilience Framework to guide their response to the pandemic context.



Children and Young People's Mental Health Inquiry – Submission of evidence

In this submission to The House of Lords a group of academics, students, practitioners, parents/carers and young people working as and with disadvantaged communities share their thoughts on whether progress has been made by Government in its ambition to improve children and young people's mental health provision.

The Economic Impact of Covid-19 on Young People

Youth Affairs APPG's Economic Impact Inquiry
Submission of Evidence

15 September 2020



The Economic Impact of Covid-19 on Young People – Submission of evidence

In this submission we outline and discuss the economic impact of Covid-19 on young people in Blackpool and provide recommendations for immediate and long-term interventions.



Being a care leaver in the pandemic: Injustice within the system and opportunities for change

This blog is co-authored by Charlotte, 24 and Caitlin, 20 who teamed up with Nathan from the Resilience Revolution in Blackpool to share experiences and perspectives of being a care leaver in the pandemic.

[Older Entries](#)