

developing  
our managers  
and leaders

# Resilience Workbook

*Signature Strengths*

February 2015

## Background

### Leadership and Management Development

Leadership and Management Development within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) aims to increase the capabilities of DHHS managers and leaders, 'enabling our workforce to be properly educated, trained and developed, motivated and appropriately supported to give of its best'.<sup>i</sup> All activities expand the core themes:<sup>ii</sup>

- **Leads Self:** Leaders are self-aware; seek out opportunities for personal development; have strength of character.
- **Engages Others:** Leaders value diversity and model cultural responsiveness; communicate with honesty and respect; strengthen consumers, colleagues and others.
- **Achieves Outcomes:** Leaders influence and communicate the direction; are focussed and goal oriented; evaluate progress and are accountable for results.
- **Drives Innovation:** Leaders champion the need for innovation and improvement; build support for change; and positively contribute to spreading innovative practice.
- **Shapes Systems:** Leaders understand and apply systems thinking; engage and partner with consumers and communities; build alliances.<sup>iii</sup>



### What is resilience?

Resilience is the capacity to cope with change and challenge and bounce back during difficult times.<sup>iv</sup> Resilience requires leaders to take care of business and themselves while taking action in new realities. Resilient leaders flexibly improvise in response to unexpected situations.

According to the *Tasmanian State Service Senior Executive Leadership Capability Framework*, a leader -

- Deals resiliently with work pressures and negative criticism by maintaining an optimistic outlook and developing and applying effective wellbeing strategies.
- Remains focused on the objectives even in difficult and uncertain circumstances and in a rapidly changing environment or changing priorities.
- After setbacks, remains positive, motivated and focussed.
- Maintains energy and willingly invests extra effort when required.<sup>v</sup>

### How resilient are you? -

1. I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times.
2. I have a hard time making it through stressful events.
3. It does not take me long to recover from a stressful event.
4. It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens.
5. I usually come through difficult times with little trouble.
6. I tend to take a long time to get over set-backs in my life.

Scoring for 1, 3, 5:

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

Scoring for 2, 4, 6:

5 = strongly disagree, 4 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 2 = agree, 1 = strongly agree

Smith, B. W., Dalen, J., Wiggins, K., Tooley, E., Christopher, P. and Bernard, J. (2008). The Brief Resilience Scale: Assessing the ability to bounce back, *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 15: 194-200, 2008

A higher score indicates greater resilience.<sup>vi</sup>

### To access our resilience coaching and leadership resources:

Go to the DHHS intranet site:

[http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/intranet/scwr/nursing/education\\_and\\_training\\_unit/resilience\\_leadership](http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/intranet/scwr/nursing/education_and_training_unit/resilience_leadership)

Contact the Leadership and Management Development Unit at: [mandlprogram@dhhs.tas.gov.au](mailto:mandlprogram@dhhs.tas.gov.au)

# Our approach to resilience



*Tasmania's health system needs to change ...*  
 Hon Michael Ferguson MP Minister for Health

While valuable in and of itself, we see staff resilience as part of the bigger picture of change, and our contribution to making it successful and sustainable. Research indicates that this kind of change requires:

- First, it can inform policy leadership through policy-oriented learning.<sup>viii</sup>
- Second, it can promote organisational change management and culture management.<sup>ix</sup>
- Third, it can control for the negative impacts of organisational change by supporting staff resilience.<sup>x</sup>

- Shaping behaviour: leadership team thought and action.
- Framing change: communication throughout the change journey – organisational change management.
- Creating capacity: building individual capability – in order to ensure organisational change success.<sup>vii</sup>

We believe we can establish this kind of change through *education* (with providers like the University of Tasmania) and *training* (programs within the DHHS/THS).

The value proposition of education and training is that it can help develop and support these long-term, sustainable changes in three ways:



Individual responses to organisational change are often complex and multi-faceted. During and after change that involves staff downsizing, employees are generally less motivated to contribute to organisational success and are less willing to apply discretionary effort to accomplishing tasks important to the organisation.<sup>xi</sup> This is related to a rise in employee stress, health issues and voluntary departures after downsizing.<sup>xii</sup> Addressing both the cognitive and affective elements of individuals' response to change is essential for the successful implementation of change.<sup>xiii</sup> Specifically, building employee resilience has been shown to increase employee engagement and support for change.<sup>xiv</sup>

## Three Keys to Resilience

<b>Human Capital</b> <i>Signature Strengths</i>	<b>Social Capital</b> <i>Building Bridges</i>	<b>Psychological Capital</b> <i>Self Matters</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing education, experience, knowledge, skills and abilities</li> <li>• Refreshing career strengths with SMART personal goals</li> <li>• Physical and mental fitness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friends and family</li> <li>• Professional networking and resilient role models</li> <li>• Community and civic engagement</li> </ul>	<p><b>Hope</b> – the will and the way – expect the best and have a plan to achieve it</p> <p><b>Efficacy</b> – ‘can do’ – the confidence to succeed</p> <p><b>Resiliency</b> – bouncing back and beyond</p> <p><b>Optimism</b> – realistic and flexible</p>

Individual resilience can be conceptualised as being developed through the ‘three capitals’: human, social and psychological or identity.<sup>xv</sup> **Human capital** is the experience and expertise that the individual brings to their working life.<sup>xvi</sup> It can be developed through higher education<sup>xvii</sup> and in-house training programs.<sup>xviii</sup> **Social capital** provides the networks and relationships that support individuals in their work, home and community.<sup>xix</sup> Activities such as coaching develop peer professional networks and new professional role models and have been shown to increase social capital within the workplace.<sup>xx</sup> Developing the **psychological capital** of staff speaks to the links between individual psychological and physical health; organisational health and culture; and productivity.<sup>xxi</sup> The HERO (hope, efficacy, resilience and optimism) attributes of identity or psychological capital are particularly valuable in times of change.<sup>xxii</sup> **Change resilience, developed through a focus on the three capitals, is a key element of successful, sustainable change.**

# Overview of signature strengths



What are 'signature strengths'?

These are a person's own, individual way of thinking, feeling and behaving, that helps them accomplish their goal. These 'natural' talents and abilities help guide our choice of education, career and employer.<sup>xxiii</sup>

The positive psychology institute (VIA) provides a free on-line assessment, to help discover what these strengths are, at <http://www.viacharacter.org/www/> The ability to use your signature strengths in the workplace have been shown to contribute to positive experiences at work.<sup>xxiv</sup>

In order to use these strengths, however, you need to be in the right kind of environment – there has to be a match between your natural strengths and the opportunity your job provides to use these strengths.<sup>xxv</sup>

Research suggests that increased use of signature strengths in the workplace can also contribute to a reduction in the perceived conflict between professional and personal activities ('work-life balance').<sup>xxvi</sup>

This workbook will take you through the process of looking at your existing education, knowledge, skills and abilities; what (if anything) you would like to develop; and where you want to be in the future. Doing these exercises will help you develop the kind of 'career optimism' that is positively related to career success.<sup>xxvii</sup>

## How did you get to where you are today? What are your strengths and skills? Where do you want to go next?

While you can go through the exercises listed in this booklet by yourself, there are many reasons why it may be more effective to work with another person. The process of communicating to another person makes the ideas being described clearer, while the other can reflect back to you and help you explore new ideas.

Maybe you can 'buddy up' with a work colleague to do the exercises together? Or your whole team might decide to build resilience leadership by doing this as a group?

Leadership and Management Development [Coaches](#) may also be able work with you, on a one-to-one basis, to do the exercises.

Contact the Leadership and Management Development Unit at: [mandlprogram@dhhs.tas.gov.au](mailto:mandlprogram@dhhs.tas.gov.au) if you want help.



The rest of this booklet will suggest different exercises you can do to work with your signature strengths. You can follow these or make up your own. (If you do, please tell us about them and we can share them around!) You can find more resilience leadership coaching handbooks on the DHHS [intranet](#).

# Your brilliant career (so far)

Even if you intend to stay in the position you currently occupy, it is a great idea to update your resume, from time to time, and reflect on what you have achieved.<sup>xxviii</sup>

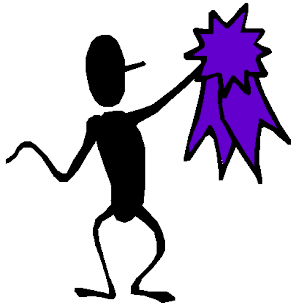
Take some time to review your existing education, experience, knowledge, skills and abilities.

## Education and training

On a separate paper, list your education and training activities, with the most recent listed first.

Thinking about your experience of studying for formal education and qualifications, answer these questions:

- What about this experience did you enjoy the most?
- What did you enjoy the least?
- What traits of yours contributed to the successes and setbacks in your education and training experiences so far?



**What is your highest level of education?**

**What other qualifications have you gained?**

## Employment and experience

Now, on a separate piece of paper, list your experience in paid employment, with the most recent position listed first.

What were/are your main duties and achievements? (Keep this information to a brief paragraph, or a few dot points outlining the main duties and/or achievements.)

If you are, or have been involved in any volunteer or community organisations, list these unpaid employment experiences, and their main duties and achievements.

Thinking about your *paid or unpaid* employment experiences, think about the same three questions:

- What did you enjoy the most?
- What did you enjoy the least?
- What traits of yours contributed to the successes and setbacks in your employment career so far?

Think now about both your education *and* employment history. Who would you choose to corroborate your education and or employment history? Why?



**What are your outstanding achievements?**

**What other special recognition have you received?**

## Skills and Abilities

Write down the strengths you believe you have developed as a result of your personal education and employment history.

Support your claims with actual, specific examples of what you have done and how well you did it. One way to do this is to use the STAR model:

**S**ituation – Outline a specific circumstance where you demonstrated the particular skills or qualities required. Set the context of the situation.

**T**ask – What was your role? What did you have to do?

**A**ction – What did you do and how did you do it?

**R**esult – What did you achieve? What were the results of what you did?

Example: Demonstrated capacity to communicate effectively<sup>xxix</sup>

**Situation:** I demonstrated my ability to communicate effectively with a range of people when I was undertaking higher duties as manager of the XYZ service unit.

**Task:** I dealt with members of the general public, a range of health and human service professionals, the general public, officers from the local council and government departments, and private service providers on a daily basis.

**Action:** I communicated with these people face-to-face, over the phone and through use of email. As I was the first point of contact for the unit it was very important that I was professional, courteous and helpful in my interactions.

**Result:** My positive interpersonal skills were praised by senior management, colleagues and team members. When the substantive manager returned from leave, I was encouraged to apply for a similar position in another service unit. I was successful in gaining that position.

# What's next?

Career development unfolds over a lifetime. What we want in our 20s may not be what we want in our 40s or 60s. Initial career planning, combined with on-going career development, can be thought of as career renewal or career preparedness. Preparedness incorporates expected and unexpected events and outcomes and allows us to take advantage of opportunities, as well as mitigating threats to our continued success.<sup>xxx</sup>

Even people with very stable work lives can explore the benefits of finding work that has even greater compatibility with their 'work personality'. Entertaining the image of other, 'possible selves', encourages flexibility in thinking and action.<sup>xxxi</sup>



**Do I spend most of the workday doing things I enjoy?**

This leads to two lines of thought -

- What changes in your *present* job would decrease the amount of time doing tasks you dislike, or would increase the time spent on more enjoyable tasks?
- Should you think about *changing* my job within this organisation, or finding one elsewhere?

If you do identify some changes that you would like to make, you might like to think about *how* you could change things? SMART goal setting involves asking yourself five questions:

SMART Goals	
<b>S</b>	<b>SPECIFIC and Clear</b> • What exactly should be realised?
<b>M</b>	<b>MEASURABLE</b> • How will we measure this?
<b>A</b>	<b>ACHIEVABLE</b> • Is it feasible? • Do we have control/influence over it?
<b>R</b>	<b>RELEVANT &amp; RECORDED</b> • Is this goal recorded and relevant to my life or business right now?
<b>T</b>	<b>TIME-BOUND</b> • What is a realistic timeframe?

What are the *feasibility* of your SMART goals? Looking at one of these goals, on a separate piece of paper, write down as many positive and negative consequences of this goal, as you can think of. Rate these consequences in terms of likelihood and seriousness. How would you overcome the negative consequences and maximise the positive consequences?

### More or Different? Education or Experience?

People do not generally make big changes in their careers on a moment's whim. Certain options will appeal (or seem more or less viable) to an individual compared with other options given his or her interests, values, talents, resources, and experiences. Choices may also require additional education or experience, in order to be viable.

There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that lifelong learning has widespread advantages.<sup>xxxii</sup> DHHS staff who are studying part-time also show:

- Improved job performance
- Increased motivation to learn
- Improved self esteem<sup>xxxiii</sup>



**University study may provide a pathway to the career changes you want**

If you do not wish to engage in further education, talk to your immediate manager about professional development within DHHS – what kind of opportunities would you like to try out?

*Examples of career renewal activities include updating one's skills and expanding one's interests; enriching or one's own job, to the extent possible, by negotiating to take on more agreeable tasks; writing an ideal job description and considering the parts of it that could be implemented, either on one's own or with support; and mentoring more junior colleagues. ...<sup>xxxiv</sup>*

# Conclusion – my priority goal



In this Signature Strengths workbook we looked at your ‘natural’ strengths and how these have been developed by education and experience. We then considered your current position, and how this may be improved, to become an even better ‘fit’. Finally, we did some planning for the future, how you can access further education and experience, to achieve your goals.

Doing these exercises will help you develop ... *a proactive stance toward managing one’s own work life and promoting one’s own work well-being (and not simply relying on one’s employer’s goodwill or economic health). The focus on self-development (e.g., skill updating, interest expansion, setting new work goals) is aimed at both maintaining career vitality and hedging one’s bets against job loss and organizational downsizing.*<sup>xxxv</sup>

If you had to take **one thing** away from this workbook – what would it be?

**List your number one Signature Strengths priority goal below.**

<b>Insert your goal here:</b>		
<i>Progress markers/milestones? How will you or others know you are getting there?</i>	<i>What barriers might stop you achieving this goal? How might you address these?</i>	<i>What benefits will result from achieving this goal?</i>

# Further reading



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