

Resilient Leader Assessment

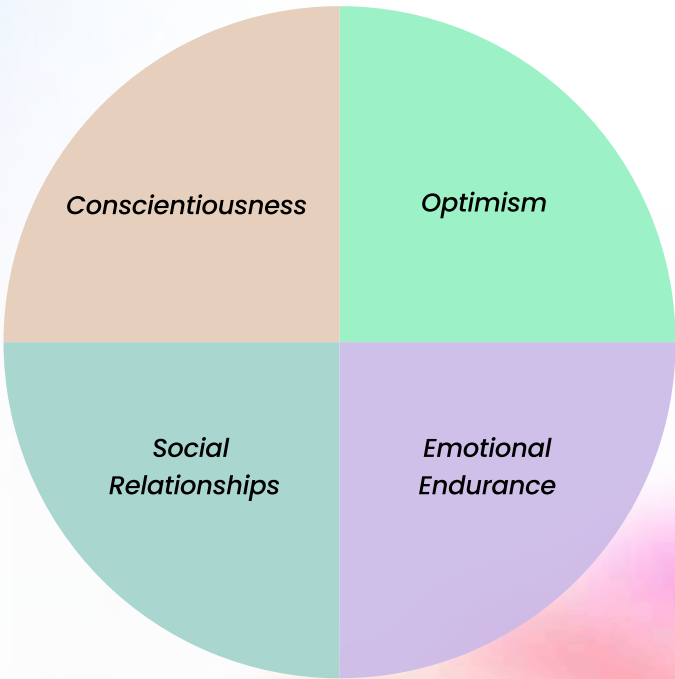
Companion Guide



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Thanks for checking out the **Resilient Leader Playbook**! We hope you find it not only **informative** but also **FUN**—because building resilience should feel empowering, not exhausting. Let’s strengthen your team and make resilience something you can actually enjoy!

The **Resilient Leader Playbook** is built on the **COPES model**—a research-backed framework that I describe in my book *Rethinking Employee Resilience*. The model breaks resilience down into four key areas, as illustrated in the pie chart to the right. Ideally, you or your team have already taken the **COPES assessment** on my website, giving you a personalized breakdown of your leadership strengths. This playbook is your roadmap to action—**helping you reinforce strengths, shore up weaker areas, and better support your team** in the domains that matter most!



Definitions and Traits

C

Conscientiousness

Remain highly focused on being responsible, organized, and goal- directed

OP

Optimism

Maintain a positive outlook and the expectation of favorable outcomes

E

Emotional Endurance

Remain highly focused on being responsible, organized, and goal- directed

S

Social Relationships

Forge deep, supportive connections with diverse groups of people



Behavioral

- Commitment
- Achievement Orientation
- Self-Control
- Agility



Cognitive

- Internal locus of control
- Problem Solving
- Positive Expectancy
- Growth Mindset



Emotional

- Meaning
- Perspective Taking
- Humility
- Stress Tolerance



Relational

- Social Support
- Reciprocity
- Communication
- Empathy

Table of Contents

The Resilient Leader Playbook is your **go-to guide for boosting your COPES profile** —packed with key activities that'll help you flex your resilience muscles and sharpen your leadership skills, even in the toughest environments. **Ready to lead like a pro?**

Overview and User Guide: Pages 3, 4, & 5

Key Activities: Pages 7 – 46

About Me: Page 47

C

Conscientiousness

- 7. Radio Doom and Gloom
- 8. The Life Deviation Score
- 9. Eisenhower Decision Matrix
- 11. Pomodoro Technique
- 12. Setting SMART Goals
- 15. Micro Breaks
- 16. Dissecting the Problem

OP

Optimism

- 18. Mental Contrasting
- 20. Practice Gratitude
- 21. Visualize Positive Outcomes
- 22. Engage in Positive Affirmations
- 23. Future Perfect Exercise
- 24. Vision Board Creation
- 25. Send your Phone to Jail

E

Emotional Endurance

- 27. The Problems and Values Worksheet
- 28. Mindfulness: What do you Hear?
- 29. Affect Labeling
- 30. The Life Compass
- 31. Values Target
- 34. 5/5/5

S

Social Relationships

- 37. Regular Feedback Sessions
- 38. Cultural Days
- 39. Icebreaker Activities
- 41. Workplace Appreciation Languages
- 46. Virtual Cooking Challenge

I. Overview

The Resilient Leader Playbook provides activities and resources for individuals and teams to use to build workforce resilience.



IN THIS SECTION

- Background and objectives
- The importance of workforce resilience
- How to use this playbook

Background and Objectives

Introducing the Resilient Leader Playbook—a hands-on, no-fluff guide packed with **25 science-backed activities** to help you build real, lasting resilience. This isn't just theory—it's a practical toolkit rooted in the best of psychology, drawing from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, social psychology, and behavioral science.

Each activity is designed to be simple yet powerful, turning key psychological principles into everyday habits that strengthen your ability to **adapt, lead, and thrive**. At its core, this playbook is built on **psychological flexibility**—the ability to embrace thoughts and emotions without judgment while staying committed to actions that align with your values.

The Importance of Workforce Resilience

Workforce resilience isn't just about endurance—it's a **strategic shift**. By leveraging cultural strengths to balance job demands with resources, organizations create an environment that fuels engagement and protects against burnout.



There is a 20-point difference in resilient scores between employees who intend to stay with an organization for four plus years compared to those planning to leave within one year 2020 Global Employee Experience Trends.

Only 19% of US workers are considered highly resilient according to a 2020 ADP survey CSIS.



70% of employees consistently struggle with resilience despite the widespread implementation of well-being programs AON

65% of US employees view their jobs as the number one stressor in their lives ISACA.



When experiencing constant stress or adversity, especially with fewer resources, our brains can become more sensitive to threat and stress increasing vulnerability to mental health issues such as PTSD substance abuse depression or anxiety The Ohio State University.

Individuals with low resilience were at a 5-fold greater risk of a new onset major depressive episode and 4-fold greater risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviors Pub Med.



How to Use this Playbook

Start by choosing an activity that targets one of the four key resilience-building areas: conscientiousness, optimism, emotional endurance, or social relationships. Each exercise is designed to spark real behavioral change and can be used individually or in groups, whether in-person or virtual.

These activities aren't just exercises—they're tools to help you build lasting habits that strengthen resilience in yourself and your team. As you work through them, focus on applying these principles daily, creating a culture of growth, adaptability, and resilience that extends beyond the page.

Activity Page Guide:



II. Conscientiousness

C

Conscientiousness is the foundation of a resilient workforce. With traits like organization, responsibility, and diligence, it brings structure and dependability to teams. High performers in this area deliver consistent, high-quality work and anticipate what's ahead—acting as the steady hand during uncertain times. Their disciplined approach doesn't just keep things running smoothly; it builds teams that can embrace change and face future challenges with confidence, strengthening resilience across the board.



Management is not being brilliant. Management is being conscientious.

Peter Drucker

Author and Educator

Note that some of the activities in this section are based on
Acceptance and Commitment Therapy exercises/ principles

Radio Doom and Gloom

Ever feel like your brain's stuck on repeat with negative thoughts? Name your station—maybe "Radio Doom and Gloom"—and picture the announcer dramatically saying, "Here's your daily dose of worry!" The goal? Remind yourself these thoughts are just noise, not reality.

The Science

Studies show that "defusion" reduces psychological distress by lowering activity in the brain's default mode network (DMN), which controls self-referential thinking and rumination. This enhances cognitive flexibility, helping individuals disengage from unhelpful thoughts, improve emotional regulation, and stay focused on goals under stress.

Reflection

- What triggers my negative thoughts?
- How do these thoughts influence my behaviors and emotions?
- What values do I want to focus on instead of these negative thoughts?

Instructions

- 1. Identify Negative Thoughts:** Recognize specific negative thoughts that frequently recur or cause significant distress.
- 2. Imagine a Radio Broadcast:** Visualize these thoughts as part of a radio broadcast, spoken by an announcer.
- 3. Give the Station a Name:** Label the radio station something fitting, like "Radio Doom and Gloom," to emphasize that these thoughts are just broadcasts, not realities.
- 4. Change the Presenter's Voice:** Modify the announcer's voice to something less serious or even humorous, altering your perception of the thoughts' impact.
- 5. Turn Down the Volume:** When you notice these thoughts, imagine turning down the radio's volume or switching stations, symbolizing your choice to disengage and focus on your values.



The Life Deviation Score

The Life Deviation Score is like a reality check for your values—measuring the gap between what matters most to you and how well you're living it. It shows you where you're on track and where you might need to adjust for a more fulfilling life.

The Science

This activity uses cognitive dissonance and self-determination theories to highlight discrepancies between values and fulfillment. It activates brain regions like the prefrontal cortex and anterior cingulate cortex, enhancing motivation, resolving conflict, and aligning actions with values, leading to improved well-being and life satisfaction.

Instruction

Rate the importance & fulfillment of each life value on a scale from 1 to 10 (1 = low, 10 = high). Importance reflects how much a value matters to you, while fulfillment reflects how well it's met in your life. Subtract fulfillment from importance to get a deviation score for each. Sum these scores for your overall life deviation score. Higher scores indicate imbalance, while low scores indicate alignment.

Valued Life Domain	Importance 1-9 (A)	Fulfillment 1-9 (B)	Life Deviation (A-B)
Romantic relationships			
Leisure / Fun			
Job Career			
Friends			
Spirituality			
Parenthood			
Health and wellness			
Family			
Growth			
Totals			

Eisenhower Decision Matrix

In this activity, you'll take a deep dive into your to-do list, finding smarter ways to tackle tasks. The goal? Cut through the clutter and focus on what really moves the needle for your most important goals—no more chasing endless distractions!

The Science

Drawing from cognitive psychology, decision theory, and behavioral psychology, this activity helps prioritize tasks by urgency and importance, reducing cognitive load. It engages brain areas involved in decision-making and goal alignment, enhancing productivity, focus, and stress management while supporting overall mental clarity.

Step 1: Refer to the Eisenhower Decision Matrix Worksheet

Refer to the Eisenhower Decision Matrix on the next page to start organizing your tasks.

Step 2: List Your Work Tasks

Write down all the tasks or responsibilities you regularly handle.

Step 3: Categorize Tasks

Place each task in the matrix based on urgency and importance. Use these questions to guide you:

- What goals are am I working toward?
- Which tasks are most crucial for those goals?
- Which tasks consume my most time and energy?
- Are any tasks flexible with deadlines?

Step 4: Assess and Prioritize

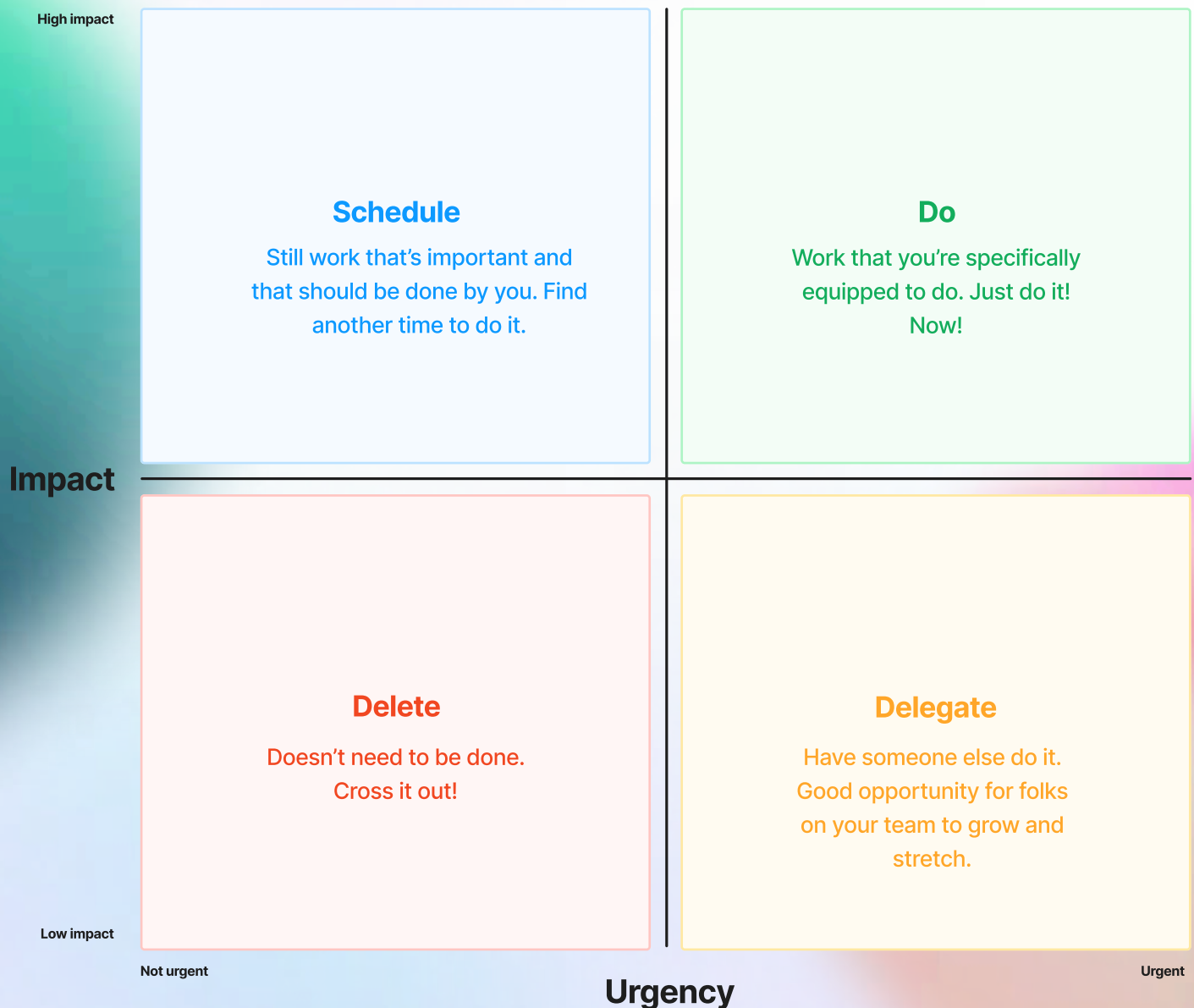
Review your matrix and prioritize tasks based on urgency and importance. Decide if low-priority tasks can be deferred, rescheduled, or optimized for efficiency.

Step 5: Action Plan

Focus on urgent and important tasks first. For important but not urgent tasks, strategize how to manage or streamline them to boost productivity.

Eisenhower Decision Matrix Worksheet

Effective time management is key to maximizing productivity and achieving your goals. Use the Eisenhower Box template to prioritize tasks by urgency and importance, helping you focus on what truly matters and organize your day for success.

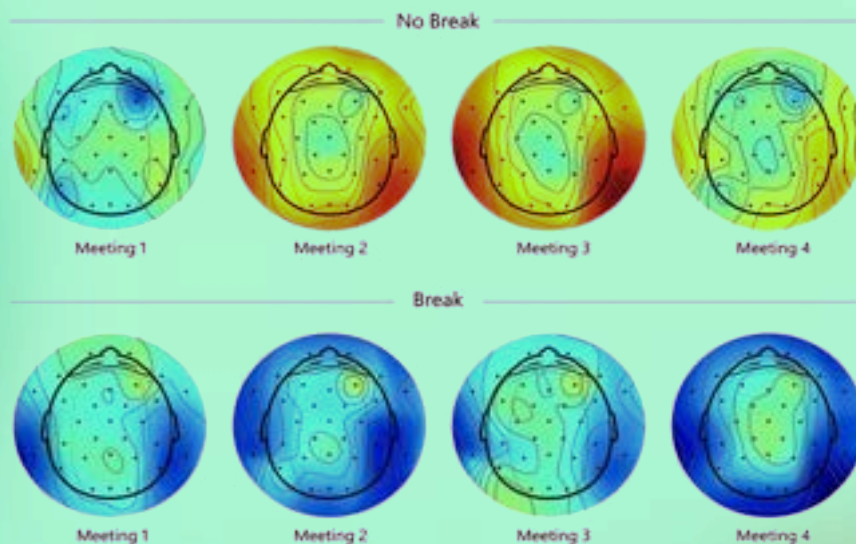


Pomodoro Technique

This technique uses timing to break your work into 25-minute power sessions, followed by short breaks—it's like a sprint with a snack break, but for your brain!

The Science

The Pomodoro Technique enhances focus and productivity by breaking work into short intervals to prevent cognitive overload. Microsoft's Human Factors Lab measured beta wave activity—linked to stress—using EEG caps. Participants who took breaks showed steady beta activity (cool colors), while those who didn't had increasing stress levels (hot colors). The diagram illustrates the difference in beta wave activity, emphasizing how regular breaks maintain mental well-being and productivity. ([Microsoft WorkLab](#))



Instructions

1. Select a task.
2. Set a timer for 25 minutes.
3. Work on the task without distractions.
4. When the timer goes off, take a 5-minute break - the only instructions are for you to get away from your computer or phone for 5 minutes!
5. Repeat steps 1–4 at least 4x throughout your day.
6. Observe and document how you feel before and after.

Setting SMART Goals

SMART goals are like the GPS for your ambitions: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. They help you map out your path to success, making sure you don't get lost on the way to crushing your personal + organizational goals!

The Science

The science behind SMART goals is grounded in goal-setting theory, which suggests that well-defined and challenging goals enhance motivation and performance by focusing attention, promoting persistence, and encouraging the development of effective strategies.

Instructions

Reference page 13 for a SMART goals example. Then on page 14, please do the following:

- 1. Document your core purpose** – Answer this question: “What do I want to be known for?”
- 2. List goals** – Write down your personal and professional goals aligned with your purpose.
- 3. Identify top priorities** – Pick the most important goals from each category.
- 4. Apply the SMART framework** – Document your top goal in a way that is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

Consider the following with your stated goals:

- 1. Assess and prioritize** – Review your SMART goals and determine which ones matter most. Subdivide if needed.
- 2. Ensure alignment** – Check how your goals tie into your broader purpose.
- 3. Allocate time and effort** – Dedicate appropriate time to each goal according to your schedule.

Setting SMART Goals Example

Purpose: I want to be known for taking care of our people, and our business.

Goals: Increase sales; empower team members; reliable and hard-working

Priority #1: Sales

GOAL

Increase sales by 20% by next quarter. Develop a new client outreach program. Complete leadership training by the end of the year

S

Specific

Your goal should be well defined, detailed and clear.

Increase sales in the Northeast region by 20% in the next quarter through enhanced marketing strategies and increased customer engagement

M

Measurable

Is your goal measurable? You should be able to tell when you reach your goal.

Track weekly sales reports and aim for a consistent 5% increase week over week.

A

Attainable

Can you reach the goal considering your available time, skills, and financial status?

Yes, by allocating an additional 10% of the current marketing budget and increasing the sales team by two members.

R

Relevant

Is your goal aligned with your overall objectives?

Yes, increasing sales will directly contribute to the overall financial health and growth strategy of the company.

T

Time-bound

Set a start and finish date for your goal.

The goal will be achieved by the end of the next fiscal quarter.

SMART GOAL

Revise your goal based on the answers to the questions above.

Increase sales in the Northeast region by 20% by the end of the next quarter through enhanced marketing strategies and increased customer engagement, monitoring progress through weekly sales reports to ensure a steady 5% growth in sales week over wee

Setting SMART Goals Worksheet

Purpose:

Goals:

Priority #1:

GOAL

S

Specific

Your goal should be well defined, detailed and clear.

M

Measurable

Is your goal measurable? You should be able to tell when you reach your goal.

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Attainable

Can you reach the goal considering your available time, skills, and financial status?

R

Relevant

Is your goal aligned with your overall objectives?

T

Time-bound

Set a start and finish date for your goal.

SMART GOAL

Revise your goal based on the answers to the questions above.

Micro Breaks

Take 5–8 short breaks throughout the day, each lasting 2–5 minutes. Use this time for activities you enjoy to refresh your mind and boost productivity.

The Science

Microbreaks reduce stress and improve focus by activating brain regions like the prefrontal cortex and hippocampus. These short breaks lower stress hormones, enhance memory, and sustain attention, boosting productivity and well-being. Research shows they're essential for preventing burnout and staying mentally sharp throughout the day.

Reflection

- How many breaks do I currently take throughout the day?
- What activities do I typically engage in during my breaks?
- How long are my breaks; are they spaced out effectively throughout the day?
- What barriers prevent me from taking regular microbreaks?

Instructions

- 1. Plan Your Breaks:** Schedule 5–8 short breaks throughout your day. Put each break on your calendar. Set reminders or alarms to ensure you take these breaks regularly.
- 2. Choose Enjoyable Activities:** Identify a list of quick, enjoyable activities you can do during your breaks, such as stretching, deep breathing, or stepping outside for fresh air.
- 3. Stay Present:** During each break, focus entirely on the activity you've chosen. Avoid multitasking and immerse yourself in the moment.
- 4. Monitor Your Time:** Keep your breaks between 2–5 minutes. Use a timer if necessary to ensure you return to your tasks promptly.
- 5. Reflect and Adjust:** At the end of the day, reflect on how these breaks impacted your mood and productivity.

Dissecting the Problem

This activity splits a problem into thoughts, feelings, and behaviors—like a mental puzzle, giving you clarity and insight for smarter, more effective solutions.

The Science

Dissecting problems identifies maladaptive patterns, promoting cognitive restructuring and emotional regulation. This process activates brain regions like the prefrontal cortex and amygdala, enhancing problem-solving, emotional control, and behavioral change, ultimately improving psychological well-being by fostering adaptive thinking and reducing cognitive biases.

Reflection

- Is there a context in which I commonly encounter problems – work, school, home, or family?
- What is the general nature of these problems – relational, work, personal, etc.?
- What are the most significant consequences of this problem?

Instructions

- 1. Write down the Problem:** Clearly document the issue you are facing. Describe how it affects your life and what it stops you from doing or being.
- 2. Entanglement with Thoughts and Feelings:** Write down the difficult thoughts, feelings, memories or sensations “hooking” you, e.g., “I must be perfect at everything.”
- 3. Life Draining Actions:** Consider my behaviors that are keeping me stuck, draining my energy, restricting my life, or making life worse in the long run.
- 4. Avoiding Challenging Situations:** Think through the situations, activities, people, or places am I avoiding.
- 5. Consider New Perspectives and Solutions:** Given 1-4, now challenge your current mindset. How you could view the situation differently or approach it from a new angle? What would you tell a friend facing the same issue?

III. Optimism

OP

Optimism is the belief that good things are on the horizon, even when the going gets tough. Optimists see challenges as opportunities rather than obstacles, helping them stay positive and adaptable, no matter what. In the workplace, they create an upbeat environment that boosts morale and motivates teams. Their ability to quickly bounce back from setbacks inspires others to stay engaged and keep pushing forward, no matter the difficulties.



The essence of optimism is that it takes no account of the present, but it is a source of inspiration, of vitality and hope where others have resigned; it enables a man to hold his head high, to claim the future for himself and not to abandon it to his enemy.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer
German Theologian

Mental Contrasting

Mental contrasting is a clever way to boost motivation by comparing your dream future with your current reality. It's a key part of the **"WOOP" framework** (Wish, Outcome, Obstacle, Plan), designed to help you spot and tackle the roadblocks standing between you and your goals.

The Science

Mental contrasting, used in the WOOP activity, enhances goal achievement by engaging the prefrontal cortex for planning and the amygdala for emotional processing. It contrasts ideal outcomes with obstacles, boosting motivation, problem-solving, emotional regulation, and resilience, making challenges more manageable and increasing goal commitment.

WOOP Example

1. **Wish:** Identify a meaningful and challenging wish or goal that you want to achieve.
2. **Outcome:** Imagine the best possible outcome that would result from fulfilling your wish
3. **Obstacle:** Reflect on the obstacles that might prevent you from achieving your wish
4. **Plan:** Develop an "when-then" plan

W

WISH

What is an important wish that you want to accomplish (think challenging, but feasible)?

My Wish:

Get an exemplary performance review in December

O

OUTCOME

What will be the best result from accomplishing your wish? How will you feel?

Best Outcome:

I feel proud

O

OBSTACLE

What internal obstacle might hold you back from achieving your wish? Take a moment to visualize it.

My Obstacle:

I procrastinate

P

PLAN

What's an effective action to tackle the obstacle? Make a when-then plan

When...

I finish work on Thursday...

...then I will...

...create a 30, 60, 90-day prioritization matrix.

WOOP Worksheet



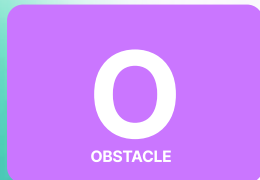
What is an important wish that you want to accomplish (think challenging, but feasible)?

My Wish:



What will be the best result from accomplishing your wish? How will you feel?

Best Outcome:



What internal obstacle might hold you back from achieving your wish? Take a moment to visualize it.

My Obstacle:



What's an effective action to tackle the obstacle? Make a when-then plan

When...

...then I will...

Practice Gratitude

Start a gratitude journal! Every day, jot down three things you're thankful for—whether it's something small (like that perfect cup of coffee) or big (like a friend's support). It helps shift your focus from what's missing to what's already working well.

The Science

Daily gratitude isn't just feel-good fluff—research shows it significantly boosts mental well-being, reduces stress, and enhances physical health by improving heart function. It also strengthens empathy, decreases aggression, and rewires the brain for resilience, making it a powerful tool for both emotional and physical health.

Instruction

- 1. Choose Your Medium:** Pick your favorite way to express gratitude—whether it's a physical journal, a digital note, or even a quick audio recording. Whatever feels most natural for you!
- 2. Set a Routine Time:** Pick a time that works for you, like starting the day with a gratitude boost or winding down by reflecting on the good things.
- 3. List Specific Items:** Write down three specific things you're grateful for each day. Instead of just saying "I'm grateful for my friends," get detailed—e.g., "I'm grateful for my friend texting me just when I was about to feel overwhelmed."
- 4. Elaborate on One Item:** Pick one thing from your list and write a little more about why it matters. For example, "I'm grateful for that text from my friend because it reminded me that I'm supported, even when life feels chaotic."
- 5. Reflect Weekly:** At the end of each week, go back over your list. Notice any patterns or shifts in your thinking. Are you focusing more on the small wins? How is your mindset changing?

Visualize Positive Outcomes

Take a few minutes each day to daydream about the best version of your life—whether it's excelling at work, strengthening relationships, or crushing personal goals. You're simply giving your brain a sneak peek of success (positive expectancy).

The Science

Research shows that vividly imagining success isn't just wishful thinking—it rewires your brain. Visualization boosts motivation, sharpens confidence, enhances performance, and primes you for real-world success by activating the same neural pathways as actual achievement. In short, your brain starts believing you've already won—making it far more likely you will.

Instructions

- 1. Choose a Quiet Space** – Find a calm spot where you can focus without distractions.
- 2. Set a Clear Goal** – Define exactly what success looks like. Be specific—vague goals create vague results.
- 3. Close Your Eyes and Breathe** – Take deep breaths to relax your mind and body before you start visualizing.
- 4. Create a Vivid Mental Image** – Picture the outcome in detail. Where are you? What are you doing? Who is there? Imagine movement, not just a snapshot.
- 5. Engage All Your Senses** – What do you see, hear, feel, smell, and taste? The more senses involved, the more real it feels.
- 6. Embrace the Emotion** – Feel the pride, confidence, or relief of success. Emotion cements the experience in your brain.
- 7. Repeat Regularly** – The more you practice, the more your brain treats success as familiar—making it easier to achieve.

Example: Nailing a Presentation

You step onto the stage, feeling the firm wood beneath your feet. The audience is engaged, nodding as you speak. Your voice is clear, strong. The mic hums slightly, notebooks rustle. Warm lights ground you. Confidence swells as you deliver your final point—then applause. You *belong* here.

By visualizing with clarity, sensation, and emotion, you train your mind for success before it happens.

Engage in Positive Affirmations

Craft a list of affirmations that *actually* speak to your goals and the life you want to create. Say them aloud each morning like you mean it—because *you* should. Think “I am the kind of person who thrives under pressure” or “Today I will lean into my strengths – focus and discipline.” Saying it isn’t enough—believe it, and watch how the day shifts in your favor.

The Science

Positive affirmations work by engaging the brain’s neuroplasticity—the ability to rewire itself. Repeating affirmations strengthens the neural pathways connected to self-empowerment, gradually shifting your mindset from self-doubt to self-assurance. This process leads to tangible results: improved performance, better decision-making, and increased resilience.

Instructions

- 1. Identify Areas for Improvement:** Reflect on areas where you want to grow—whether it’s confidence, stress management, relationships, or professional skills.
- 2. Write Affirmations:** Create present-tense, actionable statements that focus on your desired improvements, like “I handle stress with calm and clarity.”
- 3. Make Them Believable:** Keep your affirmations grounded in reality. Ensure they’re achievable, so your brain can accept and believe them.
- 4. Integrate Emotion:** Feel the emotions tied to your affirmations. When you say, “I am confident,” imagine the pride and calm you’d feel in those moments.
- 5. Repeat Regularly:** Recite your affirmations daily, ideally in the morning, to set a positive tone for the day.
- 6. Use Visual Cues and Routines:** Place affirmations where you’ll see them often—like on your mirror or phone—and link the practice to daily routines like brushing your teeth or commuting.

Future Perfect Exercise

This exercise takes visualization up several notches. Instead of just picturing success, you immerse yourself in a vivid, full-sensory experience where every part of your life is flourishing. It's not a dream; it's your future in the making and the reality you're about to build.

The Science

Positive thinking and goal visualization activate neural pathways in the prefrontal cortex, shaping future perceptions and influencing behavior. This process strengthens brain connections, making challenges feel more manageable. It reprograms the brain for optimism, boosting motivation, resilience, and goal-directed actions.

Instructions

- 1. Choose Your Ideal Future** – Define your vision: where are you? What's happening in all areas of life?
- 2. Visualize in Detail** – Close your eyes and mentally step into that future. See, feel, and hear it vividly.
- 3. Engage Emotionally** – Connect with how success feels—pride, relief, excitement.
- 4. Write It Down** – Capture the details in a journal or on paper. The more concrete, the better.
- 5. Link Actions to the Vision** – List the next steps that will take you closer to this future.

Example: Imagine it's a year from now...

You're in your dream job, leading a successful team, thriving in personal relationships, and feeling fulfilled every day. This is your *Future Perfect*—not just a visualization, but a roadmap. Write down the small, actionable steps you'll take to get there: networking, building skills, and setting clear boundaries in your personal life. This is your future unfolding, and you're actively creating it, one step at a time.

Vision Board Creation

Vision board? Sounds cheesy, right? A vision board keeps your goals visible, boosting optimism and motivation. Unlike outcome visualization, this constant exposure strengthens belief in your aspirations, keeping you focused and reinforcing your path to success—it's a science-backed strategy for achievement. 📌

The Science

The science behind vision boards is rooted in the concept of "visual priming." By regularly seeing your goals, the brain strengthens neural pathways related to those goals, enhancing focus, motivation, and belief in their achievement. This repeated exposure activates areas linked to motivation, like the prefrontal cortex.

Instructions

- 1. Set Clear Goals:** Choose specific personal or professional goals you want to achieve.
- 2. Gather Materials:** Collect images, words, or symbols that represent your goals—think of what inspires you.
- 3. Arrange & Paste:** Organize your visuals on a board in a way that feels motivating to you.
- 4. Display It:** Place your vision board somewhere you'll see it daily—on your wall, desk, or by your bed.
- 5. Engage with It Regularly:**
 - Example: For the next 2 weeks, each day, focus on one specific goal from your board (e.g., professional goal 1).
 - Take 2–3 minutes to look at the images related to that goal and ask:
 - What does this represent for me? (*Landing this large deal*)
 - What small step can I take today to make this vision a reality? (*Personalized email, follow up meeting*)
 - How does this goal align with my values and current actions? (*growth, integrity, relationship building*)

Send your Phone to Jail

Feel like your phone's holding you hostage? Send it to jail! Lock it away during set times to break free from distractions. This simple act boosts presence, productivity, and strengthens relationships. It's a digital detox your brain (and loved ones) will thank you for!

The Science

Minimizing digital distractions neurologically enhances focus by reducing cognitive overload. This allows the prefrontal cortex—responsible for decision-making and attention—to work more efficiently. Less distraction also reduces stress by lowering cortisol levels, fostering better emotional regulation and enhancing the brain's ability to form deeper, more meaningful connections.

First ask yourself (and honestly reply)...

- How engaged am I currently with my friends and family?
- To what degree am I preoccupied with my own thoughts at home?
- How frequently do I check my work phone during off-hours?

Instructions

- 1. Designate Device-Free Times:** Choose specific times (e.g., dinner, walks) to turn off your phone and place it in a "phone jail" to reinforce the habit.
(Example: *"I commit to turning off my phone every day from 5:30 – 7:00 PM."*)
- 2. Communicate Your Intent:** Let others know your commitment to being present, setting clear expectations for support.
- 3. Engage in Non-Tech Activities:** Use the device-free time for meaningful, tech-free activities like talking, playing, or walking.
(Example: *"I'll spend this time talking with my spouse or playing with my kids."*)
- 4. Reflect on Your Feelings:** Notice how you feel without your phone—anxious, focused, or free?
(Example: *"I feel more present and less distracted."*)

IV. Emotional Endurance

Emotional endurance is the ability to manage your emotions and keep your energy steady through tough or long-lasting challenges. It's about resilience and staying patient, even when the pressure is on, without letting stress take over. Individuals with strong emotional endurance can handle stressful situations, stay productive, and support their colleagues, all while keeping the work environment stable and positive. Their ability to stay calm and focused, even when things get hectic, helps keep the team grounded and moving forward together.



Enthusiasm is common. Endurance is rare.

Angela Duckworth

Psychologist and Researcher

Note that some of the activities in this section are based on
Acceptance and Commitment Therapy exercises/ principles

The Problems and Values Worksheet

This activity helps you dive into your challenges and what truly matters to you! By mapping out your problems and linking them to your core values, you'll uncover new ways to tackle obstacles & make choices that truly resonate with who you are.

The Science

This activity taps into cognitive reframing, emotional regulation, and self-awareness. By aligning challenges with core values, it activates brain regions tied to decision-making and motivation, reduces stress, and fosters a sense of purpose—leading to improved emotional resilience, focus, and overall well-being.

Instructions

Fill out the table by identifying your current challenges, linking them to your core values, explaining the connection, and brainstorming actions you can take based on those values to address the issues effectively.

Problem	Value	Value relates to the problem?	Actions based on value alignment
Overwhelmed	Balance	Current workload is creating unbalance	Prioritize tasks, delegate, set clear boundaries with work hours.
Self-confidence	Growth	I'm not pushing myself to get out of my comfort zone.	Take on new challenges to build confidence, seek constructive feedback.
Conflict	Respect	I value respect and feel that the conflict undermines that.	Address the issue calmly, seek a resolution that maintains mutual respect.

Mindfulness: What do you Hear?

Mindfulness is the art of being fully present, paying attention to the moment without judgment. It's like hitting pause on your busy brain, allowing you to breathe, focus, and find clarity—no matter how chaotic life gets.

The Science

Mindfulness reduces stress, boosts focus, improves emotional regulation, increases resilience, and enhances self-awareness. It fosters compassion, strengthens relationships, and helps manage anxiety and depression. Consistent practice improves sleep, creativity, patience, and memory—like upgrading your brain's software!

First ask yourself (and honestly reply)...

- How many minutes today was I fully present and engaged in the task at hand, without distractions?
- When did I feel my mind wandering the most, and what triggered it?
- How often did I take a moment to pause and focus on my breath today?

Instructions

1. Go for a Walk

Take a daily 10-minute walk outside your house or apartment *without your phone*.

2. Pay Attention to What You Hear

Listen closely to the sounds around you—birds, cars, children playing, airplanes, etc.

3. Notice Your Breathing

Observe your breath as it flows in and out, focusing on the rhythm and sensation.

4. Feel Your Movements

Stay present by focusing on the sensation of your feet touching the ground and the movement of your body. When your mind wanders, gently bring your attention back to the present moment. This is the key - noticing when your mind wanders, without judgment and bringing your attention back to the present.

5. Reflect:

What was this experience like? How quickly did I get distracted? What sounds did I notice that I might have missed in the past?

Strengthen your Emotional Literacy

Affect labeling is as it sounds – identifying and naming your emotions in real-time. By putting feelings into words, it helps you process them, reducing emotional intensity and stress. This simple technique can improve emotional regulation, making it easier to manage overwhelming feelings.

The Science

Affect labeling helps calm the brain's emotional center, the amygdala, by engaging the prefrontal cortex, which controls thinking and problem-solving. Naming your emotions reduces stress, allowing you to think more clearly and handle challenges better.

Instructions

- 1. Learn the Language of Burnout:** Find and take an on-line burnout self-assessment quiz to understand your stress levels.
- 2. Identify Burnout Drivers:** Write down these six empirically-supported burnout drivers on a note card and add them to your emotional vocabulary: *Purpose, Fairness, Control, Workload, Recognition, Community*.
- 3. Check Your Stress:** Put an X next to the driver causing your stress today. Reflect on the emotions (e.g., *"I feel anxious because I feel have little to no control over my workload"*).
- 4. Track Your Stress:** Put an X next to each stress trigger(s) daily to spot patterns throughout your day.
- 5. Recognize Stress Triggers:** Identify activities or situations that trigger burnout drivers, so you can anticipate them.
- 6. Strengthen Your Emotional Vocabulary:** If workload is the driver, explore underlying emotions like helplessness, anxiety, or doubt. If needed, print out and study an emotional vocabulary list to strengthen this skill (Do this daily – *I recommended this a lot during my time as an Army psychologist in Afghanistan!*).
- 7. Support Your Team:** Use the same notecard (step 2) to help your team voice their feelings and better understand their stress sources.

The Life Compass

The ACT Life Compass is like a personal compass for your values. It helps you pinpoint what truly matters to you, check if your actions align with those values, and course-correct when needed.

The Science

The science behind the Life Compass shows that connecting actions to core values boosts psychological flexibility—helping you to adapt to tough emotions while staying aligned with what matters. This reduces stress, increases motivation, and enhances overall well-being.

Instructions

In each box write what is important to you in each area of life. In the top right portion of the box, mark on a scale of 0-10 how important these values are to you . In the bottom right, mark how effectively you are living these values right now, from 0-10.

Education

Leisure

Work

Health

Spirituality

Family

Friends

Growth

Values Target (1/3)

The Values Target activity is a simple yet powerful tool that helps you clarify what truly matters in life. By identifying your core values and mapping out your actions, it shows you how to live more authentically, reduce stress, and increase motivation

The Science

This activity taps the prefrontal cortex to align actions with core values, reducing amygdala-triggered stress. This promotes emotional flexibility, boosts motivation, and enhances well-being by strengthening reward pathways and fostering a sense of purpose.

Instructions

- 1. First, list up to 5 of your personal values in four domains areas. An example is provided below. The next page has a blank template for you to complete

Example

Work and Education

- 01 Autonomy
- 02 Innovation
- 03 Fairness
- 04 Novelty
- 05 Ambition

Leisure

- 01 Time away
- 02 Adventure
- 03 Relaxation
- 04 Unplugged
- 05 Freedom

Work

- 01 Quality Time
- 02 Trust
- 03 Encouragement
- 04 Conversations
- 05 Partnership

Health

- 01 Exercise
- 02 Learning
- 03 Eating Well
- 04 Nature
- 05 Reading

Values Target Worksheet (2/3)

Instructions

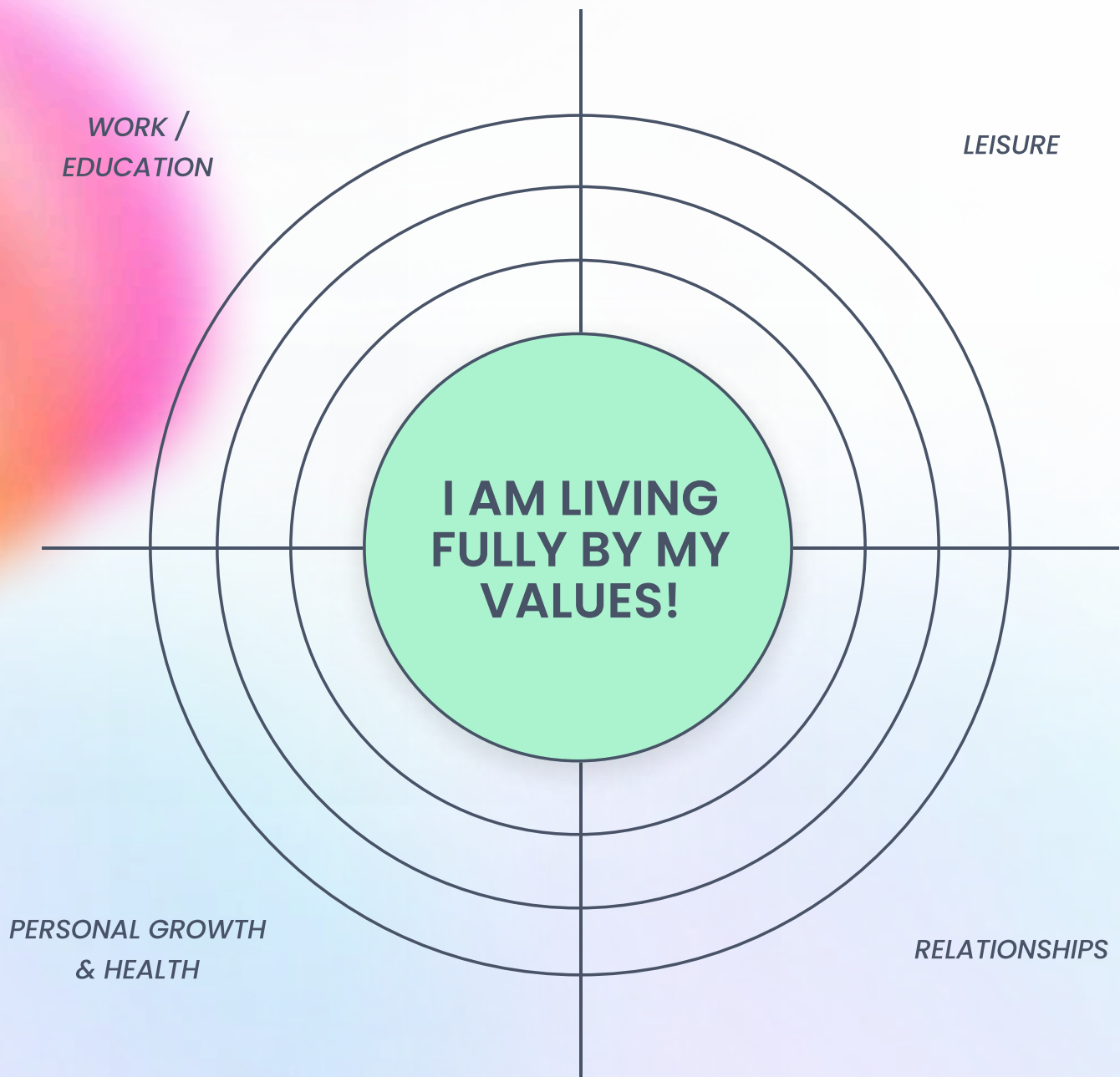
2. Next, add your values to the table below

Work and Education	Leisure	Work	Health
01	01	01	01
02	02	02	02
03	03	03	03
04	04	04	04
05	05	05	05

Values Target Worksheet (3/3)

Instructions

3. Finally, this worksheet helps you evaluate how well you're prioritizing your personal values across different areas of your life. Place an X in each quadrant of the dartboard: the closer to the center, the better your alignment with your values. Or, you can write each of your values (or corresponding numbers) on the target for a more granular view!



5/5/5

The 5/5/5 activity involves identifying five things to say "yes" to, five things to say "no" to, and five things to improve your life. This exercise promotes clarity, prioritizes your values, and encourages intentional choices to boost well-being.

The Science

This activity taps into cognitive psychology by enhancing decision-making and cognitive clarity. By prioritizing actions, it reduces cognitive overload, strengthens self-regulation, and aligns behaviors with core values. This leads to reduced stress, improved focus, and better emotional well-being.

Instructions

Reference the following 5/5/5 table as an example. Complete the form for yourself on the following page.

Example

	5 Things To Always Say 'Yes' To	5 Things To Try To Say 'No' To	5 Things to Make Your Life Better
01	Opportunities that will give me leadership visibility	Volunteer work that doesn't align with my professional goals	Take time to make a nutritious lunch on weekdays
02	Tasks that will grow my data analysis skills	Working past 7:00 pm multiple days in a row	Decompress after work by meditating or taking a walk outdoors
03	Opportunities to build my facilitation skills	Responding to emails outside of business hours	Take all my PTO
04	Networking events with colleagues	Tasks that involve working on the weekends and impact my personal well-being	Exercising at least three times a week
05	Spending time with family	Late night social events that leave me tired the next day	Read more novels

5/5/5

Using the previous page as an example, compete this 5/5/5 activity on your own!

	5 Things To Always Say 'Yes' To	5 Things To Try To Say 'No' To	5 Things to Make Your Life Better
01			
02			
03			
04			
05			

V. Social Relationships

Social relationships are the connections you build with others—both personally and professionally—that shape your support system. Strong relationships thrive on trust, clear communication, and mutual respect. In the workplace, people who foster these connections create a culture of collaboration and support. They bring teams together, strengthen communication, & offer a steady source of encouragement during high-pressure moments. When challenges hit, these relationships become a backbone of resilience, keeping teams motivated and connected.



Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another: 'What! You too? I thought I was the only one.'

CS Lewis

British Author and Scholar

Regular Feedback Sessions

Make feedback a habit, not a rare event. Regular sessions keep communication open, respect flowing, and surprises to a minimum—because no one likes a “we need to talk” moment. When feedback is routine, teams grow, improve, and actually enjoy working together

The Science

Regular feedback taps into psychological principles like the feedback loop and growth mindset theory. It rewires the brain for growth, enhances performance, and fosters psychological safety—reducing anxiety, boosting adaptability, and keeping teams aligned. Without it, vague expectations and last-minute surprises can trigger threat responses, not productivity.

Instructions

- 1. Normalize Feedback as Growth** – Make it clear that feedback is about improvement, not criticism. Set the expectation that it’s a two-way process and a regular habit.
- 2. Schedule Consistent Sessions** – Pick a predictable cadence (weekly, biweekly, or monthly) and keep it brief (15–30 minutes) to encourage participation.
- 3. Create a Safe Space** – Set ground rules: Feedback should be specific, constructive, and actionable. Model openness by sharing your own areas for growth.
- 4. Use a Simple Framework** – Try Start-Stop-Continue, the SBI Model (Situation-Behavior-Impact), or Feed-Forward to keep feedback structured and productive.
- 5. Make It a Conversation** – Ask teammates to self-reflect first: “How do you think that went?” Actively listen, ask clarifying questions, and acknowledge good insights.
- 6. Follow Up with Action** – Document takeaways, provide support, and recognize progress—not just perfection—to keep motivation high.

Remember to keep it light and human—use humor and empathy. This isn’t a courtroom after all!

Cultural Days

Cultural Days give team members a chance to share their backgrounds through food, music, traditions, and more. Sure, it might sound a little corny—but done right, it's an incredible way to build real connections, spark curiosity, and celebrate what makes your team unique.

The Science

Positive social interactions, like sharing personal traditions, trigger oxytocin—the trust hormone—enhancing trust, empathy, and psychological safety, all of which are key to building cohesive, innovative teams.

Instructions

This activity can be done in person or virtually, lasting 30 minutes to an hour, as a one-time event to foster connection and understanding—plus, it's a fun way to learn something new about your team!

- 1. Start with Intent:** Set clear goals for the day: to build understanding, foster connection, and create a space where everyone can showcase their background. Keep it purposeful and professional.
- 2. Cultural Showcases:** Encourage employees to share something meaningful—whether it's a dish, piece of music, or tradition—from their culture. Keep it simple and allow for brief presentations to keep it engaging.
- 3. Casual Q&A:** After each showcase, open the floor for questions. This helps break the ice and encourages team members to dig deeper into each other's backgrounds, fostering natural conversations and trust.
- 4. Focus on Common Ground:** Guide the group to discuss similarities in their experiences or values. Highlight how diverse backgrounds contribute to the team's collective strength and innovation.
- 5. Reflection & Action:** End with a short reflection session. Have team members share one key takeaway or something they'll implement in their work after learning about their colleagues' cultures. This reinforces the day's impact.

Icebreaker Activities (1/2)

An icebreaker activity is like a team's first handshake—it helps people shake off the awkwardness, spark connections, and get into the groove of working together, setting the stage for real collaboration.

The Science

Icebreaker activities help reduce social anxiety by encouraging casual interactions that make people feel more comfortable. They trigger dopamine, the "feel-good" neurotransmitter, which makes these moments more enjoyable and memorable. This release has a reinforcing effect, motivating people to seek more positive interactions, strengthening connections.

Instructions

10 examples meant to trigger connection...and laughter!

- 1. Two Truths and a Lie:** Everyone shares two truths and one lie about themselves. The catch? The rest of the group has to guess which statement is the lie. It's a fun way to spark conversation and uncover surprising facts about your teammates—who knew that Sharon's claim to fame is winning a hot dog eating contest?
- 2. Speed Networking:** Think of it as speed dating for professionals. Team members rotate every 2–3 minutes, sharing quick bits about their jobs or favorite hobbies. It's fast, it's fun, and it gets everyone talking (without any awkward pauses).
- 3. Job Swap:** Ever wondered what your coworker's day actually looks like? Here's your chance! Everyone writes a description of what they think another team member's job entails. Then, the actual person reveals what's really going on.
- 4. Find 10 Things in Common:** Divide into small groups and challenge each to find ten things they all have in common. No, "We all work here" doesn't count! This is a great way to discover hidden similarities and bond over unexpected shared experiences. You might be shocked at how much you have in common with someone you've never really talked to.

Icebreaker Activities (2/2)

- 5. Office Trivia:** Create a trivia quiz about your company's quirks, history, and, of course, a few fun facts about your teammates. Who knew Greg used to be a professional juggler? This game's a perfect mix of learning and laughs, with a healthy dose of competition.
- 6. The Marshmallow Challenge:** Hand out spaghetti sticks, tape, string, and a marshmallow. The mission? Build the tallest free-standing structure with the marshmallow on top. It's like a mini engineering challenge—and a great way to test your team's creativity and collaboration (plus, who doesn't love playing with marshmallows?).
- 7. Photo Scavenger Hunt:** Create a list of quirky office items or scenarios, and let teams run wild capturing them in photos. From "someone in a meeting with a coffee cup" to "the funniest plant in the office," this game gets people moving and laughing—plus, it's a great way to show off your office's personality.
- 8. The Name Game:** Everyone introduces themselves with an adjective that starts with the same letter as their name—"Bubbly Ben," "Mighty Molly," or "Super Steve." It's a fun twist on the classic name game, helping everyone remember names while showcasing personalities in a playful way.
- 9. Show and Tell:** Invite teammates to bring something that's meaningful to them—could be anything from a family heirloom to a quirky souvenir. They'll share why it matters, and you'll get to know each other on a deeper level. It's like a trip into each person's personal story.
- 10. Desert Island:** Ask everyone: If you were stranded on a desert island, what three items would you bring? This sparks fun debates—should you choose a book, a survival kit, or a rubber duck for company? It's a great way to peek into each person's priorities, preferences, and quirky side.

Workplace Appreciation Languages

Circle the letter from each pair of statements that you feel is most important to you. Sometimes both will be important to you (or sometimes neither will be especially significant to you). Do not spend a lot of time on each question; go with your first response.

01

B

I appreciate it when someone gives me their undivided attention.

C

I appreciate when others thank me with a firm handshake, publicly or privately.

02

D

I feel A when someone helps me get tasks done.

C

I appreciate when others thank me with a firm handshake, publicly or privately.

03

C

When someone buys lunch for me, it communicates to me that I am important to them.

E

Being given a fist bump for the work I do is really important to me.

04

D

When someone buys lunch for me, it communicates to me that I am important to them.

E

Being given a fist bump for the work I do is really important to me.

05

D

I am energized when those around me help me out with tasks that need to be done.

A

It motivates me when others praise me verbally.

06

A

I feel important when I am told how much the work I do is appreciated.

E

I feel important when I receive a pat on the back or shoulder for a job well done

07

D

When I am having a difficult day, it means a lot to me if someone helps me with a project or assignment I am working on.

B

When I am having a difficult day, it means a lot to me when someone close to me stops and asks how I am doing.

08

C

Receiving tangible gifts (e.g., Food, gift cards) cheers me up.

E

When others give me a quick hug at work it cheers me up.

09

A

I am more likely to persevere through a difficult task when someone thanks me for the work I am doing.

B

When others show a genuine interest and listen to me, it helps me to persevere through a difficult task.

10

D

I feel valued when people give me a high five to celebrate small or large "wins"

E

I feel valued when people close to me celebrate my birthday by getting me a gift.

11

B

I'm encouraged when I'm able to spend time together with my closest coworkers/teammates.

D

I'm encouraged when my coworkers/Teammates help me get caught up on tasks that are behind schedule.

12

C

I receive an emotional lift when I receive a gift from a friend or coworker.

D

I feel supported when those who work close to me help me out when I am overloaded with work.

13

C

I feel valued when someone who is important to me gives me a gift.

B

I feel valued when people listen to me patiently without interrupting.

14

A

When I am feeling stressed, some words of encouragement help me feel better.

D

When I am feeling stressed, having others help me get things done reduces my stress levels.

15

A

Being complimented for the work I do means a lot to me.

B

Being able to spend quality time with friends and colleagues means a lot to me.

16

A

Kind words from others are especially encouraging to me.

D

When someone gives practical help to me, I feel encouraged.

17

A

It energizes me when I am in close proximity to people from work whom I enjoy.

E

It energizes me when I am told that I am doing a good job by those who work with me.

18

D

If I am discouraged, someone offering to do a small favor for me will lift my spirits.

C

If I am discouraged, a small gift (e.g., Humorous card, dessert) can lift my spirits.

19

E

I feel supported when others sit next to me and/or put their arm around me.

B

Spending time with people important to me gives me a sense of support.

20

E

It really cheers me up when someone gives me a bear hug

D

When someone enthusiastically does a task I have requested, it cheers up my day.

21

A

When I am having a difficult day, a compliment really encourages me.

C

When I am having a difficult day, receiving a small gift from a coworker/classmate really encourages me.

22

E

I feel supported when someone holds my hand or puts an arm around me during difficult times.

B

If life's circumstances are really difficult, I feel supported when someone takes time to listen and understand what is going on.

23

A

I am energized when I receive verbal encouragement from others frequently.

B

When I get to spend time with those who are important to me, I am energized.

24

A

Being recognized publicly for achievements I have accomplished makes me feel proud.

C

I know people value me when they take the time and effort to give me a fist bump.

25

D

I enjoy my work more when teammates offer to help me prepare for a big event or project.

A

I enjoy my work more when those around me acknowledge my skills and contributions.

26

E

My discouragement lessens when a teammate helps me think through issues."

B

My discouragement lessens when a teammate affirms my contributions."

27

B

After a large project has been completed, I like doing something special to celebrate with my team.

C

After a large project has been completed, I like receiving some "time off" as a reward for my efforts.

28

E

When a coworker offers a hug when I am weighed down, I find myself feeling more positive about my work.

A

When I am having a difficult day, receiving a small gift from a coworker/classmate really encourages me.

29

C

If I am feeling unappreciated by those around me, receiving a gift card to go do something fun helps me feel better.

A

If I am feeling unappreciated by those around me, others telling me how important I am to the team helps me feel better.

30

D

I feel more energized about my work when I know others will be there to help me complete a project, if assistance is needed.

E

When others pat me on the back or shoulder, I find myself feeling more energized about my work.

Your Score:

Count the number of A, B, C, D, and E statements circled and enter each number below. The response chosen most is your primary language. You may be bilingual.

A

Words of Affirmation

C

Receiving Gifts

B

Quality Time

D

Acts of Service

E

Appropriate Physical
Touch

Adapted from the Languages of Appreciation quiz

Virtual Cooking Challenge

In this Virtual Cooking Challenge, team members prepare a meal from their own kitchens while connected via video call. It's a fun, interactive way to bond, improve communication, and take a break from the usual routine—plus, you get to enjoy a meal together!

The Science

Cooking sparks creativity and mindfulness, lowering stress and boosting mood. Shared activities activate dopamine and serotonin, enhancing happiness and connection. Working together, even virtually, strengthens bonds and fosters team cohesion in a fun, engaging way.

Instructions

- 1. Plan the Event:** Pick a date and time that works for everyone (no one wants to chop veggies at 6 AM). Choose a video platform like Zoom or Google Meet—whichever gets everyone clicking.
- 2. Prepare for the Event:** Pick a recipe that's easy for everyone to follow—think comfort food, but also mindful of dietary needs. Send out invites with the recipe, ingredients, and what tools they'll need.
- 3. Conduct the Challenge:** Kick off with a quick hello and make sure everyone's kitchen is ready for action. A designated chef or team leader guides the group through the steps, and keep the conversation flowing—because who wants to cook in silence?
- 4. Wrap-Up:** Once everyone's plated their masterpiece, have them share their creations (and maybe some kitchen mishaps). If you're feeling extra, turn it into a virtual meal where everyone "eats" together—awkward bites and all.
- 5. Get Feedback & Share:** After the fun, ask for feedback to make the next one even better. Share photos and recipes in a digital album, so no one forgets their culinary brilliance (or epic fails).

I'm so glad you made it to the end! I hope that at least one (or more) of these activities resonated with you or your team.

A little about me: I'm a board-certified clinical psychologist with over 15 years of experience and a decade spent leading management consulting initiatives focused on well-being and resilience. My career journey has taken me from providing mental health care in Afghanistan to working globally with organizations to build cultures that genuinely support their people. I'm passionate about applying psychological principles to help leaders and teams manage stress and truly thrive under pressure.

I recently wrote *Rethinking Employee Resilience*, where I introduce the COPES model—a new way to think about building resilience in yourself and your team. In the book, I challenge conventional approaches to burnout and offer actionable, evidence-based strategies to foster environments that truly support people. You can take the self-assessment on my website to see where you and your team fall within the COPES model, and I'd be happy to guide you through a debrief session to explore those insights in depth.

If you're ready to take the next step, my Resilience to Results Leadership Accelerator and team debriefing sessions can help you build a resilient team culture, overcome burnout, and create leadership strategies that truly work. Let's build a workplace where resilience isn't just encouraged—it's embedded in everything you do. Get in touch to take the first step!

Dan Pelton, Ph.D.
email: info@danpelton.com

