Resilience-building – Coaching for a Resilient and Happy Heart

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Abstract: As we move further into the ‘era of resilience’, and workplace, educational, youth and adult resilience receives more academic and professional focus, asking the question ‘what makes a person resilient?’ (Walsh, 2015) (Luthar & Brown, 2007), we should consider how we can use coaching to build resilience in our clients (Pemberton, 2015) (Gray, Burl & Kogan, 2014). This paper introduces a unique coaching tool that can be used by a coach to stimulate coaching dialogue, awareness, goals and actions in a coaching session. Using the tool as a springboard for awareness building and further dialogue, the coach can assist the client to either identify those resilience-building practices they currently utilise and would like to develop further, or identify those practices that might appeal to them but that they are not applying. Utilising this awareness, the client can then set goals and actions that can help them build and strengthen their ability to be resilient. Use of the tool could prove particularly helpful in assisting a client who is symptomatic of impending burnout.
Introduction

As we move further into the ‘era of resilience’, and workplace, educational, youth and adult resilience receives more academic and professional focus, asking the question ‘what makes a person resilient?’ (Walsh, 2015) (Luthar & Brown, 2007), we should also ask ‘how can we build resilience in people?’ (Moore, Anderson, & McQuivey, 2014). Because resilience can be learned (Rutter, Resilience as a dynamic concept, 2012), and as research develops around interventions that can enable and promote resilience and wellbeing, as coaches, we should consider how we can use coaching to build resilience in our clients (Pemberton, 2015) (Gray, Burls, & Kogan, 2014).

This paper introduces a unique coaching tool (Appendix 1: A heart-shaped puzzle) that can be used by a coach to stimulate coaching dialogue, awareness, goals and actions in a coaching session. It could prove particularly relevant in assisting a client who is in danger of burnout, given that resilience could be described as the antithesis of burnout (Strümpfer, 2003).

Using the tool as a springboard for awareness building and further dialogue, the coach can assist the client to either identify those resilience-building practices they currently utilise and would like to develop further, or identify those practices that might appeal to them and are for consideration, but that they are not applying to their life. Utilising this awareness, the client can then set goals and actions that can help them build and strengthen their ability to be resilient.

1. What is resilience and what makes a person resilient?

Resilience is a dynamic concept that is not necessarily an outcome of heredity – it can be developed in a person (Rutter, 2012).

There are various considerations of the term ‘resilience’. In attempts to understand those constructs evident in people considered to be resilient, research to date has explored the dimensions of, and contributory factors to resilience. Previously, much of this focus has been on children (Walsh, 2015), adolescents (mostly in disadvantaged communities) (Davis & Paster, 2008) (Tiet & Huizinga, 2002) and medical students (Kjeldstadli, et al., 2006).
More recently, the emphasis has shifted to resilience in the face of workplace stress (where burnout is most evident) (Strümpfer, 2003), emotional resilience (Bharwaney, 2015) and coaching for resilience (Pemberton, 2015) (Green & Humphrey, 2012).

So what is resilience? In layman’s vernacular, resilience is often described as the ability to ‘bounce back’; the word resilience being a derivative from the verb resile (meaning when something is compressed, stretched or bent, it tends to spring back elastically to resume its former size and shape) (Warschaw & Barlow 1995; Strümpfer, 2003). However, the oversimplification of resilience through the image of balls reverting to their original shape and place after being bounced, seems to minimise the change, forward growth and learning that many human beings experience after working through adverse events in their life. Indeed, the concept is complex, dynamic and multi-dimensional (Rutter, 2012). Davis (2008) suggests that resilience is a particular lifestyle characterised by the use of a positive outlook to overcome frustration, disappointment, discouragement and formidable challenges. Rutter (2006) defines resilience as decreased vulnerability to risk experiences and the ability to overcome a stress or adversity with the likelihood of a relatively good outcome. The Harvard Graduate School of Education recognises resilience in childhood as being a dynamic, sometimes delicate, balancing interaction (Walsh, 2015). The balance being between a child’s character and external experiences - such as supportive and positive relationships, a sense of mastery, self-regulation skills, supportive faith or cultural traditions and response to stressful experiences and threats.

Dodge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders (2012) propose that ‘..wellbeing ..(is) the balance point between an individual’s resource pool and the challenges faced’ (p 230) and ‘..stable wellbeing is when individuals have the psychological, social and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge.’ (p230) [Figure 1].
Focusing on resilience from a broader systems perspective, the Stockholm Resilience Centre identifies resilience as ‘the capacity of a system, be it an individual, a forest, a city or an economy, to deal with change and continue to develop. It is about how humans and nature can use shocks and disturbances ..to spur renewal and innovative thinking’ (Folke, 2016). In a neuro-biological study around those hormones, neuropeptides, neurotransmitters and neural circuits associated with resilience and vulnerability to stress-related disorders (such as burnout), Osorio, Probert, Jones, Young & Robbins (2016) examine how knowledge of this nature could offer a contribution to resilience interventions that could prevent disorders connected to stress.

One human systems model of resilience names the domains of the model as the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual domains and includes various dimensions within those domains, that are linked to resilience (see Figure 2).
A person who has survived, or even thrived, after a negative life or environmental event, is changed by the experience, and as a result is in a different emotional and cognitive (sometimes physical) place to where they were in their lives before the event. It is the factors that enable the person to change, grow and learn, that make them resilient.

Historically, then, resilience has been explored in terms of:

- **Innate personality factors (trait theory)**
- **Protective environmental factors, that assist a person to mitigate the potential negative outcome of any challenges, and**
- **Resilience as a learned capacity gained while experiencing difficulties** (Pemberton, 2015).

Through trait theory, protective factors theory and other resilience specific research, we understand now that resilience is not a single trait that a person is either born with or not. Being open to learning and growth, knowing that a way can be found through adversity, is a key part of being resilient.

2. The Burnout – Building Resilience Connection

Strumpher (2003) suggests that resilience and burnout are on opposite sides of the resilience-burnout continuum. Exhaustion is the core indicator, with four general symptoms accompanying it, namely,

- distress in the form of affective, cognitive, physical and behavioural symptoms
- a sense of reduced effectiveness
- decreased motivation, and
- dysfunctional attitudes and behaviours.

An inability to cope and a sense of frustration are often preconditions to burnout and are self-perpetuating. (Carod-Artal & Vázquez-Cabrera, 2013). Emotional exhaustion is considered to be the most important dimension of burnout syndrome (Roelofs et al. 2005).

Elements that can enhance subjective wellbeing, meaning and opportunities to flourish can enhance engagement (the antipode of burnout) (Strümpfer, 2003). It follows that resilience-building techniques might also create tendencies that can resist burnout. Managers and team
leaders who are under high-pressure and susceptible to burnout can benefit from a resilience and wellbeing coach who can assist them to acknowledge, prioritise and maximise their strengths and inner resources for their own, and the teams benefit.

3. The Resilient and Happy Heart: A balanced human system for building resilience

In this paper, similar to the model of *wellbeing as a state of balance* in Figure 1, and *resilience dimensions* referred to in Figure 2, the Resilient Human Systems Model is proposed as a balanced interconnection between the cognitive, emotional, physical and social domains. Resilience involves therefore, a combination of personal characteristics, genetic vulnerability, learning from previous life experiences, management of self, interconnection with others and place in time.

In this model the cognitive, emotional and physical domains represent similar themes as other resilience models, however the social domain replaces the ‘spiritual’ element and has been included to differentiate between a person’s inner self and their outer projected self when engaging with others. The spiritual domain represented in Figure 2 is replaced with the term ‘sense of connectedness’ (‘following intuition’, ‘using breath’, ‘experiencing love’) because the concepts of ‘following intuition’, ‘using breath’ and ‘experiencing love’ are considered to be more ethereal, elusive and hard-to-measure concepts, that need not necessarily be bound to religion or spirituality as implied in other models.

This ‘sense of connectedness’ domain is represented as smaller hearts within the bigger heart and is considered an influential component in all of the other domains. The heart-shaped concept was inspired by recent research and interest in heart-intuition (Childre, Howard, Rozman, & McCraty, 2016) and HRV (heart rate variability) interpretation regarding the impact of stressors on the human system (Firstbeat, 2016). This is discussed further on in this paper.

By harnessing, learning and using various techniques or skills which are associated with the ability to be resilient in the cognitive, emotional, physical, social and spiritual (or sense of connectedness) domains (Bharwaney, 2015) (Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2015) (Green & Humphrey, 2012) (Davis & Paster, 2008) (Steinhardt & Dolbier, 2008) (Kjeldstadli, et al., 2006), people can strengthen their ability to be resilient.
4. What factors can help to build resilience in a person?

There are a variety of resilience-building skills or protective factors (in terms of the protective factor model of resilience) that have been incorporated in educational and workplace programmes to teach people how to be more resilient (Bharwaney, 2015; Davis & Paster, 2008; Luthar & Brown, 2007; Strümpfer, 2003). These include, but are not limited to, building self-esteem (Mann, Hosman, Schaalma, & de Vries, 2004), accessing social support (Pengilly & Dowd, 2000); encouraging optimism (Chang, 1998) and enabling positive affect (Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998).

Strümpfer (2003) suggests that variables such as

- being engaged in meaningful activities,
- planning events that elicit positive emotions,
- proactive coping,
- personal strategic planning,
- identifying and using restorative places to enhance optimal experience (flow), and
- developing skills and activities that encourage interpersonal flourishing,

can enhance ‘fortigenesis’ (L. fortis=strong) and eudaimonia (human flourishing)’ (Seligman, 2008).

Earlier positive psychology research identified that the practice of identifying and using strengths daily, lastingly increases happiness and decreases depressive symptoms (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). However, Biswas-Diener, Kashdan, & Minhas (2011) caution against randomly using strengths identification with someone who has psychological vulnerabilities as they might experience an attention to strengths as decreased motivation or a perception of threat to self-identity. This highlights the importance of considering the use of various tools and techniques within a wider human system context.

Positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning and accomplishment contribute positively to well-being (Seligman M., 2011) and by association, the ability to be more resilient. In research exploring strengths and resilience, Martinez-Marti & Ruch (2017) found a positive correlation between character strengths in the prediction of resilience, after the effects of other well-known resilience-related factors (i.e. positive affect, self-efficacy, optimism, social support, self-esteem, life satisfaction) were accounted for.
Through recent neuroscience research, we understand that the brain has plasticity and therefore the ability to develop new neural pathways, and fire neurons in new patterns that promote flexibility in the face of change (Tang, Hölzel, & Posner, 2015), (Rock, 2009). In some cases, recovery from severe brain trauma and physical impairment by using various physical stimuli is suggested (Arden, 2010). Learning new skills, mindfulness and meditation practice, and physical activity can create or reactivate neural pathways (Tang et al, 2015), (Arden, 2010). Indeed, the brain has a remarkable ability to rewire itself in response to experience (Kolb, Gibb, & Robinson, 2015) (Sousa, 2012).

Many of the resilience-building practices discussed further are well-known and originate in one or more of the sciences or philosophies. In addition, they have been linked to a sense of increased wellbeing, or, through research over the past decade, indicate positive correlations with resilience and a person’s ability to cope better with life’s stressors (Davis & Paster, 2008) (Arden, 2010) (Beasley, Ted, & Davidson, 2003) (Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2015) (Kjeldstadli, et al., 2006). All of them fall within the domain of coaching.

5. Resilience-building and coaching

Theories and research around coaching as a practice to focus clients on building resilience in a wellbeing context, using various tools and interventions, is growing (Pemberton, 2015) (Green & Humphrey, 2012) (MacConville, 2012) (Grant, Curtayne, & Burton, 2009). For instance, in a study exploring the relationship between coaching and wellbeing, Gray et al (2014) emphasize the efficacy of coaching to assist clients to ‘deal positively with workplace stressors’ [p42] and the identification of and practice of ‘resilient cognitive and behavioural patterns’ such as (i) projecting a positive self-image; (ii) eliciting support from others; and (iii) celebration of successes especially after setbacks are experienced. Within the sphere of leadership and executive coaching, coaching practice focuses on working with clients to assist them to deal positively with workplace stressors (Pemberton, 2015). The Coaching for a Resilient and Happy Heart © tool fits into this coaching and resilience-building paradigm.

5.1 Resilience coaching from a human systems perspective

As coaches we naturally coach from a systems perspective (Stout Rostron, 2011) so it follows that when we are coaching our client to assist them to build resilience, we must take into account the whole person system.
That is, we must coach for resilience-building in all of the five areas of the client’s system – physical, emotional, cognitive, social (interaction with others) and connectedness/spiritual (if applicable for our client). All of the domains, and therefore the resilience-builders in each domain have the potential to affect another domain in the human system.

We know from other sciences, that if a person experiences challenges or difficulties in one domain, it is highly likely that another, or possibly all of the other domains will be affected in some way, thus reducing the person to a state of ill-being, as opposed to well-being. Conversely, the positive effect of resilience in one area can then potentially have a positive effect in the other domains, and can result in an overall state of wellbeing and resilience.

Using coaching techniques, coaches can assist their client to identify what works well for them i.e. what resilience-building techniques help keep them strong and resilient. The coach can also assist the client to become aware of those habits that weaken their ability to stay strong, or opportunities where they can build their resilience. Through this awareness-building, the coach can assist their client to design resilience-building strategies in all domains of their system, thus incorporating a holistic and integrated resilience-building approach. In addition, other coaching tools can be utilised by the coach to add another layer of awareness and insight building around elements in the system domains, or to enhance the coaching process. For instance,

- GROW and Wheels
- The ROSE model (King, P. 2015)
- PERMA (Seligman M., 2011) Wheel
- Values
- Strengths building in coaching (Seligman M., 2011) (Biswa-Diener & Dean, 2007)

5.2 Understanding the resilience-builders in the Coaching for a Resilient and Happy Heart tool

The resilience-builders included in the Coaching for a Resilient and Happy Heart © tool are not exclusive and relate to a general model of the dimensions of resilience [Fig. 2] as well as the proposed model for resilience-building [Fig. 3]. A link between the two is outlined in Appendix 2. A brief explanation of the resilience-builders in each of the system domains in the tool follows:
In the **cognitive domain**, a number of resilience-building techniques and interventions (grounded in the sciences indicated in parentheses) are available for the coach to coach around. These are not limited, and an experienced coach might find them useful merely as catalysts for other more open dialogue with their client. They are listed and discussed below:

- Managing thoughts and self-talk (CB psychology, social psychology, NLP, coaching)
- Taking control (organisational psychology, coaching)
- Being in the moment (mindfulness, neuroscience, coaching)
- Balancing expectations (neuroscience, coaching, social psychology)
- Making positive choices (positive psychology, CB psychology, coaching)
- Setting goals and taking action (coaching)
- Learning new skills (neuroscience, coaching)

Managing the cognitive space, **thoughts, self-talk** and associated moods, behaviours and choices have long been the focus of among others, dialectical behaviour therapy (McKay, Wood, & Brantley, 2007) and cognitive behavioural therapeutic and social psychology interventions (Beck, 2011). More recent neuroscientific research highlights a person's ability to reframe meaning, thoughts and self-talk i.e. the brain rewiring and creating new neural pathways that will engender new behaviours and habits (Arden, 2010) (Rock, 2009). Internal versus external **locus of control** (ie. ‘I can control elements of this situation’ versus ‘something outside of me (fate) is in control’) has a pivotal role in the ability to be resilient. As a coach, we can assist our client to assess how much they are in control of a situation, how much they can influence, and if neither, what they need to accept. This method is frequently used in dialectical behavioural therapy (McKay, Wood, & Brantley, 2007) and coaching.

**Managing expectations** is an important component in happiness, physical and social wellbeing, and mental performance and problem-solving (Atlas & Wager, 2013). As part of the reward circuitry, there is a link between dopamine release and expectation (Schultz, 1999). If expectations are not met, there can be a dehabilitating effect. Unmet expectations are one of the important experiences to avoid, as these generate the stronger threat response (Rock, 2009).
As coaches, we can assist our clients to manage their expectations so that the optimal levels of dopamine are created. Paying attention to expectations, setting ourselves up for successful experiences and performance and looking at all possible outcomes can help balance expectations. Choosing to focus on things always getting a little bit better, even with evidence at times to the contrary, helps a person maintain good levels of dopamine (Rock, 2009). Perhaps this is where the balance between extreme optimism and grounded optimism/reality is key.

**Making positive choices** (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007), **setting goals and taking action** are key outcomes of a coaching session. This is a standard element in any coaching engagement.

**Learning new skills** not only stimulates neural pathway development but can also improve wellbeing in adults (Knowland & Thomas, 2014) (Vorhauser-Smith, 2012). Coaches are perfectly positioned to help their clients to identify what new skill/learning options, opportunities and obstacles they have available or might encounter.

- In the **emotional domain**, a number of the resilience-building techniques and interventions connect to the cognitive domain, as emotions originate in the amygdalae. Again, these are not limited, and an experienced coach might find them useful merely as catalysts for other open dialogue with their client. They are listed and discussed below:
  - Managing emotions (emotional intelligence, social psychology, coaching)
  - Finding the humour (positive psychology, coaching)
  - Using strengths consciously (positive psychology, coaching)
  - Finding your flow (positive psychology, coaching)
  - Being realistically optimistic (positive psychology, coaching)
  - Managing fear (psychology, coaching)
  - Expressing gratitude (positive psychology, neuroscience, coaching)

**Managing emotions** is a key component in relationship and conflict management (Bharwaney, 2015) (Dues, 2010) and is widely discussed in emotional intelligence theory literature (Bharwaney, 2015) (Goleman, 2011). Coaches can design strategies with their clients to recognise triggers, patterns and behaviours in their quest for successful emotional...
and conflict management. From a systems point of view, the coach can assist their client to consider influences from elements within the other domains. For instance, lack of sleep, inadequate diet, or sensitivity to certain foods, the effect of a negative engagement, unrealistic expectations or negative thought and self-talk patterns (elements for consideration in the physical and cognitive domains) can have an impact on emotional management.

A key characteristic of a resilient person is a sense of humour, or being able to see the ‘lighter side of things’. Learning to look for the humour in situations is a resilience-building skill that can be developed. Frederickson (2003) discusses how positive emotions widen a person’s cognitive-behaviour connection range. For example joy, a positive emotion, encourages playful behaviour. These ‘thought-action repertoires.. build intellectual, physical, social and psychological resources for the future [pg 333]. A coach can assist their client to build up awareness and habits around seeing the humour in situations through skilful questioning.

Using strengths consciously alongside particular goals, interests, values, and situational factors, and finding opportunities to experience flow are grounded in positive psychology and flow research (Csikszentmihaly, 1990). However, Biswas-Diener, Kashdan, & Minhas, (2011) suggest that while strengths are potentials for excellence they also caution against randomly using strengths-finding interventions and should not be treated as appropriate for everyone in every circumstance. Again, taking other system elements in the cognitive and social domain is key to balanced resilience.

Optimism has often been represented by ‘happy faces’ and a reputation for being unrealistic. Ehrenreich (2009) suggests that optimism is overrated and being too optimistic can be perilous for some people. Indeed many clients might feel more in control if they start off from a place of negativity or grounded realism. However, Neimark, (2007) citing Larry Dossey, discusses how ‘optimists are actually realists who take steps to solve problems.’ Research shows that optimists have more responsive immune systems, a stronger sense of self-efficacy and are persistent in the face of challenge. Under trying circumstances however, optimism can lead to fatigue and temporary immune suppression. Whilst our normal view of optimism might be too simplistic, grounded optimism suggests built-in taking action. Neimark suggests
that grounded or realistic optimists have better outcomes because they engage with the world, set goals and persist in the face of difficulty. Tools such as GROW assist the coach to look at the ‘reality’ element of their client’s goal-setting.

**Fear** of some sort, is part of most people’s lives at some point. Extreme fear results in phobia. Whilst a coach does not normally deal with phobia in clients, coaches can assist their client to consider the actual reality of their fears through examining the facts and variables in the source or object of their fear. As many minor fears are future-oriented, a coach can help their client build awareness around how they can mitigate the perceived future reality through brainstorming of available options, planning and action-taking. **F.E.A.R** – future events appearing real is a useful acronym that can highlight how not all future realities can become a present reality. Linking with locus of control, the coach can assist the client to assess the control they have in the present over situations contributing to the perceived future fearful situation.

We know from positive psychology that **gratitude expression** is a well-known intervention for its effect on increasing and sustaining positive emotion and feelings of wellbeing (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006) (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). Coaches can build awareness in their client around those opportunities for gratitude expression.

- **The social domain** has been included in this tool as a separate domain because of the importance of our interaction with others. Engaging with others is key to our survival as humans and can have either a positive or negative effect on our ability to be resilient. Elements in this domain consist of:
  - Helping others
  - Managing potential conflict well (emotional intelligence, conflict coaching, social psychology)
  - Choosing positive relationships (positive psychology, social psychology, relationship coaching)
  - Using resources and support (child and educational psychology, positive psychology, coaching)
Helping others, whether motivated by empathy, compassion or altruism, has long been a study of social scientists. Helping others, whether formally, in the form of volunteerism, or informally, forms part of our human make-up and intrinsically raises our levels of wellbeing. ‘Being there for someone else’ or ‘having someone else need us’ has been cited in many a story of resilience (Winerman, 2006). Coaching a client around opportunities to utilise this resilience-building dimension can be a rewarding experience for both the coach and the client.

The sense of achievement and gratification from managing potential conflict well helps build the ability to be resilient in other areas of our lives (Bharwaney, 2015) (Dues, 2010). As conflict often occurs because of differences in perceived needs, goals and power, with negative behaviours resulting, coaching around conflict management is a key element in the resilience-building toolkit.

Support from family, friends and other resources plays a major role in resiliency and indeed, longevity (Arden, 2010) and there is much research on this topic. Helping the client identify their personal and social resources and support, and identifying ways to use them differently can help build a client’s capacity to be resilient.

- Physical domain
  - Sleeping to recover (health psychology)
  - Having fun (hedonic psychology, coaching)
  - Eating foods that are right for you (health psychology, nutritional psychology)
  - Exercising (health psychology etc)

Historically, elements in the physical domain have been connected with increased wellness and staying healthy. Recently however, there has been a plethora of studies around the specific physical, mental, emotional and social effects of a lack of sleep, incorrect diet and exercise. The measurement of heart rate variability (HRV) is now a popular and largely well-researched quantitative and qualitative measurement of the stress effects of too little sleep and the body’s ability to recover (or recharge) during sleep and exercise (Firstbeat Technologies, 2014). The effect of electronic usage before sleep, on the ability to recover in sleep, as well as sleep hygiene (preparation before sleep), is a focus of study in many research papers on shift-worker and athlete performance and weight-loss.
Whilst people vary in the amount of sleep they need, it is the quality of recovery in that sleep that is seemingly more important (Firstbeat).

As the population increasingly becomes intolerant to various foods, more and more people experience physical discomfort in the form of headaches and abdominal issues, aside from diseases such as coeliac disease and irritable bowel syndrome. Increasingly more focus is on the knock-on effect the symptoms of dietary intolerances have on the other system domains, affecting mood and social interaction (Arden, 2010). When our client identifies dysfunction or dis-ease in one of the system domains, as coaches assisting our client to build resilience, we should be asking questions that help build awareness of their actions and behaviours in the other system domains.

‘Having fun’, and the importance of having fun, has been one of the puzzle’s most selected pieces by test clients when using the Resilient and Happy Heart Puzzle. Clients have either identified that they value having fun highly and incorporate it as much as possible into their daily lives or that they value having fun highly but feel that they can’t seem to integrate it currently as the pressures and stressors of modern day living minimise their ability or opportunities to have fun.

This is an ideal coaching opportunity and planning ‘fun’ times or ways to integrate a sense of fun into their lives, becomes a key part of the client’s resilience-building coaching session.

- **Sense of connectedness**
  - Using breath
  - Following intuition/instinct
  - Experiencing love

On a micro-level, rapport-building is one of the most powerful examples of connecting with another person, and sharing a connectedness. Successful coaching depends on the coach and client feeling connected, hence the chemistry meeting. However, on a larger macro scale, human beings have wanted to feel connected to something greater than themselves since the dawn of man. Transpersonal coaching is a form of coaching that explores this element and it’s ensuing dimensions (Whitmore, 2007).
Breathing is our life-force. The impact of no breath is obvious, but literature around the effect of diaphragmatic breathing, shallow breathing, focused breathing etc., is a core discussion point in many disciplines from medicine to meditation, and resilience studies (Kjeldstadli, et al., 2006). Mindfulness meditation with breathing as a core component, has received much attention over the last decade as a form of mental training that ‘aims to improve an individual’s core psychological capacities, such as attentional and emotional self-regulation.’ (Tang, Hölzel, & Posner, 2015, p. 1). Many coaches are incorporating one or more forms of mindfulness into their coaching sessions to assist their clients to relax, become present in the moment and focus on the coaching experience.

Recent research around the interaction between the heart and the brain and the suggested powerful role the intuitive heart has on decision-making in the brain (Childre, Howard, Rozman, & McCraty, 2016) has received varied responses. The intuitive guidance of the heart however, is reflected in the English language by phrases such as ‘follow your heart’, ‘let your heart guide you’, ‘bare one’s heart’, ‘off by heart’, ‘don’t have the heart’. These simple phrases belie the power we give to our heart’s intuition.

The most recent ‘scientific’ example of increased focus on what role the heart does indeed have to play in our cognitive responses and the impact of various lifestyle practices, thoughts, emotions and social interactions, is reflected in the wealth of information that the heart rate variability results are showing researchers (Firstbeat).

The ‘experiencing love’ resilience-builder is not necessarily about romantic love. Many novice coaches or student coaches have expressed their fear of coaching around the topic of love. Yet love in some form will have touched nearly all of our clients at some point in their lives, leaving some experience of that love. The key consideration for the coach in this dimension, is to remain open-minded, non-judgmental, and stay guided by the client’s goals, following own intuition as the coach.

6. The coaching tool: Coaching for a Happy Heart Builder – putting pieces together for a Resilient Heart ©

The Coaching for a Happy (Resilient) Heart Puzzle © is a tool and a model. A tool is the instrument you engage with in a coaching conversation in order to produce certain results. The model is the process that the coach works with, embodying all the tools and techniques
If a model is too prescriptive, the coaching process runs the risk of the coach following their own agenda and not that of the client (Stout Rostron, 2011). While the resilience-builders named in the Heart Puzzle could be viewed as being too prescriptive, the nature of any model is to ‘represent a system with an implied process; a metaphor or analogy used to help visualize and describe the journey’ [Stout Rostron, p117]. The expectation is that an experienced coach will work with flexibility and in the moment with the client whilst using the tool and refocusing the client if needed, or relinquishing the tool if it no longer serves the client’s journey. Working with a particular model or incorporating other models into the coaching conversation and the entire coaching intervention will assist the coach to work with considerably greater ease. The Heart Puzzle® model represents a system that can help a client focus on their wellbeing and resilience capacity from a whole human system perspective.

The 22-piece wooden puzzle, approximately A3 size, is colour-coded to represent the 5 domains of a human system – the cognitive (thinking), emotional (feelings), social (interaction with others), physical (healthy lifestyle) and life force (connectedness) which can be equated to concepts such as the soul and spirituality. Each piece has a resilience-building label on the front side, and a word or phrase on the underside. The words are intended to stimulate thought in the client and focus them on a particular resilience-builder.

The method utilises a pedagogical and transformational approach based on the premise that humans are complex and integrated systems, and a balanced whole human system approach should be taken when building resilience and wellbeing. The resilience-builders used in the tool are based on or adapted from a number of well-known, and perhaps some lesser known wellbeing interventions grounded in coaching psychology, positive psychology, neuroscience, cognitive behavioural theory and social psychology models. The intention is to use the tool as part of a wider, positive integrative approach to building resilience in the client, or as a set of coaching sessions centred around the theme of resilience-building.
6.1 The coaching session procedure

The tool can be introduced to the client as part of a specific wellbeing and resilience coaching programme or in the middle of a coaching session as the need arises, as with other coaching tools.

Step 1: The coach introduces the heart puzzle as a coaching tool that is designed to stimulate awareness around those practices or elements that can help develop our ability to be resilient. The coach can explain that resilience is a person’s ability to deal with change, the stressors in our lives, life events and changes in our environment in a way that enables us to learn and grow from the experience and move forward – ‘bounce forward’.

Step 2:

For the session, the coach needs to have the completed puzzle available in order to show the client the end result. The intention is that in each session the client selects 1 or 2 pieces from each of the 4 domains. The statements printed on the puzzle pieces should then stimulate further dialogue.

There are two ways for the client to select the pieces.

1) The coach turns the puzzle over so that the pieces fall onto the table. The coach then invites the client to select 4 pieces, one from each colour, and asks them to consider which statement or word ‘resonates’ with them. The client then selects the piece (from each domain) where the statement resonates (either positively or negatively) with them.

2) The coach then asks the client ‘what does (that statement) mean to you? Or ‘what made you choose that piece?’

3) If the client is having difficulty choosing pieces, the coach can suggest putting the pieces in the puzzle bag, and after inviting the client to pick 4 pieces out of the bag, say ‘what does that word/statement ‘say’ to you?’

4) The dialogue should then follow a coaching pattern of questioning, listening, and where applicable, awareness-building, goal and action-setting that will assist the client to increase use of that resilience-builder.
Step 3:
As the coaching dialogue progresses, and after discussing what the word, phrase or concept means to them and how it relates to them in their life, the client might identify that they are perfectly happy or comfortable with that particular issue or element relating to the piece. At this point, the coach will invite the client to place that piece into the puzzle as a way to start building their heart puzzle.

Alternatively, the coach and client might become aware of an opportunity to change a behaviour or practice that can facilitate using that skill or practice more. In this case, the coach can invite the client to write down a goal or action around that issue, on the resilience-building action template (Appendix 3).

Step 4:
Once the first 4 pieces have been discussed, and the client is still engaged in the process, the coach can invite the client to choose another 4 pieces from the bag. The process is the same as for step 2 and 3. The pace of the session and the selection of pieces should be guided by the client’s continued engagement and interest in the process. The dialogue around the concepts should not be rushed.

As the coach draws the session to a close, he/she might suggest to the client that they take a photo of their heart puzzle as a visual reminder to themselves. The coach might also take a photograph of the heart in whatever stage of completion it is as this serves as a note to the coach as to where to place the client’s pieces at the beginning of the following session, if the client wishes to continue with resilience-building coaching.

Other coaching tools:
The coach might find it appropriate to integrate another coaching tool into the session by putting the puzzle building on hold. For instance, the coaching questions in the ROSE Model, developed by Paula King, is an extremely effective way to assist the client to dialogue further around following their heart, instinct, and building their sense of connectedness.

Typically, an hour session will only allow for approximately 8 pieces to be discussed but again, the session should be free-flowing and suit the needs of the client at the time.
Conclusion

The coaching tool introduced in this paper offers an opportunity for coaches to engage with a structure and process that is based on research and innovation regarding resilience. The premise is that resilience is not a fixed state, but rather a dynamic and balanced flow between various elements, and can be built on. The tool offers a way to springboard a coaching dialogue around this. No coaching tool should be utilised unless it can assist the client to move forward, and the coach should be skilled enough to release attachment to the tool if it is no longer serving the coaching dialogue. Future intentions involve using the tool for empirical research around the efficacy of coaching and resilience-building. No-one knows what life events will befall them, but if coaches can assist their clients to understand and use resilience-building techniques in their lives, perhaps that will be the catalyst for positive thriving.
Appendix 1

(1) Complete puzzle

(2) Base of puzzle without pieces

(3) Underside of pieces

(4) Top side of pieces
Appendix 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resilience-builders in coaching tool (Build a Happy Heart - Figure 3)</th>
<th>Dimensions for Resilience (Figure 2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive domain</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cognitive</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Managing thoughts and self-talk (CB psychology, social psychology, NLP, coaching)</td>
<td>• Self-belief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Taking control (organisational psychology, coaching)</td>
<td>• Outlook and perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being in the moment (mindfulness, neuroscience, coaching)</td>
<td>• Thinking traps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Balancing expectations (neuroscience, coaching, social psychology)</td>
<td>• Sustained focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Making positive choices (positive psychology, CB psychology, coaching)</td>
<td>• Causal analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Setting goals and taking action</td>
<td>• Control controllables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning new skills (neuroscience, coaching)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional domain</strong></td>
<td><strong>Emotional</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Managing emotions (emotional intelligence, social psychology, coaching)</td>
<td>• Calming and focusing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Finding the humour (positive psychology, coaching)</td>
<td>• Impulse control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Using strengths consciously (positive psychology, coaching)</td>
<td>• Emotional regulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Finding your flow (positive psychology, coaching)</td>
<td>• Positive emotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being realistically optimistic (positive psychology, coaching)</td>
<td>• Realistic optimism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Managing fear (psychology, coaching)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Expressing gratitude (positive psychology, neuroscience, coaching)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social domain</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Helping others
- Managing potential conflict well (emotional intelligence, conflict coaching, social psychology)
- Choosing positive relationships (positive psychology, social psychology, relationship coaching)
- Using resources and support (child and educational psychology, positive psychology, coaching)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical domain</th>
<th>Physical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Sleeping to recover (health psychology)</td>
<td>- Fitness and stamina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Having fun (hedonic psychology, coaching)</td>
<td>- Nutrition for energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Eating foods that are right for you (health psychology, nutritional psychology)</td>
<td>- Rest and recovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Exercising (health psychology etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of connectedness</th>
<th>Spiritual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Using breath</td>
<td>- Values and beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Following intuition/instinct</td>
<td>- Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Experiencing love</td>
<td>- Reaching out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are your top 4 resilience builders for today in the following 4 areas?</th>
<th>Cognitive (thinking)</th>
<th>Emotional (feeling)</th>
<th>Social (engagement with others)</th>
<th>Physical (sleep, exercise, diet etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write your choices in each of the colour fields.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes and goals for myself:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography


