

Stories of resilience

Throughout history people have adapted to difficult, changing situations when unexpected things happen and disrupt people's lives. Being resilient means being able to adapt to these changes, being able to cope and keep going and support others to do the same through kindness. These activities explore resilience and what it means to be adaptable to change.

Suggested ages for each activity are for guidance. Resources have been designed to be adaptable and are suitable for multi-generational learning.

Learning objectives

Learners will:

- reflect on how have people have adapted to the current situation
- think about the words 'resilience' and 'adaptability'
- evaluate their position in their community and the importance of community resilience
- empathise with others in difficult situations
- understand the meaning of and develop resilience

Definition activity: What is resilience? (ages: 12-19)

Resilience can mean different things to different people. Write or draw your own definition of resilience, then look at the one below.

It can mean that people are able to keep going even if they find themselves in a difficult situation, by finding ways to solve problems or adapting to fit the new situation.

What do you think makes a person resilient? Draw an outline of a person and write all the things that you think make a person resilient inside the outline. On the outside of the outline of the person write any changes that are happening that they might need to be resilient to.

One way to consider resilience is to talk about what you need in order to be resilient. The New Zealand Red Cross believe there are four things you need to be resilient that they call 'the pillars of resilience':

- > You need connections with other people who can help and support you
- > You need some stability, like support from friends and family and certain things you do regularly
- > You need resources like food and shelter, and access to medical care
- > You need the ability to be adaptable and flexible

Why do you think these things are important? Now think about your own resilience, do you have things from the four pillars in place? If not, what could you do to ensure you have what you need to be resilient?

Reading activity: Adaptable people, resilient people (ages: 12-19)

Read the stories of the people beneath who have shown resilience. Think about some of the similarities in their stories.

Katelyn

I am a university student in the UK. When coronavirus struck, I was in the middle of my first year at university. I had just settled in and started when I suddenly had to come home again. Moving back home to my parent's house just when I had moved out for the first time was a little difficult. I was excited to start university and now I feel I have lost some of my time there. My friends are far away but we stay in contact on social media. We chat regularly. Staying in contact with them really helps me feel less lonely and bored. I also keep busy by exercising, grooming my dogs and baking cakes. My older sister moved in with us because she didn't want to be in isolation on her own, my mum has stayed busy by painting the house and my dad's factory is has reopened again so he can make parts for delivery vehicles. So, we are all getting used to our new routine.



Christina

I am a nurse in Chengdu, a city in the west of China. My job is more complicated than it was before the outbreak. I now have to take every patient's temperature and ask them a lot of questions about where they have been and who they have been with. When the virus first started to spread, I was worried that it would get out of hand. We didn't know that much about it at first. We didn't know what would happen. But, when we started to learn more about it, and learnt what we needed to do to stop it spreading we felt better. Whenever I felt worried, I tried to stay positive whilst I wasn't working. I exercised at home and focused on my hobby: learning how to play a traditional Chinese instrument. I even had online classes with my music teachers. Working together also helped me. Staying home is important. The more people stayed at home the easier our job was and the better we could take care of people.



Russell

I am a teacher in the UK. Being in lockdown has changed the way that I work because alongside teaching my lessons I now have to home school my own children. There are a lot of plates to spin. I have had to find new ways to work. Alongside having to make new working routines at home and at work, I have had to get used to setting work for students through computers instead of standing in front of them. I found this very strange; I miss directly teaching my students. I have been emailing and telephoning students to keep in contact to make sure that some of the normal routine stays in place. The contact with students has helped with my own routine and let me feel a bit more normal. I still miss the spark, and the humour, that is created within the classroom and hope to get back to school soon.



Think about the different types of challenges they had. What did these include?

Think about what each person said. How have they adapted to the situation?

Think about the different challenges you have overcome in everyday life. How did you overcome them, keep going and looking after yourself?

Reading activity: Community resilience (ages: 12-19)

Read the information about some Red Cross volunteers. These people spend their time helping their community.



Lisa and Jeanie

Lisa and Jeanie, community response volunteers: This mother and daughter pair decided to put their spare time to good use when the coronavirus outbreak saw their work and college close. They volunteered together at a local food bank. "When times are so desperate, and when someone shows a bit of kindness, the kindness does go a long way. It's nice to be united in that," Lisa said.



Gaia

Gaia is from Italy and is 16 years old. She has volunteered in her local Red Cross branch in Florence since October 2019. She is a high school student who studies and loves art. Now that the schools are closed, she is helping as much as possible as a volunteer. She helps bring groceries to elderly people in Florence.

- > Why do you think they chose to volunteer in their community?
- > How does their work help other people become resilient?
- > How might it help them to be more resilient?

Their acts of kindness will help others to be more resilient. We can't all donate our time to volunteer like them, but we can all do something. Think of small acts of kindness you can do to help your family or community be more resilient, whilst following safety guidelines.

Reflective activity: Ripple effect (ages: 7-19)

Part of resilience is understanding how things affect us and our communities.

Draw a series of circles like ripples when you drop something into water. The inner circle is you, the middle circle is your friends and family, the outside circle is your school or community. Draw the ways in which the current situation has affected your life. It's important to reflect how problems affect you personally and how they affect others.

How have you shown resilience to these changes? Who and what has helped you?

Think about another person's perspective – do the ripple effect again for the people in the stories above, a family member or friend.

Interview activity: Your stories (ages: 7-19)

Using the stories above as examples, ask your friends and family how they have been affected by this situation, or another challenging situation in the past. What did they do to overcome it?

Some example questions are:

- > How did this situation change your life?
- > What is the biggest challenge you have had to overcome?
- > How did you overcome it?

You can create your own newspaper article of stories or a news style programme where you record the interviews in videos.

Reflect on what you have learned. Go back to your resilient person outline. What words did you write? Think about one thing you can do to be more resilient and help others to be resilient too.