



ENHANCING RESILIENCE RESOURCE SERIES

How to develop my support networks

STUDENT RESOURCE

What is resilience?

Resilience is important for your emotional, psychological and social wellbeing and for your ability to learn and perform. More specifically, resilience is positively associated with good mental health, happiness, optimism, coping with stress, persistence in the face of challenges, successful completion of a degree, career decision making and career adaptability. Resilience can be developed.

Our circle of social support—friends, family, communities and institutions (including the university)—are important to our resilience. These social supports come in lots of different forms including instrumental support (e.g. university fee assistance, financial support from family), emotional support (e.g. behaviour from your social group that helps you feel loved, respected, and/or cared for), and informational support (e.g. getting advice or guidance intended to help you cope with a challenging situation, and encouragement and reassurance).

Your social support can also help with thinking about challenges in a different way. To enhance your resilience you need to focus on yourself as an individual and also ensure you have positive

relationships and supportive environments.

You might like to watch [Emma Seppälä's TedX talk](#) on social connection and how we can improve this in our lives.

Seibert, Kraimer and Heslin (2016) outline four strategies we can use to enhance the quality of our social connections. We have listed these below. When reading them, challenge yourself to enact each of them at least once over the next week.

1. Engage respectfully by ensuring you pay full attention during interactions, setting aside your electronic devices and ignoring other distractions.
2. Provide information or other resources that assist others to do their work (or studies) more effectively.
3. Be reliable: meet your commitments.
4. Take a leisurely break with someone for the purpose of relaxation, without discussing studies or work.

Resilience Activity: How do I develop my support networks?

1. What important goal would you like to achieve in your studies over the next month? Use the [SMART goals resource](#) to ensure that the goal is ambitious yet achievable, and to identify the strategies you can use to achieve it.

2. Who might support you to achieve your goal?

List below the people from whom you will seek support to achieve your goal. The support you need might be emotional, informational or instrumental - as outlined on the first page. You may wish to draw on your close personal network of family and friends, and/or you might need to draw on university supports such as peers, university staff or a workplace supervisor.

3. List the people you can ask for support to achieve your goal/s. Your list is likely to include people you feel comfortable in approaching for support and also people you feel less comfortable in approaching. Take a few minutes to note how you will go about approaching people in a professional manner.

You might like to use the resource [Learn how to network](#) if you are meeting someone for the first time. Take along your SMART goal and strategy to guide the conversation!



This resource was developed by Margo Brewer (Curtin University) and Dawn Bennett (Curtin University)

The **EmployABILITY initiative** is led by Professor Dawn Bennett, Curtin University, Australia.

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