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## CULTIVATING RESILIENCE AND WELL-BEING IN HAIRSTYLING

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

## Introduction

**R**eject on the passion and artistry that first drew you to hairstyling, fueling your journey through creativity and resilience. The moments when creativity flows, where every cut and color reflects the vision in your mind. Yet alongside that passion often lies another reality: the exhaustion of long hours, the stress of managing clients, and the pressure to constantly innovate. For freelance hairstylists, the path to success isn't always smooth. Balancing creativity with the demands of running a business—whether in a rented studio, mobile setup, or at-home salon—can leave you vulnerable to burnout.

In a field that celebrates self-expression, sustaining mental and physical well-being is as critical as mastering the latest techniques. Psychological studies highlight the importance of resilience in high-demand professions like hairstyling. Resilience—our ability to bounce back, adapt, and thrive through challenges—is the foundation for both long-term success and fulfillment. Consider the journey of hairstylist Johnny Wright, known for his work with Michelle Obama. His career wasn't always glitzy. Through rigorous self-care, a commitment to growth, and community support, Wright navigated the ups and downs of his freelance career and continues to thrive.

Then there's Tabatha Coffey, a celebrity stylist who rose to fame through her unfiltered approach on television. Behind her on-screen persona, Coffey's journey has been one of learning to balance a high-profile career with well-being. She has openly shared how prior-

## Burnout Self-Assessment

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Take a moment to check in with yourself by answering yes or no to these questions:

1. Do you feel emotionally drained after a typical workday?
2. Have you noticed decreased satisfaction in your styling work?
3. Are you experiencing physical symptoms like headaches, back pain, or insomnia?
4. Do you find yourself canceling personal plans due to work exhaustion?
5. Have you become more irritable with clients or colleagues?
6. Do you feel a sense of reduced accomplishment despite working hard?
7. Are you relying on unhealthy coping mechanisms (excessive caffeine, alcohol, etc.)?
8. Has your creativity or problem-solving ability decreased?

**Scoring:** If you answered “yes” to 3 or more questions, you may be experiencing early signs of burnout. If you answered “yes” to 5 or more, consider implementing the strategies in this chapter immediately and potentially seek professional support.

Remember: Recognizing burnout early is the first step toward reclaiming your well-being and creative passion.

## **Building Resilience: Reframing Challenges with a Growth Mindset**

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In any creative field, resilience starts with how we perceive challenges. Shifting from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset is a powerful way to build mental resilience. Psychologist Carol Dweck describes a growth mindset as seeing failures and setbacks not as limitations but as opportunities for learning. When hairstylists adopt this perspective, it becomes easier to embrace each misstep as a stepping stone to skill and self-improvement.

**Example in Action:** Renowned stylist Kim Kimble rose to success by adopting this mindset early in her career. Known for her work with Beyoncé, Kimble recalls the struggles she faced in the beginning. Instead of viewing each setback as a failure, she saw them as valuable learning moments. “Challenges have always driven me to learn more, to think differently,” she has said. This attitude helped Kimble innovate her techniques, allowing her to push creative boundaries and achieve career longevity.

**Maya Smith’s Story:** Maya Smith, founder of The Doux, exemplifies a growth mindset. Building her brand meant staying true to her vision while navigating the complexities of entrepreneurship. Smith’s approach has always been to view obstacles as catalysts

for personal and professional growth. She believes in the power of authenticity, sharing her journey openly with her clients and community. This connection strengthens her brand's message of resilience and pride in individuality.

## Personal Anecdote: Turning Setbacks into Success

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There was a time early in my career when a major setback almost derailed my confidence. I had invested months into a promotional campaign that, despite my best efforts, failed to generate the expected response. Instead of wallowing in disappointment, I reframed the experience as a vital learning opportunity. I spent countless hours analyzing what went wrong—from misaligned messaging to technical glitches—and gradually transformed my perspective.

That setback taught me that each failure is a stepping stone, and embracing a growth mindset allowed me to refine my approach, ultimately leading to more innovative strategies and improved client interactions. This experience reshaped how I view challenges and solidified my belief in continuous learning.

**Key Insight:** Every setback contains valuable lessons that can strengthen your resilience and improve your professional approach when viewed through a growth mindset.

## Practical Steps for Hairstylists

1. **Self-Reflection After Setbacks:** Take a moment to analyze challenges. Instead of focusing on “what went wrong,” ask yourself, “What can I learn?” Keeping a journal where you reflect on client experiences, both good and challenging, can help build a constructive outlook.
2. **Seek Constructive Feedback:** Actively seek out constructive feedback from trusted peers or clients to improve your skills. This will help normalize learning from others while broadening your perspective.
3. **Celebrate Small Wins:** Growth doesn’t happen overnight. Celebrating progress, whether it’s perfecting a new technique or managing a difficult client interaction, reinforces a growth-focused outlook.

## Setting Purposeful Goals with the SMART Methodology

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For freelance hairstylists, having clear goals can be a lifeline in the fast-paced beauty industry. SMART goals—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound—provide a structured framework to achieve tangible progress. These goals anchor us, offering direction and a sense of purpose that strengthens resilience.

Real-World Example: Vernon François, a celebrity stylist known for his advocacy in textured hair care, credits goal-setting with helping him navigate the com-

petitive beauty industry. Early in his career, François set specific goals to develop products that cater to diverse hair types, something he felt was missing in mainstream beauty. By focusing on his goal with purpose and clarity, he built a successful line of products that has changed the textured hair industry.

## Personal Anecdote: SMART Goals in Action

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I vividly remember the time I decided to apply the SMART goal framework to boost my freelance business. I set a very clear objective: to increase my client bookings by 20% within six months. Breaking the goal down into specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound steps, I crafted a plan that included targeted social media campaigns, a streamlined booking system, and follow-up routines for past clients.

By monitoring my progress regularly, I not only met my target but exceeded it by reaching a 25% increase in bookings. This structured approach gave me the confidence to set and achieve meaningful goals, proving that clarity and discipline can transform aspirations into tangible successes.

**Key Insight:** SMART goals provide the structure and accountability needed to turn ambitious visions into achievable milestones, creating momentum and building confidence.

## Practical Steps for Stylists

1. **Define Specific Goals:** Instead of a vague goal like “I want more clients,” specify it as “I want to attract five new clients in the next month by improving my social media presence.”
2. **Break Goals into Steps:** Outline achievable actions. For example, to increase visibility, plan to post daily on social media, collaborate with a local brand, or attend industry networking events.
3. **Set Milestones and Track Progress:** Regularly review your progress and celebrate reaching smaller milestones. Tracking your efforts helps maintain motivation and a sense of accomplishment.
4. **Adjust and Reflect:** Not every goal will go as planned. Flexibility is essential; re-evaluate and adjust your approach to remain aligned with your overall vision.
5. **Accountability Tip:** Connect with another stylist or professional to share your goals and check in regularly. Having someone to encourage you and keep you on track can boost resilience.

## Building a Support Network Through Community and Vulnerability

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A thriving freelance hairstyling career doesn't have to be a solitary journey. Research from the American Sociological Association underscores the importance of support networks in fostering resilience. Building

genuine connections with others in the industry can provide emotional support, shared learning, and professional growth.

Case in Point: Hairstylist and educator Ted Gibson, known for his celebrity clients and salon success, openly credits his community for sustaining him throughout his career. After closing his salon in New York, Gibson joined industry groups and built a network of support, which he describes as invaluable to his resilience. He later reimagined his business in Los Angeles, offering virtual consultations, a shift inspired by his support network's insights and encouragement.

## Personal Anecdote: Building Future Community

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Building a supportive network has always been a goal of mine, and while I haven't yet established a dedicated community, I'm excited about the future. There was a time when I truly felt the need for a group of like-minded stylists to share insights and lift each other up. That experience has inspired me to create a space where we can all grow together.

With the launch of this book, I look forward to starting a community—Curls n Contemp Collective—where we can exchange ideas, overcome challenges, and celebrate our successes. If you're reading this, I encourage you to sign up and be part of this emerging collective. Together, we'll build a network that supports our creative journeys and drives our industry forward.

**Key Insight:** Creating community takes intention and vulnerability, but the support and shared wisdom gained from connecting with fellow professionals can be transformative for both personal and career growth.

## Practical Steps for Cultivating Supportive Connections

1. **Engage with Industry Groups:** Join hairstyling communities, whether online or in person, to share experiences and find mentors. Platforms like Instagram and LinkedIn have active groups for stylists, offering opportunities to connect with others who understand the industry's challenges.
2. **Create Accountability Partnerships:** Pair with a fellow stylist to set goals, brainstorm solutions, and celebrate wins. Accountability partners offer encouragement and practical insights that enhance resilience.
3. **Attend Events and Workshops:** Industry events provide valuable opportunities to meet like-minded professionals and build your support network.
4. **Practice Vulnerability:** Sharing your challenges can feel uncomfortable but often leads to deeper connections and mutual support. Start small by opening up to trusted colleagues about your experiences.

## Professional Boundary Templates

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Clear boundaries protect your well-being and professional standards. Use these templates to address common challenging situations:

**For After-Hours Requests:** “I appreciate you reaching out about your hair emergency. To ensure I provide the best service to all my clients, I maintain specific business hours (list your hours). I’d be happy to schedule you for the next available appointment, which is [date/time]. For urgent styling tips until then, I recommend [quick solution].”

**For Scope Creep:** “I understand you’d like to add [additional service] to today’s appointment. Since this service requires additional time that isn’t available in today’s schedule, I’d be happy to book a follow-up appointment specifically for that service. This ensures you’ll receive the dedicated attention each service deserves.”

**For Price Negotiation:** “I understand budget concerns, and I appreciate your interest in my services. My pricing reflects the quality of products I use, my ongoing education, and the personalized experience I provide. While I can’t adjust my rates, I’d be happy to discuss a service package that might better fit your budget while still meeting your needs.”

**For Persistent Lateness:** “I notice we’ve had some challenges with appointment timing. To ensure you receive a complete service and I can honor my commitments to all clients, I’ll need to start precisely at our scheduled time. If you arrive more than [X minutes]

late, we may need to reschedule or modify your service. Would you prefer a different appointment time that might work better with your schedule?”

## Practicing Essential Self-Care

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Self-care is not a luxury but a necessity for mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Research highlights how regular self-care improves focus, reduces stress, and enhances overall resilience, allowing professionals to sustain their passion and productivity. For hairstylists who work in dynamic, high-pressure environments, building a self-care routine can make all the difference.

Inspiration from Experience: Celebrity hairstylist Tabatha Coffey, known for her work on TV shows like “Tabatha Takes Over,” has spoken openly about her self-care practices. Coffey maintains that taking time to rest and recharge fuels her creativity and strengthens her resilience. She emphasizes that self-care is what enables her to handle high-stakes situations calmly and with a positive outlook.

## Personal Anecdote: The Power of Self-Care

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After years of relentless work, there came a moment when burnout hit me hard—I was missing important family events, and my creative spark was fading. It was then that I realized self-care wasn’t a luxury but a ne-

cessity. I began to incorporate practices like daily mindfulness meditation, regular physical exercise, and strict boundaries between work and personal time.

One particularly transformative week, after forcing myself to take a full day off, I returned with renewed energy and a sharper focus on my craft. That turning point taught me that prioritizing self-care not only enhances my well-being but also elevates the quality of my work, proving that taking care of myself is integral to sustaining a vibrant, creative career.

**Key Insight:** Self-care isn't selfish—it's essential for maintaining the energy, creativity, and resilience needed to serve clients at your highest level.

## Actionable Self-Care Tips for Stylists

1. **Mindful Morning Routine:** Start the day with intention. A few moments of meditation, deep breathing, or journaling can help center your focus, creating mental clarity before a busy day.
2. **Set Boundaries:** It's essential to know when to say "no" to extra hours or challenging clients if it compromises your well-being. Respecting your boundaries prevents burnout and keeps your energy sustainable.
3. **Prioritize Physical Health:** Long hours can take a toll on the body. Stretching exercises, regular movement, and proper ergonomics are essential. Making time for exercise—even a quick walk—can boost your mood and keep you energized.

4. **Digital Detox:** Set aside time to disconnect from social media and digital devices. Unplugging from work-related stress helps clear your mind and recharge.
5. **Practice Gratitude:** Reflect on positive moments and achievements at the end of each day. A gratitude journal can reinforce your appreciation for your work and clients, helping you maintain a resilient, positive outlook.

## Mental Health Resources for Creative Professionals

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When self-care isn't enough, professional support can make all the difference. These resources are tailored for creative professionals and entrepreneurs:

### Crisis Support:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 988 or 1-800-273-8255 (24/7)
- Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741 (24/7)

### Apps for Mental Wellness:

- **Headspace:** Guided meditation app with specific programs for work stress and creativity
- **Calm:** Sleep stories and relaxation techniques for better rest
- **Woebot:** AI-based cognitive behavioral therapy chatbot for daily mental health support
- **Youper:** Emotional health assistant that tracks mood patterns

## **Organizations for Creative Professionals:**

- **The Boris Lawrence Henson Foundation:** Focuses on mental health in the Black community
- **Loveland Foundation:** Provides therapy support to Black women and girls
- **Beauty 2 The Streetz:** Supports stylists experiencing homelessness or financial crisis
- **Professional Beauty Association:** Offers emergency funding and resources for beauty professionals

## **Finding a Therapist:**

- **Therapy for Black Girls:** Directory of culturally competent therapists
- **Open Path Collective:** Affordable therapy for individuals without insurance
- **BetterHelp:** Online therapy platform with flexible scheduling for busy professionals

Remember: Seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness. Your mental health is as important as your creative talent.

## **Physical Wellness for Hairstylists**

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The physical demands of hairstyling—standing for hours, repetitive motions, and exposure to chemicals—can take a significant toll on your body over time. Proactive physical wellness practices not only prevent injury but also enhance your stamina and career longevity.

## Ergonomic Practices to Prevent Physical Strain

1. **Proper Positioning:** Maintain good posture while working. Adjust your client's chair height so you don't need to hunch or reach awkwardly. Your shoulders should be relaxed, not raised or rounded forward.
2. **Supportive Footwear:** Invest in quality shoes with proper arch support and cushioning. Consider compression socks for improved circulation during long days.
3. **Anti-Fatigue Mats:** Place these in areas where you stand the most to reduce pressure on your joints and lower back.
4. **Wrist Protection:** Keep wrists in a neutral position when cutting and styling. Consider ergonomic scissors and tools designed to reduce strain.
5. **Height-Adjustable Equipment:** Use chairs, styling stations, and tools that can be adjusted to your height to prevent unnecessary reaching or bending.

## Essential Stretches for Hairstylists

### Daily Stretching Routine for Stylists

#### Morning Stretches (5 minutes):

1. **Wrist Flexor Stretch:** Extend one arm forward, palm up. With your other hand, gently pull fingers back toward your body. Hold 15-30 seconds. Repeat on other side.

2. **Shoulder Rolls:** Roll shoulders forward 5 times, then backward 5 times.
3. **Neck Stretches:** Gently tilt your head to each shoulder, holding for 15 seconds.

#### **Between Clients (1-2 minutes each):**

1. **Standing Back Bend:** Place hands on lower back and gently arch backward.
2. **Finger Spreads:** Spread fingers wide, then make a fist. Repeat 10 times.
3. **Calf Raises:** Rise onto toes, hold for 3 seconds, then lower. Repeat 10 times.

#### **End of Day Recovery (10 minutes):**

1. **Child's Pose:** Kneel on the floor, sit back on heels, extend arms forward, rest forehead on mat. Hold 1-2 minutes.
2. **Seated Spinal Twist:** Sit with legs extended, bend one knee and cross it over the other leg. Twist toward the bent knee. Hold 30 seconds each side.
3. **Legs Up The Wall:** Lie on your back with legs extended up a wall. Stay for 2-5 minutes to improve circulation.

### **Nutrition for Sustained Energy**

1. **Prep Nutrient-Dense Meals:** Prepare balanced meals that include protein, healthy fats, and complex carbohydrates to maintain steady energy levels throughout your workday.

2. **Stay Hydrated:** Keep a water bottle accessible. Dehydration can lead to fatigue, headaches, and reduced concentration.
3. **Strategic Snacking:** Pack small, energy-boosting snacks like nuts, fruit, or yogurt to maintain blood sugar levels between clients.
4. **Limit Caffeine:** While tempting during long days, excessive caffeine can lead to energy crashes. Consider herbal teas or infused water as alternatives.

## Financial Wellness and Mental Well-Being

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Financial stress can significantly impact your mental health and creative performance. For freelance hairstylists, irregular income patterns can create additional anxiety. Building financial wellness practices helps create stability, reducing a major source of stress and enhancing your overall resilience.

### Creating Financial Stability as a Freelancer

1. **Emergency Fund:** Build a savings buffer that covers 3-6 months of essential expenses. Start small if necessary—even \$500 can provide peace of mind during slower periods.
2. **Separate Business and Personal Finances:** Maintain separate accounts to clearly track income and expenses, making tax preparation less stressful.

3. **Income Smoothing:** During high-earning months, set aside a percentage of income to support yourself during predictable slow seasons.
4. **Diversify Revenue Streams:** Reduce financial vulnerability by developing multiple income sources—services, product sales, education, or content creation.
5. **Understand Your Worth:** Regularly review and adjust your pricing to ensure it reflects your experience, specialization, and market value.

## Simple Financial Practices for Mental Peace

1. **Weekly Money Check-ins:** Schedule 15-30 minutes weekly to review your finances. Regular attention prevents anxiety-inducing surprises.
2. **Automate Essential Payments:** Set up automatic payments for recurring expenses to reduce mental load and avoid late fees.
3. **Implement a Simple Tracking System:** Use apps like Mint, YNAB, or QuickBooks Self-Employed to easily monitor income and expenses.
4. **Create Financial Boundaries:** Establish clear policies about deposits, cancellations, and payment methods to protect your financial health.
5. **Seek Professional Guidance:** Consider consulting with a financial advisor who specializes in working with freelancers or creative professionals.

Remember that financial wellness isn't about pursuing wealth for its own sake—it's about creating a foundation that supports your creative freedom and re-

duces unnecessary stress. Even small steps toward financial organization can significantly improve your mental well-being.

## Embracing Resilience as a Lifelong Practice

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Building a career as a freelance hairstylist requires much more than technical skill; it demands resilience, adaptability, and a dedication to well-being. Throughout this chapter, we've explored how adopting a growth mindset, setting structured goals, building community connections, and prioritizing self-care can create a foundation for long-term fulfillment and success.

Resilience is not a fixed trait; it's a practice. With each challenge you face, you have the opportunity to strengthen your resilience, adapting to the demands of the beauty industry while nurturing your passion. Let the tools and insights in this chapter be a guide on your journey. With self-awareness, purpose, and community, you can shape a career that not only sustains you but allows you to flourish.

As you move forward, remember that resilience is both a skill and a journey. Lean on these practices, honor your well-being, and trust in your unique strengths. By fostering resilience, you'll not only enhance your career but also inspire others to pursue their passions with balance, strength, and intention.

## Actionable Steps

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### Immediate Actions (This Week)

1. **Complete the Burnout Self-Assessment** and honestly evaluate your current well-being status
2. **Establish One Daily Self-Care Practice** such as morning meditation or evening gratitude journaling
3. **Set Up Ergonomic Workspace** adjustments to prevent physical strain and injury
4. **Create Professional Boundary Templates** for common challenging client situations

### Short-Term Goals (Next Month)

1. **Develop a SMART Goal** for one specific area of your business you want to improve
2. **Connect with One Industry Professional** to begin building your support network
3. **Implement a Simple Financial Tracking System** to reduce money-related stress
4. **Establish a Daily Stretching Routine** to maintain physical wellness

### Long-Term Strategies (Next 3-6 Months)

1. **Build an Emergency Fund** starting with small, consistent contributions
2. **Join or Create a Professional Community** of like-minded hairstylists

3. **Develop Multiple Revenue Streams** to increase financial stability
4. **Create a Comprehensive Self-Care Plan** that addresses mental, physical, and emotional wellness

## Endnotes

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# **Chapter Quiz**

**1. The chapter's burnout self-assessment tool serves what purpose?**

- A)** To make stylists feel guilty about struggling
- B)** To provide awareness of burnout symptoms and prompt proactive intervention
- C)** Burnout assessments are unnecessary
- D)** To diagnose clinical mental health conditions

**2. When building resilience through a growth mindset, the chapter recommends:**

- A)** Avoiding all challenges and setbacks
- B)** Viewing failures as personal deficiencies
- C)** Reframing challenges as opportunities to learn, adapt, and strengthen your capacity
- D)** Pretending difficulties don't affect you

**3. The SMART goal methodology emphasized in the chapter helps with:**

- A)** Making vague wishes about the future
- B)** Creating Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound goals that drive meaningful progress
- C)** Setting impossible standards to push yourself
- D)** Goals are unnecessary if you're passionate

**4. According to the chapter, why is building a support network critical for resilience?**

- A)** Support networks are only for weak people
- B)** You should handle everything alone to prove your strength
- C)** Community, mentorship, and professional support provide perspective, encouragement, and resources during challenges
- D)** Support networks create dependency

For answers, see the Quiz Key in the backmatter.

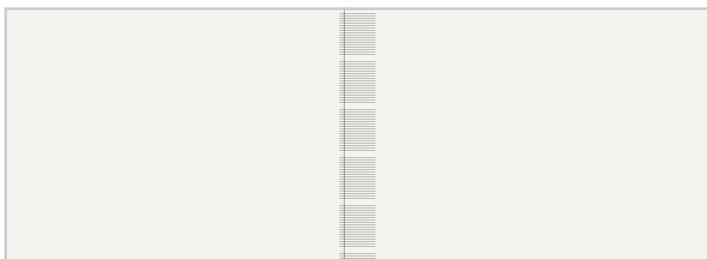


# Chapter Worksheet

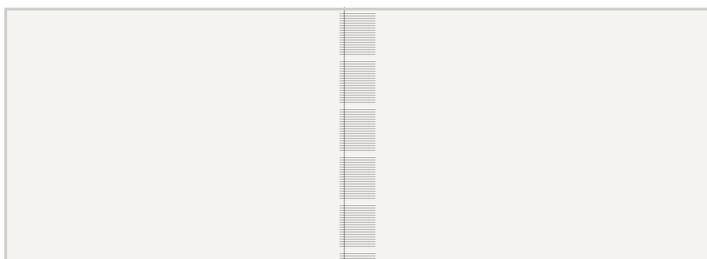
## Reflection Questions:

Take time to consider how this chapter's concepts apply to your own experience and practice.

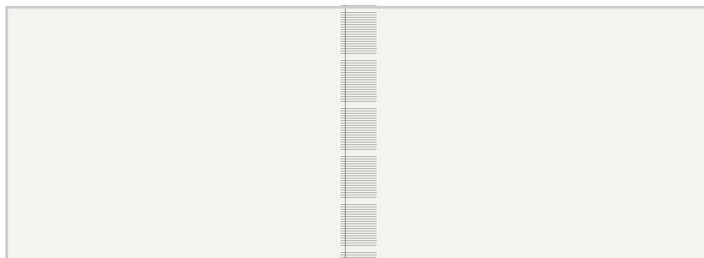
1. Complete the burnout self-assessment from the chapter. What is your current resilience level? What warning signs do you notice?



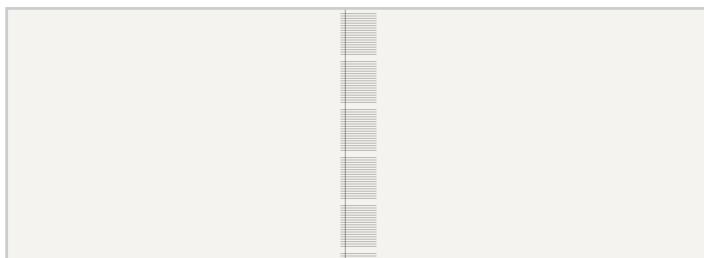
2. Identify a recent professional challenge. How did you respond? Now reframe it using a growth mindset: What did you learn? How did it strengthen you?



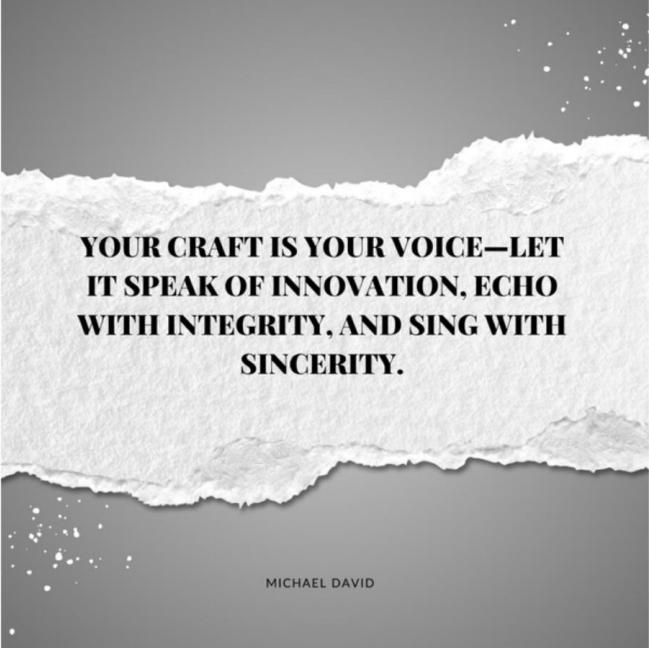
3. Set 2-3 SMART goals for the next quarter. Ensure each goal is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.



4. Map your support network: Who provides emotional support, professional guidance, accountability, and inspiration? Where are gaps? How can you intentionally build community?







**YOUR CRAFT IS YOUR VOICE—LET  
IT SPEAK OF INNOVATION, ECHO  
WITH INTEGRITY, AND SING WITH  
SINCERITY.**

MICHAEL DAVID

Optional caption for the closing image