The practitioner tight rope

A guided discussion tool for recognising and supporting worker resilience

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Version 2

This toolkit was designed for experienced managers and trainers who should feel confident in their ability and qualification to engage workers and teams from specialist professions to recognise and develop their resilience. Training and coaching on the use of 'The Tightrope' as a tool for identifying and supporting worker resilience is available.

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Contents

Introduction

Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit has been developed for managers and trainers of teams working in statutory and specialist services working with vulnerable, complex, high risk or high concern individuals and families.

For example:

- Social Care managers
- Youth Justice managers
- Probation managers
- Healthcare managers
- Substance Misuse managers
- Child, Adolescent and Mental Health Services managers

What is in the toolkit?

Chapter 1 gives a summary of literature on resilience, in the workplace and the practitioner

Chapter 2 introduces the Tightrope analogy and how this can be applied in practice

Chapter 3 provides the tools and materials for use in practice and/or training, including a subchapter for each area of the analogy and the references to the prompts within the toolkit

Chapter 4 will conclude with questions to support a review

1. Resilience

"Resilience is …the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaption despite challenging or threatening circumstances"

(Masten et al, 1990)

What is resilience?

There is a wealth of definitions of, and approaches to, individual resilience. Within the helping professions there is widespread agreement that resilience is a protective resource that might help vulnerable children successfully recover from environmental adversity (Haggerty, Sherrod, Garmezy & Rutter, 1996). In the field of adult mental health it is seen as a vital component of protecting the psychological wellbeing of traumatised adults (Bonanno, 2004). Environmental influences, such as attachment style in childhood, is thought to be predictive of resilience to stress in later life (Buckner, Mezzacappa & Beardslee, 2003).

More latterly there has been an increased interest in workplace resilience as a possible explanation as to why some practitioners may succumb to burnout or compassion fatigue, whilst others appear to thrive despite considerable pressures (Collins, 2008; Morrison, 2007 and Howe, 2008). Kinman and Grant (2011) have developed a hypothesis that emotional resilience is a predictor of accurate empathy in social workers.

While the common narrative of resilience is the ability to "bounce back' despite adversity and the resource to do well against poor odds, to cope, and importantly to recover; the concept of resilience is commonly understood with reference to risk, vulnerability, and protective factors. *Risks* are any factors which increases the probability of an undesired outcome. *Vulnerability* is a feature which determines whether a person is more susceptible to a threat. *Protective* factors are those which offer a buffer against the ill-effects of risk. Therefore, resilience is a dynamic process involving a personal negotiation through life that fluctuates across time, life stage and context. The Practitioner Tightrope is the analogy used for this complex negotiation.

Why is resilience important for professionals?

Working with vulnerable clients is challenging for any profession. To engage successfully with human adversity requires considerable professional and personal skills and knowledge. This work is both intellectually demanding and emotionally laden. Jan Horwarth (2015) states "practitioners, irrespective of the service users they work with, have educational, emotional and supervisory needs". Convincingly she argues that practitioners must have their *own* needs met in order to have an "effective working alliance with families". Therefore the cultural and climatic elements of the workplace can impact on the quality of practice *and* the physical, emotional, educational and supervisory needs of the practitioner.

Dr Louise Grant and Prof Gail Kinman have provided extensive papers on the subject of resilience in social work training and practice (2009 – 2016) and have developed tools to assess and enhance resilience of students and practitioners and believe the following factors underpin resilience:

- Emotional literacy / self efficacy
- Bounded empathy / compassion
- Self care / self compassion
- Reflective ability
- Social resources, support / confidence
- Appropriate coping style / coping flexibility

(Kinman and Grant, 2011)

These factors would also be influenced by both personal characteristics and organizational context, however, if there is an absence or active avoidance of these essential building blocks of resilience within any caring organisation, client safety and well-being could be compromised. For instance, The Francis Report (2013) identified "an insidious negative culture involving a tolerance of poor standards and a disengagement from managerial and leadership responsibilities." Within such an adverse hospital environment the Francis Inquiry heard distressing evidence of appalling care of, and indifference to vulnerable patients, whose outcomes often worsened. Therefore a respectful, humane and robust organisational culture not only influences practitioner development, it provides the environment necessary for clients to build their own resilience.

Resilience in the workplace

Whilst resilience requires utilising innate abilities such as perseverance, emotional management and self-efficacy, it is also influenced by wider organisational cultures and structures. The last section highlighted the dangers associated with negative organisational cultures. The workplace environment (or structure) can also optimise practitioner resilience. The proximity of solid peer relationships and the availability of effective supervision are essential elements of the immediate work environment. Structures of support and guidance are especially important when practitioners are engaged in change work with at risk populations. As Ruch (2007) highlights:

> *"the primitive feelings generated by complex, unpredictable situations can have the effect of disrupting cognition and fragmenting thought processes. Such experiences make it difficult for an individual or group to think coherently about a situation"*

The engaged team leader, or supervisor, can heavily influence the practitioner's ability to manage the toll of high emotion. Effective supervisors are the stewards of organisational energy. They have the capacity to motivate and contain individuals and teams. The containment function of the supervisor is demonstrated when:

> *"The linking of feelings and thoughts generates emotional and cognitive development— thoughtfulness—and contributes to the construction of structures for thinking. The absence of a 'container' impairs this developmental construction process"*   (Davys & Beddoe, 2010).

The physical and psychology availability of a contained (and containing) supervisor allows for greater integrated thinking, which in turn models resilience, as illustrated below.

> *"My supervision is both structured – so I know what to expect – and flexible, allowing scope to look at certain issues in detail. I have a good working relationship with my supervisor and feel comfortable and able to share anything which is on my mind."*
>   (Social Worker, Community Care, 2013).

The building of such alliances between the practitioner and supervisor creates greater organisational resilience. In an analysis of Serious Case Reviews, Brandon et al (2012) identify that:

> *"The professionalism and authoritative practice described above does not emerge automatically within our services. It needs to be embedded in education and training of professionals, and undergirded by cultures of supportive supervision. Building cultures of support and empowerment needs strong organisational leadership within Local Safeguarding Children Boards and in their constituent agencies."*   *(page 205).*

2. Introducing the Tightrope

"Only relationship-based cultures offer the security to tolerate, contain and explore uncertainty and unknowing in a productive and collaborative manner".   *(Morrison, 2010)*

The Tightrope analogy

During transition, crisis, change and development individuals can experience a period of volatility and imbalance. This could be likened to walking on a tightrope. How volatile the experience is will depend on historical risk and protective factors, internal resilience, external support and ongoing or current pressures. These are all used in the tight rope® tool as shown below:

tight rope®

Warning signs of 'falling off'

Balancing – Internal strengths

Forecasting - Contingency planning

Steps up - Current worries making Tightrope higher

Motives, intentions, capacity to change

Steps planned / actions needed

Safety net – external support

What can others do to support the plan?

Past worries making path muddy

Positive past experiences

Goals – What does safe ground look like?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

The analogy for assessing workplace volatility

The tight rope can be used to map out, analyse, and reflect about:

- The skills and attributes a person (or project) have that help them be safe and well.

- What we are worried will happen and what the warning signs are of future burnout.

- Sometimes a 'muddy path' or uneven ground due to organisational and personal work experiences will make the ground under the tightrope more wobbly

- Likewise, past positive experiences will help give a foundation and stability for change

- Current concerns mounting up to make the situation more stressful (higher ladder).

- Having a strong safety net (that is not too tight or too loose) will be protective during this time and make it easier to be supported to take the steps needed.

- Being on the tightrope can mean different things for different people, it can be exciting, scary, fun, and risky, but it's not safe to stay up too high for too long. It's important to have an idea of what 'safe ground 'looks like.

- To take the steps back down on 'safe ground' think about what motivates us to stay up or move forward – and this will be different for different people.

- Thinking about the steps needed to get to safe ground can help sequence what needs to happen first, formulate an action plan, and consider contingency planning.

Using the toolkit in practice

The materials in this toolkit can be used in a variety of ways:

- During supervision when a worker is feeling stuck to support decisions for further action
- A self-reflective process regarding a specific service user
- Actively and interactively engage a worker in a discussion about their goals
- Following a critical incident to support increased resilience
- As part of an appraisal process or workforce development planning
- When there is a dip in professional performance to draw on previous good practice and identify any barriers to getting the worker back to previous performance
- As a group work or training exercise for practitioners to understand the different elements of professional practice.

The tight rope analogy could be used as a group-based activity a part of an 'Away Day'. For example, an outdoor group using a confidence course and high-wire activities then reflecting on how that experience compares to taking risks in real life and then thinking about this in relation to the tight rope model. Even without access to a confidence course having a line drawn on the floor using rope or masking tape could act as a physical tool to take the individual along a discussion about risks, strengths and needs.

Although it might be helpful to support a worker following a difficult period when they may have been involved in disciplinary processes, this tool is not designed for that process specifically. This tool is designed for supporting strength-based practice. Therefore, it could be helpful following the conclusion of any formal process to think about how the worker can be reintegrated into the workplace and supported through that process.

We have found through application of the tight rope in coaching sessions that:

- ❖ Scaling is helpful – as it allows the person to incrementally think about change rather than grand steps to achieve goal
- ❖ Imagery is accessible to both person facilitating and person receiving
- ❖ Importance of identifying what the person's goals are for the session at the beginning
- ❖ Clarify some relevant context (to get picture of past path and worries)
- ❖ Remind person what they have done previously that's worked well
- ❖ Inquire about what steps they have already taken before met with us in order to reach their desired goal
- ❖ Help them be planful to take the next steps to reach safe ground

Examples of how the authors have used this approach

Mentoring

Richard had been asked by a senior manager to provide mentoring for an experienced practitioner who was experiencing emotional difficulties when working with very vulnerable children and young people. The practitioner was very open about how the nature of their role often evokes strong personal resonances, whilst created difficulties. The only strategy, as the practitioner saw it, was to leave the organisation. The senior manager valued the practitioner and wished to offer them the opportunity to review their decision. Richard used the concept of the Tightrope to guide the practitioner's expression of their fears, wishes, strengths, perceptions, past coping strategies, and best hopes for the future. The following questions illustrate how the analogy of the Tightrope model framed Richard's questions:

Can you explain in your own words why you are here today?

What are the current worries you have? How strong are they?

What is going on in your team that makes things worse?

Give me an example of how you have coped well with similar worries in the past.

What is it about today's meeting that is helping you?

What originally motivated you to work with at risk populations?

What do your clients most value about you?

If your most trusted colleague were here now, what would they tell me about your strengths?

Outside of work what gives you strength?

What is the kindest thing you can do next for yourself?

Whilst the practitioner acknowledged that leaving the organisation was still a possibility, they were now reconsidering the timing and manner of such a move, including whether other alternatives could be considered, such as a period of redeployment. This seemed to be a more circumspect position to be in than before.

Team 'away day' mapping

Roberta used the tight rope as a framework for a team meeting to review the past year and consider plans going forward. She was conscious that across the team staff members had experienced a number of changes, including bereavements, moving house, pregnancies, weddings and separations. These were in the background of three changes in management and two near-critical incidents with the young people they were working with.

The tight rope image was printed on an A3 sheet with the past path and steps filled in advance to acknowledge these past experiences and current pressures, alongside the performance and successes that the team had achieved filled in the past positive foundations. The team were asked to remember the values that were drafted in the previous year's team review and these were placed in the centre of the framework. Everyone was then asked to work in small groups, who were given a copy of the partly filled in A3 tightrope and asked to consider and answer the following questions:

> *What skills do you recognise in yourself and others that help you achieve these successes and overcome difficulties?*
>
> *What do you value in yourself and others?*
>
> *What are we worried will happen in the future?*
>
> *What are our goals for the next year?*
>
> *Who else do we have in our network (partnerships / colleagues) that helps us to achieve success and share our goals?*
>
> *What steps can we take as a team to achieve these goals?*

These questions were given in stages so the groups could first feedback after each question and discuss as a whole team. All of the handwritten notes were collaborated and typed up into one final version that was then put on the team's notice board as a reminder of our journey, values, goals and actions. These were then reviewed a year later and updated accordingly.

Links to Professional Standards

For Social Workers in Adult Services attending Tightrope training this course will contribute towards continuing professional development with a specific focus upon KSS Statement 9 (Organisational Context) and KSS Statement 10 (Professional ethics and leadership).

For Social Workers in Children's Services this course will contribute towards continuing professional development with a focus upon KSS Statement 9 (Professional ethics), 10 (The role of supervision and research) and 11 (Organisational context).

For practice leaders this course will contribute towards continuing professional development with a focus upon KSS Statement 1 (Promote and govern excellent practice), 2 (Developing excellent practitioners), 3 (Shaping and influencing the practice system), 7 (Emotionally intelligent practice supervision), 8 (Performance management and improvement), and for practice supervisors this course will contribute towards continuing professional development with a focus upon KSS Statement 1 (Lead and govern excellent practice), 2 (Create a context for excellent practice), 3 (Design a system to support effective practice), 4 (Develop excellent practitioners).

For health professionals this course will contribute towards continuing professional development, as outlined in the Intercollegiate document (2014) with a focus upon Attitudes and Values levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 for example, "*Understands the importance and benefits of working in an environment that supports professionals*" and "*Understands the potential personal impact of safeguarding/child protection work on professionals*."

For non-regulated health and social care staff the training will contribute towards continuing professional development with a focus upon Standards 2 (Your personal development), 13 (Health and Safety).

3. Tightrope form and materials

Template for capturing information

The ideal application of this tool is to simply use the analogy to create some space to think and discuss and plan. This could be done without any paper or pen but due to the professional task of ensuring we record then it is probably wise to have some way of capturing the key points. Maintaining a balanced approach will be important, recognising strengths alongside concerns.

The template (shown on the next page) has ten sections to explore the areas of past and current strengths and risks. The visual analogy is also aligned to Signs of Safety® three columns

- Worries on the left
    - past concerns – person in muddy path
    - current concerns – steps up the ladder; and
    - future concerns / warning signs – person falling off
- Strengths in the middle
    - past positive foundations – person building path / growing plant
    - current external support – safety net
    - Wants and values (person holding hand on their heart)
    - current internal strengths – person balancing on the tightrope
- What needs to happen next on the right
    - Future goals (person holding up a star)
    - What needs to happen (person taking steps down to goals)
    - Contingency planning (person watching clouds with umbrella ready)

There is a scale from 0-10 on the ground to assess progress towards goals. There is also a scale underneath the rope to measure the level of motivation to take the steps needed to the goal(s).

This template and the cards can be copied and used by managers or practitioners but must maintain the copyright details and must not be amended to ensure validity of delivery.

tight rope® mapping

Worries?
What are the warning signs?

Working well?
Strengths to stay balanced?

Needs to happen?
Contingency planning

Steps planned / need to take

What can others do to support?

What is the goal? What does safe ground look like?

Willingness to take steps (0 = none, 10 = taking steps)
What values drive my practice?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

External support

Past positive foundations

Current worries making Tightrope higher?

Past worries making path muddy?

Scale of safety / stability (0 = still in place of worries, 10 = on safe and stable ground)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   tight rope®

Notes   **Worker:**
Date: **Supervisor:**

Prompts with guidance

This workbook includes prompt cards against each of the areas of the tight rope. The prompts are factors drawn from research and reports on practitioner resilience, social capital and development predominantly in statutory organisations, and the organisational and environmental factors that impact or support resilience.

The prompts can be used directly from the workbook or cut out and laminated as an interactive reflection tool in professional or peer supervision.

The prompts should be used as a guide. The specific examples for each worker / team will still need to be teased out. It is also important to be familiar with why the prompts were chosen to clarify their presence and to be mindful of what to explore further when discussing their choice of cards within a team / group work environment. As the manager within the organisation, you will play a role in the safety net and positive or negative experiences. It will be important to acknowledge these to support a reflective process, a task that can support resilience.

Each section has:

- An introduction to the set of prompt cards
- Some guidance on how to encourage discussion to clarify the significance or strength of different factors
- A list of the prompts aligned with the relevant references. The full list of titles from the references and sources are available at the end of this document in the bibliography.

The sections can be reviewed and discussed in any order and can be covered separately in different discussions, but it will always be important to identify both strengths and concerns in the same session. In this workbook they start with motives and warning signs in order to first focus on why the worker is in the role and to be transparent about what signs of stress and burnout are present. Then the discussion can move to future goals and what has happened in the past that can support those goals or may have acted as barriers or stress factors. Finally the personal strengths of the worker and the safety net (organisational support) can be discussed before agreeing next steps.

What does safe ground look like? What is the goal?

This section is without prompts since the worker's understanding of what being off the tight rope and on 'safe ground' looks like will be different for each. There are two areas of goal setting:

Examples of questions for the goal of the session / short term goals

What would the worker find helpful at the end of this session?

What are your best hopes for today's meeting?

How will you know this process has been useful?

What would you and I have needed to discuss / reflect upon to for you to feel you're moving forward / felt this was useful / feel confident in our ability to resolve these difficulties?

Longer term goal(s)

What would you need to see happen to be able to confidently address ... [problem] ..

What would your colleagues / others notice if we were able to achieve this?

What would you notice?

What would your client / service user notice to be different?

If you were able to achieve your goal, what difference would that make to you and why is that important?

Scaling

Use the scale on the ground to understand how close they are to their long term goals

Exploring values and needs

The prompts for this section have been developed from Newman's (2004) resilience research, the Wakefield Risk and Resilience Tool (Chrisp et al, 2001) and other wellbeing research. While the research is primarily from child development, these are human needs and relevant to adults.

The purpose of this section is to support the person to maintain their values and achieve them through more positive behaviour.

By acknowledging and drawing on the personal values of the worker there is more likely to be 'buy in' to any change. If our motivations are aligned with the team or service vision, practitioners are better placed to withstand current or future challenges that might otherwise throw them off course.

Encourage the worker to think about what values and messages they grew up with and they still hold as important to them.

You can use the prompts or have an open discussion

Consider how the worker's values are consistent with or in conflict to their role

Consider your role as a manager

This could be an opportunity to identify any actions that you as the manager or others could do to support the worker to achieve their goal from a value-based perspective.

It will be important to revisit the motives when setting the next steps and to consider the level of motivation for those steps.

1

Making decisions for myself

tight rope®

Values / Motives

2

Feeling ok in myself

tight rope®

Values / Motives

3

Health / Life

tight rope®

Values / Motives

4

Giving to others

tight rope®

Values / Motives

5

Recognition

tight rope®

Values / Motives

6

Doing well at something

tight rope®

Values / Motives

7

Culture and routines

tight rope®

Values / Motives

8

Belonging

tight rope®

Values / Motives

9

Being close to others

tight rope®

Values / Motives

10

Being creative

tight rope®

Values / Motives

Having enough information

tight rope®

Values / Motives

12

## Being active

tight rope®

Values / Motives

Research to inform prompts for discussing motives and values:

Prompt statement:	References:
1. **Making decisions for myself**	Chrisp et al (2011) – "working it out", "expressing self" and "knowing where I'm going" all important for resilience; Sense of personal control key stage of development (Erikson, 1950)
2. **Feeling ok in myself**	Chrisp et al (2011) – loving self. Linked to sense of competence, belonging, safe exploration / activity.
3. **Health / Life**	Resilience theories (good health is a primary and basic need), Chrisp et al (2011) – keeping safe, understanding the value of food and exercise support resilience
4. **Giving to others**	Taking responsibility, contributing to others promotes resilience (Newman, 2004); Mental Health Partnership (2013) – five steps to wellbeing include 'give'; (Chrisp et al, 2011) - opportunity to make a difference and knowing impact on world
5. **Recognition**	Resilience through praise, acknowledgement, and good expectations; 'Being heard' and 'knowing where going' key to resilience (Chrisp et al, 2011). Developing sense of purpose key stage of development (Erikson, 1950)
6. **Doing well at something**	Newman (2004) - Development of skills and mastery of tasks build resilience; linked to Recognition; sense of competence - key to development (Erikson, 1950)
7. **Cultures and routines**	Newman (2004) - Family routines and rituals support resilience; positive sense of self and confidence in culture / diversity supports resilience (Chrisp et al, 2011)
8. **Belonging**	Mental Health Partnership (2013) – five steps to wellbeing include 'connect'. "Living together" is an area of resilience (Chrisp et al, 2011). Sense of belonging early stage of emotional development (Barrow et al, 2001)
9. **Being close to others**	Positive relationships and living together (Chrisp et al, 2011). Linked to friendship.
10. **Being creative**	Being heard and expressing self (Chrisp et al, 2011; Barrow et al, 2001)
11. **Having enough information**	Briggs (1998) - knowing how to get help is key for social capital. Mental Health Partnership (2013) – five steps to wellbeing include 'keep learning' and 'take notice'. Getting informed key to resilience (Chrisp et al, 2011).
12. **Being active**	Freedom to explore and learn linked to resilience and stages of development (Barrow et al, 2001; Erikson, 1950); Mental Health Partnership (2013) – five steps to wellbeing include 'being active'.

Further considerations:

Understanding what motivates (or drives) our responses to work-based challenges is an essential component of self-awareness. If aspects of the work role or task are healthily consistent with the worker's value ("I act as an advocate for my client and I know I am altruistic in my nature") this creates resonance. However, dissonance may occur if the task is inconsistent with the worker's sense of their self ("by denying a client their right to a service this challenges who I thought I was").

Newly qualified staff, or new starters to teams, might experience similar challenges when negotiating transitions into unfamiliar roles. Successful adaption to these roles is the hallmark of resilience. The diagram below illustrates that the transitions are possible if they are negotiated, rather than imposed (Morrison & Wonnacott, 2009).

©T.Morrison/J.Wonnacott 2009
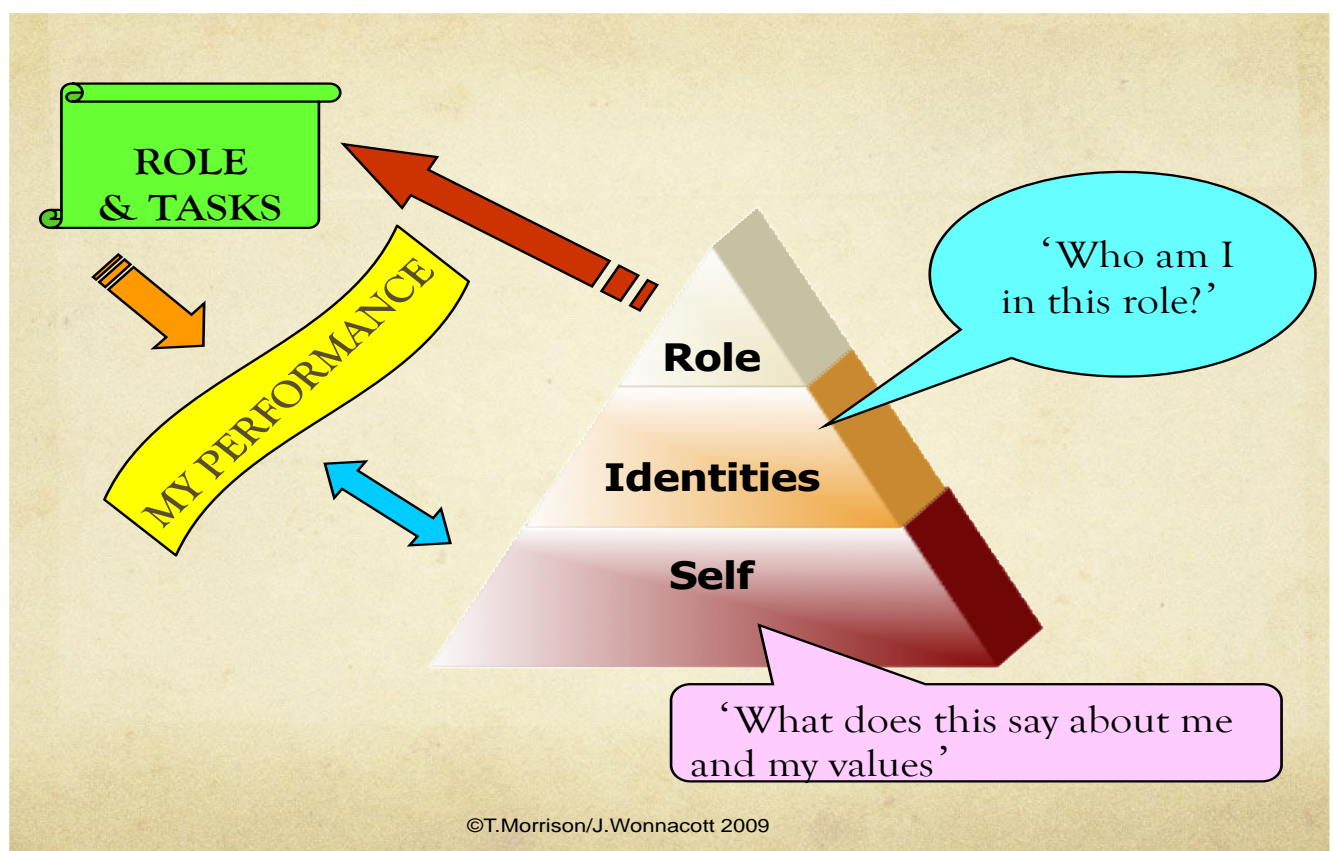
What are the warning signs of being unbalanced?

This section is to allow the worker(s) and their manager(s) to identify factors that indicate a concern and the need for additional support or strengthening of resilience.

This section can also support the identification of support needs following critical incidents, crisis points or periods of instability that have occurred in the past. These may be incidents that the worker or team are worried will reoccur or escalate in future. The focus should be on how we respond to these rather than ruminating on the event itself (Paton et al, 2008; Roger, 2002).

Encourage the worker to think about why these may be important to explore.

Recognise the workplace pitfalls and triggers for some of these concerns.

Clarify whether the concern is a current or historical issue, how recent it has been present or how often it has occurred.

While it is important to identify the presenting concern that could trigger more complicated cumulated situations of exhaustion or burnout, some of these prompts refer to each other – therefore multiple concerns may be bundled around one issue.

Ensure that the balancing strengths and safety net are considered alongside these warning signs.

Be mindful of disclosures

Please be mindful of the emotional impact when identifying concerns in a worker's practice and the need to carefully manage the discussion to focus the attention on identifying worker's strengths, how the workplace can support them and the positive steps both the worker and manager need to take. Ensure that the worker fully understands your duties regarding human resources, health and safety and also sharing of information if they disclose information that means that their safety or that of others or where service delivery has / could be significantly impacted.

1

Disengaged

tight rope®

Warning signs of losing balance

2

Compassion fatigued

tight rope®

Warning signs of losing balance

3

Capacity distress

tight rope®

Warning signs of losing balance

4

Cynical

tight rope®

Warning signs of losing balance

5

Commit to one hypothesis

tight rope®

Warning signs of losing balance

6

Reliant on professional information

tight rope®

Warning signs of losing balance

7

Unfinished tasks

tight rope®

Warning signs of losing balance

8

Just tick boxes

tight rope®

Warning signs of losing balance

9 Information left unchecked

tight rope®

Warning signs of losing balance

10 Defensive practice

tight rope®

Warning signs of losing balance

11 Bottling emotions

tight rope®

Warning signs of losing balance

12 Often late

tight rope®

Warning signs of losing balance

13 Inaccurate assumptions

tight rope®

Warning signs of losing balance

14 Risk avoidant

tight rope®

Warning signs of losing balance

15 Want to leave

tight rope®

Warning signs of losing balance

References supporting the prompts for WARNING SIGNS:

Prompt statement	References
1. Disengaged	Consequence of compassion fatigue / burnout (Horwath, 2015). May feel like 'woolly thinking' (Munro, 1996)
2. Compassion fatigued	Workers may become exhausted or burnout with the emotional demands of the job and then distance themselves from emotions (Horwath, 2015); or insufficient recovery time from repeated contact with trauma and high caseloads (NSPCC, 2013)
3. Capacity distress	Individuals feel highly motivated to achieve desirable outcomes but are distressed by lack of capacity to do so (Maslach et al, 2001)
4. Cynical	If workers feel unfairly treated, distressed or emotionally exhausted this can fuel cynicism about the workplace (Maslach et al, 2001). From experiencing worst aspects of human nature (NSPCC, 2013)
5. Commit to one hypothesis	If hypothesis formulated on basis of incomplete information and accepted too quickly (Broadhurst et al, 2010). Fixed attitudes / slow to revise judgements can lead to serious mistakes (Munro, 1996)
6. Reliant on professional information	Insufficient weight given to information from family, friends etc can be a pitfall in social work (Broadhurst et al, 2010)
7. Unfinished tasks	Sign of workers taking on too much and not time managing (Horwath, 2015)
8. Just tick boxes	A 'self-supporting' strategy – appear to get on with the job, prioritise form completion and work to timescales but no focus on relationships or asking for help (Horwath, 2015).
9. Information left unchecked	Can lead to early categorisation without considering the context or history of information (Broadhurst et al. 2010)
10. Defensive practice	Workers may become fearful of getting things wrong / being blamed and need space to critically reflect on practice (Horwath, 2015).
11. Bottling emotions	Important to reach out for emotional support and peer support also important (Grant, Kinman and Alexander, 2013); The role of reflective supervision in creating space for reflective and emotional thinking is a crucial way of containing anxiety and creating conditions for workers to flourish (Ruch 2009)
12. Often late	Workers struggling with workload management compensate by adopting a 'quality-reducing strategy' – may have more work but reduce quality like miss appointments or arrive late (Horwath, 2015).
13. Inaccurate assumptions	This may be when attention is focused on most visible – rather than exploring the less obvious details; not paying attention to what service users say, present or behave; or when sharing information and assuming 'information shared is information understood' (Broadhurst et al, 2010)
14. Risk avoidant	Practitioners may be overly anxious about families and become risk avoidant. This can result in defensive practice and reality distortion (Horwath, 2015)
15. Want to leave	When practitioners feel their supervisory needs are not met or marginalised this can result in high staff turnover (Horwarth, 2015)

Past positive foundations

These prompts draw on research about 'resilience', and 'social capital' in the workplace. These are closely associated to the prompts for current balancing skills but are designed to focus on the skills or behaviours that the worker has learnt through training or experience.

In addition to these prompts this can be an opportunity to consider evidenced-based strategies that have strong potential to enhance self-care and resilience. For example:

- enhancing reflective practice.
- mentoring and peer coaching to enhance support.
- mindfulness and relaxation.
- experiential learning

Encourage the worker to think about times when they have managed well or when things have been a little easier.

Have there been times when they have felt confident or capable, demonstrated resilience or sought support – ask what was happening at the time?

Discuss times before their behaviour was worrying.

Be mindful of pessimism and hopelessness

It can be easy to focus on the worrying behaviour and focus on these as the problem to be fixed. Identifying how and when a worker has managed well in the past will help provide some indications of areas of foundation for change.

Workers who are thinking about leaving the organisation or feeling desperate about their current situation may not be in the frame of mind to consider past positive examples. You may need to give examples of behaviour or practice that you have been witness to first.

1

Help I've had

tight rope

Positive foundations

2

Something proud of

tight rope

Positive foundations

3

Praise received

tight rope

Positive foundations

4
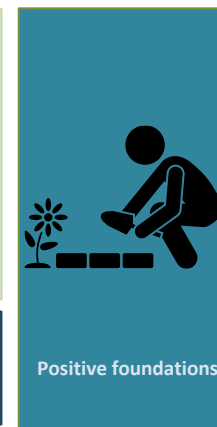
Emotional resilience training

tight rope

Positive foundations

5

Training prepared me for the job

tight rope

Positive foundations

6
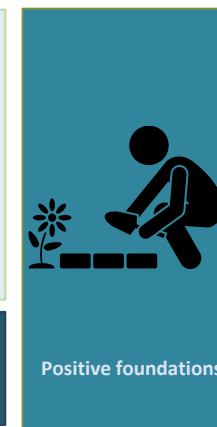
Had opportunities to reflect

tight rope

Positive foundations
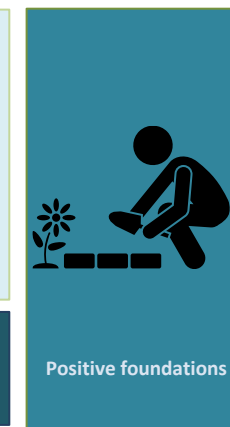
7

Found solutions

tight rope

Positive foundations

8
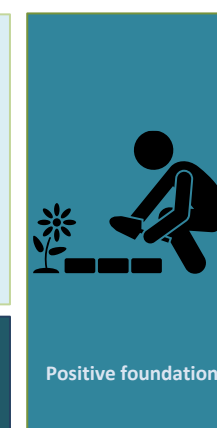
Maintained self-belief

tight rope

Positive foundations

9
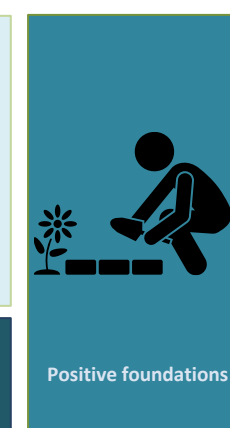
Good time management

tight rope

Positive foundations

10

Stable financial organisation

tight rope

Positive foundations

11

Good practice rewarded

tight rope

Positive foundations

12

Strong team value base

tight rope

Positive foundations

13
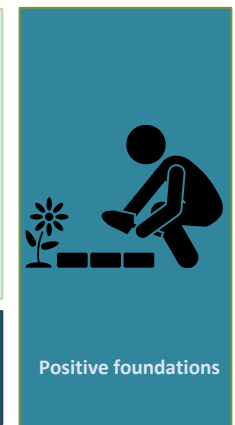
Sense of team identity developed

tight rope

Positive foundations

14

Peer support received

tight rope

Positive foundations

15

Overcame difficulties

tight rope

Positive foundations

Research supporting prompts for past positive foundations:

Prompt statement:	References:
1. **Help I've had**	Sought and received support (Horwath, 2015, McFaddon et al); Informed managers when not feeling confident (Broadhurst et al, 2010); Utilised colleagues (Grant and Kinman, 2012);
2. **Something proud of**	"self-efficacy" (building block for resilience Kinman, Grant and Alexander 2013); Pride in work reduces burnout (Maslach et al, 2001)
3. **Praise received**	Bynner (2001) – builds self esteem; social rewards through praise reduces burnout (Maslach et al, 2001; NSPCC, 2013); Appropriate use of praise in supervision/meetings (Hackett, 2006);
4. **Emotional resilience training**	Strategies to enhance emotional resilience during pre-qualifying training can help achieve sustained employability (Grant and Kinman, 2012); Learning about self and self-awareness increases coping (McFaddon, Campbell and Taylor, 2015); learning how to detach (Roger, 2002); develop adaptive capacity (Clarke, 2013)
5. **Training prepared me for the job**	Sufficient experience while training increases worker stability, (McFaddon, Campbell and Taylor, 2015; Grant, Kinman and Baker, 2014); Preventative to vicarious trauma (NSPCC, 2013)
6. **Had opportunities to reflect**	Space to critically reflect on practice reduces defensive practice (Horwath, 2015). Debriefing from Trauma (McFaddon et al, 2015); The ability to look at both strengths and limitations in own practice supports development of resilience Grant and Kinman (2013)
7. **Found solutions**	"I am good at finding solutions to difficult problems" (Grant and Kinman, 2012); Capacity to re-frame adversities (Newman, 2004); Active coping increases job satisfaction (McFaddon et al, 2015)
8. **Maintained self-belief**	"I am generally able to maintain a strong belief in my professional capabilities" (Grant and Kinman, 2012); Self-efficacy and self-esteem building blocks (Grant, Kinman and Alexander, 2013);
9. **Good time management**	Learning how to manage time effectively is a key factor in minimising stress, building resilience and improving quality of life: commitment to professional values (Grant and Kinman, 2013); Taking responsibility (Grotberg, 2003).
10. **Stable financial organisation**	Stable rather funding arrangements provides foundation for worker satisfaction (Hackett, 2006; Horwath, 2015). Allows for adequate resources (McFaddon et al, 2015)
11. **Good practice rewarded**	Agency / management explicitly rewards good practice (financially and socially). Motivators and rewards (internal and external) (Lewis et al, 2011). Balances impact of traumatic work (NSPCC, 2013)
12. **Strong team value base**	Systematic development of an explicit team/agency value base (Hackett, 2006) and commitment to it (McFaddon et al, 2015)
13. **Sense of team identity developed**	Overall environment and management style that fosters a sense of peer identity and commonality within staff group (Hackett, 2006); trust between colleagues (McFaddon et al, 2015)
14. **Peer support received**	Particularly important as student (Grant and Kinman, 2012); co-worker support increases retention (McFaddon, Campbell and Taylor, 2015); Mental Health Partnership (2013) – five steps to wellbeing include 'connect'
15. **Overcame difficulties**	Perseverance and embracing risk increases resilience (Grant, Kinman and Alexander, 2013; Kelley, 2005; McFaddon et al, 2015);

What makes the path 'muddy'?

These prompts are designed to identify the personal and environmental events or behaviours that have occurred in the past but may be increasing the volatility or instability of the current workplace.

Encourage worker(s) to consider whether the prompt chosen is something they recognise as being part of their past or current experience.

These prompts could also assist in identifying factors to avoid and support safe practice in future.

Please use these prompts as an aid to discussion rather than a diagnostic tool.

Ask workers to think about what has happened in the organisation in the past that has created the current structure / culture / pressures or practice.

How much of the past are they still holding as a current concern?

How easy is it for the worker to dwell on previous incidents / changes / concerns?

Be mindful of creating excuses that allow for continued unsafe practice.

Although a situation or incident may be 'understandable' due to several past concerns that provides an understanding of the reasons for the situation, it does not mean it is 'acceptable' or to be excused in order for it to be repeated.

1 High staff turnover

tight rope®

Past concerns

2 Staff treated unfairly

tight rope®

Past concerns

3 Target driven environment

tight rope®

Past concerns

4 Others haven't valued our work

tight rope®

Past concerns

5 Process orientated systems

tight rope®

Past concerns

6 Year on year cuts

tight rope®

Past concerns

7 Responsibility has been diluted

tight rope®

Past concerns

8 Critical incidents

tight rope®

Past concerns

9

Mismatched allocations

tight rope®

!?

Past concerns

10

Lack of reward

tight rope®

!?

Past concerns

11

Maintained poor practice cycle

tight rope®

!?

Past concerns

12

Exhausted workforce

tight rope®

!?

Past concerns

13

Agency values contradictory

tight rope®

!?

Past concerns

14

Can't show what feeling

tight rope®

!?

Past concerns

15

Personal history of trauma

tight rope®

!?

Past concerns

Research supporting prompts for past muddy path:

Prompt statement:	References:
1. **High staff turnover**	When practitioners feel their supervisory needs are not met or marginalised this can result in high staff turnover (Horwarth, 2015); can bring inexperienced workers into high stress positions (NSPCC, 2013)
2. **Staff treated unfairly**	Can lead to emotional distress and exhaustion or fuels cynicism about the workplace and burnout can occur (Maslach et al, 2001).
3. **Target driven environment**	Can result in continued high workloads with a focus on risk management and results in the failure to meet the needs of practitioners (Horwath, 2015);
4. **Others haven't valued our work**	Lack of recognition, within and outside the team, has the effect of devaluing the work and practitioners (Maslach et al, 2001; Horwath, 2015)
5. **Process Orientated systems**	Can lead to 'tick box' work styles or unmet tasks – leading to emotional exhaustion, poor attitudes, or negative impact on practice (Horwath, 2015)
6. **Year on year cuts**	An environment affected by cuts / increased service demand will inevitably influence the organisation climate – with negative impact on perceptions and then quality of practice (Horwath, 2015, Broadhurst et al, 2010)
7. **Responsibility has been diluted**	Case responsibility can be diluted in the context of multi-agency working – particularly if referrals to other agencies are inappropriate and/or not followed up (Broadhurst et al, 2010)
8. **Critical incidents**	Can create a sense of psychological disequilibrium if response is stressful rather than seen as an opportunity for developing resilience (Paton et al, 2008 - Stress Shield); single incident can be a 'tipping point' into vicarious trauma, particularly if blame culture (NSPCC, 2013)
9. **Mismatched allocations**	When the wrong kind of work is inappropriately allocated, i.e. where people lack the skills or inclination for certain types of work (Maslach et al, 2001; Broadhurst et al, 2010)
10. **Lack of reward**	Lack of appropriate rewards, either financial or social (i.e. praise) or intrinsic (pride in work) can lead to burnout (Maslach et al, 2001)
11. **Maintained poor practice cycle**	When workers haven't learnt from mistakes or managers have rescued workers with little self-efficacy (Grant and Kinman, 2012)
12. **Exhausted workforce**	Workers may become exhausted or burnout with the emotional demands of the job and then distance themselves from emotions (Horwath, 2015); or when experience direct abuse (NSPCC, 2013)
13. **Agency values contradictory**	Workers caught up in contradictory agency values, e.g., high-quality service provision verses cost-cutting (values - Maslach et al, 2001) (Horwath, 2015)
14. **Can't show what feeling**	Within the team the work is especially draining when people are required to display emotions inconsistent with their true feelings (workload - Maslach et al, 2001). Dissonance between feeling rules of organisation and worker's values can lead to compassion fatigue (Horwath, 2015)
15. **Personal history of trauma**	Studies have shown that personal history of childhood trauma can increase risk of secondary traumatic stress for child welfare worker (McFaddon, Campbell and Taylor, 2015)

Compounding current concerns 'steps up'

These prompts have primarily been adapted from previous work by Maslach et al (2001) and are designed to provide practitioners and managers working with vulnerable populations the opportunity to identify factors associated with worker burnout. The visual representation of compounding steps gives an indication of how volatile the situation is.

The factors are based on 6 key dimensions:

- Workload
- Control
- Reward
- Community
- Fairness
- Values

Maslach's model suggests that the greater the mismatch between practitioners and these six key dimensions the more likely it is that burnout will occur. Conversely, the greater the fit between the worker and these domains the greater the practitioner's engagement with their role and task

Encourage the worker(s) to think about whether the prompt chosen is something they recognise as being part of their past experience or current situation.

Be mindful of ruminating on past events rather than focusing on current concerns.

The separation of the past (muddy path) and current (compounding steps) is to assist with clarifying the historical context in comparison to current systems or organisational practices that could be more easily addressed.

1

Demands exhaust energy

tight rope®

Current concerns

2

Prescriptive recording formats

tight rope®

Current concerns

3

Duties exceed authority

tight rope®

Current concerns

4

Tight timescales

tight rope®

Current concerns

5

Disconnect in the team

tight rope®

Current concerns

6

Isolated job

tight rope®

Current concerns

7

Lack of support

tight rope®

Current concerns

8

Hostility in workplace

tight rope®

Current concerns

9

Lack of mutual respect

tight rope®

Current concerns

10

Tasks conflict with values

tight rope®

Current concerns

11

Mounting unfinished tasks

tight rope®

Current concerns

12

Desired career path not available

tight rope®

Current concerns

13

Regular contact with trauma

tight rope®

Current concerns

14

Passive Defensive culture

tight rope®

Current concerns

15

Low wages

tight rope®

Current concerns

References supporting the prompts for current compounding concerns:

Prompt statement:	References:
1. **Demands exhaust energy**	Excessive caseloads or too many demands that exhaust individual energy (workload - Maslach et al, 2001); Workload pressures impact on satisfactory completion of difficult tasks (Broadhurst et al, 2010)
2. **Prescriptive recording formats**	Can block curiosity or openness to detail or analyses of new information (Broadhurst et al, 2010); Appropriate tools needed for job (Horwath, 2015)
3. **Duties exceed authority**	Burnout can occur when individuals' responsibilities exceed their authority (control - Maslach et al, 2001).
4. **Tight timescales**	Increase risk of making judgements on incomplete information – certainly if little space to reflect or probe uncertainty (Broadhurst et al, 2010).
5. **Disconnect in team**	Team members have lost their sense of connection with others in the workplace (community - Maslach et al, 2001).
6. **Isolated job**	Isolation or lack of social support undermines team's sense of shared values and community (Maslach et al, 2001). Limited face-to-face communication leads to ambiguity and misunderstanding / mistrust (Horwath, 2015)
7. **Lack of support**	Need recognition of emotional labour & support to manage difficult service users (Horwath, 2015; Broadhurst et al, 2010). Can impact development of workers and how engage service users. Supervisor and co-worker support closely linked to impact of burnout or turnover (McFaddon, Campbell and Taylor, 2015)
8. **Hostility in workplace**	Chronic or constant negative feelings of frustration and hostility in workplace can undermine workers' sense of support (community - Maslach et al, 2001).
9. **Lack of mutual respect**	When the workplace is characterised by a lack of mutual respect amongst work colleagues – can lead to burnout (fairness - Maslach et al, 2001).
10. **Tasks conflict with values**	E.G when asked to do something considered unethical or contrary to own and professional standards (values - Maslach et al, 2001), (Horwath, 2015)
11. **Mounting unfinished tasks**	Sign of workers taking on too much and not time managing (Horwath, 2015)
12. **Desired career path not available**	There is a mismatch between worker's personal aspirations for their own career and the structure of the organisation (values - Maslach et al, 2001)
13. **Regular contact with trauma**	Can develop into secondary trauma or compassion fatigue (McFaddon, Campbell and Taylor, 2015); or "vicarious trauma" (Baird and Jenkins, 2003; NSPCC, 2013)
14. **Passive Defensive culture**	Can have negative impact on workers (McFaddon, Campbell and Taylor, 2015)
15. **Low wages**	When high caseload and pressures are compounded with low wages impacts staff self-esteem and sense of value (McFaddon et al, 2015)

Identifying strengths to stay balanced

These prompts draw from research on resilience, in particular worker resilience. They outline statements to reflect temperament, motivation and feelings associated with self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Grant, Kinman and Alexander (2013)[1] in their study of student social workers found that these students were more resilience and less distressed if they:

- were more emotionally intelligent

- were more socially competent

- had more empathetic concern, but less empathetic distress

- had stronger reflective abilities across all domains, especially empathetic reflection

Therefore, it is positive to have high empathy but not without empathetic reflection.

Encourage the worker to think about how much this strength helps them in different situations.

When building the picture get them to indicate how strong (how long) any particular strength might be (the longer a balance stick the more balance they have to get across the line).
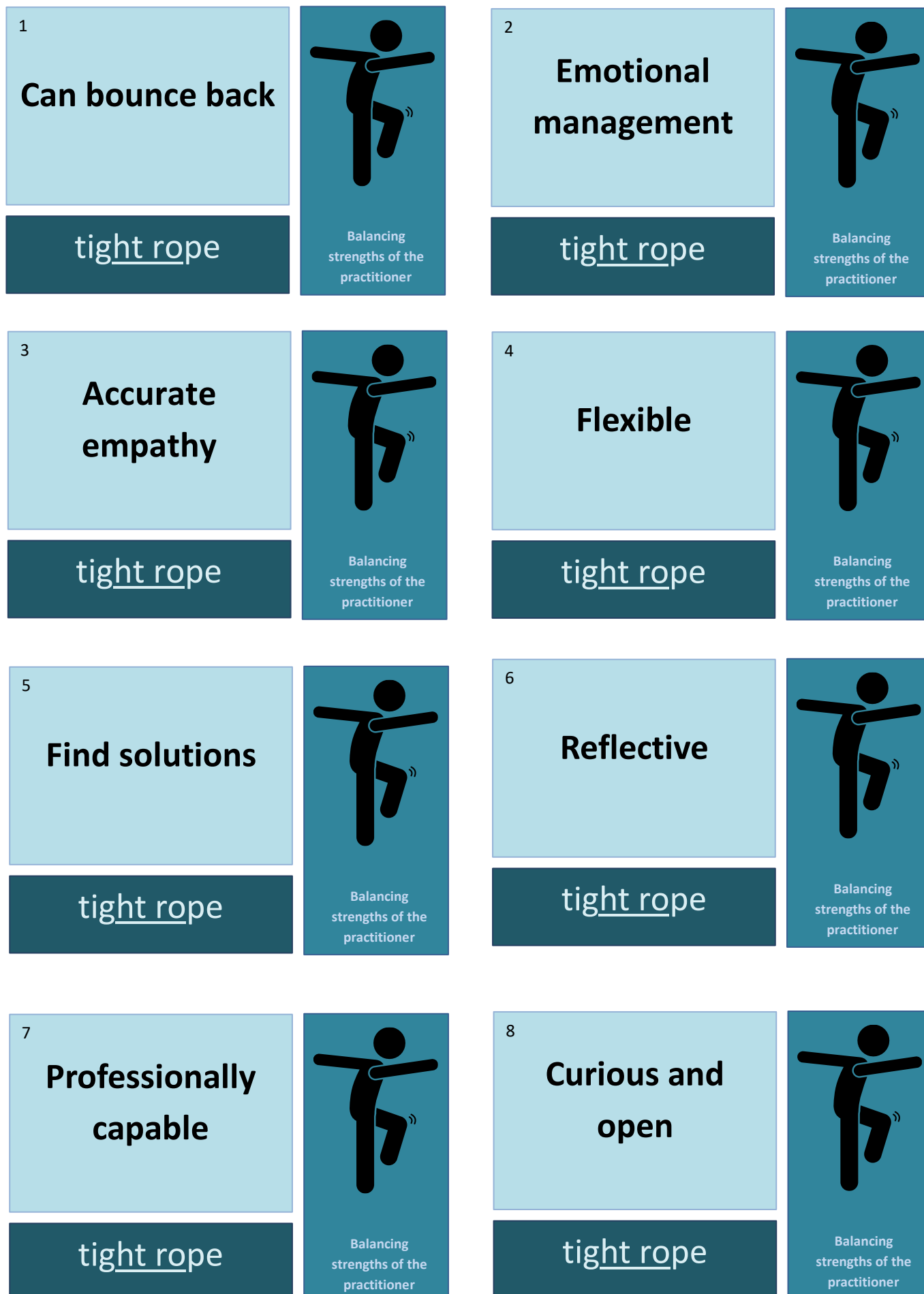
Also remind the worker that many of these strengths can be learnt or developed. They are often things that everyone has had to learn through relationships at home and the workplace.

Be mindful of your own reactions to the worker's presentation

Do you support particular traits or characteristics?

Do you react to certain personalities?

---

[1] Also see Grant, Alexander and Kinman (2014)

1

Can bounce back

tight rope

Balancing strengths of the practitioner

2

Emotional management

tight rope

Balancing strengths of the practitioner

3

Accurate empathy

tight rope

Balancing strengths of the practitioner

4

Flexible

tight rope

Balancing strengths of the practitioner

5

Find solutions

tight rope

Balancing strengths of the practitioner

6

Reflective

tight rope

Balancing strengths of the practitioner

7

Professionally capable

tight rope

Balancing strengths of the practitioner

8

Curious and open

tight rope

Balancing strengths of the practitioner

9

Socially competent

tight rope

Balancing strengths of the practitioner

10

Optimistic

tight rope

Balancing strengths of the practitioner

11

Manage stress

tight rope

Balancing strengths of the practitioner

12

Can respect self and others

tight rope

Balancing strengths of the practitioner

13

Manage time and energy well

tight rope

Balancing strengths of the practitioner

14

Sense of humour

tight rope

Balancing strengths of the practitioner

15

Sense of purpose

tight rope

Balancing strengths of the practitioner

References for research supporting: CURRENT STRENGTHS (to help stay balanced)

Prompt Statement:	References:
1. **Can bounce back**	Persistence in the face of challenges, setbacks and adversity (Grant, Kinman and Alexander, 2013); "Able to cope well when I am going through difficult times" (Grant and Kinman, 2012); Perseverance – Kelley (2005); Embracing the risks and challenge (McFaddon, Campbell and Taylor, 2015)
2. **Emotional management**	Kelley (2005), (Van Rooy and Viswesvaran 2004); Rational emotional responses to practice (Grant, Kinman and Alexander, 2013);
3. **Accurate empathy**	"I can empathise with service users' feelings and experiences without becoming over-involved or overwhelmed" (Grant and Kinman, 2012);
4. **Flexible**	"I am generally able to adapt well to new situations" (Grant and Kinman, 2012); openness to experience, adapt to situations that can be thrown at you, "bend with the wind" (Grant, Kinman and Alexander, 2013); expecting the unexpected (McFaddon, Campbell and Taylor, 2015)
5. **Find solutions**	Problem solving (Kelley, 2005); Chen (2010) "I am good at finding solutions to difficult problems" (Grant and Kinman, 2012); Capacity to re-frame adversities supports resilience (Newman, 2004)
6. **Reflective**	Chen (2010); Critical thinking skills, self awareness and emotional literacy support emotional resilience (Grant, Kinman and Alexander, 2013); Allow time to consider context and analyse all information (Broadhurst et al, 2010)
7. **Professionally capable**	"I am generally able to maintain a strong belief in my professional capabilities" (Grant and Kinman, 2012); Self-efficacy and self-esteem (Grant, Kinman and Alexander, 2013); Can "walk the walk and talk the talk" (Horwath, 2015); Achieving competence and confidence support coping (McFaddon, Campbell and Taylor, 2015; NSPCC, 2013)
8. **Curious and Open**	Inquisitive and open to new information - prepared to change mind (Broadhurst el al, 2010; Munro, 1996); "understanding, open minded, patient" (Grant, Kinman and Alexander, 2013); applying investigative and interpersonal skills helps with coping (McFaddon et al, 2015)
9. **Socially competent**	Supports resilience - Grotberg (2003); (Chen, 2010). "I am confident that my interpersonal skills at work are effective" (Grant and Kinman, 2012); overcome barriers from service users (Broadhurst et al, 2010)
10. **Optimistic**	"I feel positive about most aspects of my working life" (Grant and Kinman, 2012); Enthusiasm, Optimism and Hope are building blocks to emotional resilience (Grant, Kinman and Alexander, 2013); Boeck et al (2006) – positive outlook key to social capital; Kelley (2005); Chen (2010); Also keeping expectations realistic support coping (McFaddon, Cambell and Taylor, 2015)
11. **Manage stress**	Being able to cope without feeling overwhelmed or let pressures build up (Grant, Kinman and Alexander, 2013); internal locus of control (Kelley, 2005)
12. **Can respect self and others**	Grotberg (2003); Have empathy but protect self – keep professional distance, "not blaming self or others" (Grant, Kinman and Alexander, 2013)
13. **Manage time and energy well**	Learning how to manage time effectively is a key factor in minimising stress, building resilience and improving quality of life: commitment to professional values (Grant and Kinman, 2012); Energy management enhances performance (Loehr and Schwartz, 2003).
14. **Sense of humour**	Building block to emotional resilience in practitioners (Grant, Kinman and Alexander, 2013). Glover (2009); Kelley (2005)
15. **Sense of purpose**	Chen (2010); Grant, Kinman and Alexander (2013); McFaddon et al (2015); Kelley (2005); Newman (2004) – Ability to make a difference on the world .

Further considerations:

Reflecting on personal strengths and limitations can also foster many of the competencies associated with resilience that have been outlined above; particularly improvements in self-awareness and coping and problem solving skills.

Emotional intelligence is a transferable skill that will help people manage their personal as well as their professional life (Grant and Kinman, 2013, p8)

Emotional resilience in the workforce has been defined as:

> *'The potential to exhibit resourcefulness by using available internal and external resources in response to different contextual and developmental challenges'.*
>
> *(Pooley & Cohen, 2010)*

> *"To be resilient is to be able to overcome stressors or withstand negative life events and, not only recover from such experiences, but also find personal meaning in them"*
>
> *(Klohen, 1996; Youssef and Luthans, 2007).*

Emotional resilience within workforce:

> *"The most troubling and intractable situations exist when performance difficulties occur in the context of staff who lack accurate empathy, self-awareness and self-management skills"*
>
> (Morrison, 2007)

Resilience and Stress:

> *Stress comes when, "The process that arises where work demands of various types and combinations exceed the person's capacity and capability to cope"*
>
> (Health and Safety Executive)

Who or what is 'the safety net'?

These prompts also draw from research on 'resilience', 'social capital' and studies about protective work environments.

The safety net is about what is currently in place to act as a supportive and protective environment.

Encourage the worker to think about how flexible these are. Discuss why it is important that the safety net is not too tight or too loose.

Ask them how much they rely on any support network or protective factor – is it being stretched too thin? Are there any gaps? Is it wide enough and strong enough to manage a fall from very high up?

Remember that you as the manager / trainer will be able to provide at least one of the cards!

Use this time to discuss how the worker / team sees the service they work for, considering legal constraints and resource implications.
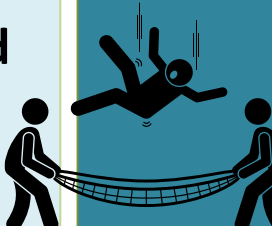

Be mindful of feeling defensive

The Tightrope analogy allows a discussion to occur about the flexibility of the safety-net. Making sure it is strong enough to 'catch' the worker should they 'fall' but not too tight (authoritarian) otherwise they may bounce out and also not too loose (permissive or negligent) otherwise they crash to the ground.

If you are completing the Tightrope with a worker that you directly line-manage then it will be inevitable that the spotlight in regard to environmental factors will shine on you at some point. Be careful to avoid defensive responses and consider how your role as the safety net can be deployed in a positive and collaborative way.

1

Well managed caseloads

tight rope®

Supportive working environment

2

Choice to opt into specialist areas

tight rope®

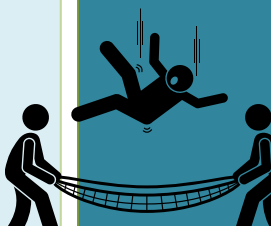Supportive working environment

3

Specialist training equips staff

tight rope®

Supportive working environment

4

Space to reflect

tight rope®

Supportive working environment

5

Appropriate resources

tight rope®

Supportive working environment

6

Remits and roles are clear

tight rope®

Supportive working environment

7

Can discuss power issues

tight rope®

Supportive working environment

8

Learning culture, open to ideas

tight rope®

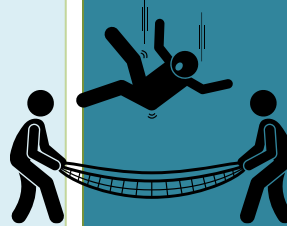Supportive working environment

9

Staff treated fairly

tight rope®

Supportive working environment

10

Appropriate tools

tight rope®

Supportive working environment

11

Room to grow and develop

tight rope®

Supportive working environment

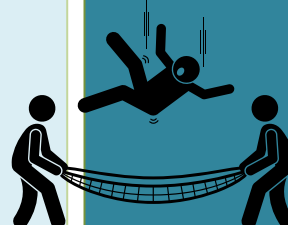**12**

Engaging Supportive Leadership

tight rope®

Supportive working environment

13

Network of support

tight rope®

Supportive working environment

14

Life outside of work

tight rope®

Supportive working environment

15

Personal trauma managed

tight rope®

Supportive working environment

References to research supporting PROTECTIVE WORKING ENVIRONMENT (safety net):

Prompt statement:	References:
1. Well managed caseloads	Managed caseloads which reflect intensity / volume of work helps avoid burnout (Hackett, 2006) workload management (Horwath, 2015)
2. Choice to opt into specialisms	Working in specialist areas of work (e.g. sexually harmful behaviour) requires choice for workers to opt into (Hackett, 2006); Job design (Lewis et al, 2011)
3. Specialist training equips staff	To provide requisite skills and knowledge to work in specialist fields (Hackett, 2006). Individuals have sufficient authority to pursue work they believe to be most effective (Maslach et al, 2001); development opportunities support staff retention (McFaddon, Campbell and Taylor, 2015; Clarke, 2013)
4. Space to reflect	Case discussions, appropriate challenge and probing to support critical reflection (Broadhurst et al, 2010) and time to think (Munro, 1996). Explicit permission and space within agency supervision or consultation to reflect on the emotional response to specialist work (Hackett, 2006). Opportunities for emotionally informed thinking and critical reflection (Horwath, 2015); Trauma 'not just part of job' and need outlet for help (NSPCC, 2013)
5. Appropriate resources	Agency attention to appropriate resources - physical, intellectual, emotional (Hackett, 2006, Horwath, 2015; McFaddon et al, 2015); Individuals within the team have sufficient control over resources needed to work effectively (Maslach et al, 2001). Network of successful relationships (Lewis et al, 2011)
6. Remits and roles clear	Clarify individual's expectations, boundaries and responsibilities (Hacket, 2006), Job design clear about level of control (Lewis et al, 2011); multi-agency understanding of each others remits (Broadhurst et al, 2010); workers supported to accept limits of role in clients' lives (Horwath, 2015); realistic, achievable standards of good practice (Munro, 1996)
7. Can discuss power issues	Open discussion within teams and organisations about division / balance of power and authority = personal and organisational balance (Hackett, 2006)
8. Learning culture, open to ideas	Learning led culture, which is open to new ideas and ways of doing things (Hackett, 2006). Frameworks that stimulate critical thinking with a culture of openness and exchange are valuable (Broadhurst et al, 2010); Allow new information to review judgements (Munro, 1996)
9. Staff treated fairly	Operational and strategic clarity about decision-making and consistency of treatment of workers & clients (Hacket, 2006); Caseloads not higher than expected for worker's wage (McFaddon et al, 2015)
10. Appropriate tools	Tools and systems to support optimum decision making (Broadhurst et al, 2010; Horwath, 2015) and intuitive professional judgement (Munro, 2011)
11. Room to grow and develop	Clear career development structure and opportunities for personal development (Hackett, 2006). Learning is integrated and supported (Horwath, 2015); Also following incidents (NSPCC. 2013)
12. Engaging Supportive Leadership	Leadership builds resilience in an organisation (Lewis et al, 2011), managers who initiate critical reviews support workers to be open to new information (Broadhurst et al, 2010); Strong leaders with professional characteristics (McFaddon et al, 2015); consultative leadership style (Clarke, 2013)
13. Network of support	"I have a wide network of friends and colleagues who I can turn to for help" (Grant and Kinman, 2012); Supervisor and co-worker support can buffer impact of burnout (McFaddon et al, 2015; NSPCC, 2013)
14. Life outside of work	Maintaining important life outside work assists in workers being able to cope with pressures of work (McFaddon, Campbell and Taylor, 2015)
15. Personal trauma managed	For workers who bring history of personal trauma supervisors and managers need to be aware of risk of secondary trauma (McFaddon et al, 2015)

Further considerations:

There is much debate in regard to the various factors that influence someone's behaviour, including individual, family and social factors. In the context of resilience, this could be seen as "a product of a person's personality in combination with environmental influences such as family, peers and social environment" (Lewis, Donaldson-Feilder, E and Pangallo, A, 2011:4) who outline various resilience factors within an organisational context:

- Job design / job role
    - how demanding the person's job is
    - how much control they have in their job
    - type of motivators or rewards (internal and external) associated with a particular job
- Organisational culture and structure
    - How processes and procedures adopted
- Leadership (in particular by middle management)
    - Engaging
    - Supportive
- Systemic / External environment
    - Networks of successful relationships
    - Social and institutional support
    - Resilience of stakeholders and industry

Jan Horwath also outlines the importance of workers' needs being met in order to "establish an effective working alliance with families" otherwise the way workers establish relationships with clients will be negatively impacted. Needs are best met by emotionally intelligent organisations whereby managers "recognise that practice is complex, anxiety-provoking and emotionally charged" and also:

- recognise the value of relationships
- provide supportive management style
- are proactive in nurturing worker relationship with families
- set boundaries around work
- encourage practitioners to accept the limits of their role in relation to clients' lives

Support is particularly crucial during transition (Bartley, 2006). Within helping professions, "social support refers to positive psychosocial interactions with others with whom there is mutual trust and concern" (Grant and Kinman, 2013). Lewis et al (2011) warn that "if an organisation has a bureaucratic structure coupled with a command and control culture, this may be detrimental" (p5). Hanson and Holmes (2014) highlight that authoritative parenting, demonstrated by 'love and warmth paired with actively communicated boundaries and high expectations', protects against the experience and impact of risks (p22). Authoritative management provides a similar framework for workers to develop and learn safely. Praise and fair sanctions are also key aspects of building resilience (Newman, 2004).

The Shield Project (Paton et al, 2008) encourages a model of resiliency for police offers that focuses on the capacity of organisations and individuals to see that the events are not stressful but the response is stressful and therefore to draw on their resources to learn from challenging events. The NSPCC research review on Vicarious Trauma highlights the benefit of debriefing procedures that allow self-reflection and self-monitoring (NSPCC, 2013).

Choosing the 'Next Steps'

This section has just 10 prompts to consider as the aim of the tightrope is to assist workers in identifying what they need to do to reach their goals. However, these prompts could still support a 'planned' approach toward goals. They derive from theories of resilience, social capital, desistance, and positive development. Grant and Kinman (2012) in their briefing from December 2013 highlight the importance of utilising strategies proactively, rather than merely reacting to adverse events. They outline evidenced-based strategies that have strong potential to enhance self-care and resilience. These are grouped under the following four headings:

- Enhancing reflective practice
- Mentoring and peer coaching to enhance support
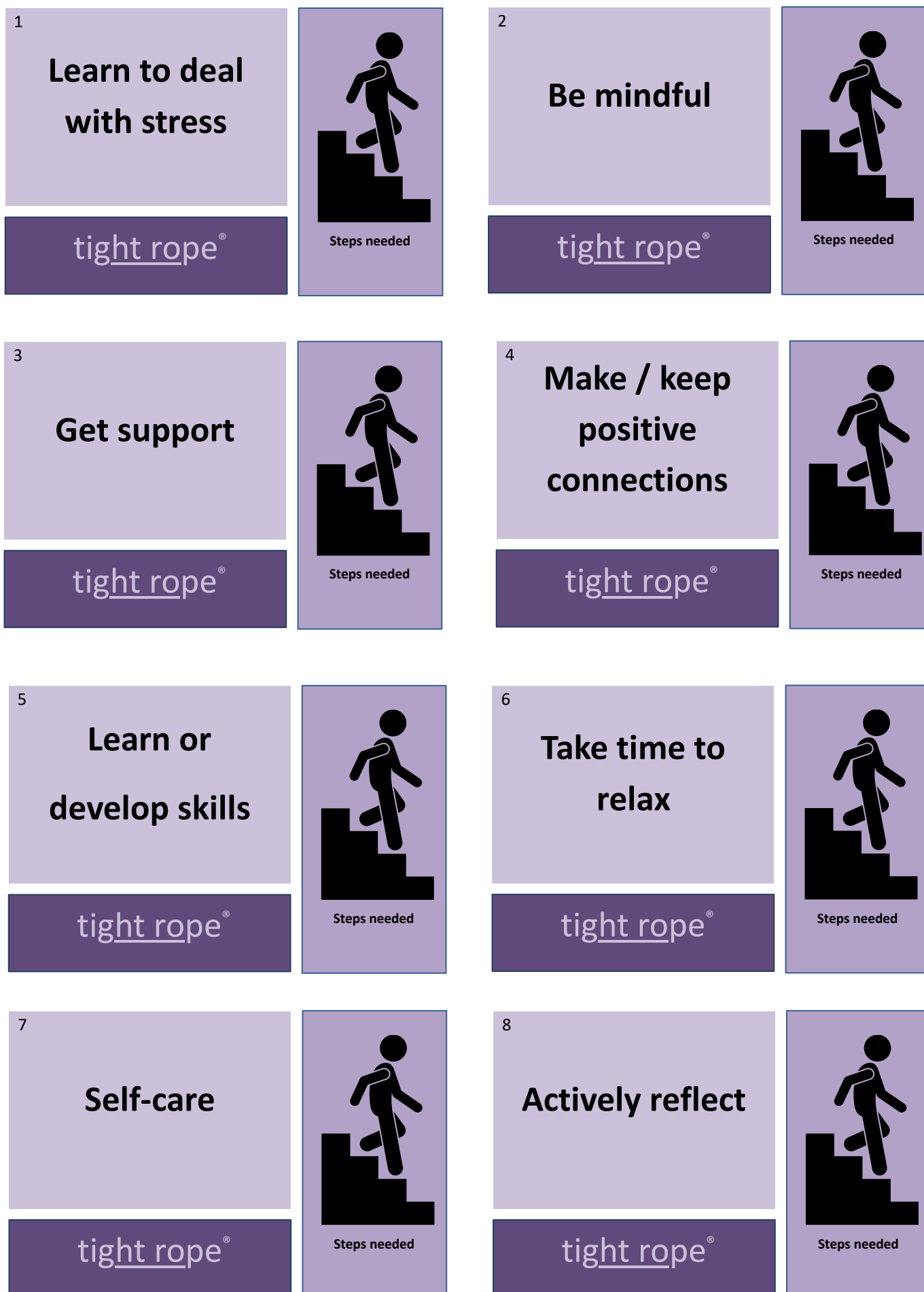- Mindfulness and relaxation
- Experiential learning

First talk about the goals wanting to be achieved, then discuss the steps needed to achieve them

Encourage the worker / team to think about the order in which these need to be taken and how realistic they are.

Encourage the worker / team to identify their own goals and actions. Reflect on whether the steps are sufficient to bring them to a safer, more manageable level of practice.

Be mindful of realistic goals whilst maintaining aspirations

In some situations the steps may be viewed as a goal in itself. Encourage discussion about the external supports and internal strengths identified that will make the steps more achievable. It is important to keep aspirations and dreams high whilst also mapping out the most achievable and most important first steps to achieve these.

1

Learn to deal with stress

tight rope®

Steps needed

2

Be mindful

tight rope®

Steps needed

3

Get support

tight rope®

Steps needed

4

Make / keep positive connections

tight rope®

Steps needed

5

Learn or develop skills

tight rope®

Steps needed

6

Take time to relax

tight rope®

Steps needed

7

Self-care

tight rope®

Steps needed

8

Actively reflect

tight rope®

Steps needed

9

Establish boundaries

tight rope®

Steps needed

10

Record uncertainties

tight rope®

Steps needed

11

Learn time management

tight rope®

Steps needed

12

Accept infallibility

tight rope®

Steps needed

13

Let go of worries

tight rope®

Steps needed

14

Celebrate sparkling moments

tight rope®

Steps needed

15

Remain hopeful

tight rope®

Steps needed

Research supporting: "FUTURE ACTIONS" (steps to help move forward / recover)

Prompt statement:	References:
1. Learn to deal with stress	Lewis et al (2011) - "components of stress management interventions would be a good place to start thinking about organizational resilience interventions"; "Learn techniques to deal with emotions and difficulties" "find good skills and ways to de-stress" (Grant, Kinman and Alexander, 2013); CBT can be enabled to better manage anxiety and problem solve more effectively - key skills in self-regulation (Goleman 2004). Mental Health Partnership (2013) five steps to wellbeing include 'being active'.
2. Be mindful	Mindfulness – Grant and Kinman (2013). "Being aware of my own thoughts and feelings" (Grant, Kinman and Alexander, 2013), Mindfulness is a useful tool in regulating emotions – to reduce over identification with service users and avoid empathetic distress (Kinman, Grant and Baker, 2016); Mental Health Partnership (2013) – 'take notice' is a step to wellbeing.
3. Get support	"strong supervision with clear guidance and space to reflect", peer support also important (Grant, Kinman and Alexander, 2013); Mental Health Partnership (2013) – positive connections increase wellbeing; The role of reflective supervision in creating space for reflective and emotional thinking is a crucial way of containing anxiety and creating conditions for workers to flourish (Ruch 2009)
4. Make / keep positive connections	Increases job satisfaction / retention (McFaddon, Campbell and Taylor, 2015); Putnam (2000) – bonding social capital (sense belonging most important), Mental Health Partnership (2013) – five steps to wellbeing include 'connect'; Newman (2004) – positive friendships build resilience; "Build a community of support" (Kinman, Grant and Baker, 2016)
5. Learn or develop skills	"Practice seeking or enhancing knowledge to manage better" (Grant, Kinman and Alexander, 2013); "It is never too late to learn" (Bartley, 2006), Aids recovery / supports mental wellbeing (Mental Health Partnership, 2013)
6. Take time to relax	Relaxation enhances resilience (Grant and Kinman, 2013); "Taking time out to relax" (Grant, Kinman and Alexander, 2013); take time to detach (Roger, 2002);
7. Self-care	Utilise self-help methods to build resilience - "Apply own oxygen mask before helping others" (Clarke, 2013; Grant, Kinman and Baker, 2014); Self-care enhances resilience: Grant and Kinman (2013); "Making sure we look after ourselves physically, mentally and spiritually" (Grant, Kinman and Alexander, 2013); For self-help strategies for resilience see Reivich and Shatte (2003). Taking responsibility increases resilience (Grotberg, 2003)
8. Actively reflect	Grant, Kinman and Alexander (2013). One technique is to write a narrative from the client or patient's perspective, and sharing these reflections in small groups of peers (Grant and Kinman, 2013). Culture of accepting queries (Broadhurst et al, 2010); Adopt a more critical approach to judgements (Munro, 1996)
9. Establish boundaries	"Being able to detach from situations, feelings and thoughts" and to "have a good work-life balance" (Grant, Kinman and Alexander, 2013) also see Roger (2002); identify times or "corridors" when can separate from work to home and vice versa (Kinman, Grant and Baker, 2016)

10. Record uncertainties	It is important to be open to both confirming and disconfirming information – exploring and testing initial hypothesis to avoid "premature categorisation" (Broadhurst, et al, 2010)
11. Learn time management	Use diary effectively, vary days so emotional content managed, designate 'worry time' (Kinman, Grant and Baker, 2016)
12. Accept infallibility	Our initial beliefs may be wrong, and we need to consider new information or look differently at the 'pieces of the puzzle' (Munro, 1996)
13. Let go of worries	To maintain resilience, it's important to stop ruminating and let go (Roger, 2002; Clarke, 2013; Bishop et al, 2004)
14. Celebrate sparkling moments	Helps to be kind to self and to remain hopeful and optimistic and keep healthy balance (Kinman, Grant and Baker, 2016); remain aware of successes (NSPCC, 2013)
15. Remain hopeful	With realistic optimism - see stressful events as temporary and even an opportunity to grow (Paton et al, 2008; Kinman, Grant and Baker, 2016)

Scale progress and motivation

After identifying the steps needed, it could be a helpful time to reflect on the overall scale of progress towards their goals.

It can also help to scale their level of motivation to take the steps identified.

If a worker is identifying with a low motivation to take the steps needed – the discussion could then lead onto thinking about what the next number up might look like, what is the next step that could help? Consider a task for the next session to get from current number, such as a 'noticing task' where they will notice when they are behaving like a higher number to the lower number. For example: "could you notice a time when you feel an increase, when you are more motivated or acting upon the steps needed to achieve the goal of …?"

Forecasting - Contingency planning

This section is also without prompts and is a space on the form to think about what we know is 'looming' in the future that we are worried about or 'peeking over the horizon' that we are happily anticipating. Importantly to consider if there is anything else we need to do in preparation for when or if this occurs? Some examples of stormy events might be:

- Threat of further savings or funding cuts
- Vacancy in the team or pending restructure
- Inspection

The worker may also identify some personal pressures that may be on the horizon and will need to think about how they will manage these alongside the professional pressures:

- Holidays or celebrations
- Beginnings (pregnancy) or endings (separation / loss)
- Moving house or home

> **It may be sufficient to just name these as an acknowledgement but not necessarily plan for them any more than the steps that are already identified.**
>
> Encourage the worker / team to think about future events they are worried or excited about and how these increase volatility, anticipation and energy. Does this change the priority of the steps identified to achieve the goals?

Be mindful of catastrophic thinking

In most statutory organisations with vulnerable clients there will be an inspection or audit on the horizon, which is a normal part of the balances and checks made on the organisation as a whole. Ruminating and stressing about these wider influences would more likely increase rather than address any poor practice that might get picked up as a result. Similarly with vacancies and funding cuts, which are regular scenes in large and/or stressful organisations.

4. Conclusion

Successfully navigating our way through the personally and professionally challenging safeguarding environment requires the enactment of inner strengths, external supports and the mindfulness of effective leaders. The Tightrope for Practitioners provides the means by which a practitioner and supervisor can map out this volatile environment in order to develop resilience.

In order to sustain resilience it will be important that the Tightrope is referred back to, especially if the practitioner and/or the team experience further turbulence or pressures. In these circumstances the following questions might help in the rediscovery of strengths, coping mechanisms and support networks.

What is the event, or thought, which has triggered uncertainty/anxiety/worry?

Have I experienced these before? If so, what would my wiser self tell me now?

What previous strengths (internal and external) can I draw upon today?

When I used the Tightrope before which aspects were useful to me, and why?

What patterns am I now noticing about this troubling event?

If my most effective and valued supervisor were here today, what insights would they offer me?

Once I have taken the 'steps down' what will be the first thing I will notice about myself, my practice, my resilience?

In what ways is this current challenge an opportunity for learning?

If I successfully resolve this particular issue, what will I have most learned about myself and my team?

In the future, what might I/the team need to be especially vigilant of?

Are there anything 'storms' within the current organisational context which might make the path muddy again?

What do we all need to do to ensure we are working in a safe and stable way?

What will my most challenging client notice about my practice when I have rediscovered my resilience?

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