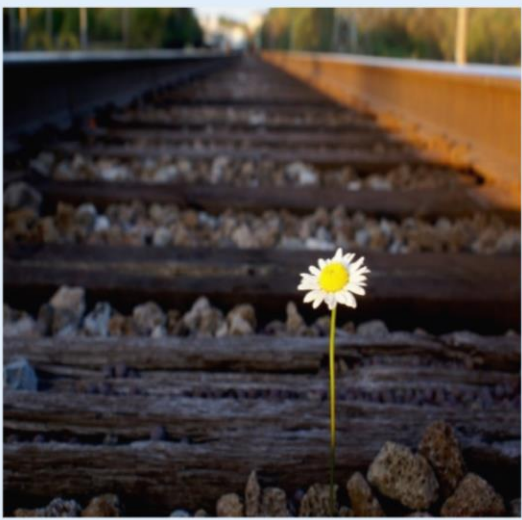




## Building Your Resilience

This toolkit is for parents or carers of a child with additional needs or a developmental disability.

Here are some ideas and strategies **to promote and strengthen your resilience as a caregiver.**



Remember...

Self-care is important, you can't  
pour from an empty cup!



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# What is Resilience?

There are 6 areas of life that seem to help us feel more resilient:



**'Resilience'** is the capacity to overcome adversity and "bounce back" from tricky situations. Being a parent or carer of any child can be difficult at times, but often, when caring for children with additional needs, everyday life can throw up additional challenges such as being judged by others who may not understand, having to chase the services you need, or suffering from sleep deprivation. Being resilient does not mean that a person doesn't experience difficulty or distress; resilience means they are successful at adapting in the face of this adversity.

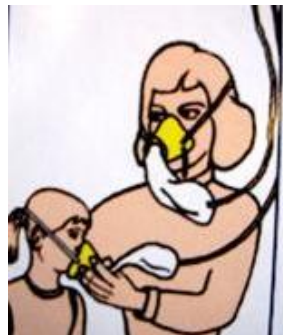
Resilience is a skill and not something that we 'just have', it is something we build up. Therefore, our resilience can be tested and damaged. We have to work to maintain our resilience.

You can find out more on resilience here - [Mind.org.uk - Resilience](https://www.mind.org.uk/resilience)

# Facing Adversity

In parenting a child with additional needs, you are likely to have already shown great resilience through parenting and caring for your child.

We don't always give credit to ourselves for what we already do to manage our own self-care and resilience, which in turn helps us be in a position to be able to help others.



Put on your own  
oxygen mask  
before helping  
those around you.

The below activity can help you recognise the things you are already doing well to promote your own resilience and self-care.

<b>Can you think of an example of a time you showed great resilience in the face of adversity?</b>	
<b>What did you do/say/feel in this situation?</b>	
<b>What did you learn? How would you explain this to another parent or carer if they asked for help?</b>	

# Building Resilience

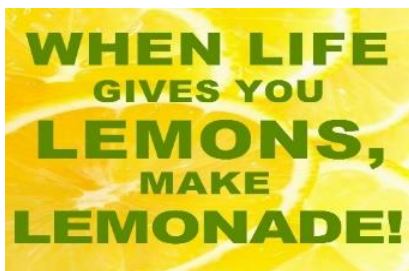


You are on an important journey to building an important skill, give yourself a pat on the back! Acknowledge that you have already taken small steps in building your resilience.

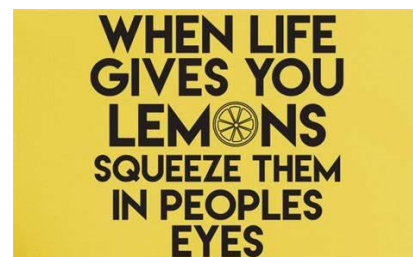
# Self-Care is Important

It is vital to look after yourself. In keeping yourself both physically and mentally healthy, you may feel better equipped to help others around you. Your self-care must be centred on what works for you as an individual. It does not have to mean implementing a new activity into your already busy schedule, it can just be 5 minutes to yourself where you can pause and reflect.

A part of self-care is acknowledging that there may be times when despite your best efforts you find it difficult to respond to situations with resilience. This is okay and this is perfectly normal.



Although there are some inspiring quotes throughout this toolkit...



It's okay to feel like this sometimes!

# Ideas for Self-Care

We asked some of our families what they do as self-care activities:

*"I feel it's so important to keep myself feeling strong because if I become poorly who looks after my family?"*

*Just to have enough time to have an undisturbed bath with a cup of tea is bliss. It recharges my batteries and sets me off again."*

*"I recognise the importance of taking time to myself. For me, reading, singing and attending a parent group provides me with an element of escapism and/or an increase sense of purpose and worth building resilience to keep on supporting my family."*

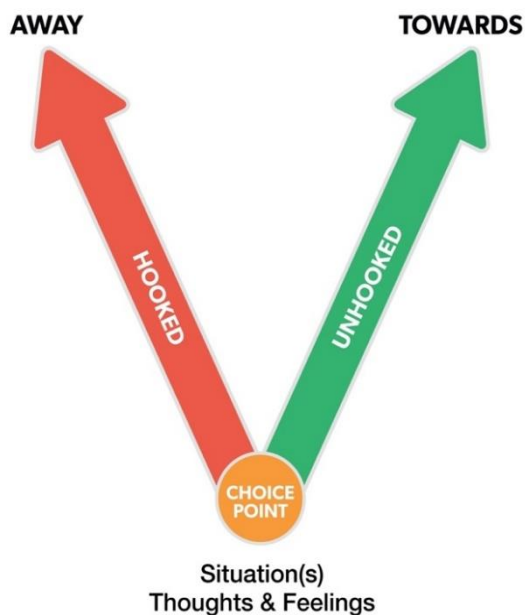
**INTERACTIVE TIME:** Now it's over to you... use **my relaxation activities postcard** below to write or draw activities that you can do to make you feel relaxed and do that is time for you. Once you have finished you can cut this out or take a photo as a reminder of self-care activities you can do.

## My Relaxation Activities



## The Choice Point

A choice point is a moment in time when it is possible to choose between taking action towards your values and taking action away from your values. Sometimes things come up which 'hook' us away from our values. This could be the unhelpful thoughts or difficult emotions that arise in tricky situations.



When faced with a choice point, it can help to remember to be BOLD:

**B** - *Breath* - Breath slowly, slow down.

**O** - *Observe* - Observe what you are thinking, feeling and doing.

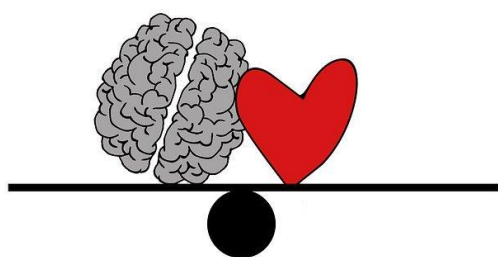
**L** - *Listen to values* - Right now, what kind of person do you want to be?

**D** - *Decide* - Decide on actions and do them. Choose actions that reflect your values.

## Compassion Circle

What is one thing that is going well for you at the moment? Can you think of one thing, no matter how small, that you already do to take care of yourself?

This might be an aspect of your physical self, your creative self, your emotional self, your social self. As parents/carers, you may regularly support others in your life (your children, partner, family, at work), but it is so important to keep something for you; keep some compassion for yourself.



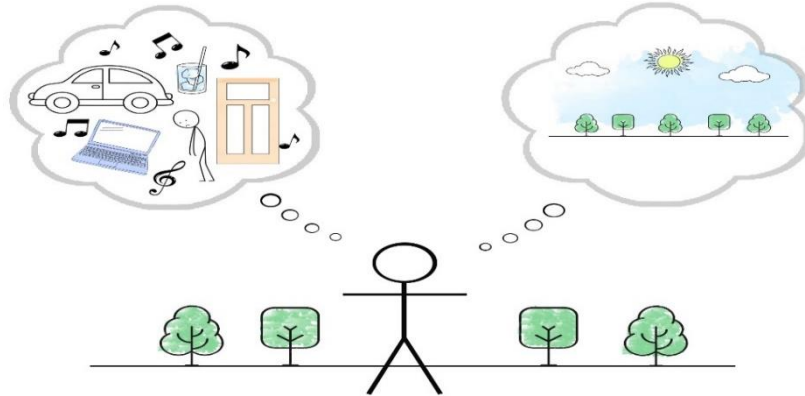
# Mindfulness

Mindfulness is simply... **noticing what is happening right now.**

It brings us back to the present moment by noticing how our body feels and what we may see, hear, smell, taste or touch.

Mindfulness is also noticing what your mind is doing. It encourages us to acknowledge our thoughts and choose to let them go.

*Mind full, or Mindful?*



We can begin to practice mindfulness by adding many brief moments of awareness into our lives. Some examples include:

- Noticing the sensations when brushing your teeth in the morning
  - Savoring a cup of tea or coffee
  - Listening and noticing different sounds of the birds singing
  - Observing the shapes and sizes of clouds in the sky
- Consciously think about each and every ingredient you cook with. What is its taste, smell and texture?





## Mindfulness Script

Here is an example of a mindfulness exercise that may be helpful to try.

The exercise could be tried for 5-10 minutes at a time, 2-3 times a day... whatever works for you!

### **“Leaves on a Stream” Exercise (Harris, 2009)**

1. Sit in a comfortable position and either close your eyes or rest them gently on a fixed spot in the room.
2. Visualize yourself sitting beside a gently flowing stream with leaves floating along the surface of the water. *Pause 10 seconds.*
3. For the next few minutes, take each thought that enters your mind and place it on a leaf... let it float by. Do this with each thought – pleasurable, painful, or neutral. Even if you have joyous or enthusiastic thoughts, place them on a leaf and let them float by.
4. If your thoughts momentarily stop, continue to watch the stream. Sooner or later, your thoughts will start up again. *Pause 20 seconds.*
5. Allow the stream to flow at its own pace. Don't try to speed it up and rush your thoughts along. You're not trying to rush the leaves along or “get rid” of your thoughts. You are allowing them to come and go at their own pace.
6. If your mind says “This is dumb,” “I'm bored,” or “I'm not doing this right” place *those thoughts* on leaves, too, and let them pass. *Pause 20 seconds.*
7. If a leaf gets stuck, allow it to hang around until it's ready to float by. If the thought comes up again, watch it float by another time. *Pause 20 seconds.*
8. If a difficult or painful feeling arises, simply acknowledge it. Say to yourself, “I notice myself having a feeling of boredom/impatience/frustration.” Place those thoughts on leaves and allow them float along.
9. From time to time, your thoughts may hook you and distract you from being fully present in this exercise. This is *normal*. As soon as you realize that you have become side-tracked, gently bring your attention back to the visualization exercise.

Perhaps to end this exercise, you could allow the image of the stream to dissolve in your mind and bring your attention back to sitting in the chair. Open your eyes gently and look around the room, noticing what you can see and hear. This will bring you back into the present moment, ready to continue on with your day.

# Focusing on your Values

## What matters to you?

It can be good to ask ourselves some questions that identify where our values lie. This can help us know what kind of person we want to be, and help us to live our lives in line with this.

Identifying and thinking about these things can help you learn how to be true to yourself, even when life gets hard, or things get in the way.

- *What really matters to you, deep in your heart?*
- *What do you want to do with your time on this planet?*
- *What sort of person do you want to be?*
- *What personal strengths or qualities do you want to develop?*

Values and goals are often confused, but they are different. We can think of values as being like points on a compass, helping to point us in the right direction in life. But just like the points on a compass, your direction of travel is not your destination. For example, your goal and final destination may be 'talking to your child about their diagnosis', but your direction is guided by your overarching value of 'honesty'.

### Your Core Values

There may be lots of values that are important to you. Try to think of the four most important, or '**core**' values, and write them here. Some people might choose 'kindness' or 'family'

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

### Your Goals

Try now to think of four goals that you would like to achieve which are aligned with your four core values.

For example, if your value was kindness, your goal could be to help out a friend or volunteer at a charity.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

# Useful Resources and Information

## Self-help Apps

Self-help apps can be a useful and viable way of support. The NHS have published apps on their digital library, some focussed on helping you relax include:



## Useful Websites

The following websites may offer some useful resources and information regarding building resilience, learning disabilities, and mental health support.

- <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health/>
- <https://www.mind.org.uk/media/17944275/peer-support-toolkit-final.pdf>
- <https://www.mind.org.uk/>
- <https://www.psycom.net/dealing-with-change>

## Further Support

**Helping Hands Psychology Team:** If you require further support please use the contact details overleaf to contact the Helping Hands team in your designated Children's Centre.

**GP:** If you are concerned about yourself or a member of the family you can access support from your local GP.

**Charities:** Charity organisations such as Mind Cymru, Samaritans and Young Minds may also be able to provide you with support regarding resilience.

Mind Cymru	02920 395 123
Samaritans	116 125
Young Minds	0808 802 5544

**Local Support Groups:** Groups are a great way to meet new people and to talk about shared experiences. Here are the links to some we are aware of in the local area:

<a href="https://www.facebook.com/SparrowsAln/">https://www.facebook.com/SparrowsAln/</a>	<a href="http://www.valleydaffodils.co.uk/">http://www.valleydaffodils.co.uk/</a>
<a href="https://www.magicparents.co.uk/">https://www.magicparents.co.uk/</a>	<a href="http://www.buildingbridgesproject.org.uk/">http://www.buildingbridgesproject.org.uk/</a>
<a href="https://hopegb.co.uk/">https://hopegb.co.uk/</a>	<a href="http://www.onelife.wales/About-us/">http://www.onelife.wales/About-us/</a>
<a href="https://www.asdinfoales.co.uk/newport-autism-support-group/">https://www.asdinfoales.co.uk/newport-autism-support-group/</a>	

**Supporting Siblings:** If you are worried about your sibling child please visit: <https://www.sibs.org.uk/> for further information and resources or alternatively please contact the Helping Hands team.

# Contact

This toolkit was created by the **Helping Hands Psychology for Children with Additional Needs** team at Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB).

**Your feedback is important to us!** If you would like to tell us what you thought about this self-help toolkit, please get in touch with us by emailing [ABB.HelpingHandsTeam@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:ABB.HelpingHandsTeam@wales.nhs.uk). We would love to hear from you.

Additionally, if you need any help or support with using or accessing these resources, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Helping Hands Psychology Team.

<b>Serennu Children's Centre</b> 01633 748023	<b>Nevill Hall Children's Centre</b> 01873 732713
<b>Caerphilly Children's Centre</b> 02920 867447	

Please contact the team if you would be interested in any of our other toolkits on the following topics –

Understanding and  
Managing Behaviour

Supporting Siblings

Transition

Friendships

Anxiety

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