



# Resilience

**Resilience is a crucial skill when it comes to managing adversity and adapting to change. In today's challenging landscape, being resilient is more important than ever. But where does resilience come from? And how can we be intentional about building this critical skill, so we're better equipped when facing adversity in the future? We caught up with Olympian Lizzie Simmonds to discuss the lessons she learnt on resilience following her fourth-place finish at the London Olympics in 2012.**

## **Mindset: understanding that you have a choice when faced with adversity**

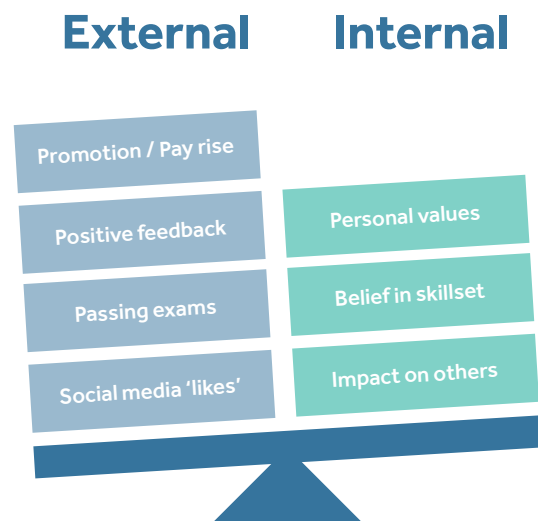
We all have obstacles, barriers and challenges in our lives. For some, these might be trivial; for others, these might be considerable or all-encompassing. Some we can recover from in a few minutes, while others can take years to process and accept. Nobody wants to face hardship, but most of us will. We need to be aware of our internal narrative and take ownership.

The real challenge is not just to be stoic and resilient when faced with adversity. The real challenge is to accept what is happening and find a way to thrive. Some great questions we can ask are:

- How can I learn and grow from this experience?
- How can I see the next hurdle as an opportunity rather than an obstacle?
- How can I use my experience to support others who are going through something similar?

## **Building confidence through challenge**

Building resilience means challenging ourselves with difficult tasks and goals, and confidence plays an important part in this. We can generate confidence internally, or we can receive it from external sources



Neither source is inherently good or bad. But, if we lack ways to build our confidence internally, we become reliant on others and systems outside of our control to feel good about ourselves. This reliance can lead to a need to seek affirmation from others to validate our self-worth.

Using external sources for confidence can also reduce our ability to take risks and challenge ourselves.

If we believe the end result is a reflection of who we are, it becomes very difficult to engage with risk as the thought of underperformance is detrimental to our self-worth.

Understanding that our value isn't based upon our results is an important part of resilience.

## Why failure can be a positive

It's hard to become resilient unless we experience adversity, yet many of us fear failure. We can all agree that failing doesn't feel very pleasant, but the learning that comes through failure is often a crucial component for later success.

The world has changed significantly, and with change comes inevitable failure. Recently, we have all shifted our way of working into the virtual world. Through this transition we might have come across small bouts of failure ourselves – meeting agendas that don't quite work, technology that freezes at a pivotal point in our presentation, project adjustments that don't stand the test of remote working. However, we're all engaging with failure in a new and positive way.

Reminding ourselves that we are not our failures frees us to engage with risk, try new things, be innovative and creative. Why? Because we know the consequences of things not going to plan are not catastrophic to our self-worth.

So be proud of your failures going forwards – take ownership of them just as we do our successes. Failure shows us that we're pushing our boundaries and challenging our limits.

## Thriving through change

Most of us had to adapt our lifestyles to follow the restrictions caused by COVID-19. We shifted routines in ways we probably didn't think possible before this year. We created a balance of personal and working life, all within our home environment.

Many of us are creatures of habit. We actively avoid change, the unfamiliar, the uncomfortable. Yet change can be invigorating and inspiring. Reflect on this period, and remember change is not only manageable, but it can also be transformational.

When this is all over, don't automatically fall straight back into old habits and routines. Adapting, mentally and practically, to life's challenges is part of resilience. Don't underestimate our ability to do this.

## Perspective

In times of emergency, we prioritise the essentials – our family, our health, our connections with others. Suddenly an argument with a spouse or a setback at work seems trivial. It's important, as we move forward and transition to the 'new normal', to keep sight of the essentials. Hopefully, we have also gained some perspective on our abilities. We are stronger than we probably thought, and we are more capable of juggling tasks than we believed in March.

## Looking after our mental and physical wellbeing

Managing our wellbeing can be key to building resilience. We need to make sure we are:

- getting enough sleep
- exercising regularly
- eating healthily
- managing stress levels, and
- reaching out to others when we need support.

## Resilience is not a destination

Resilience is not something to 'achieve'. It is a way of being. The aim is not to just return to where we were before this crisis. The real objective is to transform, both as individuals and as organisations, through adversity. It is not just recovery, but rather reinvention that will define us as we move forward.

## Together, #wecandothis

Lizzie Simmonds



Lizzie is a retired British swimmer who has won medals at World, Commonwealth and European Championships, and has represented Great Britain at two Olympic Games. She retired from professional competition in 2018 but still has many roles within high-performance sport, including supporting fellow athletes throughout and beyond their sporting careers. Lizzie has also developed a successful programme transferring the systems and habits of elite performers into the corporate world and works with companies to help staff find ways to prioritise their own physical and mental health

Follow Lizzie's story on Twitter @LizzieSimmonds1