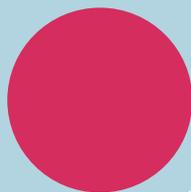


# RESILIENCY TOOLKIT

PRACTICES FOR  
PEER WORKERS

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# CONTENTS

## Introduction

### Tool 1:

**Reflexive Writing-pg.  
- ABC's of Resilience(video)  
(Pg. 2-4)**

### Tool 2:

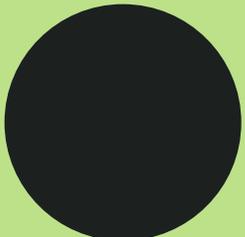
**10 ways to Develop Resilience  
- The Art of Failing Forward (video)  
(Pg. 5-7)**

### Tool 3:

**Finding your Ikigai  
- Ikigai (video)  
(Pg. 8-10)**

### Research

**(Pg. 11-16)**



# INTRODUCTION

Resilience has a strong link with Peer Support roles because the key functions of these roles are rooted in lived experience. This experience is generally attributed to living with, overcoming, or surpassing difficult and trying circumstances. Peer Workers bring a unique lens, informed by resilience that gives a distinct perspective to any given situation. These perspectives can be valuable to one-to-one support, group support, community building, and systematic change. The resilience Peer Workers exhibit, allows them to be accountable for their actions and well-being because they have built the necessary tools to establish appropriate boundaries and self-care practices. This toolkit has been created to provide Peer Workers with more resources to help further develop their resilience techniques. This toolkit will provide three unique resources designed to help build and maintain resilience. Each of these resources will be paired with a video to provide deeper context into their effectiveness. The final component of this toolkit will be a brief review of the literature broadly related to resilience.



# Reflexive Writing

## Purpose

The Reflexive Writing tool is for supporting Peer Workers in processing the hidden or unspoken conflicts they may be experiencing. According to the article *'Writing the Pain': Engaging First-Person Phenomenological Accounts*, Reflexive writing practices help us gain deeper insight into our thoughts and identify their implicit meanings. This practice can help bring more meaningful attention to our thoughts and feelings. Peer Workers can use this tool to identify unconscious bias and assumptions that may have gone unnoticed. Stepping back and taking the time to evaluate stressful or adverse situations allows us to recognize where we may have faltered and make corrections in the future. The Reflexive Writing tool allows us to understand our values, which is essential for self-exploration, self-compassion, building resilience, and providing high-quality support to others.

## User Guide

The practice of Reflexive Writing is to take a moment to contemplate our thoughts in a more critical light. It is helpful to keep a journal specifically for your Reflexive Writing. After each session, choose at least one of the prompts listed below and answer it. Keeping up with this practice is a valuable technique for keeping yourself grounded in Peer Values.

Ensure you keep this journal private for the safety of yourself and those who you are supporting. Be as open and honest in your Reflexive Writing as possible. Your honesty will help you grow as a person and a Peer Worker.

# Reflexive Writing

## Writing Prompts

Here are some prompts that you could use when journaling after a peer support session to break down your own personal assumptions.

- What nurtures you when you support people?
- While you support others, how do you take care of your own mental health?
- Why do you want to support others?
- What are your motives or intentions for helping others?
- What does it mean to you to be a supporter?
- In what ways have you grown as a person by supporting others?
- What scares you about peer support?
- What inspires you about the work that you do?
- What was a defining moment in your career?

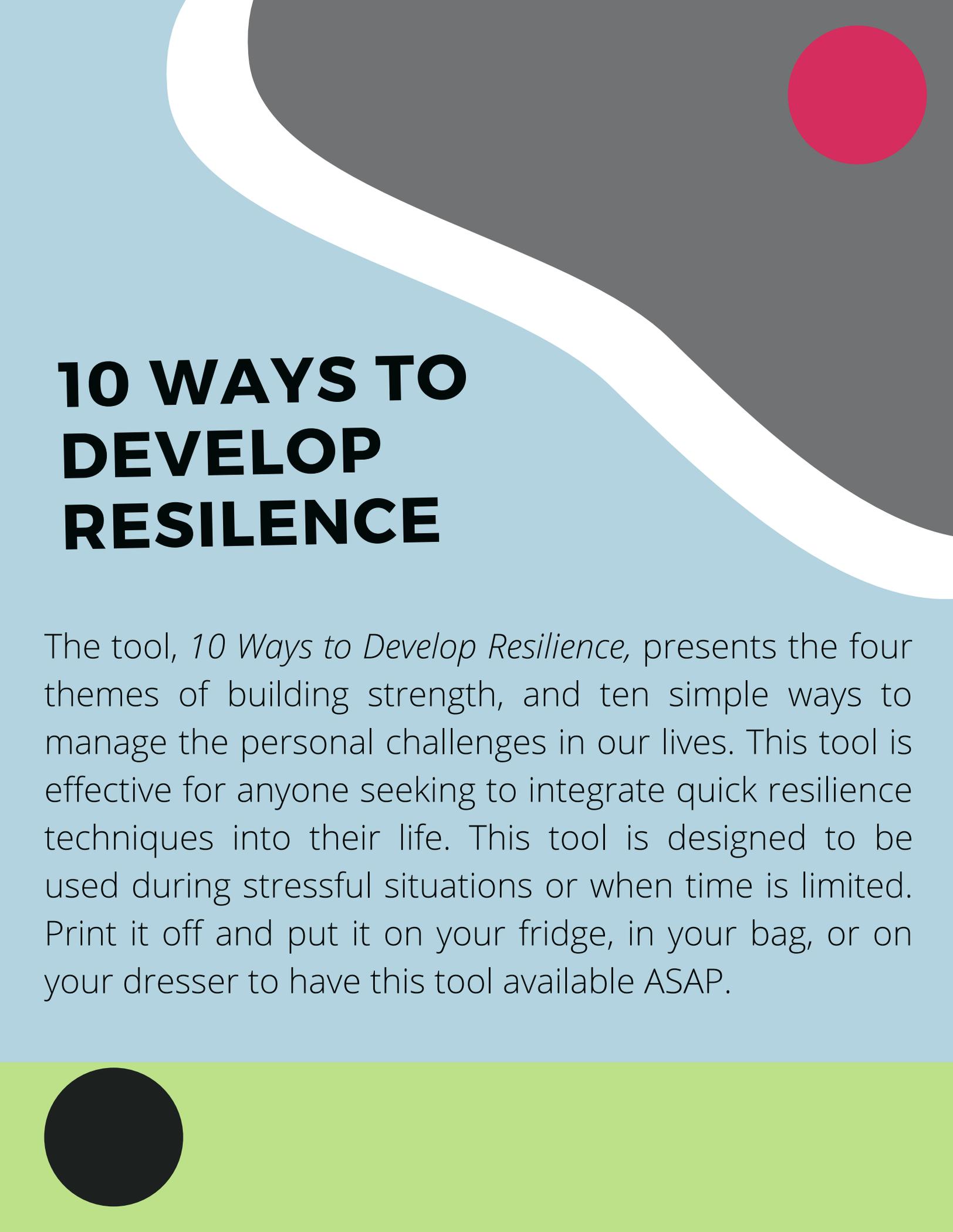
Adapted from *105 Writing Prompts for Self-Reflection and Self-Discovery*.  
The link to this list in the reference list if you would like to look at this list for more self-reflection writing prompts.

# ABC's of Resilience

Kathryn Meisner TEDxYMCA

The ABCs of resilience: Kathryn Meisner at TEDxYMCAAcademy - YouTube

In this video, Kathryn Meisners presents her audience with the idea that adversity is inevitable and how we choose to respond to adversity matters. To overcome adversity, we need to be resilient. Kathryn states that resiliency is a learned skill that anybody can acquire. To best develop resilience, Kathryn suggests using a tool called, *The ABCs of Resilience*. This tool is designed to be used when reflecting on or encountering a problematic experience. To use the ABCs of Resilience, Kathryn suggests that first, you try and slow down your thinking to evaluate the adversity you are experiencing properly. Then, Kathryn recommends that you assess the beliefs you have related to this adversity. Finally, she suggests that you reflect on the potential consequences of this adverse experience: adversity, beliefs, and consequences, The ABCs of Resilience. In the video, Kathryn goes into greater detail about how and when to use this tool (the abbreviation continues past ABC).



# 10 WAYS TO DEVELOP RESILIENCE

The tool, *10 Ways to Develop Resilience*, presents the four themes of building strength, and ten simple ways to manage the personal challenges in our lives. This tool is effective for anyone seeking to integrate quick resilience techniques into their life. This tool is designed to be used during stressful situations or when time is limited. Print it off and put it on your fridge, in your bag, or on your dresser to have this tool available ASAP.

# 10 Ways to Develop Resilience

1. Make connections and build your social support network.



2. Avoid the tendency to view crises as insurmountable challenges.



3. Accept that change is a natural and unavoidable part of life.



4. Move towards your realistic goals.



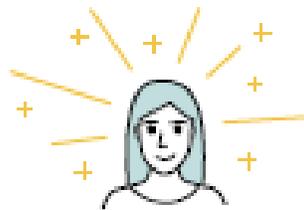
5. Take decisive action that will help you face your challenges.



6. Look for opportunities that promote self-discovery.



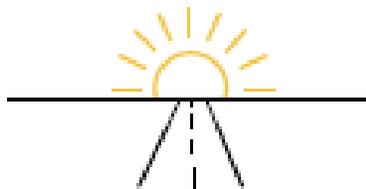
7. Nurture a positive view of yourself and your abilities.



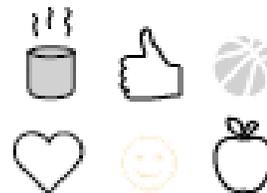
8. Keep things in perspective and in context.



9. Maintain a hopeful outlook on life.



10. Take care of yourself.

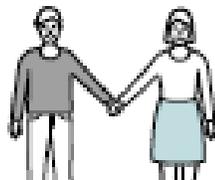


## Four Themes of Resilience training:

Resilient Thinking



Effective Relationships



Managing Emotions



Building on Strengths



# The Art of Failing Forward

Sasha Shillcutt TEDxUNO

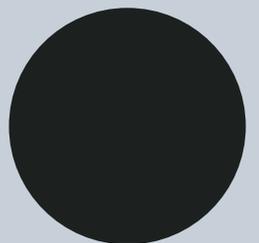
Sasha Shillcutt speaks to her audience about the misconception we have about what makes a successful person. Sasha discusses the idea that resiliency is derived from our experiences with overcoming failure and that resilient people fail... a lot! If society normalized failure and saw vulnerability as a strength, this could help us all master "The Art of Failing Forward". Sasha suggests that we all must have an acceptable margin for failure to be resilient. This margin allows us to set realistic expectations and adjust when things do not go according to plan. Finally, Sasha discusses the importance of seeking feedback, as it will enable us to be vulnerable by admitting our failures, and resilient by striving to alter our future behaviour.

[Resilience: The Art of Failing Forward | Sasha Shillcutt, MD, MS, FASE | TEDxUNO - YouTube](#)

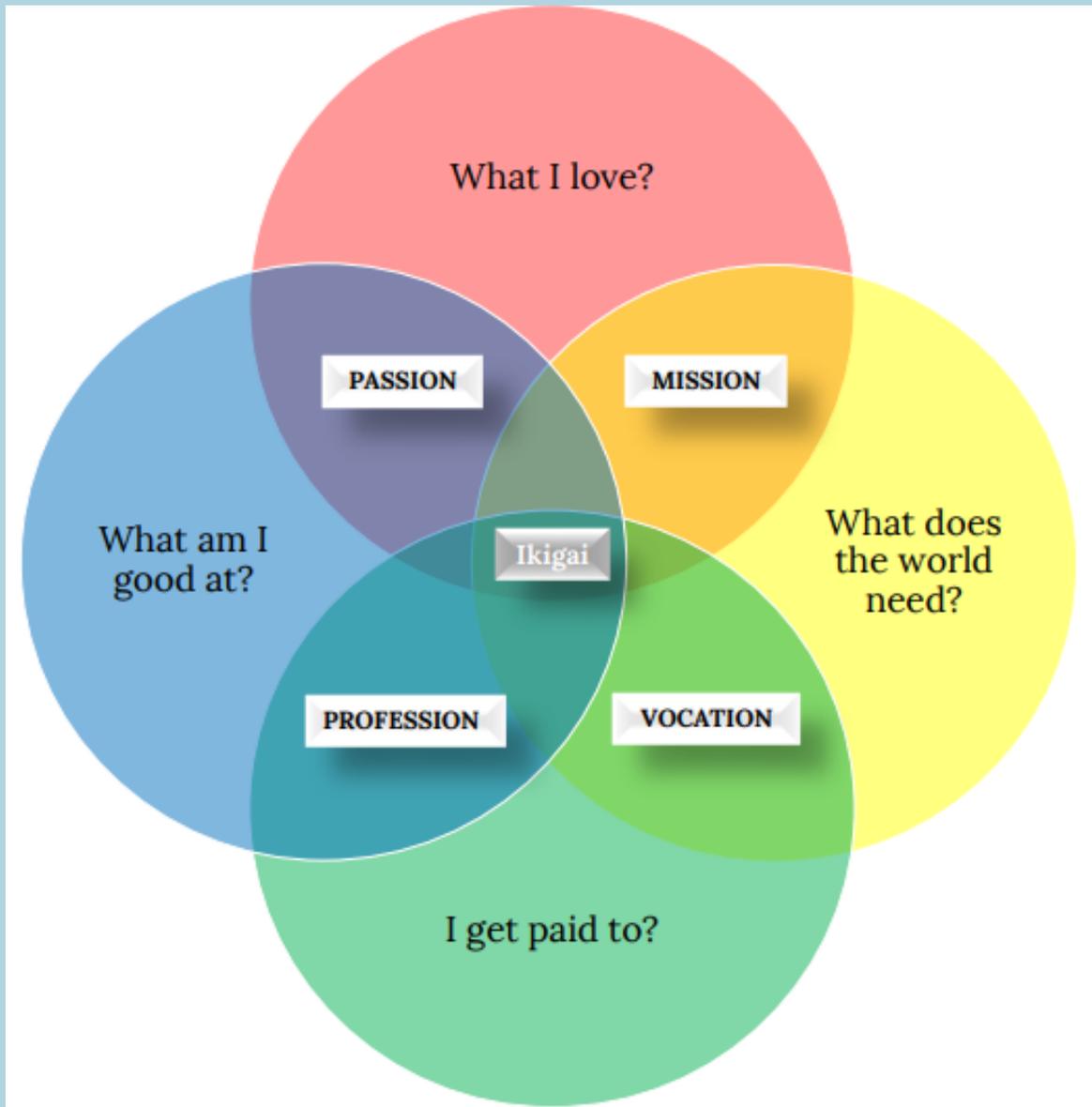


# Finding Your Ikigai

The following worksheet, *Finding Your Ikigai*, is a tool intended to help individuals explore their life's purpose. Ikigai (ee-ke-gi) roughly translates from Japanese to "reason for being" and is a practice that allows a person to discover their passions in life. Ikigai can help to reframe obstacles in our lives as opportunities. This tool can help Peer Workers find how their work defines parts of their lives and why they choose to do what they do.



# Ikigai Worksheet



**Continue the work sheets at:**

<https://www.josnierop.nl/wp-content/uploads/discover-your-ikigai-worksheet.pdf>

# Ikigai

## Emily Bidle TEDxYouth

Emily Bidel encourages her audience to embark on the journey of self-discovery through learning the Art of Ikigai (Iki = life, gai = value). The four main questions that Ikigai asks are; What do you love? What are you good at? What does the world need? and, What can you be rewarded for? Finding what you love and what you are good at can help to identify your passions in life and thus direct you towards purpose and meaning. To discover her own Ikigai, Emily shares her experience with self-realization, concrete action, deep reflective practices, and creativity. Emily explains that achieving one's Ikigai is not easy; it takes hard work, courage, determination and a willingness to make sacrifices. The process of discovering your Ikigai takes courage and resilience because it has the potential to challenge you to make significant changes in your life. These changes can provide you with more meaning and profound satisfaction through intentionally choosing to prioritize your passions. Peer Workers may use Ikigai practices to take stock of the meaningful work they do and its impact on their community.

Emily Bidle: Ikigai: the secret to a purposeful life | Emily Bidle |  
TEDxYouth@ASIJ | TED Talk

# Research

Creativity and resilience, independent of one another, are two valuable characteristics that can positively impact Peer Workers and the organizations they work for. Creativity can be seen as using specific modalities to stimulate deeper insight, heighten problem-solving, and increase the potential for alternative thinking. Resilience is often referred to as the capacity to overcome adverse situations and learn from these experiences to build a greater state of competency.

The following review of research analyzes the intersections of creativity, resilience, and Peer Work through a mental health care provider's lens and a corporate organization's lens.

# Mental Health

In traditional therapeutic practices, creative tools provide alternative avenues for expressing and processing traumatic events. Metzl and Morrell (2008) saw that art therapy is commonly used for clients who have experienced trauma, but this tool is potentially underutilized in other therapeutic practices. The researchers explored the links between creativity and resilience to determine if specific techniques could benefit general clinical therapeutic approaches.

Upon reviewing the relevant literature, Metzl and Morrell concluded that creative therapeutic practices promote divergent thinking, which can help reframe clinical problems, seek alternative solutions, and instill a sense of resilience. They expressed a need for further investigation on specific creative modalities to determine best practices for therapeutic intervention. Further study shows that the dynamic relationship between creativity and resilience requires a consistent and controlled environment that enables researchers to mitigate external factors while operating in relatively realistic situations. To achieve this environment, Kim (2015) chose to conduct their research with school-aged children who had experienced a violent and traumatic event at their school. Kim's study was designed to help define the role that creativity plays in developing resilience. Kim worked with 26 students and used different creative projects explicitly designed to stimulate the processing of the traumatic event, recontextualize the event, and express the event's meanings and impacts.

After conducting qualitative interviews to gather relevant data, Kim inferred that the students participating in the program had developed new motivations in their lives and a more effortless fluency in expressing their emotions. Peer Workers often exhibits similar resiliency traits because emotional fluency and motivation for wellness are necessary to use lived experience effectively.

# Mental Health

The act of intentionally using the experiences of overcoming adversity to help support others is a clear sign that Peer Work is steeped in resilience practices. Byrne et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative study on managers that work with Peer Workers on their mental health teams. The researchers identified that Peer Workers could connect with service consumers in ways clinical staff cannot. Byrne et al. reported that the Peer Workers' ability to build connections with program participants effectively leads to greater service retention and an increased feeling of hope. The managers in Byrne et al. research reported that Peer Workers bring a valuable perspective to team conversation, creating a more holistic and person-centred approach. Peer Workers were seen by their managers as having a lower risk of burnout because self-care is taken more seriously when compared to traditional staff. According to Byrne et al. research, Peer Work benefits consumers of service, the mental health team, and the organization they work for.

# Organizations

The advantages of Peer Workers are not exclusive to mental health services and can be implemented in a variety of organizational settings. Qualitative research by Agarwal et al. (2019) on workplace Peer Support programs suggests that Peer Workers' individual resilience can positively influence the resilience exhibited by their co-workers. Having a Peer Worker on staff can reduce stressors related to heavy workload, a high level of workplace demands, and inadequate resources for employees' mental health. Having trained Peer Workers in a workplace can create a more psychologically safe work environment that promotes a healthy work culture. People receiving support from Peer Workers report greater confidence, better organization, and greater empathy (Agarwal et al., 2019). In addition to Peer Work, organizations should build creative work environments to help encourage a sustainable degree of resilience in their staff.

# Organizations

Richtnér and Löfsten (2014), recognized that resilience and creativity are tools that successful organizations use to navigate turbulent situations. Richtnér and Löfsten's use a dynamic lens to examine and explain how resilience can influence an organization's capacity for creativity. In this study, the researchers administered surveys with Likert scale questions to 99, mid-sized technology companies to analyze the cognitive, relational, structural, and emotional resources that these companies offer. The researchers focused on these four resource groups because previous studies suggest they have a strong correlation to the creative capacity of a company. Richtnér and Löfsten, determined that emotional and cognitive resources play the most significant role in a company's creativity. Cognitive resources speak to a company's ability to provide opportunities for employees to heighten their skills, knowledge, and competencies. Emotional resources refer to a company's ability to instil trust, respect, and opportunities for meaningful relationship building amongst their employees. Richtnér and Löfsten, concluded that if a company prioritizes both emotional and cognitive resources, it can successfully foster a creative working environment, promoting a culture of resiliency.

# Closing

Creativity can promote resilience no matter the environment. When individuals choose to use creative techniques, it improves their flexibility in thinking and ability to re-contextualize adverse experiences.

Similarly, when organizations properly support their staff's emotional and cognitive needs, they encourage employees to be creative, thus building a resilient organization. In both individual practices and organizational settings, Peer Work is utilized to foster a sense of resilience. The literature suggests that more research could be done outside of the clinical and organizational perspective to properly define the scale at which Peer Worker's influence the resiliency of others.

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