



The COVID-19 outbreak has changed everyone's lives. We are all confronted with disrupted routines, a loss of social interactions and opportunities, job insecurities, and uncertainty at a level that has never been experienced before. Further, some parts of our country are in the middle of a second lock down involving the highest levels of restriction on movement and daily life. Living through this while you are also adjusting to becoming a parent or adding another child to your family adds another layer of hard.

At every level there is awareness about the impact COVID-19 is having on our mental health and emotional wellbeing. Whilst it is important to know that we cannot and should not try to 'control' our emotional experiences or 'change' how we may be feeling, there is much we can all try to do as individuals to take care of our emotional wellbeing, and ensure that our lives continue to feel as meaningful and connected as possible.

Resilience is a word that is used frequently by Psychologists. Resilience refers to how well we adapt or cope with stress, trauma, loss and general adversity. So, whilst we will all experience COVID-19 as painful and difficult, building our resilience allows us not only to survive these times but also to grow as individuals. Whilst some of us may find that we 'bounce back' or lean into adversity more readily than others, we all have the ability to build resilience at every stage of our lives. Resilience is like a muscle that only develops when it is used. Indeed, none of us can develop our resilience when life is smooth and we are within our comfort zone. The emotional discomfort we are all experiencing right now is in fact our resilience muscles switching on and gaining strength.

There are several psychological processes we can engage with that will build resilience. We refer to them as the Four Pillars of Resilience. Drawing upon these abilities and skills when we feel overwhelmed and challenged will help you flex your resilience muscles.

1. **Grit.** Grit is one's ability to apply passion and perseverance to a long-term goal. When we show grit, we stay the course despite the discomfort we feel. It involves digging deep to find our inner reserves and reminding ourselves

that we have survived hard things before. Remembering that as a species, humans have great capacity to do hard things and that you are indeed part of this universal human experience.

2. **Perspective.** Although we can't always change the facts of our circumstances, we can change how we view them. Expanding our awareness or shifting our focus holds great power to shape how we respond to the situations we face. It is important to remind yourself that you are not alone in facing COVID-19 and that it is a shared experience. Re-orientate your attention to what we can control and what has not changed. Try not to focus on what you can't control.
3. **Humour.** Laughing easily and frequently is a great tool during a crisis even though it might feel a bit out of reach. Holding events and our thoughts and feelings lightly and engaging with satire and the ridiculous eases our burdens, reduces stress and keeps us anchored to the present. Indeed, humour is a great tool to shift perspectives on our circumstances. Find what genres and activities appeal to your sense of humour and engage with them when you can.
4. **Gratitude.** Acknowledging the goodness that is present in our lives is a powerful tool in enhancing our experience of positive emotions, feeling more optimistic and more connected to others. Appreciating the good we do have is important in that it is a present orientated activity that minimises our engagement in rumination about the past or worry around the future. Writing down three things each day you feel thankful for is a great way to engage with gratitude.

Experiment with these processes and strategies and see what works for you. If however your coping resources are not proving effective or you are experiencing negative emotions that feel overwhelming and unrelenting please reach out to us at Gidget Foundation Australia. 🌸

