



Personal Resilience Workbook

Learning Mindset

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Gail Kinman,
Louise Grant and
Lisa Bostock

Learning Mindset



Encounters with people who access services are unique and require a flexible approach and learning mindset. Engaging in both informal and formal learning opportunities and seeking feedback from colleagues and stakeholders enable continuing professional development. The following characteristics are particularly important:

- Curiosity about the world and being open to new ideas.
- Balancing optimism with a realistic outlook.
- Being flexible and able to adapt to different situations and to challenges.
- Using support and supervision for personal growth and development.
- Actively seeking feedback and valuing reflection.
- Prioritising opportunities for learning and development.
- Recognising areas for improvement and building on success.

Learning mindset questions
1. Reflecting on my practice comes naturally to me.
2. I actively pursue opportunities for reflective conversations to help me learn and develop.
3. I have a clear understanding of what constitutes 'best practice' in my work and how this can be achieved.
4. I prioritise setting aside time and space for reflecting on my work and how it might be improved.

5. I prepare for supervision and other opportunities for appraisal and review to help me develop in my role and area of practice.
6. I seek out learning opportunities and engage in continuous professional development to perform at my best.
7. I am open to learning from experiences, mistakes, feedback and other people.
8. I see challenges as opportunities for growth.
9. I welcome change as an opportunity for personal development.
10. I actively seek new knowledge, skills and perspectives in my work.
11. I seek out opportunities for mentorship, feedback and advice from more experienced colleagues or peers.
12. I am aware of my personal learning styles, needs and preferences and seek out ways to accommodate them.
13. I approach new ideas with an open and learning-oriented mindset.
14. When I face a setback, I usually feel confident I can find ways to address it.

Learning Mindset - Core Actions



Core Action 1: Listening Mindfully

Reflective Pause:

How often do you practice mindful listening, where you fully engage with others' perspectives and emotions without judgment or distraction? How does this practice contribute to your relationships and understanding?

Effective communication is essential for fostering a culture that promotes a growth mindset and continuous learning. It has been estimated that the average person remembers only about a quarter of what has been said immediately after a conversation (Shafir, 2003). Mindful listening is the foundation of effective communication and learning. By minimising the distraction of our own thoughts, mindful listening enables us to truly absorb and retain information shared by others. Moreover, mindful listening – listening without judgement, criticism or interruption – cultivates a sense of understanding and validation for the speaker.

Listening More Mindfully

- **Be fully present:** Focus on the person you are listening to, minimising any disturbance. During remote meetings resist the temptation to multitask, and instead dedicate your attention solely to the conversation in hand. Before the meeting begins, take a few moments to clear your mind and prepare yourself to fully absorb the other person's perspective. Considering practicing relaxation techniques, such as the breathing exercise recommended in Quick Win 1.2 to help you stay focused during the forthcoming conversation.
- **Cultivate empathy:** Our perceptions of the world are shaped by our unique experiences, beliefs and personalities. It is important to understand other people's perspectives, even if you do not agree with them, by acknowledging their views.

- **Actively listen:** This is important for all meetings and professional development opportunities, whether face-to-face, or online. Active listening is more challenging online due to the absence of visual cues that help us understand other people's emotions and reactions. This makes it easier to lose track of conversational threads and miss key points.
- **Listen to your own cues:** Be aware of how your thoughts, feelings and physical reactions during conversation can divert your attention from the other person. Past experiences, motives, preconceptions, and negative self-talk can make us focus more on ourselves than who we are talking to. Impatience and frustration, especially when our 'inner chimp' emerges (see Core Action 1.1), may cause us to interrupt or dominate the conversation. Preoccupation with what to say next can also hinder listening. Switching off your self-view during online meetings can enhance focus and reduce self-consciousness.
- **Consider doing mindfulness training:** Research with social workers (Kinman et al., 2019) found that a brief mindfulness course improved their listening skills and their ability to discern what people are really saying. It also highlighted benefits such as improved wellbeing, job performance, and work-life balance. Other studies of health and social care professionals found that mindfulness can alleviate burnout and improve retention (Maddock et al., 2023).

Core Action 2: Staying On Track: Maintaining Purposeful Goal Direction

Reflective Pause:

How do you stay on track and maintain focus on your goals amidst distractions and challenges?

Here are some tips for staying on track.

- **Keep an 'I did' list**

As a practitioner, you will probably have an endless 'to do' list. This can be demoralising and make you feel you are not making progress towards your goals. It is crucial to avoid task paralysis by staying focused. While 'to do' lists help us prioritise tasks, they often lead to unmet expectations as new tasks are added throughout the day. Maintaining an 'I did' list, as suggested by Greer (2016), offers a solution. This list highlights achievements, fostering a positive outlook and boosting feelings of self-efficacy.

The 'I did' technique helps you identify your activities and evaluate whether they represent the most efficient use of your time and energy. By documenting your actions, you gain insight into your workload management skills. Reviewing unplanned tasks allows you to anticipate future responsibilities and manage your time more effectively. Moreover, maintaining a record of completed tasks, especially on challenging days, promotes a sense of productivity and progress towards larger goals. Greer's process and structure for maintaining an 'I did' list is detailed in Quick Win 2.1.

- ***Avoid procrastination***

Another reason why people fail to make progress on important tasks is because they procrastinate – they prioritise enjoyable, low priority activities while delaying or avoiding crucial responsibilities. Procrastination includes postponing decision-making and waiting to be in the 'right mood' to tackle tasks. Common procrastination behaviours include leaving tasks on to-do lists for long periods, starting high-priority tasks but switching to other activities, or spending excessive time checking emails under the guise of productivity.

Procrastination not only hinders goal attainment but also induces feelings of unproductivity, guilt, and shame. Recognising and understanding the reasons behind procrastination is the first step towards overcoming it. Common underlying causes include fear of failure, the daunting nature of tasks, or using procrastination as a subconscious form of rebellion.

To combat procrastination, it is essential to establish clear, achievable goals rather than vague plans and minimize distractions wherever possible. Quick Win 2.2 introduces the Japanese Kanban technique, which helps us set and track goals effectively. Similarly, Quick Win 2.3 suggests creating an 'I did' list to acknowledge achievements, helping to boost motivation and combat procrastination

Core Action 3: Using A Solution-Focused Approach For Goal Achievement - Peer Coaching

'Problem-focused' and *'solution-focused'* are two different approaches that can be used to address challenges or issues.

- *Problem-focused approaches* involve identifying and analysing the problem itself – its causes, consequences, and possible solutions. Problem-focused strategies often involve breaking down the problem into manageable chunks, gathering relevant information, and developing action plans to address it systematically.

- *Solution-focused approaches* emphasise identifying and drawing upon existing strengths and resources to find solutions. Rather than dwelling extensively on the problem itself, solution-focused strategies focus on envisioning the desired outcome and identifying steps to achieve it. This often involves exploring exceptions to the problem, identifying past successes in managing such difficulties, and building on existing strengths to create change.

Reflective Pause

How do you balance problem-focused and solution-focused approaches to effectively cope with challenges? How do you balance problem-focused and solution-focused approaches to effectively cope with challenges?

Studies show that health and social care practitioners find support from peers particularly helpful when coping with challenges (Chang, 2018). Peer coaching is a solution-focused approach where peers support each other to achieve their goals through positive, forward-looking conversations. Setting up a peer-coaching initiative can help you find solutions to a problem you are stuck with.

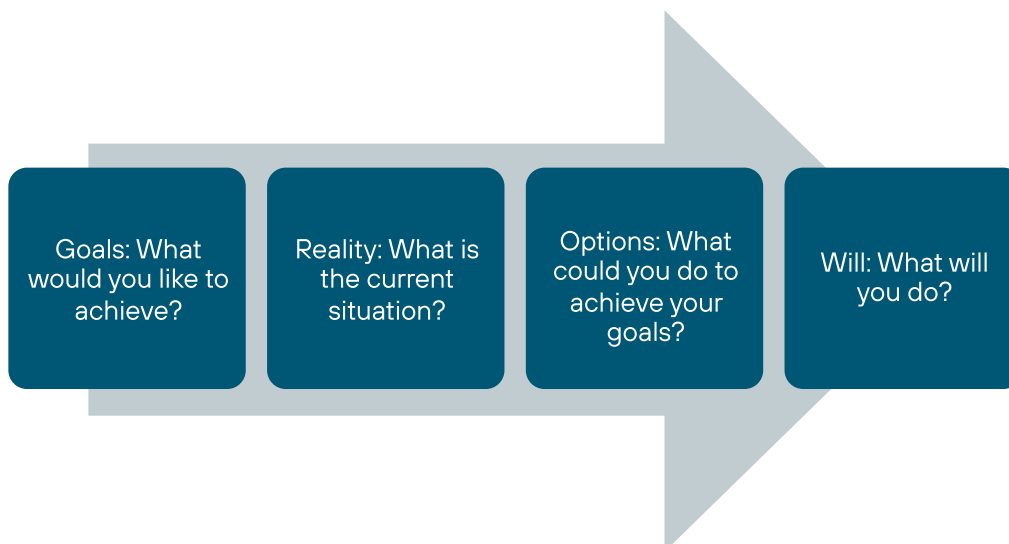
All you need is a willing colleague who also wants to benefit from this approach. Instead of dwelling on problems or obstacles, peer coaches encourage the coachee (the person being coached) to envision their ideal future, explore what is already working well, and identify small, achievable steps to move forward. By emphasising empowerment, collaboration, and self-discovery, solution-focused peer coaching fosters a supportive and growth-oriented environment for individuals to maximise their potential and achieve meaningful progress.

Peer coaching aims to:

- Provide a structured approach to helping.
- Enable someone to generate specific, measurable goals that are realistic but stretching.
- Help them identify ways to achieve those goals.
- Provide objective, non-evaluative feedback about how they are progressing towards achieving their goals.
- Offer support and encouragement when they need it.

How does peer coaching work?

- Peer coaching is a relationship where two colleagues take it in turns to be the coach and the 'coachee' (i.e. the person being coached).
- It draws on intrinsic values and beliefs.
- It uses the GROW model as a framework:
 - The coachee identifies the GOAL they wish to achieve.
 - The coach helps them reflect on how REALISTIC the goal is, based on their commitments and the time and resources available.
 - Both parties work together to help the coachee generate a range of creative OPTIONS for meeting the goal.
 - The coachee develops the WILL to meet the goal by making an action plan and a commitment to making changes or taking action.



- It utilises SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely)
- It provides non-evaluative, specific feedback based on an objective observation, or 'reflecting back' what is heard. This gives the coachee the encouragement to move forward.

There are some practical considerations to consider when setting up a peer coaching relationship:

- Trust between partners is essential as the process requires self-disclosure.
- Partners should be well matched in their working styles and expectations of the coaching relationship.

- Peer coaching can be conducted face to face, online, or by phone. Regular and formal contact (by any of these methods) is essential to ensure the coachee maintains focus on their goals.
- Venting is important, but the coach should help the coachee move beyond emotional release towards finding constructive solutions.
- The coach needs to keep the conversation on track, as it is easy to drift.
- Active listening and open/probing questions are required.

Peer coaching offers important benefits such as improved goal setting, stress management skills, wellbeing and job satisfaction (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2006). It also helps protect mental health during stressful periods (Short et al., 2020). Being a peer coach can help health and social care professionals develop essential interpersonal skills such as active listening, building rapport and trust, enhancing empathy, and promoting reflection and awareness. These skills are invaluable for strengthening relationships between practitioners and people who access services.

Guidance on how to move from focusing only on problems to focusing on solutions in peer coaching is set out below.

Moving from a problem-focus to a solution-focus in peer coaching

Being problem-focused

Use the questions below to talk (for about five minutes) about a recent situation that has caused you difficulty. Person A (the coachee) describes the situation. Person B (the coach) directs the conversation with the following questions.

'So, what is the problem?'

'What happened?'

'What do you think is the cause of the problem?'

'Who is to blame?'

'What have you tried in order to fix it?'

'Why is this still a problem?'

'How can you stop this happening again?'

The coach should spend about five minutes supporting the coachee to discuss a problem that they have. When using a solution-focused approach, it is essential to help the coachee 'reframe' their 'intractable' problem into a more manageable one. Use the following questions:

'So, how would you like the situation to be?'

'What will it take to get what you want?'

'What resources do you need?'

'What resources do you already have?'

'What two small steps could you take to help fix the situation?'

'How far have you come already? Are there times when the solution is present, at least partly?'

Incorporating the 'sparkling moments' technique (see Core Action 2.1) into peer coaching sessions can be highly effective. This can help us move towards a more positive mindset and identify both external and personal resources, such as our support networks and skills, which can help us reach solutions.

Peer coaching is a valuable tool for setting goals to improve overall wellbeing, prioritise self-care, manage stress and enhance work-life balance. It is important to note, however, that while peer coaching can be beneficial, it is not a substitute for professional counselling. If a coachee has deep-seated personal issues, seeking professional help is crucial. For more information on setting up a peer coaching relationship, [see here](#).

Core Action 4: Learning From Critical Incidents

Critical incidents are common in health and social care settings and can have a significant impact on practitioners' wellbeing and professional practice. Regardless of our proficiency in managing and learning from such incidents, a crisis can reverberate throughout an organisation, creating what can be described as a 'perfect storm' - a convergence of events or circumstances that have the potential to bring adversity to individuals and organisations.

Health and social care professionals can learn valuable lessons from critical incidents by engaging in reflective practice. This involves systematically analysing these experiences to gain insights, improve skills, and inform future actions. When confronted with a critical incident, we should reflect on the following aspects:

1. *What happened?* Take time to understand the sequence of events leading up to and during the incident. Identify key factors and contributing elements.
2. *How did I respond?* Reflect on your own actions, decisions, and emotions during the incident. Consider whether your responses were effective and aligned with best practices.
3. *What went well?* Acknowledge any positive outcomes or successful interventions. Identify the strengths and competencies you demonstrated during the incident.
4. *What could have been improved?* Identify areas where your response might have been more effective or where mistakes were made. Consider alternative approaches or strategies that you might have used.
5. *What have I learned?* Extract key insights and learning from the incident. Reflect on how this experience can inform your future practice and decision-making.

By engaging in reflective practice, individuals can transform critical incidents into opportunities for growth, learning, and professional development.

Secondary trauma, also known as vicarious trauma, refers to the emotional and psychological distress experienced by individuals who are indirectly exposed to traumatic events through their work or relationships with people who have directly experienced trauma. Symptoms may include emotional exhaustion or burnout, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, intrusive thoughts or memories, increased irritability or mood swings, and difficulties concentrating or making decisions. Guidance for health and social care practitioners on recognising and managing secondary trauma is available [here](#).

Using reflective spaces

Reflective learning is vital for health and social care practitioners, given the emotional demands of their work. Spaces for reflection, such as supervision sessions or reflective conversations with colleagues, can foster critical thinking, learning and personal growth. These spaces also provide opportunities to unpack the complex emotional aspects of the job.

Using these reflective spaces is essential for processing emotional challenges at work and developing effective coping mechanisms. Without such opportunities, emotional demands can impair decision-making, reduce motivation, and lead to compassion fatigue, which negatively affects people who access services (Grant & Kinman, 2014; Kinman & Grant, 2020). Without adequate opportunities for reflection, individuals may also develop a false sense of security. For example, a worker might 'cover their back', by sending numerous emails highlighting completed tasks before the weekend, instead of addressing underlying concerns about a person accessing services.

Reflective supervision is a key mechanism for facilitating reflection, learning, and growth in health and social care. While not available to all practitioners, it offers a platform to openly discuss practice, address emotional responses, and plan future interventions and personal development. To maximise its benefits, practitioners should actively engage in the process, understand its purpose, and prepare for each session. Supervision should address both administrative matters and support personal development, fostering collaboration and openness between supervisees and supervisors. Effective supervision involves discussing uncomfortable topics honestly and openly. See Quick Win 3.4 below for questions to consider when preparing for reflective supervision.

