Resilient Mind | Child Welfare Workforce

Mind – Body Bridging © (MBB) © Workbook for the Community

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Resilient Mind for the Child Welfare Workforce Workbook
An Overview of the Resilient Mind for the Child Welfare Workforce Workbook

Being a child welfare worker can be pretty tough sometimes. High rates of emotional exhaustion and burnout among child welfare workers are well documented in the literature (Anderson, 2000; Corovic, 2006). Child welfare workers deal with adversity in many forms and are impacted in a deep emotional way by exposure to severe conflict in child protection work (Ferguson, 2004). Consequently, learning skills that increase resilience in child welfare workers can be of significant benefit. Research indicates that a significant majority of child welfare workers recognize the importance of using a resilience-based approach to working with children and families.

What is resilience? The concept refers to our ability to adapt successfully in the face of acute stress, trauma, or adversity and then bounce back to our normal state of functioning and well-being. The good news is that resilience is not something you are born with or not - the skills of resilience can be learned. Resilience is what makes some people seem like they have "got bounce.” Resilience can help you be one of the people who have "got bounce."

The aim of the Resilient Mind for the Child Welfare Workforce Workbook is to provide you with skills to increase resilience during and after stressful life events, to enhance performance in the workplace and other demanding contexts, serve as a protective factor against burnout, and to improve productivity and well-being.

The Resilient Mind Skills presented in this workbook are derived from an evidence-based psychological intervention, called Mind-Body Bridging, that increases foundational self-regulation skills, which leads to more robust psychological resilience (See Appendix A for a brief overview of the theory and practice of Mind-Body Bridging). Mind-Body Bridging practices consist of awareness skills that cultivate present-focused awareness of one’s body, thoughts, and emotions, and metacognitive strategies (techniques that enhance awareness and understanding of one's thought processes) that allow individuals to reevaluate and direct non-productive and limiting expectations of self, others and the world that lead to maladaptive responses and behavior.

This workbook is composed of three parts, where each part serves as a building block for the next. Each part introduces various skills, called Resilient Mind Skills, that improve resilience and provides:
An explanation of the Resilient Mind Skills presented in the lesson, indicated by the book icon.

_instructions for various exercises which will help you learn the Resilient Mind Skills, indicated by the pen icon.

At the end of each part, there is a summary of the skills presented and instructions for how you can practice Resilient Mind Skills in your daily life to build resilience.
Part One

What Hinders Your Resilience?


The I-System

Exercise 1.1

In the following exercise, you are going to use a template called a Mind-Body Map (or Map for short). A Mind-Body Map aims to provide an opportunity to write down and become aware of thoughts, feelings, and body sensations related to a specific troubling situation. On the next page we provide an example of a completed Mind-Body Map.

Write down on the Map a situation from your life that is most troubling (stressful, has pressure, has anxiety) to you inside the oval.

Once you have the troubling situation in the oval, take the next several minutes to scatter your thoughts and feelings about that situation around the outside of the oval, but inside the larger circle. Don’t edit or second-guess, just put down whatever thoughts come to mind.

After a couple of minutes, stop writing. Rate your mind clutter on a scale from 0 – 10. Rate your body tension on a scale of 0 – 10. Locate an area of your body that is tense or uncomfortable when you do the Map or face the troubling situation. Write down the location(s) and description of the body tension in the space provided.

With your mind and body in this state how do you act?
Example Map for Exercise 1.1 (Map 1)

Mind-Body Map (Example of Troubling Situation)

- Can't get caught up
- Afraid the judge will be unhappy with me
- Feeling tired and worn out
- Can't sleep
- Too much to do
- Too many team meetings to set up
- Not enough time to do it all
- Too many people to please
- Worried I will get a bad employee eval
- Overworked

Rate your mind clutter (0-10): 7
Rate your body tension (0-10): 8  Location of body tension: Knot in stomach, tight chest
How do you act in this mind-body state? I withdraw
Exercise 1.1 (Map 1)

Mind-Body Map (Troubling Situation)

Rate your mind clutter (0-10): [ ]
Rate your body tension (0-10): [ ] Location of body tension: __________________________
How do you act in this mind-body state? __________________________________________

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Mapping

In the above exercise you have just learned your first Resilient Mind Skill called Mapping. When you Map you write down your thoughts and feelings related to a particular situation without editing.

Recognize Your I-System

Mind clutter and body tension is often caused by what we call the I-System (Identity System). It’s a system in your mind and body that underlies many of our dysfunctional states and behavior. The I-System becomes overactive when our sense of self or identity is threatened. You can recognize its presence whenever you experience mind clutter and body tension. Mind clutter and body tension are “red flags” that your I-System is overactive and is influencing your thoughts, feelings and behavior and restricting you to a limited and contracted state.

Recognizing that your I-System is overactive is the first step towards improved functioning, and is a Resilient Mind Skill called Recognize your I-System. All other Resilient Mind skills build on the primary skill of recognizing that your I-System is overactive.

I-System Requirements

Exercise 1.2

Go back to the Map on exercise 1.1.

Find the thought with the most associated body tension, draw a line from it to the outside of the larger circle and ask yourself the question, “How should that item be?” What expectation did I have that wasn’t met? Write the answer outside the circle (i.e., “I should be able to get my work done each day”).

Draw lines to the outside of the circle from each thought with associated body tension inside the circle, writing the answer to the question, “How should that item be?” See example map below.
Exercise 1.2 (Map 1)

| Rate your mind clutter (0-10): | 7 |
| Rate your body tension (0-10): | 8 |
| Location of body tension: | Knot in stomach, tight chest |
| How do you act in this mind-body state? | I withdraw |
Each “Should/Must” that you have written on the outside of the circle are known as **Requirements.** These “Shoulds or Musts” are ideal pictures of how others and the world should be (for example, *I shouldn’t make mistakes, I must be strong, Work should be easier, My co-workers must be nice to me*). When you have a “Should or Must” about something and it does not go the way you want it to, your I-System can become dominant and overactive.

We have a body system that regulates our temperature, keeping the body at around 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit. If our temperature goes up, we sweat, and if it goes down, we shiver as our temperature system tries to get back to the body’s normal state. In the same way, our I-System works like our temperature regulation system. But, instead of working to maintain an ideal temperature, the I-System maintains an ‘ideal picture’ or ‘mental rule’ (Requirement) of how you, others and the world should be. When something happens that doesn’t fit the I-System Requirement, our I-System becomes overactive.

We classify the various types of Requirements under the categories of **Requirements for Myself, Requirements for Others, and Requirements for the World.**

**Recognize and Defuse Requirements**

Each Requirement (Should/Must) has an inherent logical fallacy, because it imposes expectations on us, others, and the world that are not logically and factually correct, in short unrealistic. For example, the Requirement “People should be nice to me” implies that you can always expect people to be nice to you, which is obviously not an accurate view of reality. Whereas, “I prefer people to be nice to me” expresses a personal preference that is not a logical fallacy. The logical version of this statement is then, “Sometimes people are nice to me and sometimes people are not nice to me. I prefer them to be nice.” This is sound logic because it is realistic. You can **Defuse a Requirement** by **restating it as a personal preference** that has less power to activate your I-System. An alternative highly effective strategy is to **simply label the Requirement as a thought.** This is done by saying to yourself, “I’m having the thought that people should be nice to me. It is just a thought.”

Recognizing and Defusing a Requirement allows you to deal with a troubling or distressing situation more optimally. It does not mean that you won’t be upset when a Requirement-driven personal preference is violated, but it won’t be made worse by trying to deal with it with an overactive I-System.

I-System Requirements activate the I-System causing it to become overactive or dominant. To deactivate the I-System you must be able to Recognize and Defuse Requirements in the heat of the moment. Recognizing a Requirement in the heat of the moment means that whenever you are tense or not functioning at your best, you are able
to discover the Requirement about how you, others or the world should be that has been violated.

The human experience includes various degrees of suffering, distress and trauma. These are unavoidable. However, a significant portion of this suffering is due to the Requirements you have concerning how you, others and the world should be. The I-System can either cause suffering where none is warranted or add unnecessary suffering to an already distressing situation. By Recognizing and Defusing your Requirements your ongoing distress will either melt away or be reduced.

Think back to the Map you just did. Even though your initial distress was the result of an external situation, much of your ongoing distress is caused by experiencing it in an active I-System state, because it violated one or more of your Requirements. Frequently there is not much you can do about another person’s behavior or events in the world, but you do have a lot of control over how you react to it (viewing it through the lens of a Requirement).

In the exercise below restate the Should/Must on the Map to an “I prefer…” (for example, “I should be able to get my work done” to “I prefer that I get my work done.”) A Should/Must means that things must absolutely be a certain way. An “I prefer…” means that it is something you desire, which of course is okay, as we all have personal preferences. An alternative highly effective strategy is to simply label the Requirement as a thought. This is done by saying to yourself, “I’m having the thought that ______________________. It is just a thought.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement/Should/Must</th>
<th>I prefer/I’m having the thought that</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>______________________</td>
<td>-&gt; ________________________________</td>
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<td>______________________</td>
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<tr>
<td>______________________</td>
<td>-&gt; ________________________________</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Rest Your I-System

Exercise 1.3

✔ On the next Map write the same troubling situation used in the previous two Maps in the blank oval.

✔ Next, get comfortable in your chair. Take a few minutes to listen to the background sounds, feel your body on the chair and feet on the floor. Feel the table top or the fabric of your clothing with your finger tips. If a thought distracts you, simply return to listening to the background sounds. Once you begin to feel settled write the thoughts and feelings that come to your mind now about the situation around the outside of the oval, but inside the larger circle. As you write, feel the pen in your hand and watch the ink go onto the paper.

✔ After a couple of minutes, stop writing. Rate your mind clutter on a scale from 0 – 10. Rate your body tension on a scale of 0 – 10. Locate an area of your body that is tense or uncomfortable when you do the Map or face the troubling situation. Write down the location(s) and description of the body tension in the space provided.

✔ With your mind and body in this state how do you act?

✔ Indicate the level of I-System activity.

✔ Compare the first Map with the second. Ask yourself, is this Map the same (besides the same troubling situation) or different than the first Map? How is it the same? How is it different? Is the level of body tension and mind clutter experienced the same or different?
Exercise 1.3 (Map 2)

Mind-Body Map (Troubling Situation)

Rate your mind clutter (0-10): [ ]
Rate your body tension (0-10): [ ] Location of body tension: ____________________________
How do you act in this mind-body state? ____________________________________________
Indicate the level of your I-System activity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
The I-System Hijacks Your Natural Functioning

Natural Functioning refers to your natural and regular state when you are focused on the present moment or an activity without distraction. In this state you are naturally resourceful, creative, psychologically flexible and resilient. Natural Functioning is your natural mind-body state.

Look at the Mind Body Map in exercises 1.1 and 1.2 (Map 1). In these Maps the I-System hijacks Natural Functioning, filling your mind full of clutter and your body full of tension. When your I-System is dominant and in control it distorts how you think, act, feel, and see the world. This is often the cause of your poor decisions and suffering, and many of your dysfunctional mind-body states.

Look at Map 2 in exercise 1.3. In this Map, with the I-System less dominant, your Natural Functioning is no longer hijacked. All parts of your mind and body are working in greater harmony and you are more focused, freer of distraction and capable of meeting the moment optimally.

Sensory Awareness Skills

When you did the first Map in Exercise 1.1 and 1.2 you experienced I-System overactivity and how this hijacks Natural Functioning. In the second Map, you got to see what it’s like to have your I-System become less dominant. You experienced what happens when you come to your senses by focusing on your body sensations and the sounds around you. The I-System automatically becomes less dominant, your body tension eases, and your mind clutter decreases. Note that the situation written in the oval did not change from one Map to the other.

When you did Map 2 you were practicing a Resilient Mind skill called Sensory Awareness Skills. It’s as easy as listening to the sound of an air conditioner fan, traffic outside, water going down the drain when you wash your hands, the sound of a clock ticking or noticing your breath. It can also be experiencing the sensations on your feet as you walk, feeling the texture and temperature of a cup or glass you are holding or noticing the sweat as it streams down your face. Below is a list of various types of Sensory Awareness skills. You can use these skills at practice or during a game, match, or competition to maintain your focus on the moment and optimize your performance.

Awareness of Background Sounds

Your environment is full of sounds. During the day, pause and listen to background sounds, like the white noise of the heating or air-conditioning system, the wind blowing, traffic sounds, or the hum of the refrigerator. If your thoughts start to spin
or meander, simply note them and gently return your awareness to what you were doing/hearing.

**Awareness of What You Are Touching**
Tuning in to your sense of touch is another Sensory Awareness Skill that quiets your I-System. Be aware of what your fingers sense as you touch things like glasses, phones, pens, keys, computers, and other objects such as grass/turf. Are these surfaces smooth or rough, cold or warm, pleasant or unpleasant? Sense what it’s like to feel the sun’s warmth on your face or the breeze on your skin.

**Awareness of Colors and Shapes**
Pay attention today to what you see when you look at scenery and objects. Notice their colors, shapes, and forms.

**Awareness of Your Body**
Because of the unpleasant body sensations associated with your overactive I-System, you may have developed a habit of trying to block out or get away from the feelings in your body. When you have unpleasant body sensations, expand your awareness to all parts of your body.

When you practice your Sensory Awareness Skills you move from a limited and contracted state (I-System Functioning) to a more expanded state (Natural Functioning). See figure below.
Practice Maps

Exercise 1.4

Map 1

For exercise 1.4 select another troubling situation and write it in the oval on the Mind-Body Map. Complete the Map by scatter your thoughts and feelings regarding the situation around the oval.

After a couple of minutes, stop writing. Rate your mind clutter on a scale from 0 – 10. Rate your body tension on a scale of 0 – 10. Locate an area of your body that is tense or uncomfortable when you do the Map or face the troubling situation. Write down the location(s) and description of the body tension in the space provided.

Indicate the level of I-System activity.

With your mind and body in this state how do you act?

Now, Identify and write your Requirements that were violated or not met on the outside of the big circle and link them to the associated thoughts inside the circle.

Next, practice defusing these Requirements by restating them as a personal preference, replacing the “should/must” with the word, “prefer.” Or, label each Requirement as “just a thought.”

On Map 2 write the same troubling situation used in the previous Map in the blank oval.

Next, get comfortable in your chair. Take a few minutes to listen to the background sounds, feel your body on the chair and feet on the floor. Feel the table top or the fabric of your clothing with your finger tips. If a thought distracts you, simply return to listening to the background sounds. Once you begin to feel settled write your thoughts and feelings about the situation that come to your mind now around the outside of the oval, but inside the larger circle. As you write, feel the pen in your hand and watch the ink go onto the paper.

After a couple of minutes, stop writing. Rate your mind clutter on a scale from 0 – 10. Rate your body tension on a scale of 0 – 10. Locate an area of your body that is tense or uncomfortable when you do the Map or face the troubling situation. Write down the location(s) and description of the body tension in the space provided.

With your mind and body in this state how do you act?

Indicate the level of I-System activity.
Exercise 1.4 (Map 1)

Mind-Body Map (Troubling Situation)

Rate your mind clutter (0-10):  
Rate your body tension (0-10):  Location of body tension:  
How do you act in this mind-body state?  
Indicate the level of your I-System activity:
Exercise 1.4 (Map 2)

Mind-Body Map with Sensory Awareness Skills (Troubling Situation)

Rate your mind clutter (0-10): [ ]
Rate your body tension (0-10): [ ] Location of body tension: ________________________________
How do you act in this mind-body state? _______________________________________________
Indicate the level of your I-System activity:  

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Summary of Resilient Mind Skills (Part One)

Mapping

- When you Map you write down your thoughts and feelings related to a particular situation without editing.

Recognize Your I-System

- Each of us has an I-System, and it’s either dominant, or not dominant. You know the I-System is dominant when your mind is cluttered with spinning thoughts, your body is tense, and your mental and physical functioning is impaired.

Recognize and Defuse Requirements

- **Recognizing and Defusing Requirements** removes the fuse that ignites the I-System. Requirements can be defused in the heat of the moment by restating them as a personal preference or labeling them as “just a thought.”

Sensory Awareness Skills

- When you use Sensory Awareness Skills you rest your I-System, making it less dominant.

Resilient Mind Skills Practice (Part One)

🚀 Practice your **Sensory Awareness Skills** when experiencing a troubling situation in your personal life. You can do this when you are distracted in class, at home, or any place, really. The more you practice using these skills the more natural it becomes.

🚀 When experiencing a troubling situation do a Mind-Body Map about the situation. Then **Recognize** any **Requirements** that you might have about the situation (Should/Must). Once you have identified a Requirement you can then restate your **Should/Must** as an **I prefer**, in order to **Defuse Your Requirement**.
Part Two

You can’t Fix what’s not Broken

This part introduces the concept of the Depressor which is a sub-system of the I-System which activates when a Requirement is violated. It also introduces the concept of the Fixer which is a sub-system of the I-System which attempts to rectify the unpleasant feelings caused by the Depressor. Both the Depressor and Fixer create Storylines which keep the I-System active.

The Depressor

Exercise 2.1

Negative self-talk is a natural phenomenon, yet it can negatively impact your well-being, and behavior. A good way to understand how to deal with negative self-talk is through the following exercise.

Write down your negative self-talk—what you say about yourself—in the circle around the oval on the Map below about a troubling situation. Don’t edit.

After a couple of minutes, stop writing. Rate your mind clutter on a scale from 0 – 10. Rate your body tension on a scale of 0 – 10. Locate an area of your body that is tense or uncomfortable when you do the Map or face the troubling situation. Write down the location(s) and description of the body tension in the space provided.

Indicate the level of I-System activity.

With your mind and body in this state how do you act?

Then go back over the thoughts in the circle and mark each one with 1, 2 or 3 check marks based on the level of body tension associated with that thought (1 being the least and 3 being the highest level). See example map below.
Exercise 2.1 (Example Map)

Mind-Body Map (Example of Negative Self Talk)

- I am a terrible case worker
- I am going to be in trouble with judge
- I am so stupid
- My court reports are late
- I am so lazy
- I am so far behind
- I am so worn out

Rate your mind clutter (0-10): 8
Rate your body tension (0-10): 9 Location of body tension: Tension in neck
How do you act in this mind-body state? Overeat and drink too much
Indicate the level of your I-System activity:
Exercise 2.1

Mind-Body Map (Negative Self Talk)

Rate your mind clutter (0-10): 
Rate your body tension (0-10): Location of body tension: ____________________
How do you act in this mind-body state? _______________________________________
Indicate the level of your I-System activity:
All the thoughts in the circle of exercise 2.1 are just thoughts that happen to be negative. Some of these thoughts arise and pass, while others create mind clutter and body tension.

Most people have problems dealing with their troubling negative thoughts. The challenge is not what do we do with these troubling negative thoughts, but rather what do we do about the component of the I-System called the **Depressor** (which generates and drives these troubling negative thoughts). The Depressor is the component of the I-System that gets activated when Requirements are unmet. It generates and drives negative thoughts that lead to dysfunctional mind-body states.

Negative thoughts can arise and pass without creating mind clutter and body tension, but negative thoughts captured and driven by your Depressor create mind clutter and body tension.

**Depressor Storylines**

**Exercise 2.2**

Arrange back to the Map from exercise 2.1 Select one thought in the circle that has the most body tension associated with it *(3 check marks)*. Write down the story or stories you tell yourself about that thought in the space below.

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

What you have written is called a **Depressor Storyline**. The Depressor generates a negative thought and spins it into a Storyline. Storylines may play in our minds many times throughout the day, creating mental lapses, errors, misperceptions, misjudgments, procrastination, body tension, less than optimal performance, etc. Storylines pull you away from what you are doing in the moment. Storylines exist for every thought in the circle with associated body tension.
Recognize and Defuse Depressor Thoughts and Storylines

The Depressor has generated negative thoughts due to a Requirement being unmet. The first step is to recognize that your Depressor has generated a negative thought and spun it into a story.

When you realize your Depressor has generated negative thoughts and storylines you can use a Resilient Mind Skill called Recognize and Defuse Depressor Thoughts and Storylines. This can be done by identifying the troubling Depressor thoughts (and its accompanied storylines) on your Map and then Defuse your Depressor by saying: “_______ is just a Depressor Thought and Storyline.” You don’t ignore or neglect the content of the thoughts; you are just preventing the Depressor from spinning the negative thought into a story that leads to dysfunctional and non-optimal behavior. You can then use your Sensory Awareness Skills to get back into Natural Functioning and you will then likely see the situation differently and behave differently.

The Fixer

Exercise 2.3

Go back to the circle in the Exercise 2.1 Map. For each thought in the circle with associated body tension, draw a line from the thought to the outside of the circle and write down, what do you feel like doing when you have that thought. For example:

- Thought: I am so far behind. ⇒ What will I do about it? ⇒ I’ll just stay up all night and get caught up.

- Thought: I am tired. ⇒ What will I do about it? ⇒ I’ll drink a lot of energy drinks. See example below.
Exercise 2.3 (Example Map)

Mind-Body Map (Example of Negative Self Talk)

Rate your mind clutter (0-10): 8
Rate your body tension (0-10): 9 Location of body tension: Tension in neck
How do you act in this mind-body state? Overeat and drink too much
Indicate the level of your I-System activity:
Notice the energy level and feeling tone of the thoughts inside the circle then contrast it with the energy and feeling tone of the corresponding behavior outside the circle. All of the actions outside the circle are natural thoughts of how to take care of ourselves and our responsibilities. However, on this Map, the actions outside this circle are driven not by wanting to take care of yourself, but by what you are going to do to fix the unpleasant mind-body state described inside the circle that’s caused by your Depressor. We call these thoughts and actions outside the circle **Fixers.**

The Depressor works to make you believe that you are damaged and need fixing. The **Fixer** is the Depressor’s partner that drives overactive, never-ending thoughts and stories of how to fix yourself, others and your environment. In other words, the job of the Fixer is primarily to fix the bad feelings caused by the Depressor, and it can never do enough. The Fixer tries endlessly to meet the Requirement that will never be met.

**Fixer Storylines**

**Exercise 2.4**

Turn back to the Map from exercise 2.3 and find one thought in the circle that has the most body tension associated with it (3 check marks) and then select the fixer thought or action on the outside of the circle. Write down the story or stories you tell yourself about that thought or action in the space below.

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

- What you have written is called a **Fixer Storyline.** The Depressor generates a negative thought and spins it into a Storyline and the Fixer creates never-ending thoughts and stories of how to fix yourself, others and your environment.
Recognize and Defuse Fixer Thoughts and Storylines

- Every activity we do is either driven by the Fixer or by our Natural Functioning.

- The stories generated by the Depressor often lead to dysfunctional or non-optimal behavior, where you feel you absolutely must do something to get rid of any unpleasant feelings or resolve the situation.

- The Depressor works to make you believe that you are damaged or broken and need fixing. The Fixer is the Depressor’s partner that drives never-ending thoughts of how to fix yourself, others and/or your environment. In other words, the job of the Fixer is primarily to fix the bad feelings caused by the Depressor. The truth is you are not broken or damaged and don’t need fixing. You—who you really are—is enough! And, the Fixer will never be able to meet the Requirement that has already been violated.

- When you realize your Depressor has generated negative thoughts and your Fixer is generating thoughts and stories about how to fix the unpleasantness of the Depressor you can use the Resilient Mind Skill called Recognize and Defuse Fixer Thoughts and Storylines. This can be done by identifying the Fixer thoughts (and its accompanied storylines) on your Map and then Defuse your Fixer by saying: “_______ is just a Fixer Thought and storyline.” You can then use your Sensory Awareness Skills to access your Natural Functioning. When you are in Natural Functioning you will see situations differently and behave in ways that are best suited for the moment.

- If an action is being driven by the Fixer, nothing you do will ever be good enough because the Depressor is still there to disapprove or raise the bar. Fixer behavior/activity will never fix the Depressor no matter how hard you try. The Fixer traps you into thinking an I-System Requirement has to be met with Storylines of “I need to…; I have to….”

- Recognize the following Fixer signs.
  - Trying to fix the unpleasant state caused by your Depressor (Body tension and mind clutter)
  - Trying to meet the I-System Requirement at all costs (ie…at the cost of your physical and mental health, and of relationships, etc.)
  - No matter how much the fixer does ‘enough is never good enough’
  - Excess mental pressure or urgency
  - Sense of being driven
  - Over preparation, perfectionism
  - No sense of satisfaction, well-being or peace of mind with accomplishment
The Depressor-Fixer Cycle

The Depressor and Fixer dance with each other. The Depressor thoughts and associated unpleasant body sensations activate our Fixer to attempt to satisfy the Depressor. Fixer behavior/activity is always tied to a Depressor thought.

Explore the **Depressor-Fixer Cycle** below:
Exercise 2.5

> In this exercise you will have the opportunity to explore in detail a situation that activated your Depressor-Fixer cycle.

> Write down a situation that really got your I-System going.

> In each of the boxes below, describe the progression of your I-System activity related to this situation:

![Diagram showing the progression of Depressor Thoughts and Storylines, Mind Clutter and Body Tension, Fixer Thoughts and Storylines, Fixer Behavior, and Depressor Response]

Notice that the Depressor response in the last box only promotes more Fixer storylines and behavior.

> Think back over your life. Do you recognize how pervasive your Depressor-Fixer cycle has been over the years? Do you see how central that cycle is to your daily distress?
Summary of Resilient Mind Skills (Part Two)

Recognize and Defuse Depressor Thoughts and Storylines

- When you realize your Depressor has generated negative thoughts and storylines you can use a Resilient Mind Skill called Recognize and Defuse Depressor Thoughts and Storylines. This can be done by identifying the troubling Depressor thoughts (and its accompanied storylines) on your Map and then Defusing your Depressor by saying: “_______ is just a Depressor Thought and Storyline.”

Recognize and Defuse Fixer Thoughts and Storylines

- When you realize your Depressor has generated negative thoughts and your Fixer is generating thoughts and stories about how to fix the unpleasantness of the Depressor you can use the Resilient Mind Skill called Recognize and Defuse Fixer Thoughts and Storylines. This can be done by identifying the Fixer thoughts (and its accompanied storylines) on your Map and then Defusing your Fixer by saying: “_______ is just a Fixer Thought and Storyline.”

Resilient Mind Skills Practice (Part Two)

- When you realize your Depressor has generated negative thoughts and storylines you can use a Resilient Mind Skill called Recognize and Defuse Depressor Thoughts and Storylines. And when your Fixer is generating thoughts and stories about how to fix the unpleasantness of the Depressor you can use the Resilient Mind Skill called Recognize and Defuse Fixer Thoughts and Storylines. You can then use your Sensory Awareness Skills to access your Natural Functioning. When you are in Natural Functioning you will see situations differently and behave in ways that are best suited for the moment.
Part Three

Resilient Mind Practice

This part of the workbook explores how your daily activities can either be driven by your overactive I-System or by Natural Functioning, and helps you recognize that you have the capacity to choose which state you want to be in. It will show you how to maintain an ongoing Resilient Mind Practice to enhance your psychological resilience and general well-being.

I-System and Natural Functioning Loops

The Two-Loop diagram provides a simplified representation for how the mind works. All thoughts naturally flow in the Natural Functioning loop when your I-System is not overactive or dominant.

Natural Functioning refers to your natural and regular state when you are focused on the present moment or an activity without distraction. In this state you are naturally resourceful, creative, psychologically flexible and resilient. Natural Functioning is your natural, instinctive mind-body state.

I-System Functioning hijacks your Natural Functioning, filling your mind full of clutter and your body full of tension. When your I-System is dominant it distorts how you think, feel, and act. It limits our innate creatively resourceful abilities, and ultimately our resilience. This is often the cause of our poor decisions, performance, and suffering, and many of our dysfunctional mind-body states.
The I-System Loop and the Natural Functioning Loop

I-System Loop

Impaired Mind-Body State

Fixer

I-System Storylines

Depressor

Violated Requirement

Event

Behavior

Natural Functioning Loop

Unified Mind-Body State

Free Thoughts

Cognition

Free Function

Event
Unmet Requirement Triggers the I-System Loop

Two-Part Mapping

Exercise 3.1

We will now show how to do a Two-Part Map about any distressing situation using all the Resilience Mind Skills presented thus far.

Map out the distressing situation using these steps. The various Resilient Mind Skills are indicated in bold text.

Step 1

- Write the troubling situation inside the oval of the Mind-Body Map template or blank piece of paper (Mapping).
- Then write any thoughts and feelings you have regarding the situation around the outside of the oval. It is important to note that there are no right or wrong answers. Write whatever comes to mind.
- After a couple of minutes, stop writing. Ask yourself, is your body tense or relaxed? Locate an area of your body that is tense or uncomfortable when you do the Map or face the troubling situation. Write down the location(s) of the body tension in the space provided on the bottom of the Map.
- Ask yourself, “Is my I-System overactive or am I in Natural Functioning?” If in Natural Functioning then there is no need to proceed with further Mapping. If your I-System is active (Recognize your I-System) proceed to Step 2.
Step 2

- Now, notice any “Shoulds” or “Musts” (Recognize Requirements) on your Mind-Body Map, or find thoughts about the situation that you think should or must be in a certain way then draw a short line from each thought to outside the circle and write down how you think it should or absolutely must be. See the example Map provided on the next page for how this is to be done.

- Now restate each Should/Must (Requirements) on your Map to a personal preference in the form of an “I would prefer…” (Defuse Requirements) or label them using the “just a thought technique.”

- Identify the troubling Depressor thoughts and its associated storylines on your Map and then Defuse your Depressor by saying: “_______ is just a Depressor Thought and Storyline” (Recognize and Defuse Depressor Thoughts and Storylines). Do this for each of the Depressor thoughts and its associated storylines on your Map.

- Identify Fixer thoughts and its associated storylines on your Map and then Defuse your Fixer by saying: “_______ is just a Fixer Thought and Storyline” (Recognize and Defuse Fixer Thoughts and Storylines). Do this for each of the Fixer thoughts and its associated storylines on your Map.

Step 3

- Now start the second Map.

- Write the same troubling situation in the middle of a new Map, but this time, before writing anything else, listen to back-ground sounds like a fan, refrigerator, wind, air conditioner, computer sounds, or traffic sounds (Sensory Awareness Skills).

- Sense your feet on the floor, notice your toes wiggle and feel the fabric of your clothing with your finger tips. Once you begin to feel settled, write the thoughts and feelings about the situation that come to your mind now. As you write, feel the pen in hand and watch the ink go on the paper while continuing to listen to background sounds.

- Once this map is completed your I-System is likely to be less active and you are more likely to have gained new insights or a different perspective about the troubling situation.
Exercise 3.1 (Map 1)

Rate your mind clutter (0-10): 8
Rate your body tension (0-10): 9 Location of body tension: Pain in stomach
How do you act in this mind-body state? I withdraw
Exercise 3.1 (Practice Map 1)

Rate your mind clutter (0-10): □
Rate your body tension (0-10): □ Location of body tension: __________________________
How do you act in this mind-body state? ____________________________________________
Exercise 3.1 (Practice Map 2)

Mind-Body Map with Sensory Awareness Skills

Indicate the level of your I-System activity:

Rate your mind clutter (0-10): □
Rate your body tension (0-10): □ Location of body tension: __________________________
How do you act in this mind-body state? __________________________
Your Resilient Mind Practice

- When you incorporate Resilient Mind Skills into your daily activities, they will have a positive effect across various areas of your life including your athletic performance. Yet, it is critical that your Resilient Mind Skills practice does not become another Fixer-driven activity. Remember you are not damaged or broken and don’t need to be fixed; that is what your Depressor leads you to believe. You are perfectly good enough as you are.

- We suggest a simple **two-fold approach** to improve your resilience through Resilient Mind Skills practice:

  1. **Two-Part Mapping** to deal with troubling situations as discussed in part four of the workbook. When confronted by a troubling or distressing situation Mapping exercises will assist you in dealing with the situation in Natural Functioning. In this Natural Functioning state you will be more capable of navigating the situation than you would be with an overactive I-System.

  2. Ongoing resilience practice and maintenance by practicing your **Resilient Mind Skills** and using your in various dimensions of your life to maintain awareness of when your activities and goals are driven by Natural Functioning or Fixer Driven I-System Functioning.

Conclusion

- Well done for completing this workbook!

- As previously mentioned, your Resilient Mind Skills practice should not become another Fixer-driven activity. Remember you are not damaged or broken and don’t need to be fixed. You are good enough as you are.

- In conclusion, Resilient Mind Skills practice consist of

  - **Mapping** to deal with troubling situations as they arise, and

  - ongoing **Resilient Mind Skills** practices.

  1. Mapping

  2. Recognize Your I-System

  3. Sensory Awareness Skills

  4. Recognize & Defuse Requirements
5. Recognize & Defuse Depressor Thoughts and Storylines
6. Recognize & Defuse Fixer Thoughts and Storylines

Two-Part Mind-Body Map Templates
Rate your mind clutter (0-10):  
Rate your body tension (0-10):  Location of body tension: __________________________
How do you act in this mind-body state?  
Indicate the level of your I-System activity:

Mind-Body Map with Sensory Awareness Skills

Rate your mind clutter (0-10):  
Rate your body tension (0-10):  Location of body tension:
Appendix A

An Overview of Mind-Body Bridging

What is it that makes some child welfare workers seem more resilient to the high demands of this occupation? Why do some workers seem to survive and thrive in these conditions whilst others burn out? Resilience theory may offer an explanation. Burnout is considered to be an “adverse” life event and is defined as follows. “A syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do ‘people work’ ” (Maslach & Jackson, 1986, p. 1).

In a recent publication McFadden, Mallett & Leiter (2017) seek to understand whether organizational factors are predictive of resilience and if resilience mediates the relationship between organizational factors and burnout. The research conducted by McFadden, Mallett & Leiter (2017) contribute to the existing research literature by exploring individual resilience levels in the context of the organizational factors that impact on levels of burnout. This is important as organizational factors can be addressed by employers within a resilience building organizational culture, for example, teaching child welfare workers resiliency building techniques like Mind-Body Bridging (MBB) can significantly provide protective factors to employee burnout.

MBB (from which all the Resilient Mind Skills in this workbook are derived from) is an evidence-based psychological intervention that increases foundational self-regulation skills, which promotes psychological resilience.1 MBB practices consist of various skills for

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1 For example, in studies with veterans MBB practice improved sleep by reducing sleep disturbance via reducing/improving PTSD symptoms, increasing mindfulness, reducing depression, fatigue, pain, and composite sleep/general co-occurring symptoms (Nakamura, Lipschitz, Landward, Kuhn, & West, 2011; Lipschitz, Olin, & Nakamura, 2016; Nakamura et al., 2017). MBB has proven to be an effective intervention in the management of insomnia in Active-duty Military Personnel suffering from insomnia (Lipschitz, Olin, Nakamura, 2016). A study on cancer survivors showed that MBB reduced sleep disturbance symptoms and depression symptoms while improving overall levels of mindfulness, self-compassion, well-being, and attenuated waking salivary α-amylases levels, suggesting positive influences on sympathetic activity in cancer survivors with sleep disturbance (Lipschitz, Kuhn, Kinney, Donaldson, and Nakamura, 2013). Another study found MBB was associated with increased levels of oxytocin, a neuropeptide hormone associated with calmness and well-being (Lipschitz, Kuhn, Kinney, Grewen, Donaldson, and Nakamura, 2015). A study that used a sample of addicted individuals found that MBB significantly reduced drug/alcohol cravings, trauma-related thinking, and disturbed sleep while increasing mindfulness, self-compassion, and well-being (Nakamura, et al., 2015). Research with domestic violence perpetrators indicated that MBB reduced recidivism and increased treatment compliance (Tollefson et al., 2009; Tollefson & Phillips, 2015).
cultivating present-focused awareness of one’s body, thoughts, and emotions and developing an understanding of the psychological mechanisms behind maladaptive mind-body states and behavior.

The aim of MBB is to provide individuals with psychosocial skills and coping strategies to increase their resilience. The concept of resilience refers to “the ability of individuals to adapt successfully in the face of acute stress, trauma, or chronic adversity, maintaining or rapidly regaining psychological well-being and physiological homeostasis” (Feder, Nestler, Westphal & Charney, 2010, p. 35). The notion of coping refers to specific processes in which a person engages expressly to deal with stress (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Studies have identified active coping strategies and cognitive reappraisal as some of the central psychosocial factors that promote successful adaptation to stress (Feder, Nestler, Westphal & Charney, 2010). MBB coping strategies involve cognitive, behavioral, and emotional responses to stressful events and circumstances as well as cognitive reappraisal techniques that allow individuals to reevaluate or reframe adverse experiences with a growth mindset.

In a recent publication, *Cognitive Behavior Therapies: A Guidebook for Practitioners*, (Vernon & Doyle 2017), MBB practice has been compared to therapeutic approaches like acceptance and commitment therapy (Hayes, 2003), dialectical behavior therapy (Linehan, et al., 1999), mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, and other mindfulness-based interventions that are commonly referred to as the third wave of behavior therapies. Mindfulness-based intervention is a general term for mind-body interventions that focus on the power of “mental training” in regulating mental and physical health conditions. The category of mindfulness-based interventions includes mindfulness-based stress reduction (Kabat-Zinn, 2003) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (Segal, Teasdale & Williams, 2002). Although MBB practice shares similarities with many of these interventions, there are significant epistemological and methodological differences. The most fundamental difference is that MBB teaches one how to adopt a metacognitive perspective of the biopsychological mechanisms (I-System and its subsystems) and affect states (emotional dysregulation) that cause dysfunctional behavior.

More specifically, the therapeutic focus of MBB is for the individual to develop skills to recognize and rest their overactive I-System, thereby removing the hindrance to the innate resilience of the ‘true self’ (natural functioning). In a state of natural functioning, adaptive

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2 The notion of the metapsychological construct of the ‘true self’, as articulated by the I-System model, shares many commonalities with several other theoretical perspectives that embrace the “tradition of self-as-process theorizing, namely those that posit a “true,” “real,” or “core” self, for example the works of Jourard (1968) in humanistic psychology, Rank (1932)
skills and resilience emerge. Karen Horney (1950) described alienation from the ‘true self’ as the origin of most psychic distress and described the true self as “the ‘original’ force toward individual growth and fulfillment” (p. 158). According to Horney (1950), this true self is an “intrinsic potentiality” or “central inner force, common to all human beings” (p. 17) that is the core source of development. Similarly, Donald Winnicott contended that much of psychopathology is a “result of an inflation of the false self and a corresponding underdevelopment of a true self” (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p 59). In short, MBB focuses on restoring the “motivational force or tendency” of the true self and thereby unleashing its inherent resilience and “health-promoting force” (Ryan and Deci, 2017, p. 62).

How the I-System Hinders Resilience

MBB is based on the premise that an overactive I-System is a common biopsychological mechanism underlying many emotional and behavioral disorders and diminished individual resilience (Block & Block, 2007; Block, 2018). According to Greeson, Garland, & Black (2014), “most psychological disorders involve a fundamental problem with inflexibility, lack of insight, or narrowed perspective” (p. 534) - which we assert are a result of I-System overactivity. These inflexible psycho-behavioral processes span cognitive rigidities such as rumination and worry and patterns of behavioral perseveration (e.g., addiction, compulsions). Therefore, by resting the overactive I-System, an individual becomes more psychologically flexible and consequently better equipped to handle life events in resilient ways optimally.

The I-System hinders optimal functioning when specific requirements held by the individual are violated. In essence, I-System requirements are mental rules about how we, as

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3 Although these perspectives differ from each other there are certain commonalities in how they articulate the construct of the true self.

First, the true self is typically viewed as a natural endowment, as a potential that is present from birth....Second, the true self is not understood in these theories as merely a cognitive representation or concept but rather as a motivational force or tendency....Third, the true self is integrative in nature; it serves a synthetic function in the organism and represents a centering and health-promoting force in development. Finally, although the true self is innate to all human beings, it is not the only motivational force at work in development. Instead, it is a force that can be dissuaded, disrupted, or diminished in the dialectical interaction between developing persons and their social worlds (Ryan and Deci, 2017, p. 62).

4 It is theorized that because the practice of MBB focuses solely on addressing an underlying transdiagnostic psychobiological mechanism (I-System) present in several emotional and behavioral disorders it has transtherapeutic efficacy (Block, 2018; Ho and Nakamura, 2017). Transtherapeutic interventions can be seen as those that apply the same underlying treatment principles across mental health disorders, without tailoring the protocol to specific diagnoses (Greeson, Garland, & Black, 2014). Emerging literature on transdiagnostic processes has illustrated the benefits of focusing on common psychological processes that underlie clinical syndromes rather than focusing on discrete diagnostic entities (McEvoy, Nathan, & Norton, 2009).
individuals, others, events, and the world around us should be that maintain an overly rigid internalized self-image. In short, when the rigid internalized self-image is threatened (when requirements are violated) the I-System becomes overactive. According to the I-System model, there are two primary states of being and functioning: I-System functioning and natural functioning. Natural functioning is our natural state of being with limited I-System activity. In I-System functioning, our I-Systems become dominant, as a result of a violated requirement, and distorts/limits our view of the world in ways that limit or prevent resilient functioning and increases dysfunction (Block, 2018).

From a psychodynamic perspective, one of the I-System's central aims is to maintain the coherence of the self and prevent fragmentation and annihilation of the self. Heinz Kohut (1971, 1977) stated that the threat of fragmentation is ever-present as a potential - even in relatively healthy personalities. Thus, Kohut implied that even when a cohesive self has been established, the threat of fragmentation may remain, ever ready to invade when our self-identity is threatened. From this perspective, requirements can be seen as the ‘rules’ that maintain the integrity of our self-identity. Requirements are the I-System’s fuel.

The I-System has two psychobiological subsystems; the depressor, which gives rise to the experience of narcissistic mortification/shame, and the fixer, which gives rise to energizing/euphoric narcissistic fantasy (variety of feelings and sensations including euphoria, ecstasy, elation, and exhilaration).

Depressor storylines are the thoughts and storylines generated by the depressor which revolve around the beliefs of not being ‘good enough’ and being ‘damaged’ (various feelings and sensations of embarrassment, humiliation, shame, and self-loathing) (for example, I am a loser, I will never amount to anything). Consequently, depressor storylines will point to what needs to be improved or ‘fixed.’ This is where the fixer storylines come online.

Fixer storylines are elaborate ‘schemas’ and ‘action plans’ regarding how this ‘improvement’ or ‘damage repair’ will happen (for example, I must get my PhD, I must lose weight) Fixer behavior is the implementation of these schemas or plans to secure the biopsychic homeostasis of the self-system. The I-System model construct of the fixer is similar to Horney’s (1950) “character solutions.” Horney’s character solutions can be understood as ordinary solutions that originate from an individual’s attempts to resolve split and conflicts between the “false self” and “real self” (Gianotti & Danielian, 2012). Gianotti and Danielian (2012) asked how does an individual protect themselves “from experiencing the immobilizing vulnerabilities from such splits? [false self and true self]” (p. 129). They answer this question.
by suggesting that individuals attempt to contain their distress by developing character solutions that buffer against dystonic or painful emotions and attempt to maintain a coherent self. The “solution” [character solutions/fixer] binds a certain level of anxiety but unfortunately additionally creates a much larger psychic burden….As a counter-point, an equally demanding form of self-contempt may also develop when idealized standards [requirements] are not met, a self-contempt [depressor] that does not yield to debate or rational argument. Compulsive creations [fixer] are inherently unstable. They cannot deal adequately with the true realities of life and end up with internally warring factions [depressor/fixer dyad].….In its attempt to reinforce itself, the pseudo-self [false self] generates continuing psychic splits, now between compulsively created idealizing [fixer] and self-hating [depressor] sub-systems (Gianotti & Danielian, 2010, p. 130).5

The dialectical dynamic of the depressor and fixer is called the depressor-fixer dyad. To further articulate the dynamic of the depressor-fixer dyad, we will use Richard Ulman and Harry Paul’s (2006) bioself-psychological model. We propose that the I-System psychobiological sub-systems of the depressor and fixer correlate with the dialectical bipolarity of fantasy and mood of narcissistic affect states proposed by Ulman and Paul (2006).

According to Ulman and Paul (2006), archaic narcissistic affects are referred to, respectively, as moods of ‘narcissistic bliss’ (which correlate with fixer affect states) or ‘narcissistic mortification’ (which correlate with depressor affect states). The narcissistic state of bliss (fixer affect states) may consist of various feelings and sensations, including euphoria, ecstasy, elation, and exhilaration. Correspondingly, the narcissistic state of mortification (depressor affect states) may consist of feelings and sensations of embarrassment, humiliation, shame, and self-loathing. Ulman and Paul (2006) propose that archaic narcissistic fantasies and the accompanying affective states are essentially Janus-faced or two-sided (depressor-fixer cycle). Thus, they may be expressed in either a positive and hopeful way with accompanying pleasant feelings and sensations (fixer affect states) or in a negative or dreaded version with accompanying unpleasant emotions and sensations (depressor affect states). The dichotomous and dualistic nature of these emotion-laden fantasies entails an action that is inherently dialectical. Such a dialectic of positive and negative versions either flip-flops erratically

5 Examples of character solutions or fixers may be substance abuse, overworking, compulsive exercising, overly controlling behavior, self-harm.
(depressor-fixer cycle) in more severe psychopathology or switches in a more orderly fashion in more healthy psychological functioning.

Similarly, Ho and Nakamura (2017) propose that an individual who has not developed a cohesive self (and as Kohut argued the same applies for healthy individuals) at times tend to be overly obsessed with a vulnerable self (which is often manifested as the need to be reassured by others) and/or a failed self-object (which is often manifested as blaming a significant other who fails to provide what is expected), and thus both self and other can be represented as an object grasped as a fixed identity. When a discomfort arises, an identity-grasping individual [and healthy individuals] can swing between two extreme ends of a narcissistic spectrum, with grandiosity and excitement on one end of the spectrum and shame and depression on the other end. When a person perceives a threat that may injure the “grace” of his or her vulnerable self (i.e., the person may be affected by an uncomfortable “narcissist injury”), he or she will struggle to gain re-affirmation from others; this process is postulated to underlie most personality-related problems in an individual and couples (pp. 141-142).

In summary, there is a threat of fragmentation of the self when an individual’s requirements are violated. Simply put, the I-System’s job is to counteract perceived threats of fragmentation/annihilation of the self to maintain bio-psychic homeostasis. When the I-System acts in concert with other mind-body systems, its effect is helpful; when it is overactive or dominant over other systems, its impact hinders optimal functioning. MBB practice aims to loosen our rigid internalized self-images held in place by idealized standards of ourselves, others, and the world and facilitate awareness of and reliance on the true self.

How Mind-Body Bridging Promotes Psychological Resilience

There are various theories and definitions about what constitutes psychological health and what factors lead to human flourishing (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005; Vallerand et al., 2003; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Deci & Ryan, 2017). We propose that MBB skills can directly enhance psychological health and human flourishing by improving foundational self-regulation skills. Self-regulation skills are cognitive and emotional skills and personality factors that allow people to intentionally control their thoughts, emotions, and behavior, which are central in developing psychological resilience (Blair & Raver, 2015). MBB promotes foundational self-
regulation skills by improving *metacognition* (the ability to reflect on one’s thinking and actions) and *psychological flexibility* (the extent to which a person can cope with changes in circumstances and approach daily life problems and tasks in creative and novel ways). We will now briefly discuss how MBB promotes metacognition and psychological flexibility.

Psychological flexibility is a central factor in determining an individual’s psychological resilience (Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010). In an article, *Psychological Flexibility as a Fundamental Aspect of Health*, Todd Kashdan and Jonathan Rottenberg (2010) propose that the relationship between our executive functioning (‘top-down’ processing) and default mental states (‘bottom-up’ processing) is pivotal in developing and maintaining psychological flexibility. Executive functioning refers to the activity of brain circuits (particularly in the frontal lobes) that prioritize and integrate cognitive capacities that provide critical neuropsychological support for self-regulation (Baumeister, 2001).

Psychological flexibility reflects the capacity to tolerate a certain degree of distress and a receptive attitude toward emotions, thoughts, and sensations (Hayes, Wilson, Gifford, Follette, & Strosahl, 1996). Automatically labeling and reacting to particular thoughts, feelings, and events as negative or harmful reflect a lack of openness and acceptance and overdominance automatic ‘bottom-up’ processes.

Kashdan and Rottenberg (2010) state that we require attentional control to recognize any task's unique demands. The content of our consciousness is determined by the focus of our intention, which includes “awareness of the situation being confronted and being able to sustain and shift attention to the most critical aspects of the situation. Without these skills, we are at the mercy of relatively passive bottom-up strategies, which will often recruit our dominant behavioral tendencies” (p. 871). To conserve mental energy, individuals often revert to stereotyping and habits. Information processing and behavior patterns driven by heuristics can become overly fluent, and when this happens, it can erode psychological flexibility.

In conjunction with an open attitude coupled with negative or potentially negative experiences, acceptance, and awareness processes appear to be a precursor to psychological flexibility. In short, “robust executive functioning is critical for modulating responses to suit the circumstances and achieving desired outcomes—whether it is extracting rewards, reducing

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6 Scientists have used functional neuroimaging to observe this process unfold. People that exhibit less openness and receptivity to ongoing thoughts and feelings (i.e., low mindfulness) exhibit activation in limbic system structures when they rapidly label thoughts and feelings as either negative or positive (Creswell, Way, Eisenberger, & Lieberman, 2007). Conversely, people who observe their thoughts and feelings with openness and curiosity show a different activation pattern, with labeling linked to greater prefrontal cortex activity and a simultaneous inhibition of limbic responses.
behavioral control, or some other situationally-bound strategy” (Kashdan and Rottenberg, 2010, p. 871).

To enhance our psychological flexibility, we need to find ways to shape our automatic processes (bottom-up) in more optimal directions. Automated responses are useful in conserving energy; otherwise, our time and effort would be exhausted on small, relatively meaningless activities. The problem is that these automatic responses are easily activated and can lead one into a direction that is not optimal or even harmful for the situation at hand (Aarts & Dijksterhuis, 2000). Information processing and behavior patterns driven by heuristics become overly fluent, which can erode psychological flexibility.

Unfortunately, the default mindset of most adults is a relatively inactive state where the past unduly influences the present (e.g., Hart et al., 2009; Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). On the one hand, these heuristics creating closure seeking default mental states are necessary for psychological flexibility because they give a person sufficient processing speed in a potentially overwhelming environment. On the other hand, these default mental states also have a dark side, which is almost the flip side of their advantage” (Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010, p. 872).

In short, psychological flexibility reflects the ability to be aware of and open to what any particular situation requires as well as the capacity to arrange and prioritize strategies that are uniquely appropriate for the particular situation (using top-down strategies), rather than relying on dominant default strategies (Fleeson, 2001; Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010). MBB practice promotes metacognition of dominant default strategies through the practice of various metacognitive strategies.

In their article, *Healing Dysfunctional Identity: Bridging Mind-Body Intervention to Brain Systems*, Ho and Nakamura (2017) present an affect-object generative inference and regulation model that proposes a neuroscience foundation for the theory and practice of MBB. Their hypothesis is that a “hallmark of mind-body wellbeing can be characterized as a low-frequency anti-correlation between 1) the cognitive control system including the dorsal anterior/middle cingulate cortex, [executive functioning/top-down processing] and 2) the affect-object thought generation system including the ventromedial prefrontal cortex and posterior cingulate cortex [default states/bottom-up processing]” (Ho & Nakamura, 2017, p. 137). Their model suggests that MBB can enhance mind-body wellbeing by affecting these
systems (i.e., decreasing bottom-up, less flexible thought processes while increasing top-down, more flexible thought processes).

Ho and Nakamura (2017) state that various dysfunctions of the self and identity could be viewed as the result of an activated I-System. “When a situation involves a potential conflict between reality and an unrealistic expectation (Requirement), it may trigger early symptoms of mind-body dysregulation, e.g., anxiousness, urge to act, and body tension. A state of mind-body dysregulation may ensue if these early symptoms are not recognized….and thoughts are not inhibited, and original expectations are not updated” (Ho & Nakamura, 2017, p. 156).

They argue that in a natural functioning state (when the I-System is not overactive), an individual can possess healthy dynamics between the affect-object and cognitive control systems. In such a state, when there is a potential for a requirement to be violated, both the initial urge to react and the underlying requirement can be recognized and can be defused (through metacognitive strategies). An anti-correlation between the ventral attention network (top-down processing) and default-mode network (bottom-up processing) is maintained in this natural functioning state, which is an ideal state for optimal psychological flexibility.

Conversely, in an I-System functioning state (when the I-System is overactive), when “an individual encounters a failure in pausing thoughts and updating predictions that have been in conflict with reality, the thoughts perpetuated in a dysfunctional state are loaded with affect-objects viewed in a self-centered perspective. These can be identity-defining, similar to self-defining memories that are affect-loaded, vivid, repeatedly rehearsed, strongly associated with similar memories or concepts, or motivationally connected with an enduring concern or unresolved conflict” (Ho & Nakamura, 2017, p. 155).

Elucidating MBB techniques in light of their affect-object generative inference and regulation model, Ho and Nakamura (2017) propose that “if early symptoms are monitored, and Requirements are defused [through metacognitive strategies], dysfunctional thoughts and affective potentials will be inhibited to facilitate adaptive mind-body wellbeing [increased psychological flexibility]” (p. 155). Ho and Nakamura (2017) suggest that MBB techniques aim to develop a more optimal alternative response to prediction errors that can activate the I-System. “Furthermore, as MBB practitioners learn to defuse Requirements through the practice of cognitively mapping Requirements, Depressors, and Fixers related to urge-like tensions [metacognition], the initial activation of the caudate [nucleus] may not lead to excessive urge” (Ho & Nakamura, 2017, p. 157). The caudate nucleus plays a pivotal role in learning, especially the storing and processing of memories. It influences decision making and behavior by using information from past experiences (Waxman, Padron & Gray, 2004).
In the context of the above discussion, the aim of MBB practice is to provide enough access to our top-down processing, through metacognition, so that the individual has the maximum capacity to make informed decisions based on the unique necessities of each situation and be psychological flexible enough to not automatically respond according to well-worn heuristics (bottom-up processing).

Conclusion

In summary, through the promotion of psychological resilience, the Resilient Mind Skills for Child Welfare Workforce Workbook’s objective is to improve social, emotional, and psychological well-being, increase foundational self-regulation skills, and improve workplace performance. We proposed that MBB practice promotes psychological resilience by increasing foundational self-regulation skills by (1) enhancing metacognition through the application of metacognitive strategies (techniques that enhance awareness and understanding of one’s thought processes) and (2) by promoting psychological flexibility that allows individuals to re-evaluate or reframe both negative and positive experiences, and adjust non-productive and limiting expectations of self, other and the world which lead to maladaptive responses.

In terms of practice, child welfare workers’ knowledge of resilience-informed interventions, like MBB, not only helps them to refocus on the assets and resources of the child, but also stimulates children and families to build on resources. Interestingly, it seems that when child welfare staff work with clients who use the skills of resilience to bounce back from adversity it helps foster resilience in the staff themselves through a process of vicarious or shared resilience (Hurley, Martin & Rhonda, 2013).
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