

Every team will come across difficulties. A resilient team is one that can cope with these and not let them cause dysfunction. These tools are used to prepare for problems, to monitor resilience and ensure that team behaviour remains supportive.

Taking the Resilience Temperature



To stimulate a discussion about stress under pressure

Give everyone chance to describe their pressures and understand each others

This tool is used to find a mechanism that encourages the team to recognise the stress they are under and articulate the challenges. Pressure is not necessarily a bad thing, and difficulties and deadlines can help bond a team together. This tool may help to highlight and resolve any issues that can come from a feeling of excessive pressure.

I. In a meeting or at an appropriate time, tell the team you are going to pause to “take the temperature of the team’s resilience”.

II. Draw a thermometer or a line on a flipchart.

III. Ask each team member “on a scale of 1-10, how resilient are you feeling *at this precise moment?*” This is to test the mood created by the pressures they feel now, rather than in the past.

IV. Go around the table asking each team member to speak in turn. If they score 5 or lower, ask them why they are feeling low *today*.

V. Decide whether you think it would be useful to discuss what has been revealed. You may decide to encourage discussion of what steps might be

VI. At the end of the meeting, ask the same question again and see if there has been any improvement in the collective score.

VII. The process carries a degree of potential risk—team members may pick a score they feel is acceptable to others, or there could be an outpouring of fears or frustrations, however the benefits too can be significant. If the team is prepared to open up, they can build a sense of commitment to each other as well as the team goals, and follow on with supportive behaviours.



Hedges and Potholes



To anticipate, identify and discuss potential problems

To draw out any concerns or worries about the task ahead

Hedges and potholes are problems in the future. Anticipating these, and particularly what might be problems the team may not have first thought of, gives them a chance to manage the response to these now, while the team is not feeling their pressure with a better chance of managing these without blame or defensive behaviours.

I. Draw the diagram below. Explain that hedges are seen and quite likely to occur. Potholes may take the team by surprise.

II. Explain the purpose of the exercise and that we are thinking about potential issues now while the environment is relatively calm

III. Everyone takes 2-3 minutes to list the hedges they can see.

IV. Build a list of hedges but don’t discuss solutions yet.

V. Everyone takes time to think about potholes—separating the two encourages deeper thinking.

VI. List the potholes discovered.

VII. Ask the team what we can do to get over the hedges and what will we do to get over any of the potholes identified.


VIII. Depending on the numbers present, you might have one discussion or split the room into groups of 3 or 4.

IX. Write down all the output and ensure it is circulated to everyone shortly after the meeting.

X. As with other processes, the technique will become easier over time.



Fault-Free Conflict Management



To resolve conflict between team members

To improve the attitudes towards other members of the team

When the team finds itself in conflict, there is always a risk that it can become personal. The key to this model is separating the emotions from the facts, giving time for each to be articulated and resolved. The manager here ensures that the fault is removed from the discussion so emotions and facts can be discussed rationally and resolved.

I. Ensure that both parties have had time to reflect before the meeting and are in the correct frame of mind.

II. Explain for this process to work, fault must be parked to one side.

III. Reiterate the team’s goals and ask both parties to respond if they are still committed to them.

IV. Each party in turn explains what they perceive has happened, being clear not to attribute fault or blame, saying:

What they are trying to achieve and why?

Why they are having difficulty (but not whose fault it is)?

What problems the situation is creating for others.

V. Ask each party to now say:

How they want to feel?

How they actually feel?


What is making them feel the way they do?

VI. Ask each party if they believe they could resolve part of the other person’s problems, encouraging them where possible to be generous and positive.

VII. Obtain commitment to any actions each party has offered .



Constructive Challenge



To improve the quality of discussion and thought

To avoid a tendency towards Groupthink

An effective team can have challenging discussions without creating personal conflict, but they might need support to do so. The crucial element can be an acceptance that your own ideas are not the best possible solution, and therefore being open to a degree of uncertainty—the team then embraces this to explore alternatives.

I. Agree the ground rules—be clear that the objective is to achieve what’s best for the team, and conclusions are based on evidence rather than emotional reasons.

II. Identify and summarise the problem and ask if everyone is clear on the question to be answered.

III. Each team member to take 5-10 minutes to think about a potential solution. (see “Things to think about”)

IV. Ask for the ideas and pick out the 2 or 3 that seem to have the most potential

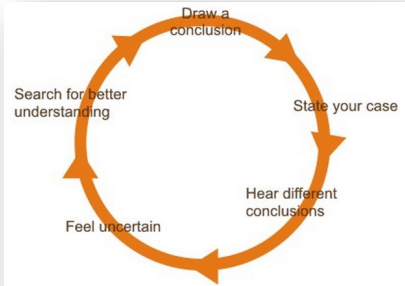
V. Ask different members to put forward a case to adopt a particular solution.

VI. Invite others to make a case for why the solution might not work, referencing the ground rules.

VII. Repeat 5 & 6 for other ideas.

VIII. Ask the individuals or sub-groups to swap solutions and make a case for or against their previous positions. This can be where the best insights arise.

IX. Once a solution is found that makes sense to the team, have a short review and ask how the process was found. It will get easier with time.



Things to think about: A team that is willing to open up is one that does not fear their comments will be ridiculed or punished. They feel they are in a psychologically safe environment.

Things to think about: This process does not replace formal risk management but by keeping the discussion at a broad level you can encourage all of the team to their about their challenges.

Things to think about: While this may seem long-winded, this process provides a means for people to divert their feelings of anger and frustration and allow both parties to refocus.

Things to think about: Individuals thinking alone tend to create more ideas than those working in a traditional brainstorming approach—this is because “groupthink” can stop idea generation.

Manager Toolkits

more available at <https://www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/organisational-development/leadership/managers-toolkits>