

# Resilience Portfolio Clinical Interview

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## Instructions for interviewers:

*This is a semi-structured interview to help providers and advocates of all types include strengths and resources in assessment. The topic areas are based on the Resilience Portfolios research program (learn more at <http://lifepathsresearch.org>). This is an ongoing project to identify the most important strengths for coping with adversity. The questions focus on the most promising strengths from this research as of March, 2017.*

*There are no right or wrong answers and no one should be expected to be good at every strength listed here. The end of the interview includes a few brief suggestions for matching needs to interventions. Every effort has been made to provide suggestions consistent with the current state of scientific knowledge, but please note that this area of research is in its infancy.*

*This is the Beta version 1.1 of this questionnaire. We have used these and similar questions in focus groups, interviews, and surveys, but this is a new version for clinical settings that will be going through a review and evaluation process and will almost certainly change with feedback.*

## Introduction:

In challenging times, your strengths and resources are very important. No one is good at everything, and I don't expect you to be good at all of these. These questions will help us identify the strengths and resources you have now, and areas where you might need more support. You might be surprised to learn how many strengths you have. We will use these to help develop a plan for coping with your problems and moving forward with your life.

We have found it useful to talk about strengths by focusing on specific stories from your life. Take your time to think of a story to tell. Something will likely come to mind. *[Interviewer: If needed, encourage them to describe a specific event and not general statements such as, "My family is a big help to me."]*

## Part 1: Stories about Coping and Support

Let's start with stories about coping and support.

1) Sooner or later, everyone has to deal with some kind of problem, often a serious problem. Tell me about a problem or challenge you had. What happened, where and when did it take place, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling? Also, please say a few words about how you handled what happened and how it shows how you cope with challenges.

*[Interviewer note: It does not have to be the reason for referral. You want to get as much as possible about their coping processes, including emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses.]*

2) Who is most supportive of you? Think about family, friends, neighbors, teachers, coaches, ministers, or others in your community. Tell me a story about a time that someone really helped you. Who was it, and what kind of support did they offer you?

## Part 2: A Portfolio of Strengths

Next, I am going to ask you about some specific strengths that are often helpful for dealing with hard times. We will discuss three areas that we have found to be especially important for helping people when they have problems: meaning making, self-regulation, and interpersonal relationships.

## Meaning making

3) Let's talk about finding meaning in your life. You might find meaning through religion or spirituality, but you may also find meaning through your role in your family or community, or your commitment to a cause, goal, group, or person. Tell me a story about a time you got to do something that gave you a sense of meaning or purpose.

4) [Religious or spiritual involvement]. Some people do not attend church or belong to a religion, but if that is important to you, it would be helpful for me to know more about that. If it's not, that's ok too, and then we will know to focus on other types of meaning making.

## Self-regulation

5) [Managing feelings of sadness and anger]. We all get upset and angry sometimes. Learning to control our behaviors when we are upset can be challenging, but is an important part of effective coping. Tell me a little bit about how things usually go when you get upset or angry, and a story about a time when you were upset or angry.

6) [Recovering positive mood]. Think about the last time you got really upset or angry, and tell me what you or others did that helped you move past that and get back in a good mood.

7) [Psychological endurance.] Endurance is the ability to keep going even when times are tough. For example, to stick to routines or finish a project, even when that is harder than you expected. It also can mean staying true to your values in hard times. Again, I'd like to hear about a specific time in your life, when things were harder than you expected and what happened.

## Interpersonal relationships

Now I'd like to learn about your relationships with family, friends, and community.

8) [Compassion.] Compassion means being aware of and caring about other people's feelings. Compassion can also mean wanting to help others in need. Do you think of yourself more as someone who keeps to yourself, or do you tend to notice what is going on with other people? Can you tell me a story about that?

9) [Generativity]. Generativity refers to investing in the next generation or the future of a community. Parents invest in their children, of course. There are many other roles that are about helping young people or investing in the future, including teachers, coaches, and many volunteer or community group roles. Tell me about some of the ways that you try to "pay it forward" to the next generation. Or, I'd also like to hear a story about a time that someone inspired you or motivated you to work harder.

### Using the results of the Resilience Portfolio Interview to plan prevention and intervention:

*It is beneficial for the therapeutic alliance to work on positive goals together with your client. There are many techniques for improving strengths, but here are a few examples of evidence-based strategies for improving some of the key strengths identified in the Resilience Portfolios research program.*

*Narrative: Improves many aspects of meaning making and self-regulation. One of the most effective brief interventions with a large evidence base.*

*Mindfulness meditation: Improves compassion, emotional awareness, emotional regulation*

*Exercise: Improves psychological endurance (and physical) and increases optimism*

*Volunteering: Improves generativity and helps build social and community support*

*Spirituality/religious involvement: Increases meaning. Note: Of course it is not appropriate to suggest that a non-religious person become religious, but if someone is religious, encouraging them to reconnect with their spiritual traditions or reach out to their church congregation can be helpful.*

*Goal setting: Can help with purpose, endurance*

*Note: Regulatory strengths are often the "weak leg of the stool." In our interviews, person after person after person told about how getting married, having a child, finding a church, or getting a good job motivated them to better regulate. Use interpersonal and meaning-making strengths to build up self-regulation.*