



**online courses**

BY MATINA JEWELL

matinajewell.online



RESILIENCE IN ACTION

# PERSPECTIVE

*'It's not a war stopper!'*



**online courses**

BY MATINA JEWELL



RESILIENCE IN ACTION

# Perspective

'It's not a war stopper!'



Watch the Video

🕒 11 min 26 sec

## Video Transcript

Welcome back. So far in this program we've explored flexibility, facing fear, and building your resilience muscle. In this module we are going to focus on the power of positive perspective which I think is lynch pin important to optimizing our resilience.

Viktor Frankl states that "with perspective comes the capacity to reappraise and generate alternative approaches and solutions to problems". And I think it's this ability to gain new positive perspective which is one of the critical tools in building and maintaining resilience.

Throughout my life I have noticed that the most resilient people I've encountered, tend to be very optimistic and view their world through a positive lens.

I look back on my Army career and the various operations I was deployed on around the world. Our overseas deployments were usually for a 6 or 12-month period where we were working 24-7 in a team environment and often living in rather challenging conditions. I found these tense and difficult environments really tested my optimism and resilience, particularly when you add in an enemy threat, lack of home comforts, sleep deprivation and danger from exploding bombs or gunfire! It takes the entire team to pull together to get through these situations and boost the overall morale of the force.

From every tough situation I encountered I found that positive perspective was a key ingredient in terms of how resilient we were and in turn how successful we were. As a leader, I found there are three critical aspects that I needed to manage in order to influence the perspective my team took towards a particular task or situation.

These three elements are:

1. Expectation management,
2. Acceptance and
3. Positive Mantra

Let me explain each element with an example. In terms of expectation management, I think the military is outstanding at preparing our personnel to lower or indeed have no expectations in order to avoid disappointment. In fact, we specifically train and practice this factor to ensure that our forces are robust and able to manage expectations on the battlefield.

The first time I experienced really needing to manage my own expectations was whilst I was an officer cadet at the Royal Military College of Duntroon, we had just spent two weeks of arduous bush training in the field, which meant no accommodation, no beds, no showers, no fresh food, we literally slept on the ground under a small tarp called a 'hootchie', ate ration packs and carried all of our gear on

our backs. After two weeks of physically tough training, hiking through terrain and no showers you can only imagine just how sweaty and dirty we all were.

On the trucks heading back from exercise the atmosphere was jubilant, as we were all excitedly planning our very first night back in barracks. I was imagining how fantastic a hot shower, clean clothes, a pizza and a beer was going to be. But suddenly that dream was shattered as we drove through the front gates of the base, past the parade ground and straight back out the gun gates at the back of the barracks.

Immediately there was confusion, which soon turned to shock and disappointment after it was announced plans had changed, there would be no leave, but instead we were going straight into another field training activity, in the dirty camouflage uniforms we were all wearing. The purpose of the lesson was to teach us the importance of managing our expectations and having a better understanding of exactly what we did or didn't have control over.

In this same situation I learnt the second component of perspective, that being acceptance. The cadets who regrouped from the setback quickest were those who could accept that their plans and leave no longer existed. They were able to come to grips with the loss quickly

and shifted their mindset to accepting that another field exercise was underway and commenced mentally preparing for what the new challenge would involve.

It was at this moment too that I learnt the third component that being the power of mantras and saying to myself "that was then, this is now". The more we fought to hold onto a situation that no longer existed, the more pain and struggle we had with accepting the new circumstances. I found using the mantra "that was then, this is now" was extremely beneficial in speeding up the time it took to shift my thinking and reframe my perspective to something more positive. I had to quickly accept that the environment I was operating in had dramatically changed and I needed to shift with it.

I utilized the combination of the three of these elements; expectation management, acceptance and mantra later in the Lebanon War when I sustained career ending injuries whilst commanding a convoy of armoured vehicles through the warzone. What should have taken two hours to drive from Patrol Base Khiam to the UN Headquarters in the city of Tyre, took two long days with near misses from both sides of the war.

On the outskirts of Tyre I was informed by my UN headquarters that Israeli fighter jets were inbound on bombing runs and the road we were on was one of the roads due to be targeted. We were making a high-speed dash for the headquarters when my driver commenced evasive maneuvering, and there are no seat belts in these particular UN vehicles.

I was thrown into the bulletproof windscreen of my armoured vehicle breaking my back in five places. Two vertebrae were crushed, three more were fractured, I ruptured my diaphragm and sustained a number of internal injuries. Despite the pain I was in I had far bigger issues on my hands than my own injury, I knew I had to get the convoy rolling again and get us into HQ as quick as I possibly could.

We arrived at the base some twenty minutes later, but due to ongoing bombardment I spent the next two days lying on a tiled floor without any morphine while the UN scrambled to come up with an alternative evacuation process. Which ended up being by boat with a thousand Lebanese refugees and the families of the UN peacekeeping force. It was then a twenty-hour boat ride across the Mediterranean Sea to reach a hospital in Cyprus.

It would then take 15 days before I arrived in Australia to commence treatment for my spinal injuries and let's just say the medical evacuation didn't go quite to plan. In the ambulance from the HQ in Tyre to the port I was dropped out of the ambulance strapped into the stretcher, the UN lost control of me in Cyprus and I was taken to the wrong hospital, we were delayed transit to the correct UN hospital due a terrorist attack in Cyprus and then once I was airlifted to Germany I was transferred to an Australian Qantas aircraft, a commercial flight to Sydney via Singapore.

By this stage I am on a stretcher with neck collar, spinal brace and I have a doctor and paramedic travelling with me. The doctor had been informed by Qantas that they would remove 9 seats out of the economy cabin of the aircraft to be able to bolt the stretcher and I into the floor for transit and that the flight would be completely empty so we would have plenty of time to secure me before the other passengers boarded.

I was taken on board the plane via the catering cart hoists at the rear of the aircraft, but once we got inside the cabin two things became quickly apparent.

1. The flight was fully loaded, there were 450 passengers all waiting for me to take off, and 2. The seats hadn't been removed.

So, after a quick discussion with the crew, there was no other alternative option but to put the stretcher and I on top of the head rests of the seats, so just underneath the overhead lockers. They then needed to use cargo ratchet straps to secure me and stop the stretcher and I falling off the seats midair. So, next time you get on a flight have a look at the distance between the headrests and the overhead lockers. And I flew like that from Germany, to Singapore to Sydney, over 20-hours flight time. So, these days I'm a pretty easy traveler, I don't really care where I sit on a plane, if I get a seat, it's like an added bonus!

But you know, I will always be a bit teary when I hear the song 'I still call Australia Home', as it played along with the Aussie accent of the Cabin Manager over the PA system, welcoming us all to the flight. That was the very first time that I thought I might actually survive the Lebanon War, and that I would make it home alive.

During the entire ordeal of my medical evacuation, I found I was able to keep perspective with the help of three mantras that I continue to use in business and even now days as a parent, those mantras are:

"That was then, this is now", which helps me gain acceptance quickly when things change.

"Focus on what I can control right now" I find this mantra helps me focus on the issues I can have the most impact on, and

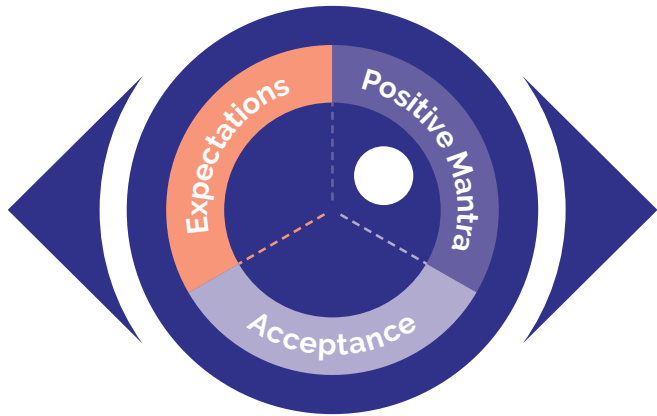
"It's not a war stopper" which helps me get perspective particularly around our 'first world problems' and to me this mantra means; if it isn't going to stop the war, then it's not worth getting bent all out of shape over.

I have used these techniques to reframe my thinking in tough military situations and now in business I rely heavily on my capacity to shift perspective fast and think positively. Whatever your current ability is to remain optimistic even in highly stressful times, we can always improve. The workbook activities for this section provide practical ideas to help stabilize, reframe your thinking and increase your resilience.

You know, I think we are all so very fortunate that we actually get to choose the lens through which we see the world through each day. I often ask my clients, 'What lens did you choose today and what perspective could you take for tomorrow and the future?' Because in my experiences, if we can change our perspective, we can actually change our lives.

## Reflecting on the Video

### Powered Perspective Framework®



1. What are your key take-outs from the video?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Thinking about expectation management and acceptance, is there anything you would like to stop/start/continue in your work or life in general?

Stop:

Start:

Continue:

3. Commit to these changes at:

Work:

Home:

Other:

4. Consider sharing one or more of these commitments with an accountability buddy (or broadcast it to all your friends via your social media)?

☐ Done

5. Pick one commitment and take positive action on it.

☐ Done

“Positive thinking has been scientifically proven to enhance our resilience, make us more engaged, and decrease our negative thoughts”

*Sergant & Mongrain, 2014 and Troy et. al., 2010*





**PERSPECTIVE:** 'IT'S NOT A WAR STOPPER!'

11

## 'It's Not A War Stopper.'

My motto in life is  
'It's not a war stopper'.

So when things happen in my day to day, such as when I feel the urge to get bent out of shape with these first world problems, the kids aren't ready and we're rushing to school and the like, often I'll just say under my breath, 'it's not a war stopper'. Let's just break it down into problems that I can actually get through and resolve and not let that extrapolation of, *'Oh my God, this is just the most chaotic thing I've [ever!] experienced. Just bring it back down. It's not a war stopper.'*

### **Brief**

Developing a mantra in the good times, even just a few short words that mean something to you - can help regain the strength and be the nudge you need, in the moment you need it most, under duress.

## Task

What is a little mantra that might work for you during times when you feel challenged? Try to cut it down to just a few short words (or a short sentence).

1. My personal mantra for tough times:

---

---

---

---

---

2. My personal mantra for when I need to focus on what I can impact:

---

---

---

---

3. My personal mantra for when I need to slow down and self-soothe:

---

---

---

---

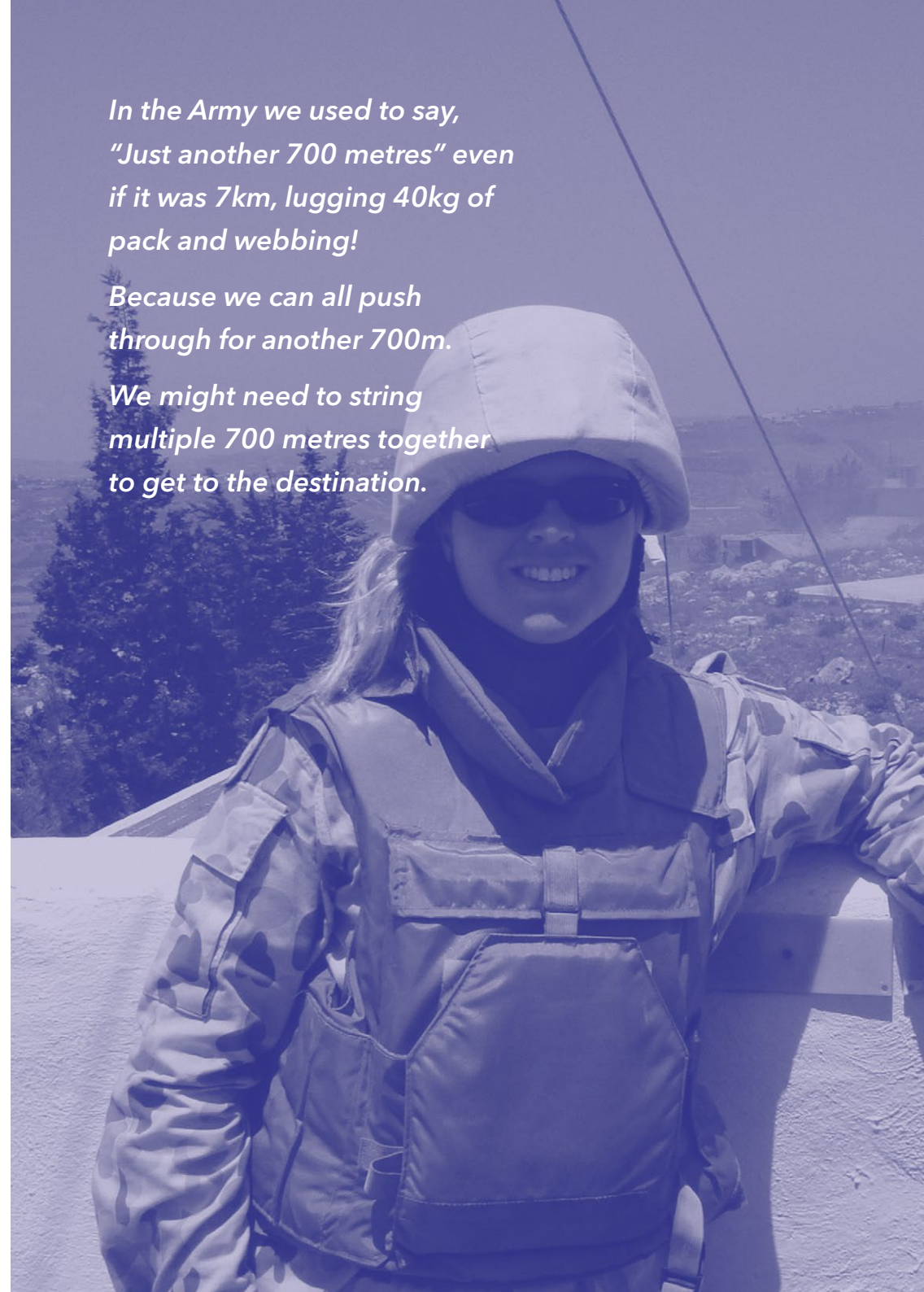
4. Use it.

☐ Done

*In the Army we used to say,  
"Just another 700 metres" even  
if it was 7km, lugging 40kg of  
pack and webbing!*

*Because we can all push  
through for another 700m.*

*We might need to string  
multiple 700 metres together  
to get to the destination.*





---

**“DO NOT JUDGE ME BY  
MY SUCCESS, JUDGE ME  
BY HOW MANY TIMES  
I FELL DOWN AND GOT  
BACK UP AGAIN.”**

---

NELSON MANDELA

---







**PERSPECTIVE:** 'IT'S NOT A WAR STOPPER!'

17

## Three Good Things

Take a moment to reflect.

According to Barbara Fredrickson, PhD., and author of *Positivity* (2009) - the most resilient of us have a very different daily repertoire of emotions to everyone else. And according to her 'broaden-and-build' theory (2001) it is a repertoire of positive emotions that can help expand responsive thoughts, actions and attention to your environment.<sup>1</sup>

### Task

At the end of your day, take a moment to reflect and write down - what 3 good things happened today?

Be intentional about reflecting on the experiences, noting how you felt, and what was the best thing about the experience.

3 Good Things Today?	Why? How did it feel?

<sup>1</sup> <https://positivepsychology.com/resilience-activities-exercises/>



---

**PERSPECTIVE:**

'IT'S NOT A WAR STOPPER!'

19

## **Bonus Exercise 1**

### **Common Cognitive Distortions**

What is cognitive distortion?  
And why do so many people have them?

I am going to ask you (or perhaps your partner) if you have any tendencies around any of these.

Cognitive distortions are ways that our mind convinces us of something that is not really true.

For example, we might beat ourselves up by saying things like "I always fail when I try to do something new; I therefore fail at everything I try." This is known as "black or white" (or polarized) thinking. Seeing things in absolutes.



## Common Cognitive Distortions

Below is a list of the most common cognitive distortions, informed by the seminal work of psychologists Aaron Beck and David Burns.

### 1. Filtering

When a cognitive filter is applied, we can find ourselves stuck only focusing and dwelling on the negative - unable to see the positives in the situation.

### 2. Polarized Thinking (or "Black and White" Thinking)

This is your classic seeing things only in 'black or white', 'all or nothing'. With this distortion there is no middle ground - only extremes. Thinking in this way ignores the complexity that is inherent in most situations.

### 3. Overgeneralisation

Taking a single piece of evidence, or witnessing a single event, and drawing a sweeping broad-brush conclusion that this is the way things are. That if something bad happens once, it's bound to happen again. Someone finds out one of their team members dislikes them and suddenly they're convinced that everybody dislikes them.

### 4. Jumping to Conclusions

Making assumptions about what another person is thinking and feeling, and that you know the reasons behind why they act the way they do. It can also lead to people thinking they can read other people's minds or even thinking that their entire future is written in stone. The classic example is assuming that someone is holding a grudge against you, and then finding out it was all in your head!

### 5. Catastrophising

Always expecting the worst. This is also known as 'magnifying', and can manifest in it's opposite behaviour 'minimizing'. For example, this may force people to exaggerate the importance of things like a silly mistake at work.

### 6. Personalisation

Thinking everything that others do or say is somehow related to them. They take everything personally. This kind of distortion also leads to people comparing themselves to others.

### 7. Control Fallacies

Either the fallacy of external control - like we're helpless victims of fate. Thinking for example, things like 'I can't help it if we didn't land that client - I got a bad handover from Bill and Jen rushed me into taking that meeting'.

Or the fallacy of internal control - assuming responsibility for things outside our control. Watch out for phrases like 'is it because of something I did?'

### 8. Fallacy of Fairness

Believing that we know what is fair and getting resentful when other people don't agree. This fallacy causes people to constantly judge the 'fairness' of situations and get resentful if things don't fall in their favour.

### 9. Blaming

When we hold other people responsible for our emotional pain. Or, at the opposite end of the spectrum, we hold ourselves responsible for everything, even if it's outside of our control. Stop making me feel bad about myself!' is a classic example. Nobody can 'make' us feel a particular emotion. Only we can control our emotions and emotional reactions.

### 10. 'Shoulds'

Should statements take the form of strict rules about how we should behave. There is an often-mistaken belief that these 'shoulds' serve to motivate us, when in fact they simply create guilt when directed at ourselves and resentment when imposed on others. 'I should wake up earlier', 'they should give me a courtesy call' etc.

### 11. Emotional Reasoning

Our emotions cloud our logic. We believe what we're feeling must be true. This can lead us to assume our unhealthy emotions reflect the way things really are (e.g. we feel bored, we must be boring).

### 12. Fallacy of Change

We expect others will change to suit us if we pressure or encourage them a bit. Often found in thinking around relationships. For example, a girlfriend who tries to get her boyfriend to improve his manners, in the belief that this boyfriend is perfect in every other way and will make them happy if they only changed these few minor things.

### 13. Global Labelling

In global labelling (also referred to as mislabelling), we generalise one or two qualities into a negative global judgment about ourselves or another person. This is an extreme form of overgeneralizing. Instead of describing an error in context of a specific situation, we'll attach an unhealthy universal label to ourselves or others. For example, someone fails at something and they tell themselves 'I'm such a loser'. Or getting annoyed at someone and thinking they're 'a real jerk' without trying to understand any of the context around why they were behaving the way they did. It often involves emotionally loaded and hyperbolic language.

### 14. Always Being Right

Continually putting other people on trial to prove that our own opinions and actions are the absolute correct ones. Being wrong is unthinkable, and we'll go to any lengths to prove that we're right. With this distortion, being right is more important than the feelings of those around you.

### 15. Heaven's Reward Fallacy

The final cognitive distortion is the false belief that a person's sacrifice and self-denial will eventually pay off. Like someone, somewhere, is keeping score. It's similar to the fallacy of fairness with the idea being that those that work the hardest will get the most reward. The danger of this fallacy is resentment and bitterness if the expected reward doesn't come.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <https://psychcentral.com/lib/15-common-cognitive-distortions/>

## Task: Create Your Own Watch-out List

1. Scan the list of cognitive distortion headings above again. Do you have a tendency toward any?

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. If so, how are you going to pull yourself up, next time you sense yourself going down that path?

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Top-tip:** The sooner you are aware and accept something, the quicker you can move to change.



Your Watch-out List

Cognitive Distortion	Frequency (Almost Never, Sometimes, A lot!)	What technique might I try to become more aware of when it happens?

Variation on the Exercise

1.

Ask someone - a partner, friend, or close colleague for their filter-free cognitive distortion of you! Watch-out: this is just their subjective opinion. Do not react. Just thank them for the feedback and sit with it. In fact, I am a big fan of sleeping on it, to let the subconscious do it's thing too.

☐ Done
2.

Revisit the exercise with fresh eyes the next day, or sometime later.

☐ Done

---

**PERSPECTIVE:**

'IT'S NOT A WAR STOPPER!'

## Bonus Exercise 2

### Practice Forgiveness

What's another name for a 'grudge'?  
Whatever you call it, we have most likely all had one, with someone.

In a minute, I am going to ask you to move on.  
Here are some options that may be useful to help you through your grudge holding.

#### Path to Forgiveness

Frederic Luskin, PhD, director of the Stanford University Forgiveness Project, has outlined 9 steps to take when embarking on a path to forgiveness.

1. Know exactly how you feel about what happened and be able to articulate what about the situation is not OK. Then, share your experience with a couple of trusted people.
2. Make a commitment to yourself to feel better. Forgiveness is for you and no one else.
3. Forgiveness does not necessarily mean reconciling with the person who upset you or condoning the action. In forgiveness you seek the peace and understanding that come from blaming people less after they offend you, and taking those offenses less personally.





4. Get the right perspective on what is happening. Recognize that your primary distress is coming from the hurt feelings, thoughts, and physical upset you are suffering now, not from what offended you or hurt you two minutes or 10 years ago.

5. At the very moment you start to feel upset, soothe your body's fight or flight response.

*Top-tip: Take a long, slow, deep breath! Cortisol and adrenaline are replaced in the brain at a molecular level with dopamine (the love drug). Please, please... just breathe.*

6. Give up expecting things from your life or from other people who choose to not give you what you need. Remind yourself that you can hope for health, love, friendship, and prosperity, and work hard to get them. However, these are "unenforceable rules". You will suffer when you demand that these things occur, since you do not have the power to make them happen.

7. Put your energy into looking for another way to get your positive goals met than through the experience that has hurt you.

8. Remember that a life well lived is your best revenge. Instead of focusing on your wounded feelings, and thereby giving power over to the person who caused you pain, learn to look for the love, beauty, and kindness around you. Put more energy into appreciating what you have rather than focussing on what you do not have.

*Top-tip: I think this is worth repeating: just live well.*

9. Amend the way you look at your past, so you remind yourself of your heroic choice to forgive.

## Task

1. If you have been holding onto a grudge, even if it's something silly from years ago, write that person a letter or email to forgive them (it's up to you if you choose to actually share it with them, or share it with a friend, or simply keep it to yourself. I've found the writing process is cathartic in itself). Just apologise and forgive them. Then, move on (and give yourself a little pat on the back as you do).

If you felt a positive shift from writing the letter you may even feel like taking the next step to message or call them. Again this is totally your decision.

☐ Done



---

**PERSPECTIVE:**

'IT'S NOT A WAR STOPPER!'

31

## Bonus Exercise 3

### Quit Complaining

#### Brief

Ok, this might be hard for some of us.

#### Task

1. Go a whole day without complaining. Not once. Not one negative comment.  
☐ Done
2. Go 3 days in a row without complaining. (And if you fall-over, start the count again.)  
☐ Done
3. Go 1 week without complaining.  
☐ Done

**Top-tip:** Put some accountability in place for yourself. Perhaps a 'buy a beer' penalty payable to a colleague if you slip-up?

## Additional Reading

### 7 Steps for Transformational Coping

In *How to Succeed No Matter What Life Throws at You*, Salvatore R. Maddi and Deborah M. Khoshaba (2005) outline seven steps for a type of reappraisal they call transformational coping:

1. Fully describe the stressful situation.
2. How could this situation be worse?
3. How could the situation be better?
4. Create a story about a worse version.
5. Create a story about a better version.
6. What can you do to create the better version and decrease likelihood of the worse version?
7. Place the situation into perspective.<sup>3</sup>

## Journaling: Get Creative

A 1988 study found that participants who did Expressive Writing for four days were healthier six weeks later and happier up to three months later, when compared to people who wrote about superficial topics. Researchers suggest that when we are forced to deconstruct experiences and ideas we enable ourselves to see things through a different lens. We give ourselves a new perspective. But more than that - we are 'creating our own life narrative and gaining a sense of control'.<sup>4</sup>

## Task

Many extol the virtues of journaling.

1. Try journaling for 3 days this week, starting right now. Don't worry about a specific word count, just write until you are done. Whether that becomes 50 words or 500 words, it is what it is.
2. Put a recurring note and time in your electronic diary to keep it going.

***Write it, rather than type it. Using pen and paper has been shown to activate 20,000+ neural receptors. And typing? Only 12.***

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/resilience/cognitive-and-emotional-flexibility/8A1DA713740F8E5D4EE0F891933058B9/core-reader>

<sup>4</sup> [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/five\\_science\\_backed\\_strategies\\_to\\_build\\_resilience](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/five_science_backed_strategies_to_build_resilience)



## Notes