

### Exercise Three: Weaving resources (done during module 5 or 6)

Our ability to navigate to the resources we need to survive and thrive is always a reflection of the quality of the social and physical environment that surrounds us. Want to get people outdoors to exercise? Provide sidewalks, safe crosswalks, a well-lit dog park, or strategically placed park benches that let people rest periodically.

Of course, our resources are also social. All of us have some connections to someone, even if that is simply the memory of someone from our past who we no longer see. Resources are many and varied. From pets to coaches, from our homes to the police, our interactions with environments around us can be supportive or fraught with challenges. Navigating effectively to resources requires understanding the many resources available to us which can be used to help us overcome both everyday hassles and far fewer regular threats. Keeping track of these resources, however, is challenging. This activity is meant to make the task simpler.

Using the instructions below, develop a weave (ecomap) of resilience-promoting resources for yourself. This intervention is especially helpful when feeling stuck with problems you can't seem to change.

To do a weave, ask yourself the following series of questions regarding the resources that are realistically available and accessible. The weave is a visual representation of your answers. To begin, draw yourself (or a symbol that represents you) at the centre of a piece of paper (flipchart paper taped to a wall works very well). One by one, name your resources, with a word or symbol drawn on the flipchart paper to represent each resource. Lines are drawn between you and the resources with the colour and style of each line used to represent your experience of the resource. Different lines represent positive or negative experiences (e.g., solid straight lines can mean a helpful, secure relationship with a resource; wavy and dashed lines can represent conflicted or weak relationships). Expect some resources to have multiple lines to the resource to reflect complex relationships over time.

### The Questions

The following pattern of questions is useful for identifying resources that promote and sustain resilience. These can include the many aspects of resilience identified in the course. Factors that contribute to disorder are less relevant to the weave (it is assumed most interventions with clients already review evidence of psychopathology and disordered functioning), though barriers to accessing resources are always explored as part of the weave. Where barriers are identified, they are mapped onto the weave but the emphasis remains on understanding how, when exposed to atypically high levels of stress, you adapt in contexts where access to resources appears strained.

### Part 1: Resource Audit

Starting with people and institutions that are most significant to you, ask yourself:

- “From my perspective, what has been one of the most significant relationships in my life?”
- “In my experience, has this relationship been a source of support? Or has it been harmful or stressful? Or perhaps it has been both?”
- “From my perspective, what is another significant relationship in my life? Again, has it been supportive and helpful, or a source of conflict or stress?”

- “Thinking beyond people, are there other sources of support or stress in my life? Maybe a place I spend time, like school, or work?”
- “Do I have activities in my life that bring me support, or cause me stress? Like a sport that I play, or maybe a habit like substance abuse? Do these activities add positively to my life, or create more stress? Do they help me cope? When are they most useful?”
- “How are these people, places and activities related to each other? Do these interactions make other resources more available or accessible, or do these relationships and resources place barriers in my life or prevent me from coping with life’s challenges?”

The goal here is to identify your strategic use of resources that improves your ability to cope under stress, even if these coping strategies appear to be maladaptive. The more resources and relationships between resources that are identified (the more lines in the weave that connect you to each resource and connect resources to one another) the more opportunities there will be for you to build resilience.

## Part 2: Interpretation

Once the weave is rich in detail, it is useful to shift the conversation from the audit of resources to interpretation of what the lines mean all together. Ask yourself:

- “Looking at the weave, is there anything that catches my attention the most? Anything that surprises me?”
- “Are there more/fewer positive supports than I would have expected?”

From this review of resources, it is critical to next look for patterns in the resources and which are being used most effectively. Just because a coping strategy appears to be maladaptive (e.g., an abused child socially withdraws from her caregivers, as represented by a weak, dashed line) each pattern should be discussed from your own perspective. Do you personally experience this relationship with the resource useful? Does it improve your sense of safety?

Once these questions are answered, it is possible to look at where else you have found positive and supportive resources and whether these connections can be strengthened.

The interpretation should also challenge negative relationships with resources by asking yourself whether these resources are always helpful and if there are alternative resources that might be just as useful if they were made more available and accessible. In this way you can explore possibilities to change the color or style of lines connecting yourself to each resource, perhaps “breaking” lines that sustain problems or removing yourself from negative relationships altogether. Likewise, the weave can become a source of inspiration for identifying potentially positive resources that could be exploited further.