

A woman with long brown hair, smiling broadly, holds a tall stack of books in front of her chest. She is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt with ruffled cuffs. The books are stacked vertically, with their spines facing outwards. The titles of the books, from top to bottom, are: 'START WITH WHY' by Simon Sinek, 'THE POWER OF MOMENTS' by Chip Heath & Dan Heath, 'dare to lead' by Brené Brown, 'THE UNIVERSE HAS YOUR BACK' by Gabrielle Bernstein, 'Joy, Inc.' by Richard Sheridan, 'THE COACHING HABIT' by Michael Bungay Stanier, 'ONE LAST TALK' by Philip McKernan, 'CHIEF JOY OFFICER' by Richard Sheridan, 'Loving What Is' by Byron Katie, 'Atomic Habits' by James Clear, 'GOOD TO GREAT' by Jim Collins, 'EXPONENTIAL ORGANIZATIONS' by Ismail, Malone & Van Geest, and 'ETHICS AND...' (partially visible).

DEVELOPING RESILIENCE IN YOURSELF AND OTHERS

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TEACHING RESILIENCE

A Student Maid team member once told me that growing up, whenever she got a grade lower than an A, she would have to write, “I will never get a B (or C or D) again,” *three hundred times* on a piece of paper.

My jaw dropped. How was that supposed to help her learn?

Over the years, I’ve realized that many people lacked healthy examples of how to navigate setbacks when they were young. So now, as adults, instead of looking at failure as something they can grow from, many fear it and avoid putting themselves in situations where they could potentially fail. That’s why at Student Maid, we’re intentional about teaching our people how to be more resilient. But what is resilience? Why does it matter?

Resilience is the muscle that helps us get back up again when we fall down, that helps us find opportunity in adversity, that gives us the courage to take risks and try things we may not be “ready” for, and that reminds us there are better days coming when our current days don’t feel so great. As the leaders of a small business, we know that when we make mistakes, we can’t waste time getting down on ourselves. The survival and success of our company depends on us taking responsibility, figuring out where we went wrong, and taking steps to learn and grow so that we avoid those missteps the next time around. We help each other learn to choose growth, no matter what situation we find ourselves in. That’s the resilience mindset.

There’s no overnight trick to building resilience, but we’ve learned there are things we can do to develop resilience both in ourselves and in those we lead. In this guide, my team will walk you through the exercises we do and share the ways we encourage each other to learn from our mistakes. We hope you will use these exercises to change your perspective and find opportunities for growth! I also hope they help you find empowerment in the situations you’ve successfully navigated in your life.

Kristen



BUILDING RESILIENCE

Like all businesses, Student Maid has had its share of setbacks and will inevitably face more. Over the years, we've worked to build resilience as a team and as individuals by looking to the lessons of the past and using them to guide our present. As Kristen said, not everyone develops a healthy relationship with failure, so it's important to us to share the ways we build resilience with our team members.

In this guide, the main exercise is called the Resilience Resume. You can do this exercise by yourself or with your team. We suggest that you do both: Create a personal resume first, encourage your team to do the same, and then come together to make one that's focused on your team's resilience.

We've found that the key to resilience is in reflection. We will guide you through a series of questions that will help you understand your relationship with failure, how you've navigated mistakes in the past, and, most importantly, what gifts those experiences have given you in the form of lessons learned.



GETTING STARTED

SETTING BOUNDARIES

The exercises in this guide will ask you and the people you share them with to do some deep self-reflection. We suggest setting the following boundaries so that you get the full benefit of the exercises:

- What's said during the exercise stays with the people involved.
- Emotions are welcome.
- Be patient with yourself and with each other. Stop and take breaks to regroup if you need to.
- If you are doing these exercises with another person aloud, remember this acronym, which we call the steps of listening:

Leave the distractions (physical and mental).

I am here for you. Make sure your body language is open.

Silence. Let them talk; don't interrupt.



Tell me more. Say this phrase when you feel like the other person has more to say to encourage them to dig deeper.

Empathy. Acknowledge the other person's emotion. For example, if they're angry, adjust your tone so they know that you understand they are angry.

Nonverbal cues, such as nodding your head and maintaining eye contact. These show someone you are still with them, even when you aren't speaking.

Want to learn more about listening? Check out our [listening guide](#)!

UNDERSTANDING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH FAILURE

Before you create your resume, we suggest that you reflect on what your lifelong relationship with failure has been like. We often begin our relationships with failure when we're very, very young—before we even realize it. It can be helpful to look back at those early experiences to get a better understanding of how they have affected the way we think about failure.

We encourage you to take some time alone in a calm, private space and ask yourself these questions (if you're doing this exercise with a group, encourage them to do the same):

- Did your parents/the parental figures in your life talk with you about failure when you were young? If so, what did they tell you? What kind of language and/or tone did they use? Were they supportive or dismissive? Encouraging or exacting? How did their words make you feel?
 - Alternatively: If you can't remember a time when a parent/parental figure talked with you about failure, how else do you think you learned about it? Who or what else may have informed how you feel about failure today?
- When your parents/parental figures made mistakes, how did they react? Did they get angry or frustrated (at themselves and/or and you or others)? Did they accept their mistakes and move on? What effect did their actions have on you? How did it make you feel to see how they reacted?
 - Alternatively: If you can't remember a time when a parent/parental figure made a mistake, how does that make you feel? How do you think it has affected you?



THE RESILIENCE RESUME

Now that you're more familiar with your history with failure, let's create your Resilience Resume.

The purpose of the resume is to show in a simple, powerful way the challenges you've been through and the ways you've grown because of those challenges.

Creating a Resilience Resume has multiple benefits: For individuals, it builds confidence. The resume doesn't just show *what* those failures were—which we all tend to focus on—but what we learned from those failures and how that has helped us. The resume also does this on a team level: As a team, you'll feel inspired and empowered when you can look back at all the things you've overcome and grown from together.

We suggest that each person on the team makes a personal Resilience Resume before you make one for your team.

PERSONAL RESILIENCE RESUME

To create your resume, you'll start by asking yourself one, big question: What are the biggest screwups I've made in my life?

Most people focus on their professional lives, but feel free to choose whatever events stand out to you. Make a list of 3 to 5 to start with (but you can list as many as you like). Then, for each one, you'll answer a series of questions to help you figure out what that screwup has taught you. We've created a template for you to print out on page 8. We suggest that you dedicate a full page to each screwup.

Here's a guide for answering the questions:

- **What was the screwup?**
 - Sum it up the best you can in one sentence
- **How did it happen?**
 - Describe the events that lead up to this screwup. Include what you were trying to accomplish, how much time you had to work with, etc.
- **How did you resolve the situation?**
 - Describe how you handled the screwup once you realized you made it. If you can, list the steps you took. Which ones worked? Which ones didn't? Include who you asked for help, what resources you used, how long it took to resolve, etc.
- **What have you done differently because of this?**



- Reflect on your life since this happened. Have you done anything different (taken a different action or approach, avoided something, etc.) directly because of this experience?
- **How would you sum up the lesson you learned from this experience?**
 - Using your answer from the previous question, take it one step further. Think about what this experience taught you, and try to sum it up in one sentence.

Example

Here's an example using Kristen's most infamous screwup story (if you haven't heard it, check out the first chapter of her book, *Permission To Screw Up!*):

- **What was the screwup?**
 - 45 out of the 60 people I hired to do a massive cleaning job walked out on me all at once because I was not being a good leader
- **How did it happen?**
 - The job was to clean hundreds of filthy apartments in the middle of summer in Gainesville, Florida. I gave them very little training, barely learned any of their names, and then sent them on their way to clean while I sat in the air-conditioned apartment clubhouse. I told them to call me if they needed me. At the time, I thought that was what I was supposed to do. *[Note: Remember, you don't know what you don't know! If you made mistakes based on incorrect information or ignorance, make note of that to help inform the lessons you learned.]*
- **How did you resolve the situation?**
 - When the 45 people walked out, I was shocked. I had no idea what I'd done, and I was angry. When I started to think about it from their perspective, I still didn't fully understand. But I figured I must have done something wrong, and I should apologize. Here's what I did next:
 - I gathered up the 15 people who somehow didn't get the memo, explained what happened, and apologized. Then, I asked for their help in contacting the 45 who walked out.
 - We told The 45 (as I call them) that if they came to my house that night and heard what I had to say, they would get early paychecks and pizza.
 - All 45, plus the 15 who helped me, showed up. I apologized for sitting in the clubhouse while they worked and promised that from then on, I'd be in there with them, cleaning and cheering them on. I stuck to my word, and we ended up finishing the work early.
- **What have you done differently because of this?**



- I didn't know it then, but this day changed my life. It's what inspired me to learn about leadership and how to be a good leader. I read every book on leadership that I could find, always made sure to learn people's names, and worked alongside my team instead of apart from them.
- **How would you sum up the lesson you learned from this experience?**
 - The best thing you can do when you screw up is admit it and not let your ego get in the way. The experience was a gift because it made me a better leader and inspired my obsession with leadership.



PERSONAL RESILIENCE RESUME

WHAT WAS THE SCREWUP?

HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

HOW DID YOU RESOLVE THE SITUATION?

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE DIFFERENTLY BECAUSE OF THIS?

HOW WOULD YOU SUM UP THE LESSON YOU LEARNED FROM THIS EXPERIENCE?



TEAM RESILIENCE RESUME

Resilience in a team environment is just as important as resilience on an individual level. When you work closely with others on big goals, as we do at Student Maid, you will inevitably face setbacks together. We've found that in order to come out of them stronger, we must all commit to a growth mindset.

To help with this, we suggest that you create a Resilience Resume together and reflect on the biggest challenges you've faced as a team using the same questions as above. You may find it helpful to have each person answer the questions on their own first.

The process for creating a team Resilience Resume is very similar. Again, we'll focus on one, big question: What are the biggest screwups this team has made?

We suggest that you discuss the questions aloud as a team. First, you'll want to decide which screwups to focus on. Choose 3 to 5 that really resonate with everyone; it helps if most, if not all, team members present were involved.

Then, discuss each question aloud as a group. As you do, it will help if one person can take notes (on a whiteboard, shared screen, or other visible place, if possible) and then write your final answers on the worksheet (available on the next page) once you decide on them. When you're done, give everyone their own copy of the resume.

Here's an example of an item from a team Resilience Resume, straight from Student Maid:

- **What was the screwup?**
 - We didn't adequately train the team we hired to help us clean apartments in the summertime (during a 3-week period we call move-out season)
- **How did it happen?**
 - We put together a presentation that went over the basics of cleaning and had everyone go through it during orientation. It was basically hours of detailed cleaning work boiled down to a 1-hour explanation.
 - Then, we sent everyone out cleaning the next day, thinking that they could learn the rest on the job. We thought it would work because we did something similar the year before.
 - But we failed to remember that there had been a team leader dedicated to doing hands-on training last year. She was no longer on the team, so no one was filling that role.



- As a result, team leaders were frustrated at all the mistakes their teams made, and team members were frustrated that they didn't know what they were doing and felt like they had no guidance.
- **How did you resolve the situation?**
 - We realized we'd never get through the season if we didn't offer more training, so we sent more team leaders out to clean alongside the team members and teach them along the way. It wasn't the most efficient way to do it, and team leaders still ended up recleaning a lot of units. But we were still able to accomplish the jobs on time.
- **What have you done differently because of this?**
 - We now know that hands-on training is essential. We've made our training longer and more detailed so that people get as much practice as possible before they go out and do the real thing.
- **How would you sum up the lesson you learned from this experience?**
 - It's worth it to spend a lot of time (and money) on training up front because if you don't, it'll end up costing you both money and people's trust in the end.



TEAM RESILIENCE RESUME

WHAT WAS THE SCREWUP?

HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

HOW DID WE RESOLVE THE SITUATION?

WHAT HAVE WE DONE DIFFERENTLY BECAUSE OF THIS?

HOW WOULD WE SUM UP THE LESSON WE LEARNED FROM THIS EXPERIENCE?



REFLECTION

The Resilience Resume exercise is about shifting your perspective. Let's explore that shift with a few reflection questions. You can use the same questions for personal and team resumes:

- Before you explored these challenges in your resume, how did you feel about them? Did you view them as failures? Did they upset you? How do you feel about them now?
- Do you see any common themes in the lessons learned? If so, what are they? Are you surprised? Do they make sense?
 - *Note: If your resume shows you that you're experiencing the same challenge or failure over and over again, it may be because you haven't taken the time to reflect, find the lesson, and do it differently. Revisit your resume again in a few months to find out if this has changed.*
- What are you most proud of about the way you handled these challenges?
- What did these challenges teach you about yourself and/or someone else? What new resources and/or ways of getting help did this help you find?
- By making this resume, you have shown that you have gotten yourself through adversity in the past. In what ways can you use your lessons learned to grow? What actions can you take to better prepare yourself for the next challenge?
- What do you know now that you couldn't have known unless you went through these challenges?

HOW TO APPLY YOUR RESUME

Hindsight is great for prompting shifts in perspective. But how can we get to that shift sooner and stay focused on growth in the moment?

We suggest that you keep your Resilience Resume handy. Any time you face a new challenge, refer to it. Ask yourself: Have I been in a situation like this before? What did I do then that worked? What did I do then that *didn't* work? What lessons of the past could be helpful now?

Here are some other questions to ask:

- What are 5 things in your control right now that you can focus your energy on?
- What can you do to gain the knowledge, skills, or insight you need to succeed in this situation?
- Who can you ask for help?

And, of course, once you beat that new challenge, add it to your resume and find the new lesson.



MAKING RESILIENCE A REGULAR PRACTICE

Becoming more resilient takes time and focus. We suggest that you make it a habit to regularly review and reflect on the everyday challenges you face and overcome.

At Student Maid, we've made reflection and learning part of our routine. At every team meeting, we talk about things that went well, things that didn't, and what we learned. When we ask people to give progress reports on projects or tasks, we don't expect them to have all the answers: We make room for them to talk about what's not going well so that we can try to fix it in the moment instead of waiting until a missed deadline or goal. We also brainstorm a big list of wins and challenges during quarterly planning meetings, which helps give us a big-picture view and put it all in perspective.

How can you build this kind of reflection into your daily life? Here are a few suggestions, for individuals and for teams:

- Keep a resilience journal. At the end of every week, name three things that went well and three things that didn't. Write about what you learned.
- Ask team members to share a "screw up story" about a mistake they recently made at the end of team meetings. Ask them to share what they learned and how they plan to avoid making this mistake again.
- At regular intervals—monthly, quarterly, etc.—make time to reflect on mistakes and lessons and add them to your resume if you haven't already. Talk through them and challenge yourself to find new lessons that maybe you couldn't see before.

By putting these things into practice, we hope you will see your mindset start to shift from, "I wish that hadn't happened," to, "I recognize why it happened, and I'm grateful because of what it taught me."



THINKING BIGGER:

Building resilience in others

At Student Maid, we recognize that we have an opportunity to build resilience in others every time they are faced with a challenge or mistake. We believe that learning from mistakes and challenges is so important that we've set up entire systems around it. Here are a few examples:

- **Accountability Action Plan:** When our team members make a mistake at work, instead of assigning consequences, we have them create a growth plan. We ask them to think about what happened and why, what they learned, and how they're going to go about things differently so they don't make this mistake again. We give them the chance to take ownership of what happens after the mistake instead of telling them what they should do. That way, we're helping them build resilience in the moment.
- **1:3:1:** The 1:3:1 is a way of empowering people to come up with their own solutions to problems. When we do it for them, we're robbing them of the opportunity to build resilience. The 1:3:1 encourages the thinking that people already have the answers within them. Here's how it works:
 - Someone comes to a leader with a problem. Instead of solving it, the leader asks:
 - 1: What's the problem?
 - 3: What are three potential solutions?
 - 1: Out of those, which one is your recommended solution?
- **1-10:** When we ask people to give updates on their projects or tasks, we ask them to rate on a scale of 1 to 10 how confident they are that they can achieve the desired result. If the number is anything but 10, we ask: What's one thing you can do now to boost that number? It inspires the thinking that we're more in control than we realize, and that your next step doesn't have to be big to be helpful or meaningful.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Remember: A mistake is only failure when you don't learn from it. When you choose to learn, you choose to grow! Nelson Mandela said: "Do not judge me by my success. Judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again."

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