

The Communications Doctor



RESILIENCE TRAINING: HONING YOUR ABILITY TO BOUNCE BACK

**SUSANNE GADDIS, PHD, CSP, CEO
THE COMMUNICATIONS DOCTOR
KEYNOTE SPEAKER * TRAINER * EXECUTIVE COACH**

The doctor's diagnosis is IN: Good communication is contagious!

Susanne Gaddis, PhD, CSP, and CEO of The Communications Doctor recognizes there is an epidemic of unhealthy interactions in today's society. The good news is – she shares prescriptions – easy and engaging tips and techniques that help foster a climate for positive, diplomatic and motivational communications. As a communications professor, Certified Professional Speaker (CSP), author and member of the National Speaker's Association, Susanne Gaddis, PhD, has taught the art of successful communication since 1989. A recognized interpersonal communications expert, Susanne has appeared on nationally syndicated radio, TV and video programming and has authored articles appearing in: *The Journal of Training and Development*, *The Whole American Nurse*, *Shape Magazine*, *The Handbook of Public Relations*, *Corporate Meeting Planner*, and on *Entrepreneur.com*. Current clients, benefiting from Susanne's action-focused, solution-oriented tips, and techniques include NASA Johnson Space Center, The American Nurses Association, Oracle, SAS, Blue Cross & Blue Shield, and Bayer Corporation. For additional information on Dr. Gaddis or to subscribe to receive her FREE newsletter, call 919-933-3237, e-mail: gaddis@communicationsdoctor.com or visit: www.CommunicationsDoctor.com, Twitter: @TheCommDoctor Facebook: CommunicationsDoctor

“Keepers”



Jeepers, Creepers, Where'd you get those “Keepers”

Handwriting practice lines consisting of ten sets of three horizontal lines each. Each set begins with a small circle containing a vertical line, serving as a starting point for letter formation.



Are You an Optimist or Pessimist?

Our attitudes toward changes in our life may be related to some extent to our general degree of optimism or pessimism. To assess yourself on this dimension, fill out the scale below. Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the statements below.

0 = strongly disagree 1 = disagree 2 = neutral 3 = agree 4 = strongly agree

_____ 1. When things are uncertain, I typically expect the best.

_____ 2. If something can go wrong for me, it usually will.

_____ 3. I always look on the bright side of things.

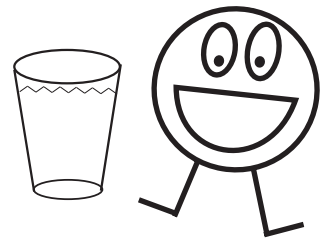
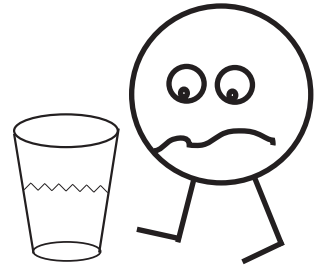
_____ 4. I'm always optimistic about the future.

_____ 5. I usually don't expect things to go my way.

_____ 6. Things don't work out the way I want.

_____ 7. I believe that every cloud has a silver lining.

_____ 8. I don't count on good things happening to me.



For items 2, 5, 6, 8, you need to reverse your scores as follows: 4 to 0, 3 to 1, 1 to 3 and 0 to 4. Now add up your scores for the eight items. Average scores are about 21. If you score 24 or higher, you can consider yourself an optimist. If you score 16 or lower, you are probably a pessimist. A score in between these two indicates that you have no strong tendency toward either optimism or pessimism. If you tend toward pessimism, you might consider trying to develop a more optimistic outlook. Of course, you should not take the results of this scale too seriously since it is only designed to provide an informal assessment. To more precisely determine a person's personality would require detailed testing by a trained specialist.

Note: This scale was adapted from one developed by Scheier, M. E., & Carver, C. S. (1985). Optimism, coping, and health. *Health Psychology*, (4), 219-247.



One Door Closes, Another Door Opens Exercise

Consider this quote by Winston Churchill: "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty." What does this quote mean to you? Do you tend to act like a pessimist or an optimist?

Optimism entails positive emotions about the future as well as the present. The optimist thus sees the good in the bad, the silver lining, and the bright side. These views have become cliché in their expression, but that does not diminish the validity of the optimist's perspective. Optimism does not make a person foolish or naïve. Indeed, optimism can be hard work, as this Doors Opening exercise suggests. Think of times when you lost out at something important, when a big plan collapsed, when you failed to get a job you wanted, when you were rejected by someone you loved. When one door closes, another one almost always opens. Consider three doors that closed on you. What doors opened? Try to fill in these blanks:

① The most important door that ever closed on me was:

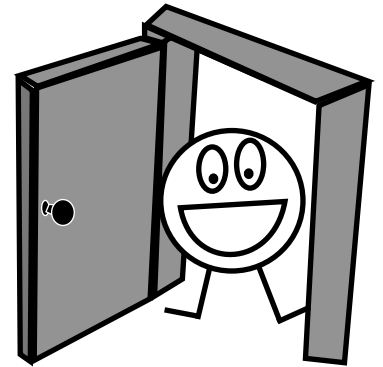
① And the door that opened was:

① A door that closed on me through bad luck or missed opportunity was:

① And the door that opened was:

① A door that closed on me through loss, rejection, or death was:

① And the door that opened was:



Write about your experiences with doors opening and closing. Did you see the open door immediately, or did it take a while? Did your disappointment, sadness, or bitterness (or other negative feelings) resulting from the closed door affect your ability to find the open door? Are there things you can do in the future to find the open door more readily?

The next time you face a difficult situation in your life (a door closes), consider the problem in terms of the opportunities it presents. Do not dwell on the negative aspect of the problem but force yourself to look for something positive.

BONUS: Try to help a friend who has a problem to look for the positive aspects of her situation. Avoid cliché generalities such as, "look on the bright side." Rather, try to help your friend find specific, concrete opportunities that he/she might otherwise overlook.

The Road To Resilience - Learning From Your Past

Some Questions to Ask Yourself

Focusing on past experiences and sources of personal strength can help you learn about what strategies for building resilience might work for you. By exploring answers to the following questions about yourself and your reactions to challenging life events, you may discover how you can respond effectively to difficult situations in your life.

Consider the following:

- What kinds of events have been most stressful for me?
- How have those events typically affected me?
- Have I found it helpful to think of important people in my life when I am distressed?
- To whom have I reached out for support in working through a traumatic or stressful experience?
- What have I learned about myself and my interactions with others during difficult times?
- Has it been helpful for me to assist someone else going through a similar experience?
- Have I been able to overcome obstacles, and if so, how?
- What has helped make me feel more hopeful about the future?

American Psychological Association, <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience.aspx>

10 Ways To Build Resilience

Make connections. Good relationships with close family members, friends, or others are important. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you strengthens resilience. Some people find that being active in civic groups, faith-based organizations, or other local groups provides social support and can help with reclaiming hope. Assisting others in their time of need also can benefit the helper.

Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems. You can't change the fact that highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to these events. Try looking beyond the present to how future circumstances may be a little better. Note any subtle ways in which you might already feel somewhat better as you deal with difficult situations.

Accept that change is a part of living. Certain goals may no longer be attainable as a result of adverse situations. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter.

Move toward your goals. Develop some realistic goals. Do something regularly -- even if it seems like a small accomplishment -- that enables you to move toward your goals. Instead of focusing on tasks that seem unachievable, ask yourself, "What's one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?"

Take decisive actions. Act on adverse situations as much as you can. Take decisive actions, rather than detaching completely from problems and stresses and wishing they would just go away.

Look for opportunities for self-discovery. People often learn something about themselves and may find that they have grown in some respect as a result of their struggle with loss. Many people who have experienced tragedies and hardship have reported better relationships, greater sense of strength even while feeling vulnerable, increased sense of self-worth, a more developed spirituality, and heightened appreciation for life.

Nurture a positive view of yourself. Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps build resilience.

Keep things in perspective. Even when facing very painful events, try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Avoid blowing the event out of proportion.

Maintain a hopeful outlook. An optimistic outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life. Try visualizing what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear.

Take care of yourself. Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly. Taking care of yourself helps to keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience.

Additional ways of strengthening resilience may be helpful. For example, some people write about their deepest thoughts and feelings related to trauma or other stressful events in their life. Meditation and spiritual practices help some people build connections and restore hope.

The key is to identify ways that are likely to work well for you as part of your own personal strategy for fostering resilience.

American Psychological Association, <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience.aspx>

Resilience Assessment Questionnaire

Please read the statements below, and using the scale strongly disagree to strongly agree (1 – 5) indicate how the statement applies to your perception of yourself.

1. I have the knowledge and skills and experience to deal with almost anything that happens to me.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I know what's important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I approach new situations with an open mind.	1	2	3	4	5
4. When faced with new challenges, I am able to take control of the situation.	1	2	3	4	5
5. When I have a problem, I take time to define the problem before deciding what to do.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I have the capacity to laugh at myself.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I have a diverse network of good friends.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I view change as an opportunity.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I am able to think positively about myself when faced with challenges.	1	2	3	4	5
10. When I look back I can see some clear patterns in my life about the types of choices I have made.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I am able to adjust to changes.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I start each day by working out what needs to be achieved during the day, and I end the day by reviewing what has been achieved, and what needs to be achieved on the next day.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I perceive the problems and challenges of everyday life as challenges I can solve.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I can empathise easily with others' frustrations, joys, misfortunes and successes.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I find it easy to form lasting relationships and friendships.	1	2	3	4	5
16. When an unwelcome change involves me I can usually find a way to make the change benefit myself.	1	2	3	4	5
17. When I face difficult challenges I can maintain confidence in my own ability to overcome the challenges.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I know what I want to achieve at work and in life.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I can easily find ways of satisfying my own and other peoples' needs during times of change and conflict.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I keep a 'to do' list, and use it every day.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I try to find the cause of a problem before trying to solve it.	1	2	3	4	5
22. During stressful and challenging times I can maintain effective relationships with those involved.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I share the frustrations in life, as well as the successes, with my friends.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I am able to focus my energy on how to make the best of any situation.	1	2	3	4	5
25. When I face challenges I look to myself to find ways of rising to the challenge.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I know what I need to do to achieve my ideas for personal and professional achievements.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I am able to accommodate other people's needs whilst focusing on achieving my own ambitions.	1	2	3	4	5
28. When I am uncertain about what to do I write down the choices and my thought about them.	1	2	3	4	5
29. When I solve problems I identify the links between the problems and other issues that may be around.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I value the diverse experiences, skills and knowledge that others have in their interactions with me.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I regularly participate with friends in social activities where I can relax.	1	2	3	4	5
32. I believe my own decisions and actions during periods of change will determine how I am affected by the change.	1	2	3	4	5

<http://www.orghealth.co.uk/uploads/PDFs/Resilience%20Assessment%20Questionnaire.pdf>

Scoring the Resilience Questionnaire

Instructions

Transfer the scores you gave to each item on the RQ in the appropriate box below (note the vertical listing of the statement numbers).

Then add the numbers in each row to calculate the score for each RQ dimension and enter it in the column to the right.

To determine your overall RQ score, add the numbers for all of the eight RQ dimensions and enter your total RQ score in the box at the lower right of the grid.

Interpreting the scores

The maximum overall RQ Score is 160. The lowest possible overall RQ score is 32. For individual RQ dimensions, the maximum possible score is 20; the lowest possible score is 4.

Locate your overall RQ score in the range of RQ values below. Follow the suggestions offered in the explanations of each resilience level to begin developing and strengthening – or preserving – your personal resilience.

141 to 160 Very Resilient: You are consistently able to deal effectively with and even thrive on change. You have effective mechanisms in place that give you direction, structure, support and self-confidence.

116 to 140 Resilient: Most of the time you are able to deal with change in a positive manner. You have a number of mechanisms in place that help you deal with the uncertainty of change. You could strengthen your RQ by further developing your skills in your lower scoring RQ dimensions.

61 to 115 Somewhat Resilient: Change has a tendency to knock you off your best performance. You have some difficulty regaining your footing. While you have some stabilizing mechanisms in place, you could work at developing and exercising more of them. Look to your lowest scoring dimensions as a place to start.

32 to 60 Not Very Resilient: Change creates major challenges for you. You are frequently unprepared for the uncertainty and lack of stability that change creates. While there are times when you are able to find stability and focus, you need to develop and enrich a broad range of resilience capacities. Look to your lowest scoring dimensions as a place to start and then develop your RQ development plan.

<http://www.orghealth.co.uk/uploads/PDFs/Resilience%20Assessment%20Questionnaire.pdf>

Scoring the Resilience Questionnaire

Self assurance	1	9	17	25	
Personal vision	2	10	18	26	
Flexible and adaptable	3	11	19	27	
Organised	4	12	20	28	
Problem solver	5	13	21	29	
Interpersonal competence	6	14	22	30	
Socially connected	7	15	23	31	
Active	8	16	24	32	
				Overall Score	

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