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BUILDING RESILIENCE FROM LOSSES EXPERIENCED IN LIFE WORKBOOK

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Introduction

We will all face difficult experiences in our lives. They will vary in degrees, but some of those difficulties will be life-altering. Loss is one of the biggest difficulties that life brings – the loss of a loved one, an illness, a job loss, a natural disaster... they all bring change and that can be traumatic. How you cope with these events has everything to do with your resilience.

Resilience is the ability to adapt and overcome adversity. It's not a trait you are born with. It's something you can learn. It's good news for you because resilience is the best way to protect yourself from stress and adversity. You can't avoid stress altogether – all you can do is learn how to minimize the effects of it and improve your problem-solving and decision-making skills.

Resilience helps you battle the stressors you have no control over, the accidents, injuries, sicknesses, or loss. For example, trees bend and sway in the wind. They adapt to the challenge that nature presents. If they didn't, they would lose branches in inclement weather. Like a tree, you too can build your resilience so that you don't just survive this life but find a way to thrive.

Building Resilience

There are a whole host of ways to build resilience in the face of loss.

Self-Care

Practicing self-care is an important part of managing stress and building resilience.

To be resilient you need strong physical and emotional reserves to draw from, this requires self-care. You have to make deliberate choices and consciously consider your mind, body, and relationships to manage stressors in life. When stress knocks you down, you don't have to stay down, practicing self-care makes getting back up easier. The basics of self-care are eating well, exercising, sleeping well, and investing time in rest and recreation.

Relationships

Supportive relationships are another important factor for resilience.

The relationships you build are key because those people are there to help you back up in the face of profoundly difficult periods in life. It's important that you're proactive, don't wait for things to happen to you, proactively create and prepare for the difficult times. Your resiliency weakens when you slip into reactionary mode and builds when you're proactive. This is something you can

improve with practice. When faced with adversity, you determine what is required and make a plan before taking action.

Your Experiences

Use your experience when dealing with adversity and trying to build resilience.

Most people recognize when they are dealing with stress, but they haven't learned the lessons on stress management. Think about how you have dealt with difficulty in the past, what strategies or strengths you drew on to help, what worked, what didn't, and how it changed you and your life?

Adversity is such a normal part of life that perhaps it's time to view it as normal. That doesn't mean you have to like or enjoy pain, hardship, sorrow, or trauma. It just means that you steel yourself for it because you know adversity is normal and that it will come to you at various times throughout your life.

In the meantime, let's look at some helpful activities and exercises that will help you build resilience from losses that life delivers.

Exercise 1: The Power Of Positivity

You can build resilience with the power of positivity.

Let's begin with a simple exercise. In the table below, write out some thoughts you're having right now that have been bothering you. On the other side of the tablet, rewrite that thought positively. We'll provide some examples to get you started.

Current Thought	Replacement Thought
I'm never going to get over this.	I have navigated worse.
I am losing grip on everything.	I can still exert control.
I will never move on. I will never adjust to this change. It's not even worth trying.	In time, I will find a way to move on. I will find a way to adapt to these changes. I am worth trying for.

Exercise 2: Gratitude

If you want to know what powerful emotion can help build resilience, it's gratitude. It's one of the most powerful tools you can have in your arsenal and if you don't have a good handle on it now, don't worry. Gratitude, like resilience, can be developed.

There's something special about recognizing the positives in life, the beauty in what you have, and learning how to appreciate all of that instead of stressing or complaining about what you want, don't have, or lost. That, in and of itself, will make you more resilient.

A lack of gratitude will prevent you from building strength and hold you back from moving forward. A gratitude journal is an excellent place to keep a list of what you're thankful for, even when faced with serious stress or profound loss.

A gratitude journal can be a simple list where you make notes daily or you can have a format that you follow. **Start with the table we have provided below. This will serve as a checklist to guide your daily gratitude journal writing.**

I am grateful...	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
To the things I have that most people don't.							
To the goals I accomplished this week.							
To the people I positively influenced this week.							
To my family (because....)							
To the good things that happened this week.							
Notes to self.							

Exercise 3: Self-Awareness

You can build your resilience with self-awareness. The basic tenet of self-awareness is knowing your mind and knowing yourself. It's being able to recognize the cause of a situation, the behavior you choose to react, and the consequence of your emotions or actions. **Complete the table below.**

Stressor	Cause (What brought this about)	Behavior (How you reacted)	Consequence

Exercise 4: Self-Assessment

Let's take a break and complete a self-assessment form about your resilience. In the table below, we have ten defining statements.

I invite you to score yourself using a sliding scale of 0 – 5, 0 if you strongly disagree, and 5 if you strongly agree.

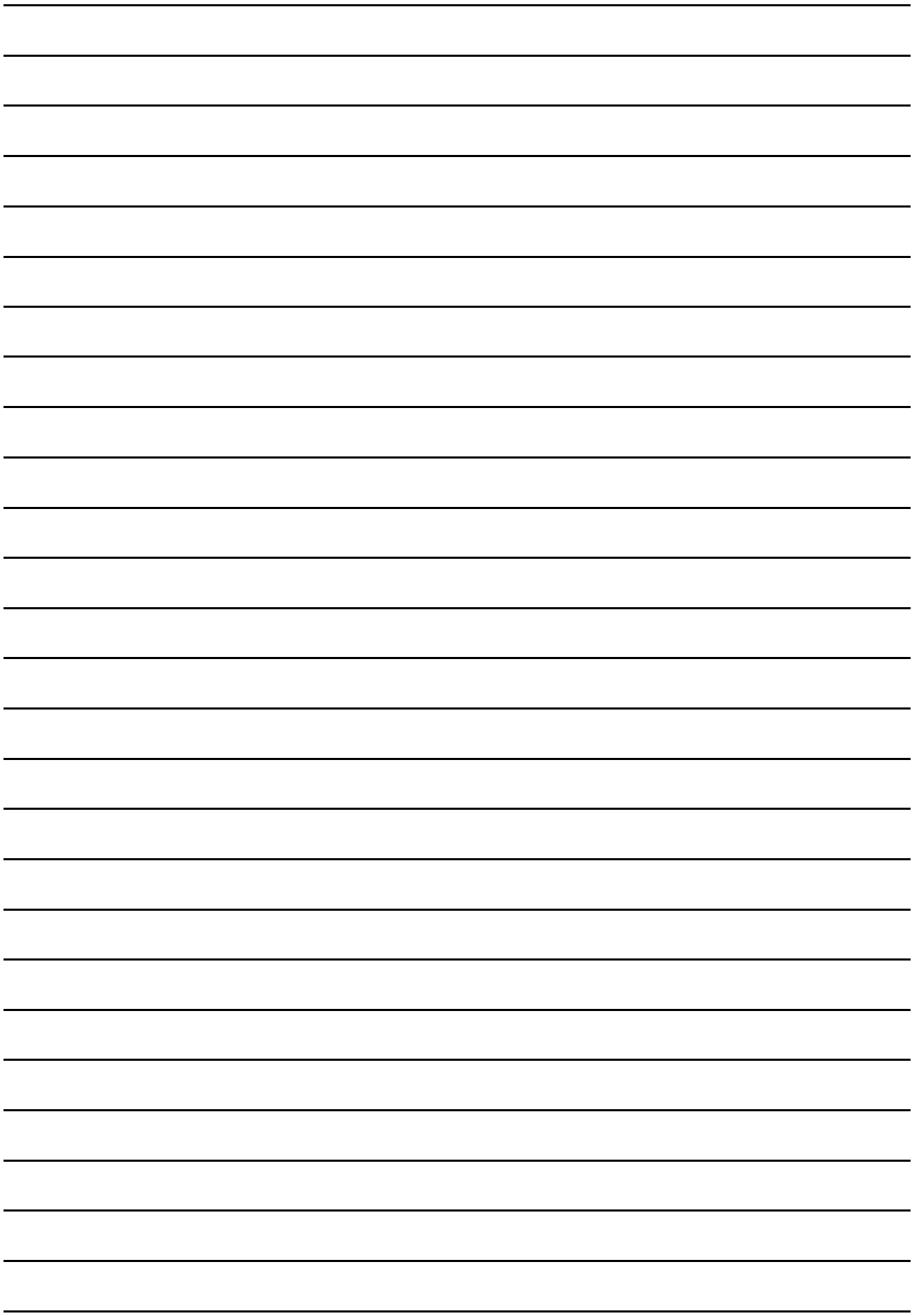
Statement	Rating 1	Rating 2
I believe in myself.		
I'm proud of what I have accomplished.		
I am strong enough to overcome difficulties.		
I am loved.		
I can deal with criticism.		
I respect myself and I respect others.		
I love being a part of my community.		
I know my strengths as well as my weaknesses.		
I am more focused on solutions rather than problems.		
I love and value my life.		
My Total Score:		

- If you scored below 15, then you have low resilience.
- If you scored over 15 but under 30, your resilience is average.
- If you scored over 31, then you have high emotional resilience.

Since you're here, there's a good chance you have scored as average or lower. I want you to return to this self-assessment after you have completed the rest of this workbook. See if you recognize a shift in your thinking.

What wakes you up in the morning?

What keeps you up at night?



What does success look like to you?

How can you apply your strengths to a pursuit?

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Summarize your purpose in one sentence...

What advice would you give a younger version of yourself?

Look at the first two questions. If there are areas connected or overlapping, then this should help you identify your passion. A passion is essentially a skill plus an interest. If you are skilled in research and information gathering and you are also interested in writing, then your passion may be writing. This is an easy one to identify, but they aren't all as easy. Use the space below to find connecting skills to find your passion.

Rather than focusing on something major, think about what the world needs by focusing on small changes you can contribute...

You can also look at the preceding steps to find your calling...

Use the preceding steps to find your profession...

Exercise 8: Your Plan

It's time to build a plan for improving your resilience in any situation, which will help you deal with loss and anything else life may throw at you.

Recognize The Signs of Stress

Where do you feel stress in your body?

What bad habit do you turn to when you feel stressed?

Build Physical Strength

You can make small changes to improve your overall health.

I would like to make this change _____,

and I'm going to tell _____ about it so they can help hold me accountable.

The activities that help me relax at work...

Relaxation strategies that help me feel present...

Consider finding comfort in activities that engage as many of your senses as possible.

Use Your Strengths

Think about a time you have dealt with loss before.

What did that loss teach you?

Think of yourself at your most resilient, what does it look like?

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Lined writing area consisting of 33 horizontal lines.

Increase Positive Emotions

I find joy in...

I find humor in...

I am grateful for...

Challenge Unhelpful Thinking

If you're dealing with a loss you can't stop thinking about, write about daily until you can see the situation more clearly, or change how you view it. Start below.

What would you tell a good friend going through the same loss?

Exercise 9: Random Acts Of Kindness

You can increase your resilience by performing random acts of kindness. I challenge you to go out of your way to complete at least one random act of kindness over the next five days. Write about what you did, how it made you feel, and how you feel it influenced the other person's day.

Day 1.

Day 2.

Day 3.

Day 4.

Day 5.

Exercise 10: Positive Emotions

Positive emotions can help improve your thoughts, actions, and overall view of the world. You can increase your positivity by embracing positive emotions and thoughts. Use the space below to write three good things that occurred today. This is a practice you can carry forward with you and should do daily.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Exercise 11: Manage Your Energy

One of the best ways to build and maintain resilience from the losses you experience in life is to learn how to manage your energy effectively. It prevents burnout and subsequently, you are more resilient. There are four aspects of you that require energy – spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional. If you plow all of your energy into one aspect, then the rest are missing out. You can't care for one aspect of yourself while ignoring the rest. I want you to consider that as you answer the following questions.

Which aspect of yourself gets more of your energy?

Are you doing anything to optimize energy in all aspects of your daily life?

What can you do to do so?

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What rest rituals do you incorporate into your day?

How do you disengage?

What activities recharge your batteries?

How do you stretch yourself?

Are you more focused?

Ruled lines for writing.

Do you feel stronger?

Exercise 13: Self-Compassion

Often, no one is more critical of you than you are. You are quick to extend compassion and kindness to others but treat yourself with derision. This exercise is about self-compassion. Practicing self-compassion builds resilience and can protect you emotionally as well.

Think about the loss you have been dealing with. Write out details of the event, what advice you would offer a friend, what tone of voice you would adopt, and the actions you would take...

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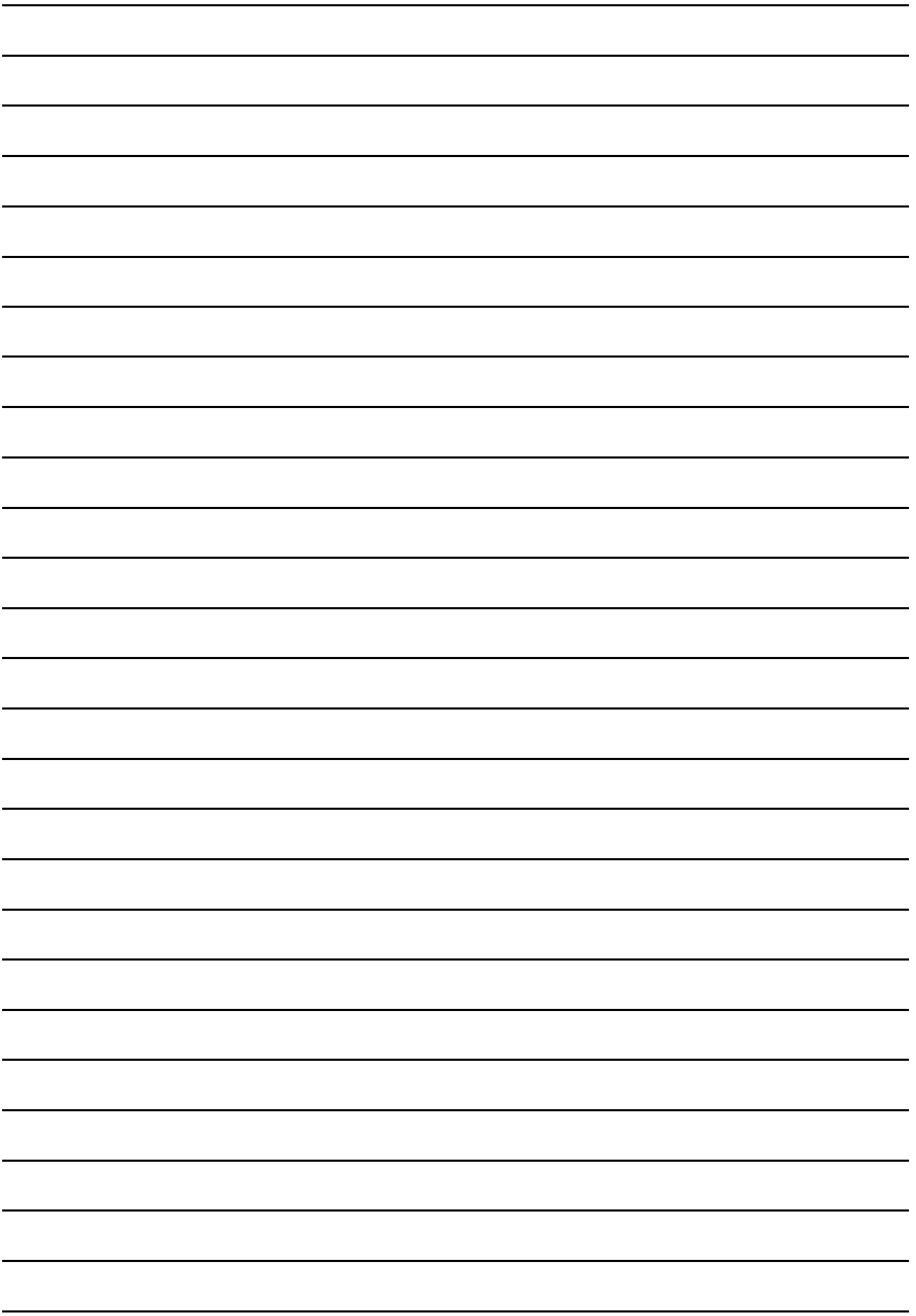
Exercise 14: Building Resilience Before You Need It

The best time to prepare for the difficult times is when everything is copacetic. Building your resilience levels is going to prepare you to deal with obstacles as they crop up. For this exercise, you should face your fears head-on. Often, the anxiety we feel about situations stems from fear. An initial fear of being laid off from your job spirals into this intense anxiety about suddenly living on the streets after being made bankrupt. That's the worst-case scenario.

Spend two days this month in a state of poverty. Remove the creature comforts you have grown accustomed to for a couple of days. The purpose of this is to come to terms with something you allow to fuel your fears. No one wants to be laid off, but a short period of discomfort is something you can deal with. Turn your internet off, put your phone away, ignore your favorite snacks, and have basic meals.

Now, be honest – it's not ideal, but you could live through it, couldn't you?

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Think about the losses you have experienced in life. How have the life-changing losses influenced the shape of your life thus far?

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The stronger your resilience is, the greater your hold on a sense of purpose, the better served you will be to deal with life's little and big hardships. The exercises above will help you build your resilience and re-frame the events and situations surrounding loss. Before you go, take a moment to record your thoughts thus far on your level of resilience by re-taking the self-assessment you did earlier. Have your scores changed? Talk about it below.

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