



Growing through times of change

Week 2 - Building resilience

- finding your rhythms of recovery



St Paul's
LUTHERAN CHURCH BOX HILL

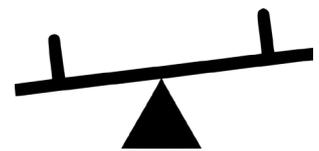
Resilience is the capacity to recover effectively from difficulties and challenges: it's the ability to bounce back.

It doesn't mean not being knocked over or impacted in the first place. It involves being down but not out. And then having the intention, the know-how and the capacity to get back up again – often stronger than before.

During times of change and ongoing challenge we have the opportunity to notice how resilient we are and to build a greater capacity to bounce back.

There's a wonderful system in our bodies that gives the capacity for resilience. It's called the autonomic nervous system. This system operates automatically and has three main roles:

- It measures how many demands are being placed on us
- It helps us to meet these demands
- It reminds us that we need to rest and recover from the pressure of these demands



This system operates like a see-saw – constantly moving up and down according to whether we're responding to a demand - or meeting our need for rest and recovery. It's always trying to find balance – or reach homeostasis.

The demands on our system place us in a position of stress. Stress enables us to do what has to be done in our day to day. It enables us to meet our physical, mental, relational, emotional and social demands. When this occurs our muscles tense, heart rate increases, breath becomes shallow and rapid and thoughts become more alert and focused. These responses provide us with what we need to meet the demand – but they also take their toll.

It's important to note that stress is accumulative. Our autonomic nervous system keeps responding to the demand from wherever it comes and like a tower of blocks just keeps adding on - becoming more vulnerable the higher it gets. It's also important to note that it doesn't recognise the difference between an actual demand and a perceived demand - the difference between responding to something in the here and now and worrying about something in some other time or place.

When it comes to our stress and recovery see-saw, we have normalised living out of balance – depleting our systems and eroding our wellbeing.

In order to restore our capacity for rest and recovery we have to learn to start paying attention. We have to start listening to and noticing our personal rhythms of recovery.

Our rhythms of recovery are personal and unique. Our own bodies are inviting us to turn our attention inward and tap into what allows our system to relax – just a little. Ask yourself: What creates a sense of ease? What helps me to come back to myself? What helps my body, my mind, my emotions and my soul to settle and quieten? It may be as simple as noticing your breath. And then noticing what activity, thought, interaction, experience – is helping you to pause, rest, recover and re-energise from the demands, stress and tension that you've been holding.

Noticing what rest and recovery looks like for you is one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself. It's almost inevitable that your sense of demand will try and convince you that there isn't time, or opportunity, or space to notice, let alone engage in these things. But there is. Because many of these things, like noticing your breath, simply take a willingness to slow down enough to look at things from a different perspective, allow the light to catch them in a different way, to open your senses to what already surrounds you.

Remember you have a rhythm of recovery that is longing for you to be able to do this.

Learn to notice your own demand and recovery see-saw.

And then practise coming back to balance again and again and again.