

**A study of resilience: A Personal and Professional  
Leadership perspective**

by

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***“Man never made any  
material as resilient  
as the human spirit.”***

*(Ben Williams in Cashman, 2000:96)*

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Throughout my life, I have been confronted with my own set of unique difficulties. In some way or another I have managed to bounce back and to continue to live my life to the fullest. This study confirmed what it actually was that allowed me to bounce back. During the course of this study, I also came to the realisation that: "What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us" (Walt Emerson).

My heartfelt gratitude to the following people who contributed to the study, particularly:

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
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# OPSOMMING

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Elke mens word daaglik gekonfronteer met uitdagings en terugslae wat hom/haar noop om stelling in te neem. Mense ervaar hierdie uitdagings en terugslae verskillend. Terwyl party floreer te midde van sodanige terugslae, val ander plat en word slagoffers van hulle omstandighede. Terugbondsvermoë bepaal hoe goed mense herstel van terugslae en moeilikhede.

In die lig hiervan, het hierdie studie ten doel om te bepaal wat mense laat terugbonds in tye van terugslae en moeilikhede in hulle persoonlike en professionele lewens. Om te verseker dat hierdie doelwit realiseer, word die volgende vrae in die studie aangespreek:

- ❖ Wat is "resilience"? (Resilience kan in Afrikaans vertaal word met onder andere terugbondsvermoë, kurkprop-effek of herstelvermoë. Terugbondsvermoë sal in die res van hierdie opsomming gebruik word as daar na resilience verwys word)
- ❖ In watter kontekste is hierdie terugbondsvermoë sigbaar?
- ❖ Hoe beleef mense terugslae en moeilikhede en wat is hulle persepsies en self-insig wat betref hulle eie reaksie ten opsigte van hierdie ervarings?
- ❖ Watter persoonskwaliteite en ander faktore stel mense in staat om terug te bouns in tye van terugslae en moeilikhede?
- ❖ Wat is die implikasies en potensiele bydrae van Persoonlike en Professionele Leierskap (PPL) wat betref terugbondsvermoë?

Die navorsing is gedoen vanuit 'n PPL-perspektief wat gebaseer is op die volgehoue verbintenis en begeleiding van die mens tot groei en ontwikkeling deur selfkennis, doelnastrewing, potensiaalrealisering, waardetoevoeging tot ander mense en professionele bekwaamheid. In die konteks van hierdie studie, het PPL ten doel om individue te sensiteer en te bemagtig om hulle vryheid van keuse uit te oefen.

In die proses om die navorsingsprobleem aan te spreek, is daar gebruik gemaak van 'n kwalitatiewe navorsingsontwerp. 'n Hermeneuties-fenomenologiese navorsingstrategie, ondersteun deur 'n beskrywende benadering, is gevolg. Daar is onder andere van 'n literatuurstudie gepaardgaande met 'n woord- en konsepanalise en individuele onderhoude (met volwassenes) gebruik gemaak om die oorhoofse doelwit te bereik.

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Die belangrikste bevindinge van die studie wat direk verband hou met die navorsingsdoelwit, kan soos volg beskryf word:

- ❖ Vanuit 'n PPL-perspektief impliseer terugbondsvermoë die vaardigheid om terug te bons tydens moeilike tye en om te volhard op die pad van groei, self-aktualisering en self-transendering.
- ❖ Terugbondsvermoë kom voor in 'n verskeidenheid kontekste wat insluit: uitdagings, ontwikkelingsoorgang, individuele teenspoed, kollektiewe teenspoed, organisasie verandering en sosio-politiese verandering.
- ❖ Daar is ook gevind dat alhoewel die respondente deur die verskillende fases in die verwerkingsproses gaan, hulle finale reaksie was om te kies om oorwinnaars te wees van hulle omstandighede en nie slagoffers nie. Die insig en selfkennis wat hulle opgedoen het gedurende die terugslae en moeilikhede het hulle verder ook gehelp om hulle terugbondsvermoë te verbeter.
- ❖ Indien daar gekyk word na die persoonskwaliteite en ander faktore van die individu se terugbondsvermoë (soos gelys in beide die literatuurstudie en die empiriese navorsing), kan die besef van keuse as sentrale tema uitgesonder word.
- ❖ PPL lewer 'n bydrae tot hierdie terugbondsvermoë deur fasilitering- en beradingsoplossings in areas soos aanpasbaarheid, selfgeldig, lewenshouding, interne lokus van kontrole, positiewe sosiale oriëntasie, doelnastrewing, potensiaalrealisering en die ontwikkeling van 'n sterk selfkonsep, selfbeeld en selfvertoue.

Die belangrikste gevolgtrekkings wat vanuit die bogenoemde bevindinge afgelei kan word, kan soos volg opgesom word:

- ❖ Die persoonlike keuse tot self-aktualisering, ongeag die omstandighede, is onderliggend aan die persoonskwaliteite en ander faktore in individue met 'n sterk ontwikkelde terugbondsvermoë.
- ❖ Die individu met goed ontwikkelde terugbondsvermoëns en vaardighede bly dus makliker op die pad van self-aktualisering en self-transendering te midde van omstandighede.
- ❖ Die PPL Praktisyn kan individue bystaan om vaardighede op 'n kontinue basis te ontwikkel sodat hulle beter kan terugbons in tye van terugslae en moeilikhede.

# SYNOPSIS

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On a daily basis, everyone is confronted with challenges and setbacks that force them to take a stand. People experience these challenges and setbacks differently. While some flourish in the midst of setbacks, others fall flat and become victims of their circumstances. Resilience determines how well people bounce back from setbacks and difficulties.

In the light of this problem, the general objective of this study is to determine what enables people to bounce back from setbacks and difficulties in their personal and professional lives. In order to realise this objective, the following specific questions are set for the study:

- ❖ What is resilience?
- ❖ What are the different contexts in which resilience can be perceived?
- ❖ How do people perceive setbacks and difficulties and what are their perceptions and self-insight regarding their own reactions to these experiences?
- ❖ Which human qualities and other factors allow people to bounce back in times of setbacks and difficulties?
- ❖ What are the implications for and the potential contribution of Personal and Professional Leadership (PPL) regarding resilience?

This study has been conducted through a PPL perspective which is based on the assumption that human beings have an ongoing commitment to growth and development, through self-knowledge and self-awareness, finding a purpose, realising one's full potential, adding value to other people's lives and professional competence in terms of organisational efficiency and effectiveness. Within the context of this study, the aim of PPL is to sensitise and empower individuals to exercise their freedom of choice.

In endeavouring to address the research problem, the researcher subsequently decided to make use of a qualitative research design involving a hermeneutic phenomenological research strategy supported by a descriptive research approach. The researcher conducted a word and concept analysis, an extensive literature study as well as individual interviews (focused on adult individuals) in order to meet the research objective.

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The main findings realising the research objective can be described as follows:

- ❖ From a PPL perspective, the concept resilience implies the ability to bounce back from life's difficulties and continue along the path of growth, self-actualisation and self-transcendence.
- ❖ It has also been established that resilience can be perceived in different contexts, including: challenging experiences, developmental transition, individual adversity, collective adversity, organisational change and socio-political change.
- ❖ It was also found that although the respondents worked through different phases in the change process, their final reaction was to choose to become victors, not victims and to thrive despite their circumstances. Their insight and self-knowledge gained through setbacks and difficulties helped them to become more resilient.
- ❖ Reflecting on the human qualities and other factors of resilience as identified in the literature study and the empirical findings, it seems evident that a central theme of these factors is the notion of choice.
- ❖ PPL contributes to resilience by means of facilitation and counselling solutions in areas such as adaptability, assertiveness, attitude towards life, internal locus of control, positive social orientation, purpose in life, realisation of potential and the development of a strong inner self.

The main conclusions that can be deduced from the above findings can subsequently be summarised as follows:

- ❖ A personal choice to self-actualise regardless of circumstances underlies the interacting web of human qualities and other factors in resilient individuals.
- ❖ The human qualities of the resilient individual thus play a role in contributing to the ability to keep the individual on the path of growth, self-actualisation and self-transcendence, regardless of the circumstances.
- ❖ The PPL Practitioner can assist individuals to develop skills on an ongoing basis in order to cope in times of setbacks and difficulties.



# *Chapter 1*

JOHANNESBURG

## CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION AND RESEARCH DESIGN

*"To keep you hidden, to lose because of self-defeating ideas is to die.  
Don't let that happen. Your greatest responsibility is to become everything you are ..."*  
(Buscaglia, 1982:264)

### 1.1 CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Writers of all kinds – be they authors of sacred scriptures, poets, novelists, philosophers, theologians or social scientists - have commented, in many and various ways, on the fact that human life is characterised by constant challenges on individuals, groups and collectivities. Some of these challenges are merely "hassles", while others are of a more serious nature. There is no way to go through life without at least some pain, and sometimes a great deal of it (Strümpfer, 2002:6).

In the South African context these challenging demands are caused by, among other factors, globalisation, the rapid pace of technological innovation, social and political change, violence and pandemic illnesses.

Betty Talmadge once said: "Life is what happens to you when you're making other plans" (Rando, 2002:1). We can make detailed plans and put structures in place to support us in creating what we want, but life will always present us with unexpected changes and unanticipated events.

There are two forces that influence life: (1) "Events that take place and (2) the way in which we react to those events" (Anonymous, 1998:2). The way in which a person responds to what happens in his/her life, is what will make the greatest difference for that person, both personally and professionally (Rando, 2002:2). Interviews and surveys show that life's best survivors value being flexible, resilient and adaptable above any other quality (Siebert, 1996:1).

Siebert (1996:1) mentions that resilience determines how well people bounce back from adversity, hold up under pressure and turn misfortune into good luck. Resilient people regain their stability quickly in difficult situations and stay physically and emotionally healthy during periods of stress and uncertainty. They stay hopeful and optimistic when others give up (Crawford, 1998:1). Resilience is thus a dynamic phenomenon, influenced by both the internal characteristics of the individual, as well as various external life contexts, circumstances, and opportunities (Strümpfer, 2002:4).

Furthermore, most of the research on resilience has been done on infants, children and adolescents. Strümpfer (1999:97) also mentions that there is more room for research on

adulthood, middle age, retirement age and old age. This study therefore will focus on the adult individual within a personal and professional context.

## 1.2 THE PROBLEM

No one can control what the future holds. As mentioned in 1.1, everyone experiences setbacks and difficulties of various degrees and intensities. When confronted with life's tensions and challenges, some individuals maintain a relatively stable, strong psychological and physical well-being, whereas others become depressed, sometimes even emotionally and physically ill (Kravetz, Drory & Florian, 1993:233).

Relatively minor setbacks, such as getting a traffic ticket or being passed over for a promotion, may get some people down. Unavoidable losses, such as children leaving the home or the death of a parent, could send them into depression. Others, however, are undaunted by terrible misfortune, catastrophic illness, the death of loved ones and financial collapse (Anonymous, 1998:1).

It is increasingly important to know how to handle these difficulties and challenges. The problem as experienced in society today, is that some individuals lack resilience and can therefore not cope with the challenges and tensions of everyday life. The following behaviour could be a manifestation of this problem:

### ❖ **Victim mentality**

Some people react to unpleasant experiences by protesting: "Look what has happened to me now!" or "If only other people would change, my life would be better!" This is what is known as a 'victim mentality'. They blame others for their unhappiness and do not learn from or gain strength from unpleasant experiences (Siebert, 1996:8). It is thus clear that people tend to react to an upsetting or distressing experience with either a victim/blaming reaction or a learning/coping reaction.

### ❖ **Conditioning**

The average adult experiences approximately 232 negative inputs per day. All these negative inputs through spaced repetition cause people to become more and more negatively conditioned (Smith, 2002a:25). Ultimately this results in people merely functioning instead of living life to the fullest.

From the above statements, it is clear that certain individuals, in society today, react to setbacks and difficulties in a negative way. These reactions result in them not being as productive as they could be and not fulfilling their full potential, both in their personal and professional lives.



### **1.3 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The problem described in 1.2 subsequently serves as background to and gives rise to the research objective and research questions addressed in this study. The general objective of this study is to determine what causes people to bounce back from setbacks and difficulties in their personal and professional lives. In order to realise the general objective, the following specific research goals and research questions are set for the study:

- ❖ What is resilience?
- ❖ What are the different contexts in which resilience can be perceived?
- ❖ How do people perceive setbacks and difficulties and what are their perceptions and self-insight regarding their own reactions to these experiences?
- ❖ Which human qualities and other factors allow people to bounce back in times of setbacks and difficulties?
- ❖ What are the implications for and the potential contribution of PPL regarding resilience?

### **1.4 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH**

Resilience is in demand in today's stressful, rapidly changing world, perhaps more than ever (Goodman, 2002:12). The fact that some individuals are able to make positive choices in the face of setbacks and difficulties, but others are defeated by life's inevitable challenges, served as inspiration to investigate possible reasons for this difference.

We all need resilience on a daily basis and not just in times of catastrophe. The cumulative effect of everyday stress of family, job and even traffic jams can be nearly as hard to deal with as great tragedy (Crawford, 1998:3). Our personal and professional lives are changing rapidly and everyone must learn to be change proficient, cope with unexpected setbacks and overcome unwanted adversities.

The potential significance of this study is to probe deeper into the concept of resilience and its contributing factors, so as to propagate the necessity for resilient behaviour in the challenging world we live in.

### **1.5 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION**

As concepts central to the study are used in their general, familiar contexts, only one concept will be connotatively described. According to Smith (1995:16) a connotative or stipulative definition of a concept is a description of the researcher's stipulation or interpretation of the concept as intended and applied in the study. This is often also called a work definition.

### **1.5.1 Resilience**

Resilience is generally conceptualised as an individual's positive response to situations of stress and adversity (Braddock & Royster, 1991:113). Garmezy and Masten define resilience as "a process of, or capacity for, or the outcome of, successful adaptation despite challenging and threatening circumstances" (Cook, 2000:717). Garmezy (in MacFarlane, 1998:16) uses the term resilience because central to the term is the concept of springing back or rebounding: "The central element in the study of resilience lies in the power of recovery and in the ability to return once again to patterns of adaptation and competence". The researcher concurs with Garmezy's opinion.

From the above definitions one can conclude that resilience refers to an ability to overcome or to rebound (resile) from life's difficulties. In the concept analysis (Chapter 2) a comprehensive definition of resilience will be formulated.

## **1.6 A PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP (PPL) PERSPECTIVE**

Pervin and John (1997:528) define the word paradigm as a model that is generally accepted by scientists in a specific field of study. According to them, this paradigm determines the type of observation and research methods. The broad paradigmatic perspective from which a study will be conducted, will include an exposition of the researcher's knowledge ideal and how this study relates to it; the researcher's views about man, education and science as applicable to this study as well as validity and methodological considerations (Smith, 1995:20).

Leadership, according to Charlton (2000:31), can be defined as the critical ingredient behind a successful endeavour - the difference between average and sustained excellence.

In the past few years, the development of a new perspective on leadership, known as Personal and Professional Leadership (PPL), has emerged.

This study will be undertaken from a PPL perspective, which can best be described as being a principle-centred, character-based, 'inside-out' philosophical approach to personal and interpersonal effectiveness (Covey, 1990:42). The focus of PPL is on a holistic view of the anthropological characteristics of a person, as well as on the existential realities of a person's existence. The anthropological foundation, which forms the basis of this study, includes: (1) All human beings construct their own life and reality; (2) Every person seeks a sense of meaning in life; (3) Humans are born 'incomplete', and therefore the possibility of constant and never-ending improvement exists; (4) Humans are responsible beings with the potential to choose their responses in any given situation.

The aim of PPL is to provide personal, interpersonal and professional strategies and solutions to assist in realising a person's potential, to find meaning and purpose in life, to add value to others' lives and to realise a fundamental human need: to leave a legacy.

PPL consists of personal, interpersonal and professional leadership. As this study is undertaken from a PPL perspective, it is important to realise that resilience manifests in the following contexts:

- ❖ Personal leadership forms the foundation of interpersonal and professional leadership and is an inside-out approach where a person accepts responsibility for his/her own life. This implies that he/she becomes more self-aware in order to achieve personal mastery and authenticity of the self (Cashman, 2000:31).
- ❖ Interpersonal leadership focuses on connecting with others, to add value to their lives and to build relationships with the emphasis on servant leadership. This sowing of seeds that benefit others, will ultimately also benefit the self.
- ❖ Professional leadership deals with efficiency, effectiveness and competence in a work related environment.

PPL thus refers to the conscious, purposeful and life-long process of personal growth that is compiled and controlled by the individual him/herself. The purpose is to establish balance between the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, work/financial, physical and social dimensions of the individual's life. The outcome could result in a state of total wellness and vitality.

It can also be defined as the process of designing and developing personal, interpersonal and professional growth strategies, that will lead to progressively higher forms of responsible independence and effective interdependence (Covey, 1990:43).

The most comprehensive definition of PPL is formulated by Smith (2001) as a scientific study of the ongoing commitment and accompaniment of the human being to valid and functional:

- ❖ self-knowledge and self-awareness;
- ❖ finding a purpose;
- ❖ realising full potential (self-actualisation);
- ❖ co-operation with and adding value to other people's lives (self-transcendence); and
- ❖ professional ability, skills and competence in terms of organisational efficiency and effectiveness.

The quality of resilience is crucial for realising the individual's full potential in each of the above-mentioned contexts. This study will be conducted through the PPL perspective.

## 1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Tripodi (in Grinnell, 1988:198), research designs refer to the overall scheme of the research process from problem identification and specification to the evaluation and dissemination of findings. Kerlinger (1973) mentions that the purpose of research is to provide answers to research questions. The research strategy refers to the strategic plan that directs a study and determines the methods and techniques to be used (Smith, 1995:18) while the research methods refer to the way in which a researcher will find answers to specific research questions (Smith, 1995:19). In an attempt to meet the study's objective, the research strategy will be integrated with various research methods. When successful, this in turn, will result in the research questions being answered.

### 1.7.1 Research Strategy

The primary research strategy for the study will be hermeneutic-phenomenological. A hermeneutical approach refers to the theory and practice of interpretation (Van Manen, 1990:179) and entails an accurate interpretation and understanding of the actions of people against the background of subjective contextual motives. It also studies the insight and understanding of the subjective giving of meaning (Smith, 1993:28). Phenomenology refers to the science of phenomena and the view that is found in the phenomenon itself. The question "What is the nature or meaning of something?" is always part of this approach (Van Manen, 1990:183). This view holds true knowledge as the researcher analyses the phenomenon and endeavours to put what is really essential about the phenomenon or problem in words.

According to Van Manen (1990:180) the hermeneutic-phenomenological approach strives to be attentive to both terms:

- ❖ It is a descriptive (phenomenological) methodology because it wants to be attentive to how things appear.
- ❖ It wants to let things speak for themselves.
- ❖ It is an interpretative (hermeneutic) methodology as it claims that all phenomena are interpretable.

The hermeneutic-phenomenological strategy will be supported by a descriptive research approach. According to Miles and Huberman (1994:10) the aim of descriptive research is that the researcher gains "thick descriptions that are vivid, nested in real context and have a ring of truth that has a strong impact on the reader". This entails a systematic, accurate and factual description of the research theme (Smith, 1993:35). The emphasis will be on a rich qualitative description of

how people experience setbacks and difficulties and what makes them bounce back during these times.

This study is meant to give a better understanding of the essence of resilience according to the research that has been done thus far. At the same time it will provide some necessary background, which will guide the researcher in her attempt to identify and disclose the human qualities and other factors that play a role in resilience.

### **1.7.2 Research Methods**

Within the research strategy the following specific research methods will be used to convey the chosen literature in a logical and systematic way.

#### **❖ Word Analysis**

A word analysis (Smith, 1993:42) will be used to clarify or define certain concepts used within this study. This will be done by focusing on the original meaning of words and their synonyms by either dictionary definitions, or the original meaning of the word in its fundamental language (mostly Latin, Greek and Hebrew).

#### **❖ Concept Analysis**

As the word analysis method does not focus on the meaning of a word in context, the method of concept analysis will also be used. The concept analysis will clarify the meaning of the central concept (in this case, resilience) in a variety of contexts as to give the researcher a better understanding of the various meanings, characteristics and connotations of the concept (Smith, 1993:44).

#### **❖ Literature Study**

A literature study normally determines what has been published in the specific field of study. This is a clear, exact and systematic study with correctly ordered notes of existing literature with regard to a specific problem field (Smith, 1995:47). The literature study will sharpen and deepen the theoretical framework of the study. Relevant publications, dissertations, books and articles will be used as resources to this study and will provide the researcher with the relevant background information. The literature study will be undertaken in Chapter 2.

#### **❖ Interview Method**

The interview method refers to two different types of interviews, structured and semi-structured (Smith, 1993:61). For the purpose of this study, semi-structured individual interviews will be used. The researcher has an important share in terms of the outcome of the interview and is in a position to deviate from the predetermined questions.

### ❖ **Phenomenological-Subjective Method**

This method focuses on the subjective experience of a person in a specific situation (Smith, 1993:59). The phenomenography is thus a personal description of the experience of a specific setback or situation.

## **1.8 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY**

**Chapter 1** has an orientation function. It details the research design and focuses the rest of the study by providing the context, research problem and objective, the PPL perspective, the motivation of the study as well as the research methodology to be used.

In **Chapter 2**, a word analysis, together with a concept analysis will be done to define the concept of resilience. Furthermore resilience will be described in the different contexts that it can be perceived. The human qualities and other factors that allow people to bounce back in times of setbacks and difficulties will also be addressed. The literature study will be used as a basis for the empirical research in Chapter 3.

**Chapter 3** will attempt to explore and identify human qualities and other factors that determine resilience by following a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach. The design, data display from the empirical research as well as the interpretation of the findings will be addressed in this chapter. This chapter will also focus on the validity and reliability of the data.

In **Chapter 4** the study will be concluded by a summary of the findings of the study and the PPL implications thereof. Suggestions for further research will also be put forward.

*"We're afraid of living life, therefore, we don't experience, we don't see. We don't feel. We don't risk! We don't care! And therefore we don't live – because life means being actively involved. Life means getting your hands dirty. Life means jumping in the middle of it all. Life means falling flat on you face. Life means going beyond yourself – into the stars!"*

*(Buscaglia, 1982:169)*



# *Chapter 2*

JOHANNESBURG

## CHAPTER 2: AN OVERVIEW OF RESILIENCE – A LITERATURE STUDY

*"The same sun hardens mud and softens wax. Trials can either make us or break us."  
(Johnson, 1996:54)*

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1 the context of this study was established and a general statement of the problem was given. In this chapter, the researcher intends to provide an overview of what is currently understood by the concept of resilience, as explained in available literature. This will allow the researcher to gain greater insight into the proposed field of study. In the first place an overview of perspectives on the concept of resilience will be discussed. It will then be shown that resilience can be clustered in different contexts. Finally the human qualities and other factors that allow people to bounce back in times of setbacks and difficulties will be investigated.

### 2.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES

The general objective of this study is to determine what enables people to bounce back from setbacks and difficulties in their personal and professional lives. To realise the general objective, the following specific research goals and research questions are formulated for the literature study:

- ❖ What is resilience?
- ❖ What are the different contexts in which resilience can be perceived?
- ❖ Which human qualities and other factors allow people to bounce back in times of setbacks and difficulties?

This chapter will lay the foundation on which the researcher will attempt to meet the study's objective and thereby answer the specific research questions.

### 2.3 DEFINING RESILIENCE

#### 2.3.1 Word Analysis of Resilience

The meaning of the concept resilience can be defined through the use of a word analysis. This analysis will be conducted by focusing on the original meaning of the word by either dictionary definitions, or the meaning of the word in its fundamental language (Smith, 1993:42).



### 2.3.1.1 Etymological Meaning

The verb, *resile* (from Latin: *re* = back, and *salire* = jump), means that if something is bent, stretched or compressed, it will tend to recoil, spring back elastically, or resume its former size and shape. When used to describe people, it refers to recuperative power (Strümpfer, 2002:2).

### 2.3.1.2 Dictionary Definitions

The *Merriam-Webster (2002)* defines resilience as:

- ❖ The capacity of a strained body to recover its size and shape after deformation caused especially by compressive stress.
- ❖ An ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.

The *Random House Dictionary (Abrams, 2001:283)* defines resilience from Latin *resilire* as:

- ❖ The ability to recover readily from illness, depression, adversity or the like; buoyancy.

The *Reader's Digest Word Power Dictionary (2002)* describes *being resilient* as:

- ❖ Able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions.

Resilience is described in the *Macmillan English Dictionary (2002)* as:

- ❖ The ability to quickly become healthy, happy or strong again after an illness, disappointment or other problem.

In the light of the above word analysis, the most relevant description of resilience for this study is: The ability to recover quickly and to become healthy, happy and strong again after setbacks and difficulties.

### 2.3.2 Concept Analysis of Resilience

A word analysis does not consider the meaning of a word within its context; therefore a concept analysis will also be used. The concept analysis will clarify the meaning of resilience in a variety of contexts, as to give the researcher a better understanding of various interpretations, characteristics and connotations of the concept (Smith, 1993:44).

Resilience is a positive term and implies a dynamic continuum. "Resilience is not just a matter of strength or weakness; it is also a reflection of what one does about one's plight" (Rutter, 1990).

Resilience represents strength in the face of adversity. Staudinger, Marsiske and Baltes (1993:543) point out that the construct is used to describe "two kinds of adaptive responses: (1) the maintenance of normal development despite the presence of threats or risks ... and (2) recovery from trauma".

Resilience thus describes a capacity for positive functioning or coping – despite severe or sustained adversity, or chronic and multiple stressors. Similar to Antonovsky’s construct of the Sense of Coherence, resilience is assumed to sustain and enhance health, as well as strengths, such as developmental transitions, work life, marital life and parenthood. Resilience also refers to the ability to use external and internal resources (including a flexible invoking of the available cognitive, personal and social problem-solving strategies) to cope successfully with pressures imposed by the ever-present strains of everyday life (Strümpfer, 1999:92).

Overall, the implication is that resilience is a dynamic characteristic and could be stronger or weaker at different times in a person’s life (Felsman & Vaillant, 1987:305). For the individual with high resilience, stressors, adversity or transitions are likely to be experienced as challenges to be dealt with. In this sense, a capacity for resilience could be viewed as a psychological analogue of the body’s immune system, in that it provides resistance or even immunity to adversity (Strümpfer, 1999:93).

It could also be suggested that highly resilient people firstly cope positively with and rebound from adverse events; secondly, they could even transcend intolerable circumstances (Frankl, 1963); and thirdly as a continuing process of “growth beyond the present level of functioning”, they will themselves be transformed by struggling with adversity (in Strümpfer, 1999:94).

The above description of resilience does not imply that strongly resilient behaviour will enable the individual to solve all problems posed in life. It only means that, in coping with adversity, highly resilient people will cope better than people with low resilience, and when a problem cannot be resolved, they will be able to go on living with it more competently - and with less pain (Strümpfer, 2002:10).

The following authors have also contributed definitions of the concept resilience:

Dunning (in Paton, Smith & Violanti, 2000:2) sees the term resilience as encapsulating a paradigm shift that accommodates the analysis and facilitation of growth. Resilience describes an active process of self-righting, learned resourcefulness and growth – the ability to function psychologically at a level far greater than expected given the individual’s capabilities and previous experience. This is not to say, however, that loss or distress outcomes will not occur.

Resilience implies an ability to cope in the face of adversity or to demonstrate general superior adjustment. “Resilience is normal development under difficult conditions,” to quote Fonagy, Steel, Higgitt & Target (1994:233) directly.

According to Higgins (1994:1) "resilience implies that potential subjects are able to negotiate significant challenges to development yet consistently 'snap back' in order to complete the important developmental tasks which confront them as they grow." Higgins (1994:2) further emphasises that resilience encompasses more than mere survival: "...an additional strength of the resilient is their ability to acknowledge and experience significant psychological pain and still maintain the ability to love well".

According to Vaillant (1993:284) resilience refers to "the capacity to be bent without breaking and the capacity, once bent, to spring back". Vaillant also proposes that this capacity is fostered by the presence of protective factors.

Young-Eisendrath (1996:20) views resilience "as the ability to thrive, not just survive, after having encountered some great difficulty or adversity".

The researcher concludes with an interpretation of the concept resilience, from a PPL perspective. Resilience, if simplified, may be defined as the ability to bounce back from life's difficulties and continue along the path of growth, self-actualisation and self-transcendence. Thus resilience may be seen as a multifaceted, active process, which enables individuals to use external and internal resources to adapt and cope successfully with challenging and threatening circumstances. Such individuals evaluate life's experiences, choose their attitudes, determine their response and find meaning in whatever they do/experience. The PPL perspective with regard to resilience can best be described as follows: "Expect trouble as an inevitable part of life and when it comes, hold your head high, look it squarely in the eye and say, 'I will be bigger than you. You cannot defeat me'" (Landers in Buscaglia, 1992:138).

## **2.4 CONTEXTS IN WHICH RESILIENCE CAN BE PERCEIVED**

Strümpfer (2002:3) clusters the following contexts in which resilience can be perceived.

### **2.4.1 Challenging Experiences**

The challenges could be produced by exceptionally challenging experiences, which do not constitute adversity but may even be experienced as having been constructive and growth enhancing. The experience of a new, exceptionally challenging job and being on an almost vertical learning curve, is an example: it stretches the individual to his/her utmost over a significant length of time, yet it is perceived as "one of the best times of my life".

### **2.4.2 Developmental Transition**

Developmental transition refers to "the psychological change that takes place whenever people are faced with the need to undertake a major revision of their assumptions about the world, and

which is lasting in its implication, not just transient” (Parkes, 1988:53). Examples are rites of passage, adolescence, mid-career and retirement transitions, as well as the transition to parenthood. Some of the experiences listed under individual adversity should also be considered, since loss is one aspect of transition (e.g. death of a spouse).

#### **2.4.3 Individual Adversity**

These demands could be inherent in individual adversity, for instance, bereavement; end of a significant relationship; personal accidents, disablement, severe illness or disease; criminal victimisation; discrimination, persecution; lack of opportunities or means, poverty, financial disaster; job loss; death and imprisonment to mention a few.

#### **2.4.4 Collective Adversity**

Social, economic, and political-legal conditions often cause collective adversity. For instance, a work situation may be adverse, in that aspects of it may be highly adverse for the workers but not responsive to individual coping, only to interventions by collectivities, either high up in the organisation or by labour union action, or even legislation. The aftermath of natural or industrial disasters and of war, should also be considered here.

A recent example of collective adversity is the September 2001 terrorist's attacks in the USA where Americans have been urged to resume their daily routines and normal lives. For many, especially those who lost family and friends, recovery may seem overwhelming. Yet, barely a year after the tragedy it is already evident that despite their losses, many men and women are rising to the challenge, thriving.

#### **2.4.5 Organisational Change**

Exceptionally challenging organisational change, such as a renewal process or radical change in technology, also place demands on the individual. Everyday life in some 'present-day organisations is demanding. Re-organisation, restructuring and re-engineering are continuing almost constantly. In the South-African context, also consider the plight of new incumbents, for instance, after an equity transformation.

#### **2.4.6 Socio-Political Change**

Large-scale socio-political change, such as post-1994 events in South Africa, creates demands, on the re-alignments of values, social, economic, educational and cultural shifts and transformations.

Resilience can thus be perceived in a variety of contexts as referred to in the above-mentioned literature. This study will only focus on resilience pertaining to developmental transition, individual adversity and challenging experiences.

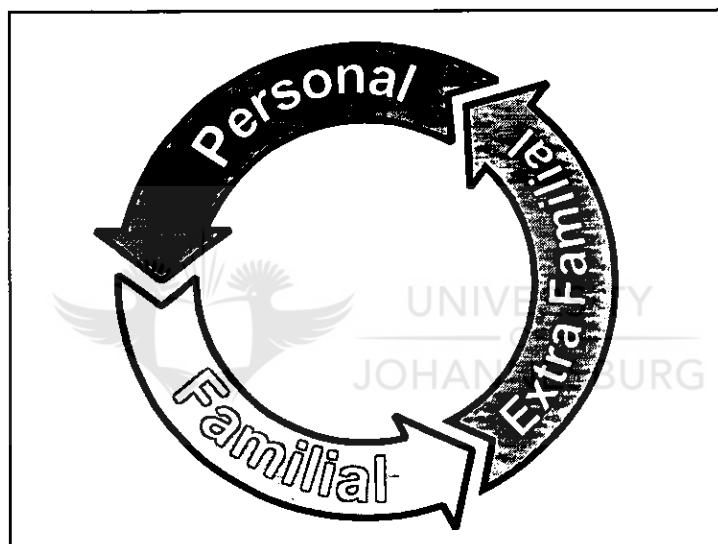
## 2.5 HUMAN QUALITIES AND OTHER FACTORS OF RESILIENCE

### 2.5.1 Protective Factors contributing to Resilience

Crucial to the process of resilience are protective factors within the individual or environment that reduce the negative impact of stressful situations and problems. According to Block, Werner, Smith and Garnezy (in Kazdin, 2000:93), resilient survival of excessive stress is attributed to a triad of protective factors:

- ❖ Personal characteristics.
- ❖ Nuclear family characteristics.
- ❖ Extra familial characteristics.

The researcher is of the opinion that these factors interact reciprocally as is graphically represented in Figure 2.1.



**Figure 2.1 Protective Factors**  
(MacFarlane, 1998:22)

According to Kaplan and Turner (1996:158) experts generally agree that there are two essential components in the development of resilience. The first is the presence of biological, psychological and environmental risk factors (such as stressful life events) that increase an individual's vulnerability. The second is the presence of protective factors (personal, social and familial) that help an individual counter and resist the effects of personal vulnerabilities and environmental hazards. Kumpfer and Masten et al. (in Kaplan & Turner, 1996:158) mention that these protective factors make up the complex of a person's resilience potential at any given time.

While it is impossible to determine how many protective factors any one person needs (some seem to rebound with a few, others need more), the goal is to build in enough protective factors to

offset the impacts of stressful life events. When the balance is favourable, successful adaptation – resiliency – is the outcome (Henderson, 1998:2). Loesel and Bliesener (1994:754-757) view protective factors in terms of a balance model – as long as the balance between stressors and protective factors is fairly stable, an individual will cope successfully. When stressors continue indefinitely and/or accumulatively, or are repeatedly noxious, the individual is likely to be at risk for developing a pathological reaction.

Rutter (1985:600) suggests that: “People knuckle under because of the sum of accumulated risk factors minus the sum of accumulated positive experiences ... there is doubtless something to this idea ... [but] it appears inadequate to account for this phenomenon”. Vaillant (1993:299) also supports this idea: “... resilience is more than just an algebraic sum of risk factors and protective factors. Resilience reflects that which characterises a twig with a fresh, green, living core - when stepped on, such a twig bends and yet springs back”.

The researcher believes that “risk and protective factors are perhaps merely different ends of the same continuum, and should therefore be viewed as interacting agents within a unique, given context. The enigma of resilience bridges this continuum, as a rainbow of defiance and promise” (MacFarlane, 1998:23).

Protective factors are also not culture or class bound: “These protective buffers appear to transcend ethnicity, social-class, and geographic boundaries” (Werner, 1995:82). A few protective factors have genetic roots (such as an outgoing social personality), but most can be learned and thus be promoted (Henderson, 1998:2).

Although the protective factor component of resilience consists of personal, social and familial elements, this study will only focus on the personal qualities and other factors that allow people to bounce back in times of setbacks and difficulties.

### **2.5.2 Resilience as a Human Quality**

More than 30 years of research into the nature of highly resilient survivors created a clear understanding of human resiliency (Siebert, 2002:2). Experts are convinced that resilient individuals share many of the following characteristics:

#### **❖ Ability to Choose**

All people need to be taught that there are external forces in life over which they will have no control. However, what they do have control over is how they choose to respond to such forces. Regardless of circumstance, they may choose to have either a victor’s or a victim’s attitude (MacFarlane, 1998:179). Every individual has the ability to determine which one it will be (Siebert, 2002a:4).

#### ❖ **Ability to Focus and Control Impulses**

"Self-control is a prerequisite for a number of the traits needed for resilience. Indeed, it's the basic foundation for our feelings of internal control ..." (Joseph, 1994:109). This ability to focus and control impulses is part of resilience.

#### ❖ **Ability to Take Risks**

The belief in one's resilience seems to allow people to take risks. Resilient people are also willing to strike out into the unknown if they believe there is a reasonable chance for success. (Goodman 2002:12).

#### ❖ **Acceptance of Change**

Those individuals who have fully accepted and embraced their situations are most likely to cope well with challenges. Although change is intrinsic to life, changes caused by loss are the hardest to accept. In general, the resilient perceive change as a challenge – even an opportunity. Thus, they are less vulnerable to the fear and anxiety that accompany uncertainty and chaos (Anonymous, 1998:2).

#### ❖ **Adaptability/Flexibility**

Resilient people adapt quickly – both mentally and emotionally. They are comfortable with contradictory personality qualities – they can both be strong and gentle, sensitive and tough, logical and intuitive, calm and emotional, serious and playful. An important aspect of flexibility is responsiveness (Anonymous, 2001:1). Resilient people are attentive to their environment. They listen to others and are open to new ideas (Anonymous, 1998:2).

#### ❖ **Altruism/Servitude**

People with survivor personalities, are foul-weather friends. When things are going well, they may drift along seemingly uninvolved, but when there is trouble, they show up, ready to lend a hand or take charge. When other people are in pain, they feel it. When others are doing well, they feel better (Siebert, 1996:42). "Contrary to what is usually thought, it is the man of excellence, and not the common man, who lives in essential servitude" (Gassett in Siebert, 1996:43). The need for good synergy in people who are good survivors is paradoxical, as they make the world better for themselves by making it better for others (Siebert, 1996:43).

#### ❖ **Assertiveness**

Resilient individuals portray the skill of assertiveness in that they fight for deserved personal rights in a socially appropriate manner (MacFarlane, 1998:187). Autonomy impacts on resilience in that the perception of the self as stable, separate and independent, (Young-Eisendraft, 1996:116) is empowering and promotes a sense of control. Wolin and Wolin (1993:88) see autonomy as "... the

right to safe boundaries". Resilient individuals succeed in separating themselves from sources of trouble and adversity.

#### ❖ **Authenticity**

Being the same person under all circumstances contributes to resiliency. A person who is content within him/herself need not maintain a facade, nor does his/her identity depend on external factors such as money or position. He/she is therefore less likely to be devastated when losing these assets (Anonymous, 1998:2).

#### ❖ **Belief in the Transcendent**

This belief allows the resilient individual to attribute meaning positively to events within his/her life. Barnard (1994:139-140) mentions that meaning can be constructed from scientific or religious beliefs. This often manifests as religious faith, but it might also be a love for nature, art, music or humanity. A sense of purpose beyond oneself often produces the unflinching conviction that life is worth living (Anonymous, 2001:1).

A common characteristic in many people who display resilience is a belief in something bigger than the self – or even spirituality that comes from within and without. This spirituality allows acceptance of the fact that as individuals, humans are not in control of the future and that they are vulnerable beings. This understanding helps resilient people to concentrate on what they can do to make the world a better place (Anonymous, 2001:35). Resilient survivors thus find meaning, purpose and value in difficult circumstances (Siebert, 2002a:2).

#### ❖ **Cognitive Competence**

"Cognitive competence does not imply an above-average intellectual ability, merely that a resilient individual possesses at least an average IQ" (MacFarlane, 1998:27). However, most studies of resilient individuals do indicate a positive correlation between the ability to overcome difficulties and intelligence. Kaplan and Turner (1996:158) confirm the importance of intellectual capabilities as a characteristic of resilient individuals.

#### ❖ **Creative Problem Solving**

Studies confirm that resilient individuals show a high degree of creative competence. Research shows that creative people have a perceptual way of looking at the world. Furthermore the imagination of most survivors is well developed and they enjoy daydreaming (Siebert, 1996:70).

#### ❖ **Decision Making**

Berliner and Bernard (1996:4) suggest that an important quality associated with resilience is resourcefulness – including the ability to make decisions creatively and reflectively or to consider alternate solutions.



#### ❖ **Desire to Improve**

Resilient individuals have a desire to improve as they grasp at life's second chances (Werner, 1995:83). Watt, David, Ladd and Shamos (1995:233-234) report that resilient individuals from all walks of life possess a determination to improve and transcend their adversity: "... the resilient subjects all agreed that transcending is a process which must be chosen and nurtured. In the minds of these people, there were no other alternatives". They are born with the ability to be made better by life's difficulties and constantly learn from experience. Resilient individuals become increasingly life competent, durable and enjoy life more and more. They spend less time surviving than others and survive major adversities better (Anonymous, 1998:2).

#### ❖ **Endurance and Determination**

Some people have all the enthusiasm and skills necessary for pursuing their ambitions, but they lack endurance. They have the talent, the ability, the best strategies and the right people behind them, but they "just cannot hang in there" (Crawford, 1998:176). A resilient person will keep on trying long after others would have quit. It is this tenacious endurance that provides opportunities to the resilient to achieve greatness (Crawford, 1998:177; Kazdin, 2000:93). Wisdom and new strengths do not come from the adversity itself, however, but from the struggle to heal and make sense of what one has gone through (Siebert, 2002:3).

#### ❖ **Express Feelings Honestly**

The ability to experience and express the entire range of human emotions (anger, love, dislike, appreciation, grief) honestly and openly and to choose to suppress feelings when they believe it would be best to do so, is part of the qualities of resilient individuals (Anonymous, 1998:2).

#### ❖ **Forgiveness**

Resilient individuals have learned to become compassionate and forgiving. One must be strong to be able to forgive. Forgiveness is not condoning or excusing, it has nothing to do with justice. Forgiving is a selfish act to free the self from being controlled by guilt. In the process, survivors develop a better, stronger version of themselves than they originally suspected could exist (Siebert, 1996:238).

#### ❖ **Hope**

Hope can be defined as "a sense of aliveness and inner strength" and is intensely personal. It cannot be maintained without a profound sense of interconnectedness, of being part of something bigger than the present (Crawford, 1998:123). Hope is an energiser and a constantly renewable source of resilience. It is the ultimate tool for coping with uncertainty, suffering and loss (Crawford, 1998:122).

### ❖ **Internal Locus of Control**

An internal locus of control suggests that the resilient individual assumes the source of change to be located within him/herself. Thus, an internal locus of control allows the individual to avoid feelings of helplessness, thereby fostering "... the capacity to expect well and ultimately to develop an internal image of oneself as a survivor..." (Felsman in Dugan & Coles, 1989:74-75). Furthermore, Luthar (1991:611) mentions that an internal locus of control means that learned helplessness is avoided.

It is vital to understand that an internal locus of control does not imply that the individual necessarily believes in his or her ability to control external forces, rather "... it means I can control myself and accept responsibility for my own decisions and their consequences" (Joseph, 1994:31). In this lies the amelioration of the stress, because in taking charge of the situation, the stressor is managed.

### ❖ **Playful, Childlike Curiosity and Spirit**

In general, asking questions is not viewed as a skill or talent to be cultivated; however, life's best survivors ask lots of questions. People who adapt and thrive well are like curious, playful children who never 'grow up'. They retain from childhood a curiosity about what exists (Siebert, 1996:18). They enjoy themselves as children do and have a good time almost anywhere. They wonder about things, experiment, make mistakes, get hurt and laugh (Siebert, 2002a:3).

### ❖ **Optimism**

Resilient people have a deep-rooted optimism guided by internal values and standards and a high tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty. They see optimism as: "A belief that life will be, in the long run, more good than bad, that even when bad things happen, the good will eventually outbalance them" (Crawford, 1998:17). It is also the belief that nearly every difficulty conceals some potential benefit, if only we have the skill to find it.

### ❖ **Positive Social Orientation**

Positive social orientation is a skill which the resilient individual appears to wield deftly. Resilient individuals are described (Hauser et al., in Dugan & Coles, 1989:114) as "... friendly, interpersonally sensitive, socially responsive and more co-operative, participatory, and emotionally stable". They mostly have good friendships and loving relationships. Berliner and Bernard (1996:4) confirm this by stating that social competence, including the ability to establish and sustain positive relationships, is a characteristic that is commonly associated with resilience.

Philosopher-theologian Paul Tillich, in *The Courage to Be* (1952), emphasises that, with proper support, human beings can display an amazing capacity to spring back from the deepest distress and helplessness (in Tice, 1995:45). Higgins (1994:20-21) suggests that resilient individuals are

empathetically attuned. Empathy refers to the ability to see things through the perspective of others, and to maintain a win/win attitude during times of conflict (Anonymous, 1998:2).

#### ❖ **Resilient Thinking**

Resilient thinking differs from positive thinking. Positive thinking is a component of resilience, but it takes a person one step further - it is tough-minded and reality-based. According to Crawford (1998:18), resilient thinkers never pretend that things are different from how they really are. They can see the stumbling blocks, but they choose the stepping-stones.

#### ❖ **Responsibility**

Resilient people accept responsibility for their lives and realise that they can still influence most situations. This helps counter resentment, fear and the inability to forgive (Anonymous, 2001:1). They do not see themselves as victims, instead they think of themselves as confronting a challenge and in doing so, they own the experience by addressing the situation with positive action.

#### ❖ **Self-Efficacy**

Bandura (in Van Slambrouck, 1999:1) is a firm believer of the fact that people can and regularly do overcome seemingly insurmountable difficulties. The key ingredient of resilience according to Bandura is self-efficacy or the conviction that action will produce results.

#### ❖ **Self-Help Skills**

Resilient adults are seen to engage in self-help activities by acknowledging their adversity: "They make the horrific comprehensible ... by recognising, reading, analysing, and speaking about human pain" (Higgins, 1994:308). In so doing, they choose not to bow indefinitely to life's pressures.

#### ❖ **Self-Motivation and Self-Managed Learning**

According to Siebert (1996:16), learning can be defined as a "relatively permanent change in behaviour that results from experience". Self-motivated and self-managed learning is derived directly from experience (Siebert, 1996:17). Henderson (1998:15) refers to self-motivation and the capacity for and connection to learning as relevant qualities within resilient individuals.

#### ❖ **Sense of Humour**

In a difficult situation, humour can help people bond with others and see themselves as survivors rather than victims (Brothers, 2001:50). If one asks survivors of horrible tragedies how they managed day after day to keep on going, one will probably learn that even under the most desperate circumstances, they were able to maintain a strong sense of humour (Siebert, 1996:231).

Frankl (in Siebert, 1996:232) emphasises the role of humour in survival: "Humour was another of the soul's weapons in the fight for self-preservation. It is well-known that humour, more than anything else in the human composition, can afford aloofness and an ability to rise above any situation, even if only for a few seconds".

According to Coffee (in Siebert, 1996:233): "Laughter sets the spirit free to move through even the most tragic circumstances". It helps to shake our head clear, get our feet back under us and restore our sense of balance and purpose. Humour is integral to our peace of mind and ability to go beyond survival.

#### ❖ **Stable Childhood/Upbringing**

Individual resilience is closely related to a personal sense of security and to feel comfortable about the self. The more psychologically stable a person is, the more he/she can tolerate the stresses of outside events. The healthier a person's psyche, the more he/she can withstand both the expected and unexpected things of life. The road to psychological health begins with normal genetics followed by an upbringing in a loving, stable family (Borenstein, 2002:12).

#### ❖ **Strong Inner Self**

Throughout life, people develop a sense of themselves. According to Siebert (1996:145), internal experiences of the self are referred to as self-esteem, self-confidence and self-concept.

**Self-esteem** refers to the way a person feels about him/herself and determines how much he/she learns after adversity (Anonymous, 1998:2).

A person's **self-confidence** depends on thoughts about him/herself and allows him/her to take risks without waiting for approval or reassurance. Resilient people have faith in themselves and are self-confident. They do not fret about whether or not they can rise to the challenge, they just take it on (Anonymous, 1998:2).

**Self-concept** refers to a person's idea about who and what he/she is (Siebert, 1996:146). Vaillant (1993:302) mentions: "We are all more resilient when we have a firm sense of who we are and that we are loveable. "Resilient individuals may enter a situation more prepared for effective action by virtue of their self-confidence; subsequently, successful mastery of a difficult situation would be expected to increase self-efficacy and reinforce efforts to take action" (Masten et al., 1990: 431).

#### ❖ **Talent for Serendipity**

Resilient people can convert a situation that is emotionally toxic for others into something emotionally nutritious for them. They thrive in situations distressing to others because they learn good lessons from bad experiences. They convert misfortune into good luck and gain strength

from adversity. A good indicator of exceptional mental health is when a person talking about a rough experience says: "I would never willingly go through anything like that again, but it was one of the best things that ever happened to me" (Anonymous, 1998:2).

#### ❖ **The Will to Live**

According to Heyl (in Siebert, 1996:210) survivors have "a great will to live" and many people overcome incredible odds through their will to live. Survival expectations usually become a self-fulfilling prophecy. People with a strong will to live can survive extreme conditions, far beyond what even they might have expected (Siebert, 1996:215).

Siebert (1996:225) also mentions that the attitude found in survivors is: "They might make it, they probably won't but they will not stop trying". According to Des Pres (in Siebert, 1996:225), survivors fall back on life itself after all vestiges of normal civilisation have been stripped away.

#### ❖ **Trust in Intuition**

Resilient individuals accept subliminal perception and intuition as valid, useful sources of information (Anonymous, 1998:2). They also avoid games people play and defend themselves against attacks and fight back when they have to (Siebert, 2002:4).

### **2.5.3 Summary of the Human Qualities and Other Factors of Resilience**

If the researcher were to summarise the role of characteristics and other factors in resilience according to the above findings, it would seem as if the presence of the following characteristics is prominent to facilitate resilience: the ability to focus and control impulses, the ability to take risks, acceptance of change, adaptability, altruism, assertiveness, authenticity, belief in the transcendent, cognitive competence, creative problem solving, decision making, desire to improve, endurance and determination, to express feelings honestly, forgiveness, hope, internal locus of control, playful, childlike curiosity and spirit, optimism, positive social orientation, resilient thinking, responsibility, self-efficacy, self-help skills, self-motivation and self-managed learning, sense of humour, stable childhood/upbringing, strong inner self, talent for serendipity, the will to live and trust in intuition.

From a PPL perspective, the researcher believes that resilience is fed by a determination to attribute meaning to the self as an individual, thereby disallowing experience to impinge on the sense of the self as an autonomous individual. Essentially the critical quality from a PPL perspective with regard to resilience is the freedom of choice: "The quality of our lives is governed not by outward circumstances, but by the choices we make" (Crawford, 1998:8).

## 2.6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The objective of this chapter was to provide an overview of what is currently understood by the concept of resilience in literature. The researcher addressed the perspectives on resilience, the contexts in which it can be perceived and the human qualities and other factors that allow people to bounce back in times of setbacks and difficulties.

Resilience, as defined by the word analysis, includes the ability to recover quickly and to become healthy, happy and strong again after setbacks and difficulties. Through the concept analysis and literature study conducted, it was found that the working definition of resilience for the context of this study implies the ability to bounce back from life's difficulties and continue along the path of growth, self-actualisation and self-transcendence. The following broad contexts of resilience were identified: challenging experiences, developmental transition, individual adversity, collective adversity, organisational change and socio-political change. It was also established that two components are essential in the development of resilience: (1) biological, psychological and environmental risk factors that increase vulnerability and (2) protective factors that help counter and resist the effects of personal vulnerabilities and environmental hazards.

The following human qualities and other factors facilitate resilience: the ability to focus and control impulses, the ability to take risks, acceptance of change, adaptability, altruism, assertiveness, authenticity, belief in the transcendent, cognitive competence, creative problem solving, decision making, desire to improve, endurance and determination, to express feelings honestly, forgiveness, hope, internal locus of control, playful, childlike curiosity and spirit, optimism, positive social orientation, resilient thinking, responsibility, self-efficacy, self-help skills, self-motivation and self-managed learning, sense of humour, stable childhood/upbringing, strong inner self, talent for serendipity, the will to live and trust in intuition.

Within the context of resilience, the aim of PPL is to sensitise and empower individuals to exercise their freedom of choice. In conclusion to the literature study, the researcher would also like to remind the reader that resilience is a process, dependent on the interaction of its multiple components. The interaction of these components forms the backdrop of what categorises the resilient individual as one who exemplifies that:

*"Nothing splendid has ever been achieved except by those who dared believe that something inside them was superior to circumstance".*  
(Barton in McGinnis, 1990:33)



# **Chapter 3**

JOHANNESBURG

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

*"Life is not the way it's supposed to be. It's the way it is. The way you cope with it is what makes the difference."  
(McGinnis, 1990:5)*

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 2, the researcher described the concept of resilience to gain greater insight into the proposed field of study. This description also forms the foundation for the empirical study. The research strategy and methodology were explained in Chapter 1 (as per 1.7). In this chapter further information on the research design and methods will also be provided. As part of the research design, Chapter 3 will also address sampling, methods of data collection and data analysis, validity and reliability, aspects related to ethical considerations and data analysis procedures. This chapter will be concluded with an exposition of data collected from individual interviews, a discussion of the data and finally the relevant findings of the researcher.

### **3.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES**

As established in Chapter 1, the objective of this study is to determine what causes people to bounce back from setbacks and difficulties in their personal and professional lives. From the literature study in Chapter 2, it is evident that resilience is a dynamic phenomenon, influenced by both internal characteristics of an individual, and various external life contexts, circumstances, and opportunities. The literature study clarified the perspectives on the term resilience, the different contexts in which resilience can be perceived and human and other factors that allow people to bounce back during times of setbacks and difficulties, from a theoretical basis. By means of qualitative individual interviews, the following questions will be explored in this chapter:

- ❖ How do people perceive setbacks and difficulties and what are their perceptions and self-insight regarding their own reactions to these experiences?
- ❖ Which human qualities and other factors allow people to bounce back in times of setbacks and difficulties?

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **3.3.1 Qualitative Design**

Qualitative research is aimed at interpreting and understanding the subjective world of the individual, rather than explaining it. The researcher seeks a rich, in-depth understanding of the respondents' perceptions through a process of deep attentiveness and empathic understanding. An attempt is made at understanding how people make sense out of their lives, delineating the



process of giving meaning and describing how people interpret what they experience (Merriam & Simpson, 1995:97; Rudestam & Newton, 1992:32).

In this study a portrayal is given of that which causes people to bounce back from setbacks and difficulties in their personal and professional lives. The intention is to understand and interpret the subjective world of their experiences and to cluster the human characteristics and other factors that allow them to bounce back during difficult times. This will lead to a deeper and extended knowledge of the phenomenon known as resilience.

As stated in Chapter 1, the primary research strategy for this study will be hermeneutic-phenomenological and will be supported by a descriptive research approach.

### **3.4 RESEARCH METHODS**

#### **3.4.1 Sampling**

Sampling is a more specialised and restricted form of choosing what to study (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993:57). According to Merriam (1998:61), non-probability sampling is the method of choice for most qualitative research, and will thus also be applied in this study. One of the sampling methods of non-probability sampling is purposeful sampling.

Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the researcher “wants to discover, understand and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 1998:61). Patton (in Merriam, 1998:61) argues that “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases”. In this case, the selection criteria for purposeful sampling involve adults that have successfully bounced back from setbacks and difficulties. The researcher applied the method of snowball sampling (also known as chain or network sampling) in this study.

The sample for this study consists of 12 adult individuals (five males and seven females). Their ages vary between 23-56 years. Diversity in terms of the context of their situations, age and gender can be distinguished. A point of saturation was reached after nine interviews in different contexts. Thereafter three additional interviews were conducted to confirm the findings of the first interviews and to add credibility to the study.

#### **3.4.2 Methods of Data Collection**

A variety of methods that will be described below, were used to collect data.

### ❖ Literature Review

The literature review formed a vital component of the research process by assisting with the selection of the research methodology and the interpretation of results. Merriam (1988:63) states that "the findings of a study are best interpreted in the light of what was previously known about the topic".

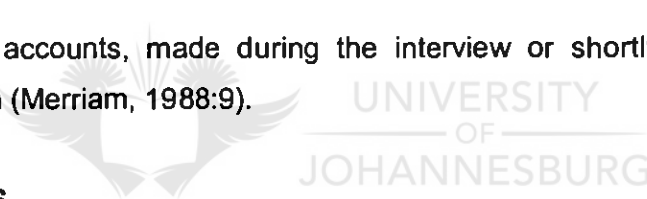
### ❖ Semi-Structured Interviews

Data collection in this study is in the form of twelve semi-structured interviews that were conducted between 15-24 August 2002. The length of each interview varied from 45 minutes to 1 hour.

The qualitative interview allows respondents to respond at length, telling their stories in their own terms, choosing what to emphasise and what to omit. The respondent is free to lead the interview in directions which might not have been anticipated by the researcher (Slavin, 1992:69). As this study focused on the respondents' own meanings and experience it was felt that a structured open-ended questionnaire was appropriate as it would not limit the depth and complexity of the responses but would rather direct the respondents to reflect on their perceptions.

### ❖ Field Notes

Field notes are written accounts, made during the interview or shortly thereafter and are a supportive source of data (Merriam, 1988:9).



## 3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the process of selection, sorting, focusing, discarding and organising of the data in order to make sense of them. The process also includes the integration of the data, the drawing up of conclusions and the verification of the data (Merriam, 1988:127; Miles & Huberman, 1994:10). De Vos (1998:336) adds to this by stating that "analysis is a reasoning strategy with the objective of taking a complex whole and resolving it into parts".

The approach that is followed for data analysis in this study is mainly based on the constant comparative method suggested by Maykut and Morehouse (1994:135):

- ❖ Inductive category coding and simultaneous comparing of units of meaning across categories.
- ❖ Refinement of categories.
- ❖ Exploration of relationships and pattern across categories.
- ❖ Integration of data yielding and understanding of people and settings being studied.

This process involves identifying small units of meaning in the data, which can later serve as the basis for defining larger categories of meaning (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:128). The aim is to

“discover what analytic constructs or categories can be elicited from the stream of behaviour” (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993:44). Miles and Huberman (1994:249) describe this process as a method employed to “understand phenomenon better by grouping and then conceptualising objects that have similar patterns and characteristics”. It may therefore be viewed as an inductive method of moving to higher levels of abstraction by the repeated sorting of phenomena into patterns.

### 3.5.1 Processing of the Data

The following steps were implemented:

- ❖ The data was collected by means of audio recording. The same recordings were then transcribed and translated. An example of a transcribed interview is included in Appendix A. Filed notes were also made.
- ❖ The researcher became familiar with the data by carefully reading through all the transcripts and field notes to reach a holistic understanding.
- ❖ The researcher used a colour coding system to assist in identifying themes and recurring ideas in all the data.
- ❖ The main ideas that emerged were compiled in a list in a process of discovery to be used as the provisionally identified categories (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:133).
- ❖ Similar topics were clustered together forming categories and subcategories. Merriam (1998:135) states that the researcher needs to develop categories that reflect the purpose of the research and that are exhaustive, mutually exclusive, independent and derived from a single classification principle.
- ❖ Semantic units were identified and indicated in the data source. Lincoln and Guba (in Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:128) refer to a semantic unit as the smallest part of information, a phrase/sentence/paragraph that is understandable without additional information, except for knowledge of the researcher’s focus of inquiry.
- ❖ The semantic units were then compared to the categories to find similarities of them. Where there were no identified categories to match semantic units of meaning, new categories were developed.
- ❖ The researcher then used descriptive words to reflect the respondents’ experiences creatively and sensitively in a narrative form.
- ❖ Operational definitions were formed by taking the identified units of meaning, the focus of the research, the researcher’s orientation, perspective and knowledge, as well as the theoretical framework derived from the literature study, into consideration. The identified categories were clustered in order to facilitate analysis and interpretation (An inclusive list of categories appears in Appendix B).

### 3.6 BACKGROUND TO THE DATA

The following table summarises the background of the respondents that were interviewed. They are characterised as resilient individuals that have faced, and continue to face, difficult situations.

**Table 3.1 Summary of the Respondents**

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Situation/s that demand resilience</b>
Respondent 1	Male	50	Death of brother Death of father Divorce Second marriage Started own business Financial disaster
Respondent 2	Female	33	Raped (three times by close family member) Family problems Intense rejection Attempt to commit suicide
Respondent 3	Female	38	Raped Death of husband Second marriage
Respondent 4	Female	30	Family problems University disillusionment Victimisation Started own business
Respondent 5	Male	23	Divorce of parents Paralegic after motorcar accident Death of best friend in same accident
Respondent 6	Female	60	Death of sister Divorce Move from the "platteland" to a big city Child losing his left hand in a accident Divorce of both children Second marriage Death of husband
Respondent 7	Female	35	Break-up of engagement Divorce of parents Severe illness (cancer)
Respondent 8	Female	31	Nervous breakdown/burnout Transition to parenthood
Respondent 9	Male	31	Best friend ruined his relationship with girlfriend Divorce of parents Started own business
Respondent 10	Male	35	Death of father Started own business Restructuring in own business
Respondent 11	Female	36	Divorce Second marriage Difficulty falling pregnant and throughout the pregnancy (twins born at 28 weeks) Children born with illness disabilities Financial problems (husband's partner forced him to leave the practice) Death of child (one of the twins)
Respondent 12	Male	32	Started own business Restructuring in own business

### **3.6.1 Interview Questionnaire**

The questions used during the individual interviews were based on the findings of the literature study conducted in Chapter 2. The questions were initially of a more general nature, becoming more specific towards the end. Some of the typical questions were:

- ❖ What difficult situations and/or setbacks have you experienced in your life?
- ❖ In which contexts did you have to display resilience?
- ❖ How did you experience it (detailed description)?
- ❖ What was your initial reaction (could you bounce back or not)?
- ❖ You have been through a number of experiences. What allowed you to bounce back under these difficult circumstances? Why do people bounce back?
- ❖ Please name the factors/elements that enabled you to bounce back and to continue with your life.
- ❖ Please name the characteristics that enabled you to bounce back.
- ❖ Life requires us to constantly change and adapt. How do these characteristics that you described impact on your outlook on life?
- ❖ Why do you think some people are more resilient than others?
- ❖ Do you believe that people can learn/develop resilience?
- ❖ As you grow and develop as a person, does it become easier/more difficult to bounce back? Why do you think this is so?
- ❖ Do you believe that you are more resilient in one aspect/area of your life than in others?
- ❖ Are there any guidelines/tips/formulas for bouncing back/resilience that you would like to share with people?

## **3.7 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

According to Merriam (1988:163-165), it is of great importance to maintain a scientific ethos and spirit in all forms of research, in order to produce valid and reliable information in an ethical manner. Merriam further states that, "... regardless of the type of research, validity and reliability are concerns that can be approached through careful attention to a study's conceptualisation and the way in which the data was collected, analysed and interpreted".

The researcher will continue with a brief discussion regarding the methods that were employed in this study.

### **3.7.1 Validity**

There are two types of validity, namely internal and external validity.

### **3.7.1.1 Internal Validity**

One of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional and ever-changing (Merriam, 1998:202). LeCompte and Preissle (1993:323) describe internal validity as the extent to which observations and measurements are true representations of reality, that is, do researchers observe and measure what they think they are observing and measuring? It is important for the researcher to capture and portray the reality of the world as it appears to the people in it and to represent these perceptions by means of thick, rich descriptions (Merriam, 1988:120). In this study, internal validity is accomplished by the following methods:

#### **❖ Triangulation**

In order to achieve triangulation throughout the study, the researcher used multiple data collection methods, data sources, analysts and theories to confirm the validity. The data was also analysed by an independent coder who holds a Master's in Industrial Psychology.

#### **❖ Peer Group Examination**

The researcher discussed the findings with other PPL colleagues as they emerged, asking them to comment on the findings thus far (Merriam, 1998:205). During the writing of this essay, the study leader, Prof. DPJ Smith added additional credibility to the findings presented (as per 3.9) by sharing his experience and advice with the researcher.

#### **❖ Researcher's Biases**

In order to account for possible interview bias, the researcher used an open-ended questionnaire, based on the principles of flexibility and freedom, to provide an open situation for discussion. According to Miles and Huberman (1994:8), researchers, like their respondents, are not detached from their object of study. They have their own understandings, convictions and conceptual orientations, and are affected by what they hear and observe.

The researcher stated in Chapter 1, that this study would be conducted from a PPL perspective. Furthermore the theory, on which the study is based, has been discussed in Chapter 2. The rationale behind the data collection methods has also been explained. The interviews were tape-recorded and gathered by means of transcriptions. Taping furthermore has the advantage of giving a permanent record of what was actually said, preventing the possibility of researcher bias having an influence (Slavin, 1992:89). By clarifying the above information, the researcher contributes to the credibility and validity of the findings.

#### **❖ Member Checks**

This involves "taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible" (Merriam, 1998:204). This is one of the most

important aspects of ensuring credibility. After the data analysis in this study, the results were presented to the respondents to ensure the correctness of conclusions. It is important to use the actual words of the respondents as respondents recognise their own words and respond better.

#### ❖ **Audit Trail**

Detailed descriptions of how data was collected, categories were derived and how findings were arrived at were also given in this chapter. Goetz and LeCompte (in Merriam, 1988:173) state that researchers should present their methods in such detail “that other researchers can use the original report as an operating manual by which to replicate the study”.

#### ❖ **Chain of Evidence**

A strong chain of evidence that flows through the research questions, the methodology, the raw data and the findings serves to strengthen the validity of the study (Leedy, 1997:169). Throughout the study, the researcher attempted to establish this chain of evidence as clearly as possible for the reader.

#### **3.7.1.2 External Validity**

External validity, also known in qualitative research as transferability or fittingness (Miles & Huberman, 1994:279), refers to the extent to which findings of one study can be applied or transferred to other situations (Slavin, 1992:103). External validity furthermore refers to the extent to which the results of the study can be generalised. Guba and Lincoln (in Merriam 1998:207) point out that the study must be internally valid; for “there is no point in asking whether meaningless information has any general applicability” (internal validity must first be established before external validity can be discussed).

External validity in this study is strengthened by the use of rich descriptions in describing the concept of resilience and how data was obtained, analysed and interpreted. Enough descriptive information is provided on how people perceive setbacks and difficulties and on the different contexts of resilience, the human qualities and other factors that play a role in resilience to enable readers to determine the extent to which their situations match this research situation (Merriam & Simpson, 1995:103).

#### **3.7.2 Reliability**

Reliability or auditability (Rudestam & Newton, 1992:38) in qualitative studies refers to the extent to which the research can be replicated under similar circumstances, as well as the dependability or consistency (Merriam & Simpson, 1995:102; Rudestam & Newton, 1992:38). Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that no validity is possible without reliability.

According to Lincoln and Guba (in Merriam, 1988:171) reliability and validity are inextricably linked in the conduct of research. They state that the "... demonstration of internal validity amounts to a simultaneous demonstration of reliability". In this study the same measures are applied to ensure reliability, as is the case with validity (as per 3.7.1.1).

### **3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Merriam (1988:179) refers to the fact that ethical dilemmas are likely to emerge at two points during a study: "... during the collection of data and in the dissemination of findings".

Various authors make reference to ethical considerations that one has to bear in mind while doing research (Miles & Huberman, 1994:240; Merriam, 1988:179). The following measures have been used to control the ethical standards of this study:

- ❖ The researcher tried to act sensitively and therefore ensured all respondents that the information would be handled in a confidential and anonymous manner.
- ❖ All respondents participated voluntarily and gave permission to record the interviews.
- ❖ The respondents were ensured that the findings would be shared with them at the conclusion of the study.



### **3.9 FINDINGS**

The discussion that follows presents the main empirical findings of this study. It is important to bear in mind that this is a qualitative study, and as such it is more interested in the subjective meanings underlying people's behaviour and feelings.

#### **3.9.1 Experiences of Setbacks and Difficulties**

The different experiences of the respondents will be clustered according to the contexts as discussed in Chapter 2. The focus will be on the following three contexts: developmental transition, individual adversity and challenging experience. Because of the limited nature of this study, the researcher only refers to the most pertinent examples in the above-mentioned categories.

##### **3.9.1.1 Developmental Transition**

###### **❖ Death of Father**

"It was the most emotional, traumatic, spiritually and physically exhausting time of my life. I can't even describe to you how bad it was. Life according to me had lost a bit of its sparkle. I don't wish



this hell for anyone. God's purpose in this is overwhelmingly evident but the missing is terrible. It is permanent. There are still so many things that I wanted to share with him. It is terribly sad. The irony is that in recent times, I was so intensely aware of how precious life is and that we should make quality time available. I always had these idealistic ideas about life but a person doesn't really know this life in all its dimensions if you haven't tasted the 'bitter' and the 'sweet'. Life goes on but I look at life now with different eyes. Everything is relative" (interview 10:1, 2 & 3).

#### ❖ **Transition to Parenthood**

"Fear of the unknown. I couldn't control what happen to him. Experience of ignorance and helplessness – I was not able to understand everything. To fight, to learn what I needed to learn and to keep going. Very determined to learn, more positive reaction, after two weeks started to enjoy the experience" (interview 8:2).

### 3.9.1.2 Individual Adversity

#### ❖ **Paraplegic after Motorcar Accident**

"It began to strike me even more. I was very angry at God for doing this to me. I felt very helpless! I cried, but it helped and the psychologist worked very hard with me. He helped me a lot. I can't go back, I must go forward! It will get better. And you realise, after a while, that if you can't walk, there are a lot of other things you also can't do. You are no longer independent. So it was obviously a huge shock!" (interview 5:1).

#### ❖ **Best Friend Ruined his Relationship with Girlfriend**

"I think I went through a very big dip in my life. There I went into a type of depression. It motivated me to study and work hard and to put everything into my work. I actually lost myself in my work. If you experience that kind of heartache, then you don't even want to go home any more. You walk around for days in the same clothes; you experience deadness in your emotions" (interview 9:2, 3 & 4).

#### ❖ **Burnout/Nervous Breakdown**

"I felt extreme fear and was not in control of everything as usual. I lost the ability to enjoy life, to be carefree, happy and jolly. Life was really an effort for me, I wasn't interested to brush my teeth and wash my hair" (interview 8:2).

#### ❖ **Divorce**

"Afterwards there was an extreme numbness in me. And then, yes ... you just go on – you get up and you go on" (interview 1:2).

#### ❖ **Financial Disaster**

"With the McCarthy agreement that fell through, I knew I was in trouble because the back-up I had financially was not there. I think my faith pulled me through and I realised that one's closest loved-ones are still important in your life" (interview 1:2).

#### ❖ **Rape**

"Intense rejection – a disappointment, even guilt! Dirtiness. The idea that you are not good enough to be loved. I felt like a failure but I came to a point where I began to realise that success is what the Lord expects of me today" (interview 2:4).

#### ❖ **Children Born with Disability**

"I felt that my life was out of my control with different facets of fear and death. There were seconds when I felt that God has deserted me. There are other moments, when Estiaan was lying in Intensive Care that I remember as moments that really hit me in the stomach that took my breath away. It doesn't allow me to give up; it's not a choice to give up! I experienced the Lord like a big tree where I could go and sit under it and you knew the shade would be there. But I did not ask for it because I no longer had the ability to ask" (interview 11:5 & 6).

#### ❖ **Severe Illness**

"When the doctor first told me that it definitely was cancer, first the shock, the disbelief, can it really be? And shortly thereafter the whole question of 'why me', is it really necessary? And then very soon after this, the absolute calmness that came over me and this feeling that it doesn't matter what they say, I know that I am going to be okay. "I have decided I have too much to live for. I am not going to allow him to put a death sentence over my head. And I think really that this whole feeling of I know I can die, obviously I can, but I wont die ... I wont die now" (interview 7:1 & 2).

#### ❖ **Unstable Childhood** (respondent supported his mother through several divorces)

"As a young child I did not have control over what happened to me ... life just happened to me! Suddenly, while I was still a child, I was being exposed to various groups of people in life, and there for the first time I learnt that it does not help to be scared; you have to stand up for yourself. And if you don't stand up for yourself then it necessarily means that certain decisions will be taken for you" (interview 9:2 & 3).

### 3.9.1.3 **Challenging Experiences**

#### ❖ **Started Own Business**

"Although the step was very risky from a professional career point of view (Senior Lecturer with a strong possibility of professorship), a marriage point of view (married for 7 years with children), as

well as a financial point of view (put up my house as security), the focus, passion, will and faith was so strong that there wasn't even place to experience this exciting time in my life as a difficult situation. It was, and still is, fantastic, enriching and a privilege to provide work for other people, to establish a positive work culture and environment and at the same time, to take on the international business world with a team of friends" (interview 10:3).

### **3.9.2 Human Qualities and Other Factors**

The responses/data from the interviews are categorised according to the qualities of resilience/other factors as described in Chapter 2. An asterix (\*) will indicate new categories derived from the interviews. The following is a selection of directly translated statements made by various respondents to the interview questions.

#### **❖ Ability to Choose\***

I made a choice in life (interview 3:7). I think it is a choice and a conscious decision (interview 5:5) ...you can choose to stand up... (interview 11:5).

#### **❖ Ability to Focus and Control Impulses**

Take control of the situation and focus on solving the problem (interview 10:12). I can focus amid my overwhelming emotions (interview 11:10). Focus, self-control and discipline (interview 10:13). The most important thing is to get focused (interview 12:4). I want to have control over how I feel, how I react and how resilient I can be in my life (interview 8:6).

#### **❖ Ability to Take Risks**

I am not scared to meet people and to do things even if there is a risk, an emotional risk or any other risks. I am prepared to take those risks (interview 8:5).

#### **❖ Acceptance of Change**

Accept that all people have problems, difficult situations and setbacks to cope with (interview 10:12). A person often thinks that acceptance comes with time, but I must tell you that all these emotions literally happened within 5-10 minutes (interview 7:1). My situation has changed, now I must also change (interview 6:4).

#### **❖ Adaptability/Flexibility**

I adapt quite easily (interview 8:4). I also have the ability to adapt to my circumstances (interview 5:4). I am also extremely adaptable (interview 11:11). A person adapts ... you must carry on (interview 11:12). I saw it as a challenge (interview 9:2 & 4).

#### ❖ **Altruism/Servitude**

I can still mean something to other people and I have the need to give to people around me (interview 7:5). I am truly aware of other people's needs (interview 7:6). Your potential to influence people around you and make their lives easier and better (interview 12:9).

#### ❖ **Ambition/Drive \***

I definitely have strong ambition (interview 4:6). I know very definitely where I am going to and how I plan to get there and what I really want out of life (interview 7:6). I wanted to be successful (interview 1:6). I have a strong driving force (interview 11:9). I must come out on top (interview 1:5).

#### ❖ **Analytical Ability \***

I analyse things to constantly work with the naked truth (interview 4:3). To investigate, to weigh up, to analyse, so that one can develop tools that will be your lifeline should you end up in a similar situation (interview 9:8). The fact that I am analytical has helped me a lot (interview 11:11).

#### ❖ **Assertiveness**

I have become very assertive ... I've learned to control my own life by asserting myself by getting to say no when I need to say no (interview 8:4). I can't live in harmony with everyone and everything to my own detriment (interview 4:5). To a large degree, I was an absolute "people pleaser", I could never say no, and how I have now learnt that a person can't always say yes (interview 7:5).

#### ❖ **Attitude towards Life\***

Passionate, goal focused, dynamic lifestyle and attitude towards life (interview 10:10). I see life as a challenge, to go all out in life and make the best of it despite my circumstances (interview 11:13).

#### ❖ **Authenticity**

I really think that I am quite an authentic person. I know who I am, I am in touch with who I am and I'm honest with myself, I'm sincere to who I am (interview 8:4). Honourability (interview 10:13). To maintain a sense of happiness and to be content in my life (interview 8:5).

#### ❖ **Balance\***

For complete resilience it is important to have balance between facets of your life, like work, personal life, relaxation and also to be in touch with changes (interview 4:9). The focus must be to look at the balance in your life (interview 12:4).

### ❖ **Belief in the Transcendent**

If I didn't have a true faith and a strong trust in the Lord, I don't know what I would have held onto during this time (interview 7:3). The Lord will help me to get through this thing (interview 3:2). The realisation that there is a Greater Power, who looks after me (interview 9:7). There is only one thing that allows you to carry on and that is through your faith in the Lord (interview 6:3). I must go on and work towards eternal life, because that is actually what life is about (interview 5:4). Solid spiritual foundation, deep personal relationship with God (interview 10:11). God is with me and that is what makes me strong (interview 11:7). Purpose and meaning forms part of this category:

**Purpose\*:** I honestly have a very definite sense of purpose (interview 7:7). Whatever happens, there is a purpose (interview 12:5).

**Meaning\*:** The Lord has a deeper meaning for your life (interview 5:6).

### ❖ **Cognitive Competence**

Intellect also plays a role, to be able to integrate information and values and to be able to come to a conclusion (interview 4:6). I think that although I am a heart person, I am also a cognitive person (interview 7:7).

### ❖ **Courage\***

The truth is that if you don't have courage and kill the monster with your own hands, it will never leave you alone (interview 9:4).

### ❖ **Creative Problem Solving**

It is possible for me to look at all the options, future possibilities within realistic limits (interview 12:6). I am very busy, my brain never stops working, I also dream all the time, I think it is part of my nature (interview 11:11).

### ❖ **Decision Making**

To be able to make difficult decisions and stick to them (interview 12:6). I made a conscious decision every time (interview 11:4). Our decisions today influence our future (interview 9:8).

### ❖ **Endurance and Determination**

I have a personality that says I won't give up (interview 3:6). I have the type of character that wants to continue (interview 3:6). I won't bail out of a situation when it gets tough: I will stick with it, until I see it through to the end (interview 8:4). Determination, purposefulness and to finish something that I have started (interview 6:4). Tenacity, because like I said a person must go on with your life (interview 5:4).

#### ❖ **Energy\***

I am energetic and I'm enthusiastic about life (interview 8:5). Part of the bounce back effect is energy and I think what is important is to be able to reproduce your own energy on a continual basis and to be in touch with yourself and stress factors (interview 4:5).

#### ❖ **Express Feelings Honestly**

Later, I was no longer afraid to tell people about my situation. I was no longer embarrassed to talk about it and I told them I had lost my job and had no bread. I am not afraid to say to people, "Help, I can't do it" (interview 3:5).

#### ❖ **Gratitude\***

I have a life of extreme gratitude (interview 9:9). You must appreciate everything you have (interview 5:4). I appreciate everything more now (interview 5:5).

#### ❖ **Inherent Resilience\***

The Lord made me this way (interview 3:5). I think God made me this way (interview 11:7).

#### ❖ **Internal Locus of Control**

I look at the world from a point of view where I ask, "what can I control?" (interview 8:5). I make myself happy within me and do not let circumstances determine my happiness (interview 8:3). I have a definite internal locus of control (interview 7:7). There is no person who can tell you to get over it; it must come from within (interview 6:5).

#### ❖ **Leadership Qualities\***

I think leadership qualities definitely play a role (interview 4:6). The fact that I am a natural leader (interview 7:6).

#### ❖ **Leaving a Legacy\***

...but a person must live as if every moment is your last (interview 9:10).

#### ❖ **Optimism**

I can always see the silver lining in the dark clouds. I can say, okay this situation is bad, but there is always a positive side to it (interview 8:5). I am an optimist by nature; I will always see the positive side (interview 7:6). I have a positive outlook but with realistic frames (interview 12:6). I am positive and I like to see the good in people (interview 11:9).

#### ❖ **Passion\***

A passion for life, dynamic (interview 10:13). To be passionate in my life about the world around me, to be energetic, that helped me to live life to the fullest (interview 8:5). My passion that I have

for life, there is too much to live for, so many precious things in life, there are so many things that I still want to do and discover and the more I do, the more things I get to do and the more I want to do (interview 7:6).

#### ❖ **Positive Social Orientation**

I really care about other people, I know a person must care in an empathic way but sometimes one must also care in a sympathetic way (interview 7:6). Strong interpersonal relationships (interview 12:6). Extraordinary relationships with family, extended family and friends (interview 10:11).

#### ❖ **Realisation of Potential\***

You are given a gift that you as a person can develop optimally with the talents that you have, and there comes a huge responsibility to develop them (interview 9:8).

#### ❖ **Resilient Thinking**

I have definitely got a sense of reality (interview 11:9). I can definitely amidst my emotions carry on and say "this is not as bad, we will have a house again" and to build positively on that (interview 11:11).

#### ❖ **Responsibility**

I would really take responsibility for what happens to me and the decisions I make. I try not to blame other people for things that go wrong. I am very responsible, maybe sometimes too responsible (interview 4:3). I have a strong sense of responsibility (interview 7:6).

#### ❖ **Self-Actualisation\***

I have a strong survival instinct, not just to exist but also to experience self-actualisation (interview 4:4). I want to fulfil and actualise my life goals so that I can enjoy this gift I was given and glorify the Creator and Giver of this gift (interview 9:9).

#### ❖ **Self-Awareness\***

To be introspective, I monitor my levels of emotion - are people making me unhappy and how can I adapt my life to make sure that I get the best out of it and that the people around me also get the best of me (interview 8:4). I am now at the stage where I look introspectively to find where the problem lies (interview 2:5). Self-awareness (interview 12:7).

#### ❖ **Self-Efficacy**

I work through something until it is concluded (interview 4:3). If I make a decision ... I want to make it work (interview 8:4). I said I would do it, I won't lie down, I will do it (interview 11:6).

### ❖ **Self-Help Skills**

I developed the ability to cope (interview 4:6). I learned how to cope and in the midst of this be in control (interview 4:6). ... and helping me and teaching me the life skills that I needed (interview 8: 4).

### ❖ **Self-Motivation and Self-Managed Learning**

That I am someone who has internal motivation (interview 7:6). I was crazy about Dale Carnegie; I did the course and presented it. The positive lessons that one gets there later become part of your life (interview 1:8). I motivate myself (interview 5:5). To me it is all about learning. With every setback that you experience, you must try to gain knowledge about the context and try to understand, why this happened to you (interview 7:5).

### ❖ **Sense of Humour**

A good sense of humour, and some of the times I can see the amusing side of things (interview 8:4). Humour is a really powerful resource available to people. To use humour in stressful situations and to unload a little (interview 12:6). My sense of humour, it is easier to work through and accept things if you can laugh and joke about it (interview 5:4). We often banished our heartache with laughter (interview 11:9).

### ❖ **Stable Childhood/Upbringing**

My upbringing definitely has something to do with it. I grew up in a house where you could always motivate yourself and you were never criticized, you were always praised in every situation. And I think it made me strong (interview 11:7).

### ❖ **Strong Inner Self**

I know who I am and I know where I want to go and so I've got a good self-esteem and a good concept of who I am. Positive self-image and I think also trust in my abilities ... you can turn everything into something positive for yourself (interview 12:7). ... I know I can do it (interview 1:7). I knew I was the best (interview 1:9). Developed much more self-confidence (interview 9:3).

### ❖ **Support Systems \***

My husband was so supportive, he was my mentor ... (interview 8:3 & 4). Extraordinary relationships with family, extended family and friends (interview 10:12). The community meant a great deal to me (interview 5:3). I know my parents are always there to support me regardless of the situation (interview 12:5). My support structure (interview 4:5). We all need other people, because you as a person are only defined by your relationship with others, without other people around you, you almost don't have a right to exist. "No man is an island" (interview 7:10).



❖ **Talent for Serendipity**

... and to concentrate on the positive and to get the best out of a situation (interview 11:9). And because the Lord gave me a second change, I am going to make a success of my life (interview 5:2).

❖ **The Will to Live**

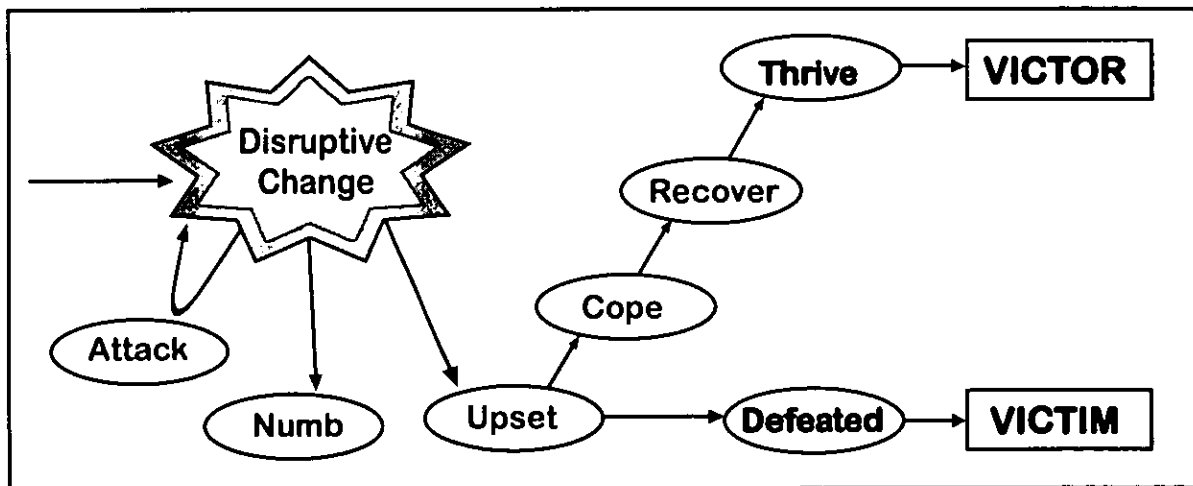
I want to live and I want to get back to the way I was. I like living; I want to live life to the fullest (interview 8:5). And I really think that this whole feeling of “you know, I can die, obviously I can, but I won’t die”. I don’t want to die now (interview 7:2).

**3.10 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF DATA**

**3.10.1 Findings on the Experiences of the Respondents**

In part 1 of the findings (as per 3.9.1) a variety of the respondents’ experiences were clustered according to the different contexts discussed in Chapter 2. The researcher would like to point out a few specific aspects.

It is clear that each respondent’s ability to bounce back was challenged by a unique set of circumstances. According to Smith (2002:94-96) the phases of dealing with change are denial, anger, depression/despair, negotiation and acceptance. Despite the initial emotional reaction, all the respondents showed the necessary self-knowledge and self-awareness that assisted them to identify and control their emotions. As the respondents worked through the different phases, their final reaction was to choose to become a victor, not a victim and to thrive despite their circumstances. The following figure illustrated the different ways people react to disruptive life changes.



**Figure 3.1 Different ways People React to Disruptive Life Changes**  
(Based on Siebert, 1996:91)

During the interviews it became clear that the respondents all experienced an initial period where they needed intense support, which helped them to own their situation and take responsibility for their circumstances. According to them, "the key to making your life better is to focus on changing yourself more than changing others". All the respondents expressed a definite link to their religious faith and the way in which they find purpose and meaning in life. The respondents further mentioned that: "it is not easy, but it is possible to add meaning to our lives from the way we choose to deal with sorrow and pain". They gained insight into their own situation, which influenced their perspective of life and facilitated them to grow to a stronger inner self. Cashman (2000:87) summarised these experiences best when he said: "These situations require change and learning to ensure purposeful growth toward who we really are".

### 3.10.2 Findings on the Human Qualities and Other Factors of Resilience

Part 2 of the findings (as per 3.9.2) revealed that the sample group (which formed the basis of the empirical element of this study) identified 44 categories which, in their opinion, contribute to the human qualities and other factors that allow people to bounce back in times of setbacks and difficulties. The researcher will now briefly discuss these findings.

A positive future orientation was projected by the majority of the respondents, suggesting the possession of an **optimistic view** of what is still to come. Coupled to this, they projected an achievement orientated **attitude** and **tenacity**. The attitude was that of "If I want to, I will" testifying to ongoing **drive** despite circumstances. A positive attitude is a salient quality of the resilient but does not imply that resilient individuals are immune to sadness, frustration or negative feelings. The dominant attitude however is positive, suggesting that resilient individuals are in **control** of their attitudes.

The respondents made reference to an **internal locus of control**. There was a repeated sense that although they experience difficulty and unhappiness, they will not be ruled by their circumstances. In general they appeared to remain positive, always holding out for a better tomorrow. The respondents also seemed to **accept** their circumstances, but refused to allow them to dictate their attitudes. **Assertive behaviour** has also been confirmed by some of the respondents as a quality of the resilient individual. According to MacFarlane (1998:165) assertiveness is a skill, which endorses resilience in that it fosters autonomy and an internal locus of control.

The respondents projected a positive **self-concept**, which suggests greater facilitation of interpersonal functioning. Another important quality named is **positive interpersonal relationships**, including the willingness to interact with others. This willingness coupled with a

more outgoing nature, leads to **positive social orientation**, which in turn affords the respondents **support and security**. A desire for love and an **appreciation** of what is beautiful and positive were also expressed by some of the respondents which in turn foster good interpersonal relations, and thus support resilience (MacFarlane, 1998:147).

Other respondents indicated **drive, analytical ability and cognitive competence** as important human qualities. This allows **creative problem solving and decision-making**.

Some of the respondents indicated that they have the need to experience **self-actualisation** and that they want to fulfil their life goals in order to glorify the Giver thereof. According to MacFarlane (1998:15), self-actualisation is intrinsic to resilience. The respondents also made reference to their ability to be introspective, **self-aware** and to consistently stay in touch with themselves in any situation. Another quality that was addressed was the ability to **express feelings honestly**.

There was consensus from the respondents that resilient individuals accept **responsibility** for their lives and make decisions that affirm their values. One respondent expressed the view that: "You are given a gift that you as a person can develop optimally with the talents that you have, and there comes a huge responsibility to develop them" (interview 9:8). Other respondents named **flexibility and adaptability** to one's circumstances – both mentally and emotionally – as important. One respondent even perceived change as a challenge. Another view was that resilient individuals are willing to take **risks** and strike out into the unknown if they believe there is a reasonable chance for success.

Interestingly, two respondents expressed the opinion that they have inherent resilience: "The Lord made me this way" (interview 3:5; interview 11:7). Other qualities expressed included the ability to **think resiliently**, implying that they are able to think positively, but also take into account the reality. One of the respondents felt that her **stable childhood and upbringing** definitely contributed to her resilience in that the secure environment made her strong. **Passion, energy and courage** were also expressed by the respondents, which are not only qualities of true leaders, but also of resilient individuals.

A quality expressed by all the respondents was a **sense of humour**, as a powerful resource available for them to cope in difficult times. The respondents also referred to their internal motivation and that they are determined to **learn**.

Another view expressed is that resilient individuals portray **authenticity**. This is evident in the following statement: "I know who I am, I am in touch with who I am and I'm honest with myself, I'm

sincere to who I am” (interview 8:4). According to Cashman (2000:175), “Action Mastery is the ongoing commitment to pull together all of our inner resources in order to go beyond what we thought was possible”. Some of the respondents mastered this competency and mentioned that they work actively through problems until they are concluded. “If I make a decision ... I will make it work” (interview 8:4). In this, they referred to the quality of **self-efficacy**.

“Balance Mastery is a dynamic centering of our life to build resilience and to enhance effectiveness and fulfilment” (Cashman, 2000:153). The data suggest that most of the respondents see **balance** as an important quality to experience complete resilience. Connecting with **purpose** in life is one of the most important points in creating balance. In fact, it is the centred position of strength. From the data it becomes evident that a sense of purpose beyond oneself is the conviction that life is worth living: “I have a reason to live again” (interview 5:5); “I honestly have a very definite sense of purpose” (interview 7:7). The respondents also experienced meaning in their lives from their solid spiritual foundation, **religious beliefs** and deep, personal relationship with God: “The Lord will help me to get through this thing” (interview 3:2). One of the respondents found **meaning** in the fact that she had to take care of her child after the death of her husband: “I have a child and I am responsible for my child. If I give up now, what will happen to her (interview 3:6)?” For many respondents **altruism** seems to be a quality that strengthens their resilience. A comment from one respondent worth noting here is that: “I can still mean something to other people and I have the need to give to people around me” (interview 7:5).

Another significant remark from a respondent was that “one must live every moment as if it is your last” (interview 9:10) and thereby leaving your **legacy**. The **will to live** and to realise one’s full potential have also been addressed by the respondents. Two of the respondents, showed the highest level of resilience, naming the ability to **turn misfortune into good luck**.

### 3.10.3 Comparison between the Literature Study and the Empirical Findings

Table 3.2 lists a comparison between the human qualities and other factors as found in the literature study and the empirical findings.

**Table 3.2 Summary of the Findings**

<b>CAPTER 2 (Literature Study)</b>	<b>CHAPTER 3 (Empirical Study)</b>	<b>SIMILARITIES</b>	<b>NEW CATEGORIES</b>
Ability to Choose	Ability to Choose	Ability to Choose	-
Ability to Focus and Control Impulses	Ability to Focus and Control Impulses	Ability to Focus and Control Impulses	-
Ability to Take Risks	Ability to Take Risks	Ability to Take Risks	-
Acceptance of Change	Acceptance of Change	Acceptance of Change	-
Adaptability/Flexibility	Adaptability/Flexibility	Adaptability/Flexibility	-
Altruism/Servitude	Altruism/Servitude	Altruism/Servitude	-
-	Ambition/Drive	-	Ambition/Drive
-	Analytical Ability	-	Analytical Ability
Assertiveness	Assertiveness	Assertiveness	-
-	Attitude towards Life	-	Attitude towards Life
Authenticity	Authenticity	Authenticity	-
-	Balance	-	Balance
Belief in the Transcendent	Belief in the Transcendent	Belief in the Transcendent	-
Cognitive Competence	Cognitive Competence	Cognitive Competence	-
-	Courage	-	Courage
Creative Problem Solving	Creative Problem Solving	Creative Problem Solving	-
Decision Making	Decision Making	Decision Making	-
Desire to Improve*	-	-	-
Endurance and Determination	Endurance and Determination	Endurance and Determination	-
-	Energy	-	Energy
Express Feelings Honestly	Express Feelings Honestly	Express Feelings Honestly	-
Forgiveness*	-	-	-
-	Gratitude	-	Gratitude
Hope*	-	-	-
-	Inherent Resilience	-	Inherent Resilience
Internal Locus of Control	Internal Locus of Control	Internal Locus of Control	-
-	Leadership Qualities	-	Leadership Qualities-
-	Leaving a Legacy	-	Leaving a Legacy
-	Meaning	-	Meaning
Playful, Childlike Curiosity and Spirit*	-	-	-
Optimism	Optimism	Optimism	-
-	Passion	-	Passion
Positive Social Orientation	Positive Social Orientation	Positive Social Orientation	-
-	Purpose	-	Purpose
-	Realisation of Potential	-	Realisation of Potential
Resilient Thinking	Resilient Thinking	Resilient Thinking	-
Responsibility	Responsibility	Responsibility	-
-	Self-Actualisation	-	Self-Actualisation
-	Self-Awareness	-	Self-Awareness
Self-Efficacy	Self-Efficacy	Self-Efficacy	-
Self-Help Skills	Self-Help Skills	Self-Help Skills	-
Self-Motivation and Self-Managed Learning	Self-Motivation and Self-Managed Learning	Self-Motivation and Self-Managed Learning	-
Sense of Humour	Sense of Humour	Sense of Humour	-
Stable Childhood/Upbringing	Stable Childhood/Upbringing	Stable Childhood/Upbringing	-
Strong Inner Self	Strong Inner Self	Strong Inner Self	-
-	Support Systems	-	Support Systems
Talent for Serendipity	Talent for Serendipity	Talent for Serendipity	-
The Will to Live	The Will to Live	The Will to Live	-
Trust in Intuition*	-	-	-

\*Categories from the literature study that were not mentioned in the empirical findings

As illustrated in Table 3.2, the following new categories were contributed in the empirical findings: ambition/drive, analytical ability, attitude towards life, balance, courage, energy, gratitude, inherent resilience, leadership qualities, leaving a legacy, meaning, (sub-category of belief in the transcendent), passion, potential realisation, purpose (sub-category of belief in the transcendent), self-actualisation, self-awareness and the availability of support systems.

There are, however, a few human qualities and other factors identified in Chapter 2 that were not mentioned by the respondents. This does not imply that these elements are not significant, but as the interviews were semi-structured, respondents were not probed and therefore they only mentioned the human qualities and other factors meaningful to their ability to bounce back. These human qualities and other factors referred to include: desire to improve, forgiveness, hope, playful, childlike curiosity and spirit and trust in intuition.

### **3.11 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The objective of this chapter was to describe the research design and methodology. Aspects related to sampling, data collection, data analysis, validity and reliability and ethical considerations were also addressed. An exposition of the data collected from the individual interviews, a discussion of the data and the findings of the researcher concluded this chapter.

What is also clear from the findings of the empirical study is that the personal qualities of resilient individuals occur in a reciprocal relationship in which each attribute endorses, and is endorsed by the others. The overall idea that was put forward implies that the respondents develop skills on an ongoing basis in order to cope in their different situations. The researcher would also like to emphatically state that throughout the findings it is evident that choice is integral to the ability to bounce back.

The power of choice is further emphasised by Rogers' observation that "The good life is a process, not a state of being. It is a direction, not a destination. The direction which constitutes the good life is that which is selected by the total organism..." (in Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1990:411). Persons who are not fully functioning are by implication choosing not to grow towards resilience.

Buscaglia (1992:111) is equally adamant about the power of choice: "Those who suffer the illusion that they are nothing more than computers, manipulated by programmers over which they have no control, will never fully know, love or live life". The implication is that choice is fundamental to achieving a meaningful existence, regardless of the circumstances (MacFarlane, 1998:158).

Maslow (1962:10) also asserts that “A person is both actuality and potentiality”. In other words, the future exists currently within the individual, and the individual’s power lies in his choice to actualise his potentiality. These choices impact forcibly on the potential for resilience. If Maslow is to be believed, the potentialities and capacities for self-actualisation - or resilience - are part of every human being. According to Maslow (1962:155-162), the choice to activate them belongs to the individual.

The findings of the resilient individuals indicate a tendency to choose to take control, rather than to submit to their circumstances. It is as if they understood the power of choice in that “we can either exercise control over our lives or lose precious time as victims of circumstances” (Buscaglia, 1992:204).

Another important quality evident throughout this study is a belief in the transcendent with specific reference to religious faith, purpose and meaning. Young-Eisendrath (1996:21-22), confirms this quality by stating: “...the capacity to be resilient, to respond to difficulty with development, is rooted in many diverse factors, but it consistently depends on one thing: the meaning you, the individual, make of where you are”.

In light of the above, the researcher has come to the conclusion that what underlies the interacting web of personal qualities in resilient individuals is a personal choice to self-actualise regardless of circumstances. In this context, self-transcendence complements self-actualisation as a way to find meaning in life and to achieve real success and fulfilment. The personal qualities of the resilient individual thus play a role in contributing to the ability to keep the individual on the path of self-actualisation and self-transcendence, regardless of the circumstances.

The researcher would like to conclude this chapter with the words of Buscaglia (1982:131):

*“To me, probably the most exciting thing in the world is the realisation that I have the potential of being fully human. I can’t be a God, but I can be a fully functioning human being”.*



# Chapter 4

JOHANNESBURG



## CHAPTER 4: PPL IMPLICATIONS, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

*"You don't get to choose how you're going to die, or when. You can only decide how you're going to live. Now."  
(Baez in Buscaglia, 1992:239)*

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3, the researcher described the research design and methodology. An exposition of the data collected, a discussion of the data and the relevant findings of the researcher concluded Chapter 3. In this chapter the study will be finalised with a summary of the findings of the previous chapters and the PPL implications thereof. Suggestions for further research are also made.

### 4.2 THE POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION OF PPL REGARDING RESILIENCE

In Chapter 1, PPL was described as a scientific study of the ongoing commitment and accompaniment of the human being to valid and functional self-knowledge and self-awareness; finding a purpose; realising full potential (self-actualisation); co-operation with and adding value to other people's lives (self-transcendence) and professional competence in terms of organisational efficiency and effectiveness (as per 1.6). The aim of PPL was defined as providing personal, interpersonal and professional strategies and solutions to assist in realising a person's potential, to find meaning and purpose in life, to add value to others' lives and to realise a fundamental human need: to leave a legacy.

The study was conducted in order to understand the nature and role of the human qualities and other factors that play a role in resilience to equip the PPL Practitioner with an in-depth understanding of the concept to inculcate resilience in vulnerable individuals and to strengthen resilience in already resilient individuals. The researcher will now discuss the implications for and the potential contribution of PPL regarding resilience. The guidelines suggested will be based on the findings of Chapters 2 and 3.

In the course of this study, the researcher identified numerous PPL-related themes. The researcher feels strongly that the contribution of PPL with regard to the field of resilience is significant. However, because of the limited nature of this study only the most important aspects will be addressed.

#### 4.2.1 Adaptability/Flexibility

Personal and professional effectiveness is in direct proportion to a person's ability to adapt to change. All significant change thus begins with self-change. "If there is no transformation inside each of us, all the structural change in the world will have no impact on our institution"

(Cashman, 2000:97). The following words capture the essence of PPL regarding change: "Whatever is flexible will tend to grow; whatever is rigid and blocked will wither and die" (Cashman, 2000:96). In other words, vulnerable individuals need to learn to be flexible; to take life as it comes. In this regard, letting go of perfectionism or knowing how to employ relaxation techniques would be useful. A sense of humour would also be invaluable in times of setbacks and difficulties.

#### **4.2.2 Assertiveness**

Individuals who show a lack of resilience need to be taught assertiveness skills. Attention should be given to a true understanding of the concept assertiveness and an understanding that assertiveness entails personal responsibility. Branden (1994:118-119) provides a comprehensive explanation of the concept: "Self-assertion does not mean belligerence or inappropriate aggressiveness; it does not mean pushing to the front of the line or knocking other people over; it does not mean upholding my own rights while being blind, or indifferent to everyone else's. It simply means the willingness to stand up for myself, to be who I am openly, to treat myself with respect in all human encounters".

#### **4.2.3 Attitude towards Life**

One of the most important anthropological characteristics in the context of resilience refers to the freedom to choose. Frankl (1963:137) best described this as: "The ultimate freedom is the right to choose my attitude in any given situation". Given this wisdom, the researcher believes that it is crucial for vulnerable individuals to be taught the truth of Frankl's words, and that resilient individuals are reminded of them.

The PPL Practitioner should thus encourage the following behaviour to vulnerable and resilient individuals:

- ❖ Begin the day well by getting up early and choosing to appreciate the inherent worth and potential of every day (MacFarlane, 1998:170).
- ❖ Use laughter as an antidote and choose to laugh even if laughter would not be akin to the individual's mood.
- ❖ Exercise regularly as this is an important aid in beating negative feelings and sustaining a positive attitude.
- ❖ Keep a gratitude journal and strive towards the appreciation of beauty. An active striving of that which is positive will impact positively on an overall attitude.

#### **4.2.4 Internal Locus of Control**

The capacity to assume control rather than assuming the status of a victim is the individual's choice and this should be made clear to vulnerable individuals who are typically not authors of

their own destiny. The following recommendations are made by the researcher to achieve an internal locus of control:

- ❖ In choosing to respond like a victor to life's difficulties, individuals need to be taught the power of visualisation. Covey (1990:96) refers to "begin with the end in mind". In the same way Wells (1990:7) emphasises that "Keeping your mind in mind matters because the quality of your thoughts affects the quality of your life. This means that you take care of your life by taking charge of your thoughts, and you can take charge of your thoughts with the help of visualisation." For this reason, it is important that vulnerable individuals are taught to visualise, in order to encourage an internal locus of control.
- ❖ Many individuals are so caught up in their personal tragedies that their lives are placed on hold. Therefore the vulnerable individual must also be facilitated through a process to stop blaming and to accept responsibility for moving forward.
- ❖ Individuals must also be encouraged to monitor their perspective on events because that will certainly impact on their locus of control. Ellis' ABC method would be useful in this respect because individuals will learn to recognise and replace negative thought patterns.
- ❖ Individuals should also be taught how to analyse their beliefs, as constructive and destructive beliefs impact on the locus of control. They should also be encouraged to challenge destructive beliefs.

#### **4.2.5 Positive Social Orientation**

For vulnerable individuals to develop a healthy self-esteem, they have to be taught to participate and to derive optimal benefit from social relations. From a PPL perspective, the researcher recommends training, which should focus on how to interact optimally with other human beings. Special attention should be paid to communication skills (including listening skills and the expression of empathy) and negotiation skills (including conflict management and appropriate assertiveness). Even the resilient individual, who relates well socially, would benefit from having his/her repertoire of social skills extended.

#### **4.2.6 Purpose in Life**

In order to achieve real success and fulfilment, from a PPL perspective, the individual ultimately has to master purpose. Purpose is that one achievement that is worth seeking with our entire heart and mind (Cashman, 2000:77). Purpose is also not purpose without adding value to others. According to Cashman (2000:79): "It is not self-expression for its own sake; it is self-expression that creates value for those around you". The PPL Practitioner can assist the individual to discover his/her purpose.

#### **4.2.7 Realisation of Potential**

In order to assist individuals to realise their full potential, the PPL Practitioner should:

- ❖ Encourage vulnerable individuals to choose to live a full life, and motivate resilient individuals to continue living the full life they have chosen to live.
- ❖ Assist the individual in the creation of reality awareness. The goal is to empower individuals to confess: "I accept the reality of my problems, but I am not defined by them. My problems are not my essence. My fear, pain, confusion, or mistakes are not my core" (Branden, 1994:163).
- ❖ Investigate and identify the personal strengths of the individual in order to provide him/her with some initial empowerment.
- ❖ Assist the individual to arrive at a realistic, positive personal vision and mission statement for the future (MacFarlane, 1998:167).
- ❖ Teach individuals that failure should be seen as a starting point rather than as an ending, or as an "... opportunity to begin again more intelligently" (Ford in Canfield & Wells, 1994:114).
- ❖ Coach the individuals to live purposefully, thereby accepting responsibility for themselves and their actions in life. Allied to the idea of living purposefully is the idea of realistic goal-setting.
- ❖ Assist individuals to reframe obstacles as challenges.

#### **4.2.8 Strong Inner Self**

According to Branden (1994:45): "There is no value judgment more important to man – no factor more decisive in his psychological development and motivation – than the estimate he passes on himself". For this reason, the PPL Practitioner should propose the following guidelines:

- ❖ Individuals need to be guided to a point where they can acknowledge themselves as worthwhile and unique human beings, despite their circumstances. Buscaglia's (1992:45) message: "You have something to offer that will never again be possible. To devalue this is not only a tragedy for you, but, in fact for the world" reflects that vulnerable individuals need to accept this and make it their reality, rather than merely agree with. Such self-acceptance relies on self-knowledge and a realistic personal evaluation.
- ❖ Individuals should be taught to express their feelings regarding themselves and their needs. It is also important that the individual learns how to be an authentic human being and not merely to fulfil certain roles.
- ❖ Individuals should be encouraged to be good to themselves. This would entail eating nutritiously, sleeping enough, exercising, spending time with people they like, laughing, appreciating beauty and even at times of extreme stress, lowering their expectations of themselves temporarily (MacFarlane, 1998:174).
- ❖ Individuals should be encouraged to love, as a loving relationship will provide a deep sense of security, which will feed the self-concept. As Buscaglia (1992:23) explains: "When we are

fulfilled in love, we can begin to feel a real sense of security, peace and contentment; one that does not fluctuate with the trends of the moment. A loving relationship gives us an inner wealth that outlives the greatest of external pleasures”.

- ❖ Self-forgiveness is also very important if a realistically positive self-concept is to be reached. Individuals need to learn that perfectionism is impossible and that as stepping stones, mistakes are almost desirable. According to MacFarlane (1998:175) individuals need to let go of negative labels derived from past mistakes and actively cultivate new, positive labels.
- ❖ Self-transcendence should also be encouraged, as there is therapeutic value in assisting someone else, and in the process, forgetting oneself. The sense of being able to help someone else uplifts the self-concept.

Within the PPL field, the practitioner should also empower individuals to create a self-managed plan for developing qualities and skills that will improve their ability for handling change, unexpected challenges and disruptive crises that come their way. Elements that could be included in a personal plan may include the following (based on Siebert, 1996:266-267):

- ❖ Develop a curiosity reflex by learning to ask questions.
- ❖ Increase mental and emotional flexibility.
- ❖ Assume that change and having to work with uncertainty and ambiguity are ways of life and learn to handle these with self-confidence.
- ❖ Learn from experience – learning is the antidote to feeling victimised.
- ❖ Take time for self-appreciation. Self-esteem determines how much is learned after something goes wrong – the stronger the self-esteem, the more one learns.
- ❖ When hit by a setback/difficulty follow the surviving and thriving sequence: regain emotional balance, adapt and cope with the immediate situation, thrive by learning and making things turn out well. The better this skill is developed, the faster disaster could be turned into good luck.

In conclusion to the guidelines in this chapter, the researcher would like to caution the reader that the separation of the various human qualities is merely cosmetic. In practice, the guidelines given would need to be integrated into a comprehensive programme, primarily because these human qualities are mutually interdependent and do not function in isolation. If the individual is to be assisted to conquer life's difficulties, a comprehensive programme would need to be developed.

### 4.3 SUMMARY

In Chapter 1 the researcher stated that human life is characterised by constant challenges on individuals, groups and collectivities. The way in which a person responds to what happened in his/her life, is what will make the greatest difference for that person, both personally and professionally. Interviews and surveys showed that life's best survivors value being flexible, resilient and adaptable above any other quality. Resilience refers to a dynamic phenomenon, influenced by both the internal characteristics of the individual, as well as various external life contexts, circumstances, and opportunities (as per 1.1). However, when confronted with life's tensions and challenges, some individuals maintain a relatively stable, strong psychological and physical well-being, whereas others become depressed, sometimes even emotionally and physically ill. Those individuals who react to setbacks and difficulties in a negative way, are not as productive as they could be and are not fulfilling their full potential, both in their personal and professional lives (as per 1.2).

In the light of this, the basic research problem as identified by the researcher, was that some individuals lack resilience and can therefore not cope with the challenges and tensions of everyday life. This problem motivated the research objective and questions addressed in this study. The general objective of this study was to determine what causes people to bounce back from setbacks and difficulties in their personal and professional lives. In order to address this problem, five research questions were formulated which would assist in moving sequentially closer to realisation of the research objective (as per 1.3).

This study has been conducted through a PPL perspective which is based on the assumption that human beings have an ongoing commitment and accompaniment to growth and development, through self-knowledge and self-awareness, finding a purpose, realising one's full potential (self-actualisation), co-operation with and adding value to other people's lives (self-transcendence) and professional ability, skills and competence in terms of organisational efficiency and effectiveness (as per 1.6).

In endeavouring to address the research problem, the researcher subsequently decided to make use of a qualitative research design involving a hermeneutical-phenomenological research strategy supported by a descriptive research approach. The researcher conducted a word and concept analysis, an extensive literature study as well as 12 individual interviews in order to meet the research objective (as per 1.7).

In Chapter 2, three research questions were addressed. Firstly, resilience was defined by means of a word analysis, which involved an etymological examination of the Latin word, "*resalire*" (resile) (as per 2.3.1). A concept analysis on resilience was then done by considering the views of

different authors (as per 2.3.2). Thereafter, a working definition of the concept resilience in harmony with the PPL perspective was developed. Secondly, the following research question was addressed by an explanation of the broad contexts of resilience (as per 2.4). Thirdly, the research question regarding the human qualities and other factors that allow people to bounce back in times of setbacks and difficulties concluded Chapter 2. The researcher studied the literature from a PPL perspective and the findings of a variety of authors were presented which indicated the most important human qualities and other factors (as per 2.5).

In Chapter 3, the question on the perceptions and self-insight of individuals regarding their own reactions to these experiences was explored through empirical research (as per 3.9.1). The research question focusing on the human qualities and other factors that allow people to bounce back in times of setbacks and difficulties was again explored, but by means of empirical research through individual interviews conducted within a variety of contexts (as per 3.9.2). The presentation of the findings from the empirical research (including both the research questions) were preceded by a discussion of the research design (as per 3.3), the methods of sampling and data collection that were used (as per 3.4), the data analysis methods that were adopted (as per 3.5), background to the data and questions used for the interviews (as per 3.6), validity and reliability aspects (as per 3.7) as well as ethical considerations (as per 3.8).

The respondents identified 44 categories (human qualities and other factors) that they considered to be important in terms of their ability to bounce back in times of setbacks and difficulties. These categories were briefly discussed. Chapter 3 was concluded with an in-depth discussion of the data by linking the findings back to the literature study conducted in Chapter 2. In cases where there was an anomaly between the respondents' views and the literature study, the issues were briefly discussed and elaborated upon. Those human qualities and other factors that appear to be the most important were then compiled by means of a table in an attempt to reflect on the pertinent qualities and factors (as per 3.10).

In the first part of this chapter (as per 4.2), the final research question on the implications for and the potential contribution of PPL regarding resilience was addressed. Guidelines from a PPL perspective, to assist in teaching vulnerable and resilient individuals skills to develop and improve their resilience, were given. The second part of this chapter will provide a summary of the findings, areas for further research (as per 4.3), as well as concluding remarks (as per 4.4).

#### **4.4 FINDINGS**

The findings of the literature study in Chapter 2, the empirical research in Chapter 3 and the potential contribution of PPL regarding resilience will now be discussed.

Resilience can generally be conceptualised as an individual's positive response to situations of stress and adversity. The central element in the study of resilience lies in the power of recovery and in the ability to return once again to patterns of adaptation and competence. Resilience, as defined by the word analysis, includes the ability to recover quickly and to become healthy, happy and strong again after setbacks and difficulties (as per 2.3.1). The construct resilience is used to describe "two kinds of adaptive responses: (1) the maintenance of normal development despite the presence of threats or risks ... and (2) recovery from trauma". Through the concept analysis and literature study conducted in Chapter 2, it was found that the working definition of resilience for the context of this study implies the ability to bounce back from life's difficulties and continue along the path of growth, self-actualisation and self-transcendence (as per 2.3.2). This definition of resilience was developed in harmony with the PPL perspective. Resilience may thus be seen as a multifaceted, active process, which enables individuals to use external and internal resources to adapt and cope successfully with challenging and threatening circumstances. Such individuals evaluate life's experiences, choose their attitudes, determine their responses and find meaning in whatever they do/experience.

The following broad contexts of resilience were identified in Chapter 2: challenging experiences, developmental transition, individual adversity, collective adversity, organisational change and socio-political change (as per 2.4). It was also established that two components are essential in the development of resilience: (1) Biological, psychological and environmental risk factors that increase an individual's vulnerability and (2) Protective factors that help an individual counter and resist the effects of personal vulnerabilities and environmental hazards (as per 2.5.1). The researcher believes that risk and protective factors are perhaps merely different ends of the same continuum, and should therefore be viewed as interacting agents within a unique, given context. The researcher is also convinced that resilience is a process, dependent on the reciprocal interaction of its multiple components.

If the researcher were to summarise the role of the human qualities and other factors in resilience according to findings in the literature study, it would seem as if the presence of the following human qualities and other factors is prominent to facilitate resilience: the ability to focus and control impulses, the ability to take risks, acceptance of change, adaptability, altruism/servitude, assertiveness, authenticity, belief in the transcendent, cognitive competence, creative problem solving, decision making, desire to improve, endurance and determination, to express feelings honestly, forgiveness, hope, internal locus of control, playful, childlike curiosity and spirit, optimism, positive social orientation, resilient thinking, responsibility, self-efficacy, self-help skills, self-motivation and self-managed learning, sense of humour, stable childhood/upbringing, strong inner self, talent for serendipity, the will to live and trust in intuition (as per 2.5.2).



Reflecting on the above human qualities and other factors of resilience, it seems evident that a central theme of these factors is the notion of choice. The researcher believes that resilience is fed by a determination to attribute meaning to the self as an individual, thereby disallowing experience to impinge on the sense of the self as an autonomous individual (as per 1.6).

In the empirical study it was found that although the respondents worked through different phases in the change process, their final reaction was to choose to become victors, not victims and to thrive despite their circumstances. Their insight and self-knowledge gained through setbacks and difficulties helped them to become more resilient (as per 3.9.1). The following human qualities and other factors were indicated by the respondents in the empirical study as playing an important role in facilitating resilience: the ability to focus and control impulses, the ability to take risks, acceptance of change, adaptability, altruism/servitude, ambition/drive, analytical ability, assertiveness, attitude, authenticity, balance, belief in the transcendent, cognitive competence, courage, creative problem solving, decision making, energy, to express feelings honestly, endurance and determination, gratitude, inherent resilience, internal locus of control, leadership qualities, leaving a legacy, meaning, optimism, passion, positive social orientation, purpose, realisation of potential, resilient thinking, responsibility, self-actualisation, self-awareness, self-efficacy, self-help skills, self-motivation and self-managed learning, sense of humour, stable childhood/upbringing, strong inner self, talent for serendipity and the will to live (as per 3.9.2).

The overall idea put forward implies that the respondents develop skills on an ongoing basis in order to cope in their different situations. Throughout the empirical findings it was also evident that choice is integral to the ability to bounce back. Another important quality evident throughout this study is a belief in the transcendent with specific reference to religious faith, purpose and meaning. The researcher has come to the conclusion that what underlies the interacting web of human qualities in resilient individuals is a personal choice to self-actualise regardless of circumstances. In this context, self-transcendence complements self-actualisation as a way to find meaning in life and to achieve real success and fulfilment. The human qualities of the resilient individual thus play a role in contributing to the ability to keep the individual on the path of self-actualisation and self-transcendence, regardless of the circumstances (as per 3.11).

PPL contributes to resilience by means of facilitation and counselling solutions (knowledge, skills, behaviour) in areas such as adaptability, assertiveness, attitude towards life, internal locus of control, positive social orientation, purpose in life, realisation of potential and the development of a strong inner self. If the individual is to be assisted to conquer life's difficulties, the guidelines given in this chapter would need to be integrated into a comprehensive programme (as per 4.2).

According to the knowledge of the researcher, the above findings of the literature study and data analysis have met the requirements of the research questions (as per 1.3) of this study.

#### 4.5 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following recommendations can be made with regard to further research concerning the subject of this study:

- ❖ To duplicate the same study with a sample of adolescents, to compare findings in terms of the human qualities and other factors which allow adolescents to bounce back in times of setbacks and difficulties.
- ❖ The correlation, if any, between commitment to personal development and the ability to bounce back in times of setbacks and difficulties.
- ❖ To investigate the question whether resilience can be learned/developed in people at any age.
- ❖ The creation of a detailed programme (utilising the information provided by this study as well as the additional data from this study, which have not been used because of the limited nature of this research essay) aimed at facilitating the knowledge, skills and attitudes which would promote resilience, thereby enhancing growth. Such a study could be ideal for a doctorate in developmental research.

#### 4.6 CONCLUSION

In the researcher's opinion, this study provides hope. It illustrated that individuals can choose to rise above their circumstances to continue along the path of self-actualisation and self-transcendation. The examples given by the respondents who participated in this study is inspiring. Their journey is not without pain or anxiety, but it continues nevertheless and is accurately captured by McGinnis' (1990:93) understanding of resilience: "Our lives are a continuing journey – and we must learn and grow at every bend as we make our way, sometimes stumbling, but always moving toward the finest within us". The researcher acknowledges the fact that she is extremely fortunate to conduct this study in the South-African context, where there are many diverse examples of highly resilient individuals.

The researcher chooses to conclude this study with the words of Crawford (1998:234) which capture the essence of resilience, as it was presented in the literature study, but, more specifically, as it emerged from the empirical findings:

*"Being challenged is our destiny; being resilient is our fulfilment".*

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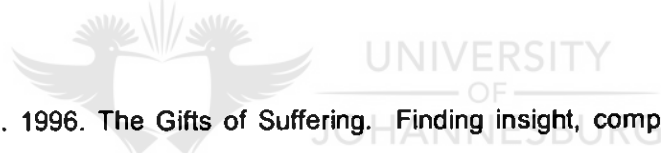
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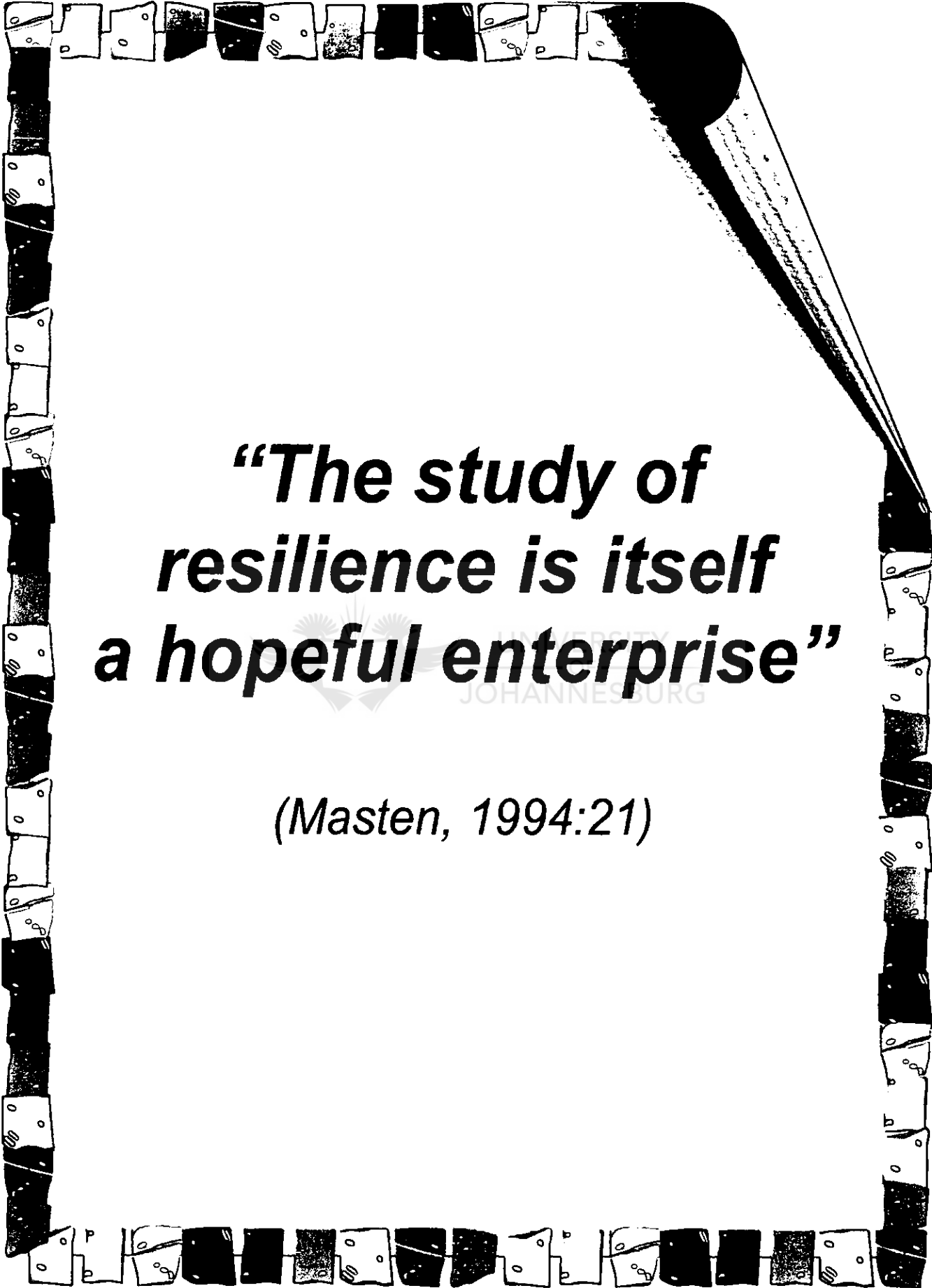
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***“The study of  
resilience is itself  
a hopeful enterprise”***

*(Masten, 1994:21)*

# APPENDIX A

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## Resilience Questionnaire of Respondent 8

(Gender: Female; Age: 31)

**What difficult situations and/or setbacks have you experienced in your life? / In which contexts did you have to display resilience?**

I had this one really bad setback when I was 23 and living in Durban and working for Eskom. I was working long hours and was busy making a decision about leaving Durban and moving to Pretoria with my fiancé, my husband now. And I had a nervous breakdown in 1995 in Durban. What really happened was that I was working long hours, until 2-3 o'clock in the mornings, weekends, driving around a lot in KwaZulu-Natal. I was allowing my boss to put all his workload on to me, and I allowed colleagues to give to me what they needed to be done, I was basically the workhorse for the whole department. I was really young and did not know at that stage how to say no to people, so everybody asked me to do everything. So I took on the work and then went and did it.

My husband asked me to come to Pretoria or Johannesburg, and to come and work there, because he was given a new job there. And at the same time I had to make a decision - do I stay in Durban with my family or do I want to move, start a new career, a new life, in Pretoria? And basically what happened, it all got too much for me. Because I didn't really know how to make the decision, I didn't know how to say no to my husband, because I was not sure if I wanted to come to Pretoria or not. And I didn't know how to say no to my work mates, my colleagues – so everybody was giving me a lot of stuff to do, and eventually it became too much. I started to loose a lot of weight. And ultimately my GP sent me to a psychiatrist who then diagnosed me with severe depression and anxiety and hospitalised me for that. So that was the biggest setback that I had.

Something else that was difficult for me, I wouldn't say it was a setback, it was a positive experience in the end – those first two weeks after the birth of my baby, four weeks ago. When he was born; I was working up to a week before he was born, and the adoption of a new baby was very difficult for me. I found it quite difficult because I did not know what to do or how to do it. Not being able to control everything I did.

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**How did you experience it (detailed description)?**

Okay, let's start with the first one. When I had the burnout, that very first, the feeling that I had or the experience that I had was of extreme fear of the burnout. Because I did not know what was happening to me, and I have always been in control of my life, everything I always did was strictly planned and organised. And suddenly I had this terrible fear of what was happening to me, because I have lost all my ability to enjoy life. I have lost my ability to be carefree, happy, jolly. And life was really an effort to me, to get up in the morning; to brush my teeth and to wash my hair was something I wasn't interested in.

And I think with the birth of my child, my biggest fear was of the unknown. That I couldn't control what would happen to him, if he got sick. Also perhaps the experience was one of ignorance. I wasn't completely able to understand everything. I wasn't able to read a book and know every time he cried what it meant and what he needed. It was one of ignorance and helplessness.

**What was your initial reaction (could you bounce back or not)?**

First incident, in the burnout incident, my first reaction to the experience was to give up. I even have considered giving up on life in general. And I even considered, at one stage when I was driving home, to drive right over the bridge and throw in the towel completely. And that was my first experience. That experience of actually wanting to give up didn't last long. It lasted for the first week or so until I got treatment, speaking about it, seeing a psychologist and a psychiatrist, and then I got better quite quickly.

The second incident, with the baby, my reaction wasn't to give up on life. It was, in that incident, to fight, to learn what I needed to learn and to keep going. I was very determined to learn. It was a much more positive reaction to the situation. And within a week or two I had everything under control, and we bonded and I learned what he wanted and needed. I was then able to enjoy the experience soon after that.

**You have been through a number of experiences. What allowed you to bounce back under these difficult circumstances? Why do people bounce back?**

In the first incident, I must say at the time of the incident I don't think I realised what stopped me from giving in the towel. I just knew that I had to carry on living. At the time when I wanted to

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give in the towel, when I wanted to drive off the bridge, that was a very low point in my life - I didn't drive off the bridge and if I look back in retrospect, I think the Lord must have stopped me from driving off the bridge, wanting me to do something with me life. All that I know is that when I got home, I phoned the psychiatrist that my doctor referred me to, and started talking and I said to him I want to live and I want to get back to the way I was. I want to be happy again and live my life and I don't want to live a life where I don't live to my full potential. It was just my passion for life that probably rescued me. And with the baby, he was obviously my inspiration, because I was very keen to have a baby, it was a planned baby and I had a wonderful pregnancy and I was looking forward to meeting him, and having a relationship with him. So, having the baby was the inspiration for obviously not giving in the towel.

**Please name the factors/elements that enabled you to bounce back and to continue with your life**

Okay, in the first one, was my husband because he was supportive, he was my mentor. He said to me I am not reaching my full potential and I need to do what makes me happy, I have to start focusing on myself making myself happy within myself and not to make other people happy to make myself happy. I must not let people around me and my circumstances determine my happiness, I must live within myself. And at that time that I was in hospital, the church people and the minister came to me in hospital. So I would say those people had a huge impact on me, and helping me and teaching me the life skills that I needed. And with my baby, obviously again my husband and obviously my baby, because he needed me, because I could see he needed me to be well. And obviously my mother as well, she came and spent time with me. And my circumstances, I've got a good set of friends here in Pretoria and they came and supported me and made sure that I'm happy, phoned me, came to visit. So really I would say all the people that supported me.

**Please name the characteristics that enabled you to bounce back**

I think probably one of the first things is that I adapt quite easily, so I'm quite adaptable. If I make a decision that I'm going to move to Johannesburg or Pretoria, then I want to make it work. So going along with adaptability is tenacity. I won't bail out of a situation when it gets tough, I will stick with it, even sometimes if it is a stupid idea, I will still stick with it, until I see it through to the end. And I think in that first situation, I made the decision to make the move to Pretoria and that definitely saw me through that difficult time, because I moved to Pretoria during that difficult time. And then I really think that I am quite an authentic person, authenticity if you want to call it that, I know who I am, I am in touch with who I am and I'm honest to myself,

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I'm sincere to who I am. And I have become very assertive from the first situation to the second. And that was probably what helped me in the second situation, is that I learned to control my own life by asserting myself by getting to say no when I need to say no. And also by learning to eliminate things in my life that made me unhappy. And along with that to be introspective, I monitor my levels of emotion, are people making me unhappy and how can I adapt my life to make sure that I get the best out of it and that the people around me also get the best of me. And then, I got a good sense of humour, and some of the times I can see the amusing side of things, without losing your marbles there. So I think that if you got a good sense of humour you can get through all this difficult times. So yes, people, and that I know who I am and I know where I want to go and so I've got a good self-esteem and a good concept of who I am. My self-concept is very good. I think over and above the self-concept I like life, I like living, I want to live life to the fullest. And I'm energetic and I'm enthusiastic about life. I think that really helps me along the way through difficult times and I think the final thing, just to wrap up, the final characteristic is that I would really take responsibility for what happens to me and the decisions I make. I try not to blame other people for things going wrong. I make the decisions and I decide who is responsible for making them.

**Life requires us to constantly change and adapt. How do these characteristics that you described impact on your outlook on life?**

Okay, I think I obviously could take each one, but if I have a look at one of the big ones is taking responsibility for your own life. I look at the world from a point of view of what can I control in my own life, let me get that right, let me not allow what is happening around me in the world to make me unhappy. So not to let the world control me, and I think that characteristic helps me to maintain a sense of happiness and to be content in my life. And obviously to be passionate in my life about the world around me, to be energetic, that helps me to live life to the fullest – compared to someone that might miss opportunities, not take risks, not experiencing certain things. I go out and I try different things, experience things, and I am not scared to meet people and to do things even if there is a risk, an emotional risk or any other risks, I am prepared to take those risks. And I think really if I look at all the characteristics, the overall thing that helps me, in my life, it makes me optimistic. I can always see the silver lining in the dark clouds, I can say, okay this situation is bad, but there is always a positive side to it. So, I am very optimistic. I think these characteristics make me optimistic in general.

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**Why do you think some people are more resilient than others?**

Yes definitely. I have met people, and you definitely get different levels of resilience in people. And it all depends, I think it depends on your personality, the characteristics of a person. If the person is more involved, he is questioning things often, that person generally can teach himself to become more resilient. If somebody has not really questioned life or why certain things happen, why are things working the way they work, they never develop assertiveness, they haven't developed the characteristics that make you resilient. And then those people, who go through their lives blaming everybody else and always being miserable because they allow external forces to influence how they are. They are not in control of themselves, somebody else is, my husband, my boss, my children, or my financial circumstances and that makes me not really resilient.

**Do you believe that people can learn/develop resilience?**

Yes definitely, I think so. In my personal case I have definitely from my first incident to this second one, learned to be resilient. It is a conscious choice that I made, in my life to say – I don't want to live my life where everything that happens to me can determine how I feel about myself. I want to have some control and take control over how I feel, how I react and how resilient I can be in my life. So definitely in my case. I have learnt it and I see people around me that make a decision to become more resilient and to become more assertive, to become more proactive in their lives, instead of saying, well it happens to me, rather than have a choice to proactively respond to what happens to you, and what I do about it and what I develop in my own personality.

**As you grow and develop as a person, does it become easier/more difficult to bounce back? Why do you think this is so?**

It definitely gets easier and easier. In fact, what ultimately happens is, every day you've got little problems and you stand up and fight against them, without realising that you are doing it. And other people indicate that they think you are quite resilient. But you yourself start to do it in normal everyday action; it becomes a habit, because you practise doing it so often. It is one of your life skills, you do it out of sheer natural reaction, and sometimes you don't even know you are doing it. And with the baby it wasn't a huge negative experience, but the first two weeks, I was very quickly able to stand up and get going, move forward in a very positive way. And I think anything else that might happen; I will be able to work through it. It was easier than with the first incident, because I've been practising these skills all my life.

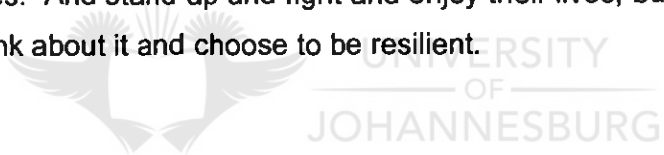
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**Do you believe that you are more resilient in one aspect/area of your life than in others?**

Okay I think if things happen to me, in my work situation I'm very resilient, or if things happen to me in my social circle, if something happens I'm resilient, but I would probably be not as resilient if something happens to my child. If something happens to my child, husband and to my family and extended family I would be more vulnerable. With my friends I would say, yes, I would be quite resilient, but with my family no. But in my own personal life, when it comes to social, financial, my emotions, all those aspects, I'm resilient.

**Are there any guidelines/tips/formulas for bouncing back/resilience that you would like to share with people?**

I think I have to stick to just give one suggestion to be able to be more resilient. And that would really be to say that they've got a choice to respond to everything that has happened to them and either choose to let life just happen to them, or they can choose to be more introspective and to question what is happening, what can I do to control it, and what they actually can do to take control of their lives. And stand up and fight and enjoy their lives, but they must make that choice, consciously think about it and choose to be resilient.



## APPENDIX B

### Categories of Resilience from the Empirical Findings

Ability to Choose
Ability to Focus and Control Impulses
Ability to Take Risks
Acceptance of Change
Adaptability/Flexibility
Altruism/Servitude
Ambition/Drive
Analytical Ability
Assertiveness
Attitude towards Life
Authenticity
Balance
Belief in the Transcendent
Cognitive Competence
Courage
Creative Problem Solving
Decision Making
Endurance and Determination
Energy
Express feelings Honestly
Gratitude
Inherent Resilience
Internal Locus of Control
Leadership Qualities
Leaving a Legacy
Optimism
Passion
Positive Social Orientation
Realisation of Potential
Resilient Thinking
Responsibility
Self-Actualisation
Self-Awareness
Self-Efficacy
Self-Help Skills
Self-Motivation and Self-Managed Learning
Sense of Humour
Stable Childhood/Upbringing
Strong Inner Self
Support Systems
Talent for Serendipity
The Will to Live