

M O D U L E

06

PATHS TOWARD
POSSIBILITIES

Life Skills & Employment Success

Module 6 - Paths Toward Possibilities

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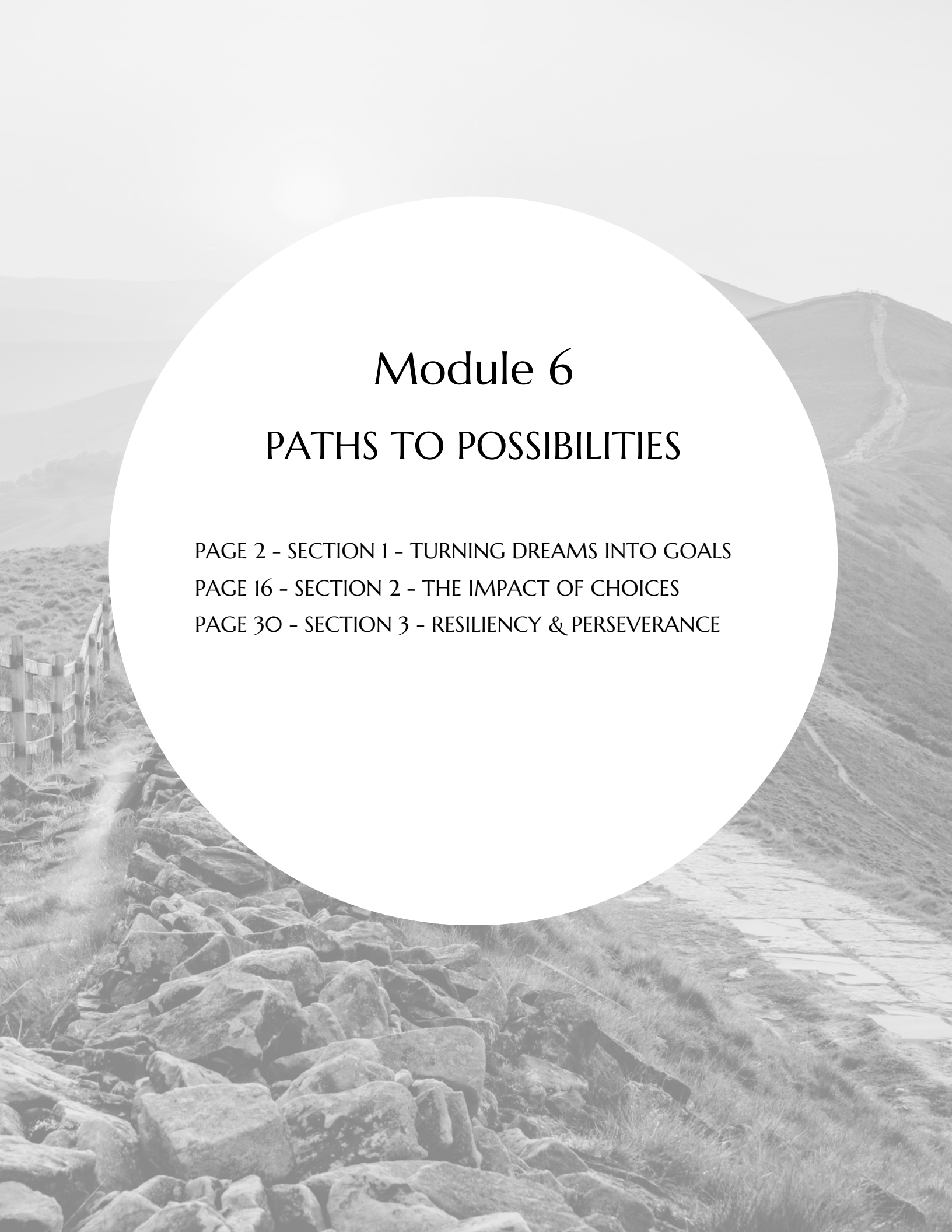
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Video presentations were recorded and edited by Songbird Pictures:
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Module 6

PATHS TO POSSIBILITIES

PAGE 2 - SECTION 1 - TURNING DREAMS INTO GOALS

PAGE 16 - SECTION 2 - THE IMPACT OF CHOICES

PAGE 30 - SECTION 3 - RESILIENCY & PERSEVERANCE

Module 6
Section 1

TURNING DREAMS INTO GOALS

Live your life on purpose and get to
where you want to go.

IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL:

Learn the importance of uncovering
your dreams.

Discover what you need to see your
dreams come true.

Examine your current situation and
explore what you want to change.

Find out how to make a plan to
achieve your goals.

TURNING DREAMS INTO GOALS

Dreams have more power over our lives than any other motivation.

Dreams help motivate us toward the future we want to have. Pursuing those dreams and turning them into goals isn't always easy. Life has a way of squashing our dreams. Past mistakes, discouragement, low self-esteem can cause us to settle for less. Settling for less than you are meant for is the easy way. It takes courage and work to unleash all the potential you have inside.

Sometimes you can feel a dream so strongly that it feels like it's your destiny. Then comes the setbacks. Sometimes things don't work out as well as we thought they would. We can do everything right, and it still can turn out wrong. It's all part of the process. Your dreams might get buried under some dirt for a while, but as long as they are still alive, there is still hope. Don't give up. Get your passion back and keep trying.

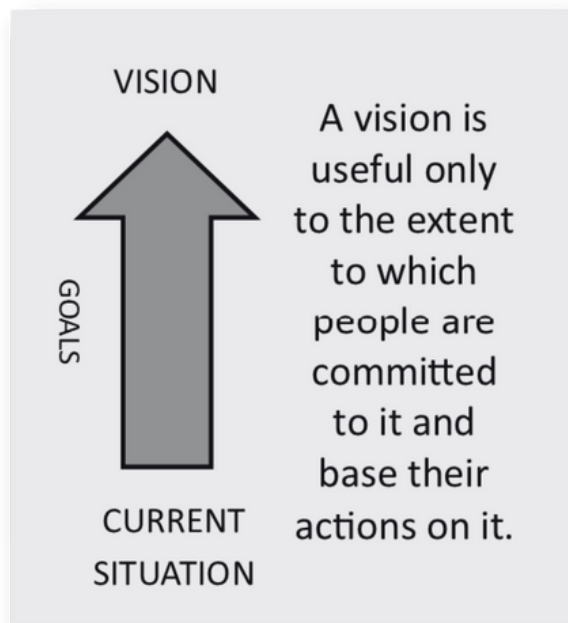
**"It's better to shoot for the stars
and miss, than to shoot for
nothing and hit."**

When you want a dream to come true, you need to be in it for the long haul. Keep looking for new opportunities. Don't let people try to talk you out of it. Don't let your circumstances convince you that you can't achieve your dream. Don't let criticism or failure shut you down. Your attitude is important. You need to believe you can do it and you have to be willing to make changes in your life. You might need to learn new skills or educate yourself in order to see your dreams become reality. You will have to put in time, sweat equity, commitment, and sometimes sacrifice to get where you want to go or become who you want to be.

**"Whether you think you can, or
think you can't, you are probably
right" - Henry Ford**

Take a few moments to think about your dreams. The next step is to write them down. There's an old saying that says, 'If it doesn't get written, it doesn't get done.' Steven Covey, the author of the book - "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" says to start with the end in mind. It is important to have a clear vision of your goals and values. You need to know what you're shooting for - what target you're aiming at.

Once you have a clear vision of your dream, you need to understand that every decision you make should lead you toward that dream. Other people may try to sway you away from your dreams and goals. Make sure you surround yourself with people who will support and encourage you. Stay away from people who are not positive influences in your life. When you need to make an important life decision, ask yourself, "Is this leading me toward my dreams?"



What are some of your dreams?
Write them down here.



"All successful people have a goal. No one can get anywhere unless he knows where he wants to go and what he wants to be or do."

Norman Vincent Peale

Goal Setting

We all have dreams, but they won't come true unless we take action. We can start making our dreams come true by doing an exercise. Get a piece of paper and fold it in half or use the following page in this workbook. Close your eyes and think about your life right now. What are you doing? What makes you happy and what makes you sad? Think of 3 or 4 things you want to change or make better.

Open your eyes and look at the left side of the paper. It says, "**Current Reality**". Think about what you want to write here. Be honest. You don't have to show it to anyone.

Jill gives an example by drawing a half of a house because her house is only halfway done. She also draws a picture of a heart because she worries about her health. Jill also draws a question mark because she's not sure about her new job.

Close your eyes again and think about where you want to be in 6 to 9 months. What do you want to do and how can things be better? Open your eyes and do the same thing on the right side of the paper where it says, "**Desired Reality**". Draw or write what you want to see in 6 or 9 months from now.

Jill draws a picture of a passport because she wants to travel. She also draws a house that is almost finished, but she's not sure if it will be completely done in 6 to 9 months. Jill also draws a healthy heart because she wants to get stronger and healthier.

First, we think about our dreams and then see where we are now. Then we have to connect those dreams with goals, so we know where we want to go. We can decide what needs to change.

There's an easy way to check if your goal setting is smart. S.M.A.R.T. stands for:

- S - Specific
- M - Measurable
- A - Attainable
- R - Relevant
- T - Time-Based

Specific goals are more likely to get done than general goals. A specific goal needs to be clear on what needs to happen for you to say you did it.

Let's look at one of Jill's goals. She wants to get healthier. How can she write down a specific goal? Saying she wants to lose weight and exercise more is too general. Instead, a specific goal might be - Goal 1: Lose 20 pounds and run 3 miles in 9 months.

The next test for a SMART goal: Is it **measurable**? How can you tell if you're getting closer or when you reached it? Jill's goal can be measured by weighing herself and seeing how far she can run.

The next letter A stands for **attainable**. If Jill set a goal of losing 50 pounds in 3 months, that would be impossible for her. It wouldn't be attainable because it's too unrealistic.

CURRENT REALITY



DESIRED REALITY



Some people set goals that are too unrealistic for them. They might say they'll run or work out every day, eat only healthy food, drink a lot of water, and get lots of sleep. For some people, this might be possible, but for most people, and Jill, those goals are too big, and they wouldn't make it through the first week. The goal Jill set is realistic for her.

Goals also have to be **relevant**. This means they need to be important to you. Other people may have goals they want you to set, but your goals have to make a difference for you and impact your life. They should take you closer to the life you want to have and the person you want to be. Having a healthier body is important to Jill so this goal is relevant to her.

The last letter in SMART stands for **time-based**. Time-based goals have a specific time or deadline. When do you want this goal to be done? Jill set her goal for 9 months, so her goal is time-based.

Once your goals are set, it's time to make a plan. Look at your "Current Reality" and "Desired Reality" page. Can you work on all the goals listed or do you need to focus on one or two for now?

Sometimes you need to change your goals. That's okay. You might have to give up something else in your life too.

Maybe you will have to spend less time doing something fun so you can make more time for a goal that is important to you. When people look at how they spend their day, they often find out that they waste a lot of time on things they like but not things they love or things that will help them get the life they want.

The good news is that you can start making a plan and working on your goals today. It only takes one step to start on your path to new possibilities.



Make SMART goals.

S

SPECIFIC

Clear
Well-defined

M

MEASUREABLE

Able to track
progress

A

ATTAINABLE

Realistic and
achievable

R

RELEVANT

Important to you
and your purpose

T

TIME-BASED

A start date and
target date

NOTES

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

What dreams do you remember having as a child?

2

What were or are some things you are really good at - or want to be good at?

3

When you dream now, where do you see yourself 10 or 20 years from now?

4

How do you want to be remembered? (What do you want people to say about you at your funeral?)

5

What takes your attention, time, or energy away from pursuing your goals?

6

Are there roadblocks or challenges that make these changes seem too hard?

7

Who are some people in your life who support and encourage you? How do they help motivate you to achieve your dreams?

8

What is one SMART goal you want to work on first?

PRACTICE, ROLE PLAY, OR JUST MORE TO CONSIDER

- 1 As a group - practice writing a goal and see if all SMART areas are covered. Make sure it is:
 - S = Specific
 - M= Measurable
 - A = Attainable
 - R = Relevant
 - T = Time-Based
- 2 Reflect on something in your life that you want to change or make better. Describe what it is and explain why it is important to you. Then, think about specific goals you can set to make that change happen.
- 3 Reflect on a time when you faced a challenge or setback. How did you stay hopeful and continue working towards your goal?

RESOURCES

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5n_OBOdDdtY

Motivational Speech Compilations by Motiversity

Steven Covey (2020). 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.

Simon & Schuster; Anniversary edition (May 19, 2020)

Christ-centered Corner

Extra encouragement from a Christian perspective.

Dreams and goals are important because they help us fulfill our purpose in God's plan. The Bible tells us to always seek God's guidance in everything we do. We should use wisdom and think about what the Bible says when we set our goals. Our goals should honor God and help others.

Proverbs 19:21 says, "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord, it will stand".

The Lord has made each of us unique and desires for us to use our gifts and abilities. He wants us to live an abundant or full life. Jesus says in John 10:10 that he came so we could have life and have it abundantly.

Reaching our goals is not always easy, but we can trust God and have faith that He will help us. We believe that serving others and showing love is really important. We also need to remember that life on Earth is temporary, and our real happiness comes from having a relationship with God.

When we set our goals, we should think about what will last forever. Seek God's guidance, make wise choices, trust God, help others, and think about what really matters in the long run. By doing these things, we can fulfill our purpose in God's plan and find true happiness. It's not always easy, but with God's help, we can achieve our goals and make a difference in the world.

Module 6
Section 2

THE IMPACT OF CHOICES

At a crossroads, you have two paths
to choose from.
Choose the better path.

IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL:

Learn there's no comfort in the growth zone... and no growth in the comfort zone.

Understand the impact of making poor decisions.

Discover how to make a shift in decision making.

Find out the importance of writing down dreams and goals. (It starts by making choices.)

THE IMPACT OF CHOICES

Brian's Story

When Brian was about 8 years old, he realized that his family was poor. He was excited to choose something special at the grocery store when he went shopping with his mom. But at the check-out, he saw his mom using what looked like coupons. A man and his son were in line behind them, and the man said to his son, "Looks like we're buying their groceries, too." Brian was confused, and so was the other boy in line. The boy asked his dad what he meant, and the dad explained, "These people don't have enough money to pay for their groceries, so they have to use services that we pay for."

At that moment, Brian felt very small, and it changed his life. He already had some struggles inside, like connecting with others and socializing. Now, not being able to afford food became another barrier. Brian didn't even want the treat he had picked out anymore. It was hard for him to feel like he belonged at school. Other kids had nice clothes, but sometimes Brian had to wear pants that were too short or too long. Having a father who wasn't involved was another challenge for Brian. He wanted to be able to talk to his father about what was troubling him, but he didn't have that opportunity.

It's important to have someone in your life that you can share anything with, talk openly with, and turn to for support. Brian didn't feel like he had anyone like that. He felt alone, and this had an impact on the choices he made. This eventually led to his first experience with alcohol. Without clear guidance, Brian continued down that path, and things kept getting worse. Whenever he came to a crossroads, he always seemed to choose the direction that was bad for him.

When Brian was 14 years old, he had what he calls the longest day of his life. He heard that his dad had been taken to the hospital, so he rushed to see what had happened. After the doctors explained things he didn't understand, they finally told the family that there was nothing more they could do. Brian's dad had a massive heart attack and was dying. Brian desperately wanted to have a relationship with his dad, but now it was too late.



Brian learned later that his dad was using drugs. He already knew his dad drank alcohol, but he didn't know about the drugs. Sadly, his dad died because of his drug use. Brian and his friend made a promise to never use drugs. However, Brian thought alcohol was different and okay to use. This decision to keep drinking led to more bad choices. When Brian was 15, he was offered marijuana while ice fishing with his friends. At first, he said no because of his promise. But since they were already drinking, they gave in and decided to try it. Word got around, and soon Brian was getting drugs for other people at school. Brian now thought drugs were bad, but he still thought alcohol and marijuana were okay.

Another Crossroads to Face. Another Choice to Make.

When Brian turned 17, he faced another important decision. A man he lent money to offered him cocaine. Brian thought about all the reasons not to try it, even thinking about how his dad died because of drugs. But then he had another thought. He wondered what was so special about drugs that made his dad choose them over his family. Brian started to think that drugs must be magical. He had to choose which path to take, and he chose to try it. He waited for something magical to happen, but nothing did. That should have been a good reason to stay away, but Brian gave the man more money

and tried it again. This time, he got high. Soon after, he started doing drugs and hanging out with his dad's old friends. It made him feel proud to be using cocaine with them. Something changed in Brian, and he felt like he was on top of the world... until the next day when he didn't feel good.

His first real time feeling peer pressure.

Being with his dad's old friends made Brian feel closer to his dad. He faced another choice. When they offered him other drugs, one of his dad's friends said Brian wouldn't join because of what happened to his dad. It was the first time Brian felt peer pressure. He wondered if they would reject him if he didn't join in. He wanted to keep that connection to his dad by being with them. So, he chose to try whatever they had in front of him. Later, he found out it was methamphetamine.

Brian didn't like how he felt when the drug wore off. He felt like he was living a lie. So, he kept trying to get more. He realized that if he sold the drug, he could get some for himself without paying. He met many new people and discovered a whole new world that he didn't know existed just two years ago. Before, he was the Senior Class President and Homecoming King. But now, his teachers asked him to leave school so he wouldn't affect the other students with what was happening to him.

After graduating from high school, Brian had planned to go to university and become an accountant. But instead, he chose to work in construction. This job allowed him to travel and maintain the lifestyle he was living. He kept going deeper into his drug use. Before, \$25 worth of drugs would last him a couple of days. But now, he needed \$1600 worth of drugs every day. He went from being a caring and kind person who wanted to help others to what he describes as a "tragic infection." He used to think that his choices only affected himself, but he soon realized that wasn't true.



Brian got into legal trouble and ended up in jail. When he went to court, he saw his mother in the audience, crying. He tried to tell her to leave, but she refused. Seeing his mother's tears made him realize that his choices didn't just hurt him, they also hurt the people who cared about him the most. He decided to try to become sober and stop using drugs, but he couldn't stay clean for long. After just a few days, he would slip back into using. Sometimes, he would try to convince himself that he could sell drugs without using them, but that didn't work. Other times, he thought he could quit drugs but still drink alcohol, but that didn't work either. He discovered that he needed methamphetamine just to get through simple tasks in his day.

Brian felt a moment of fear and realized he was in trouble. He needed to have a test to check his urine, but he thought he could stop using drugs for a few days before the test. However, he found out that he couldn't stop. His situation got worse and worse until he ended up in the hospital and had many legal problems. He used to be friends with the local police, but now they were trying to catch him. To make the police stop bothering him, Brian decided to go to a treatment program. He thought he could trick the system, but he was only tricking himself.

This decision brought him to another important choice he had to make. Brian saw the people who were affected by his choices. He saw the people he sold drugs to and the people in their lives who were hurt. It made Brian realize that he didn't want to be that person anymore. He met other people who were also trying to get better. One man told him to start by talking to his dad in prayer, which led him to talk to God. Brian asked God for a sign to help him believe, and a ray of sunshine appeared. Brian knew then that his life was going to change.



Brian went to a halfway house and was willing to do anything to get better. He wanted to go to college, but he was worried that his brain was damaged from drugs and that his background would stop him from getting in. He took the entrance exams anyway and got all A's. He studied sales and marketing, and business management. He did really well in school and made the Dean's list and National Honor Society. Brian realized that if he put as much effort into positive things as he did into negative things in his old life, he could do anything.



After getting clean, Brian got a job working in a dog food factory. He was driving a beat-up car, but he felt happy because he was living the life he was meant to live. The woman he wanted to marry started to change her mind about him and they started dating. Eventually, they got married. Things were going well for Brian. But one day, a 50-pound bag of dog food fell on his head and crushed his spine. Brian had surgery right before Christmas and was in a lot of pain and became disabled.

He kept going to school and doing everything he thought he needed to do



to be successful. Life was changing for him, but there were also challenges. Brian got a job selling things and he felt like he was moving up. Brian's self-worth was connected to how well he did. If he did well, he felt like he had worth and value. He was determined and kept achieving – but that way of thinking was a trap for him.

Linking his success to his self-worth became a trap.

His ego and pride grew because of his success. He ended up buying a house that was too expensive to take care of. He didn't go to church and recovery meetings as much anymore. He stopped going to school because his new job took up too much time. Work and making money became the most important thing. He and his family were living a lifestyle they couldn't afford and even though they were making a lot of money, they were behind on all their bills. Brian was going back to his old ways and didn't even realize it.

In 2009, he lost their car and started getting notices that they might lose their house.



He let someone stay with them to help with their recovery, thinking he could help them like a treatment center. When this person overheard Brian and his wife talking about their money problems, he offered to sell drugs for them. One bad choice led to another, and Brian convinced himself that this could be a good way to save his house and family. He ended up going to another state to buy the drugs. He didn't have them for even a few hours before he started using drugs again. He started lying to hide his drug use. In the end, he lost his job, lost his house, and then lost his mind.

He lost everything.

Each decision he made took him further from reality and closer to death and despair. He thought that the only way to help his family was to die. He couldn't find hope, direction, or a reason. He didn't ask for help either. He tried going to treatment again but couldn't stay sober. His family ended up in a homeless shelter and he ended up on the street. He thought about suicide but thankfully didn't have the courage to go through with it. He started using drugs intravenously and felt like he couldn't stop. For Brian, the pain of staying where he was had to be worse than the pain of making a change. From 2009 to 2014, Brian had set certain standards for his life. He thought as long as he paid the bills, he wasn't doing too bad. As long as there was food in the cupboard, he wasn't

doing too bad. As long as his kids were going to school, he wasn't doing too bad. He was comparing himself to the worst of the worst in addiction instead of the best of the best in life.

Brian compared himself to others he thought were worse off to make himself feel okay.

Brian ended up in the hospital for a month, dying from an infection. He still couldn't stop using drugs and people brought them into the hospital for him. A month after leaving the hospital, he saw his wife overdose. He thought as long as he did less drugs than her, he wasn't doing too bad. He kept setting standards to compare himself and make himself feel better. His final standard was that as long as he had custody of his kids...

He wanted to be better than his own dad, but he realized he was worse. The police came for a child welfare check and took the kids away. In that moment, Brian saw the man and father he needed to be. It was a turning point in his life. He went back to jail and faced many obstacles as he tried to rebuild his life. It took him a few months to get sober even with the support of people at his church. One day, he was ready to make a change and declared that he was done taking risks with his life and the lives of his family, even though he knew he was going to prison for a couple of years. He chose to take things one step at a time and move towards his goals. He and his wife

continued to choose life while their old friends died from overdoses, one by one.

They didn't do it by themselves. They had people help them. They went to support meetings. But the challenges didn't go away. Brian applied for housing 36 times and kept getting rejected. They needed housing to get their kids back. It felt like there were always obstacles in their way. Finally, someone gave him a chance. It was the start of a new beginning. Another miracle happened and Brian's legs started working again. He had been disabled after his accident and was getting disability checks. He could have kept getting the checks, but he knew he could work again and wanted to teach his son his values. He ended up getting a job as a peer support specialist at Teen Challenge.

Brian learned that there's no growth in the "comfort zone" and there's no comfort in the "growth zone".

Brian learned that all his experiences - good, bad, and okay, could be used to help others. All the years he thought were wasted became tools to help others. He discovered the gift of helping. He learned that you don't grow when you stay in your comfort zone and there's no comfort in growing.

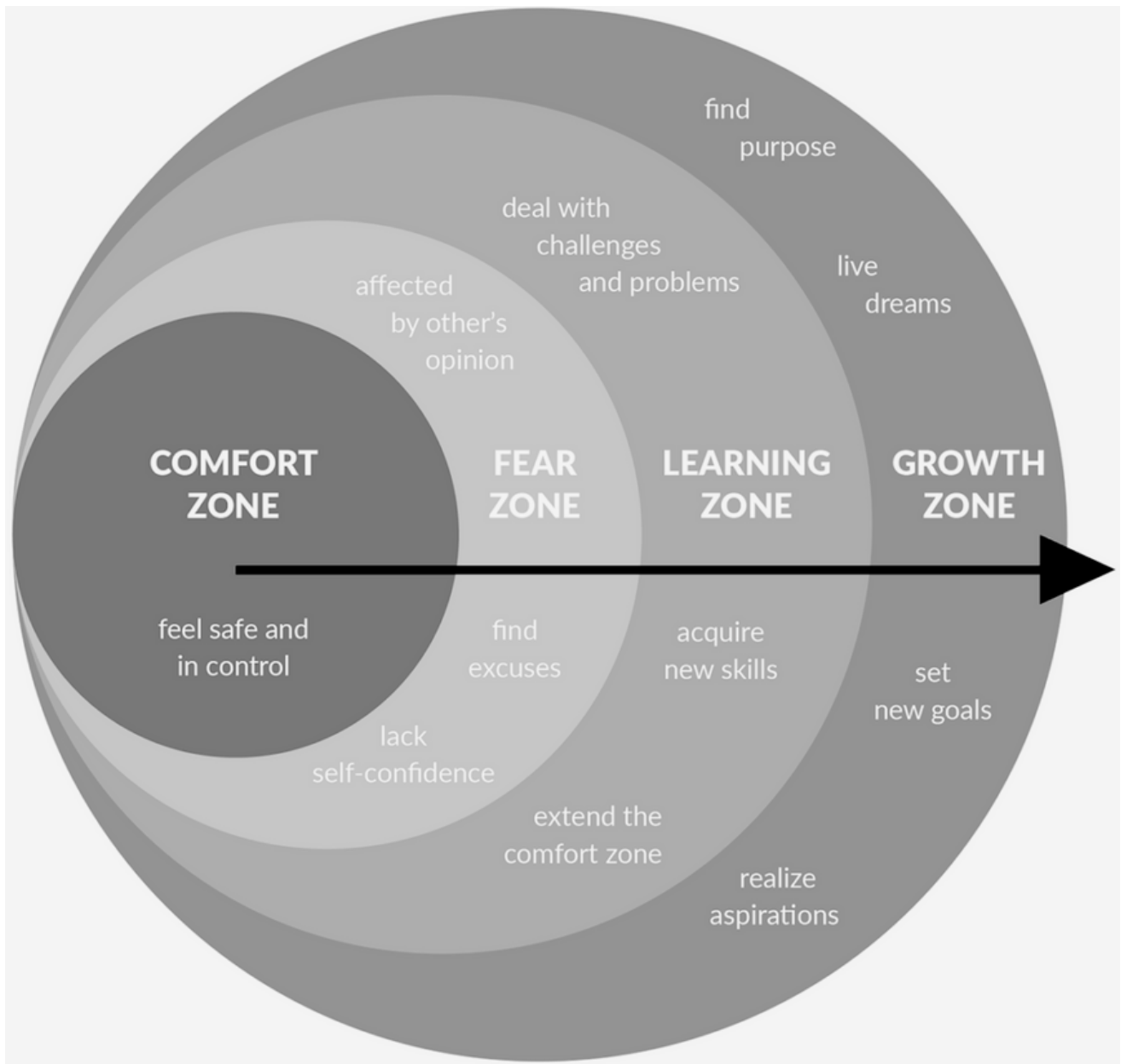
Face discomfort and find your passion and purpose.

He learned to face discomfort and found new opportunities opening up. When people get used to making bad choices, it becomes easier to keep making bad choices. It's hard to make a good choice after a bad one. It feels like being stuck in the mud. But as we keep going, it does get easier. Brian learned these things and then found his "why". It's where his passion and purpose come together. That's where he is today. Brian challenges others to try new things and face discomfort to grow and move forward. He says that just because you feel like you don't fit in, doesn't mean you don't belong. Try anyway. Volunteer anyway. You might gain new skills and get closer to your goals. Find your purpose and passion. Find out who you are. Surround yourself with people who will tell you the truth, challenge you, and hold you accountable.

Invest in your life.

Dream big. Think about what your perfect life would be. Write it down and put it aside. Then imagine if someone offered you an investment opportunity that was guaranteed. Would you invest a little bit of money or a lot? You are that investment. Everything you do from now on is an investment in the life you want to live. Your life can be very different.

To live your life with purpose and passion, you need to face your fears or discomforts and be willing to learn.



NOTES

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

Think about a time when you made a choice that you later regretted. How did it make you feel? What did you learn from that experience?

3

Why is it important to surround yourself with good people? How can they help you in your own life?

5

What goals do you have for yourself? How can you work towards achieving them?

7

Imagine you were in Brian's shoes. What influenced the choices he made? What do you tell yourself when you are facing a crossroads and need to choose a direction?

2

Reflect on the word success. Does it mean having lots of money? Is it having fame? What signs do you want to see in your life that say you are succeeding?

4

Reflect on a time when you faced challenges or obstacles. How did you overcome them? What did you learn from that experience?

6

How have you seen people in your life make positive changes, like Brian did?

8

Think about the concept of growth and discomfort. How do you feel about stepping out of your comfort zone? What opportunities might arise from embracing discomfort?

PRACTICE, ROLE PLAY, OR JUST MORE TO CONSIDER

1 Choose a situation where someone is at a crossroads and has to make a choice. As a group, make a list of pros and cons (the positive things and negative things) about each option.

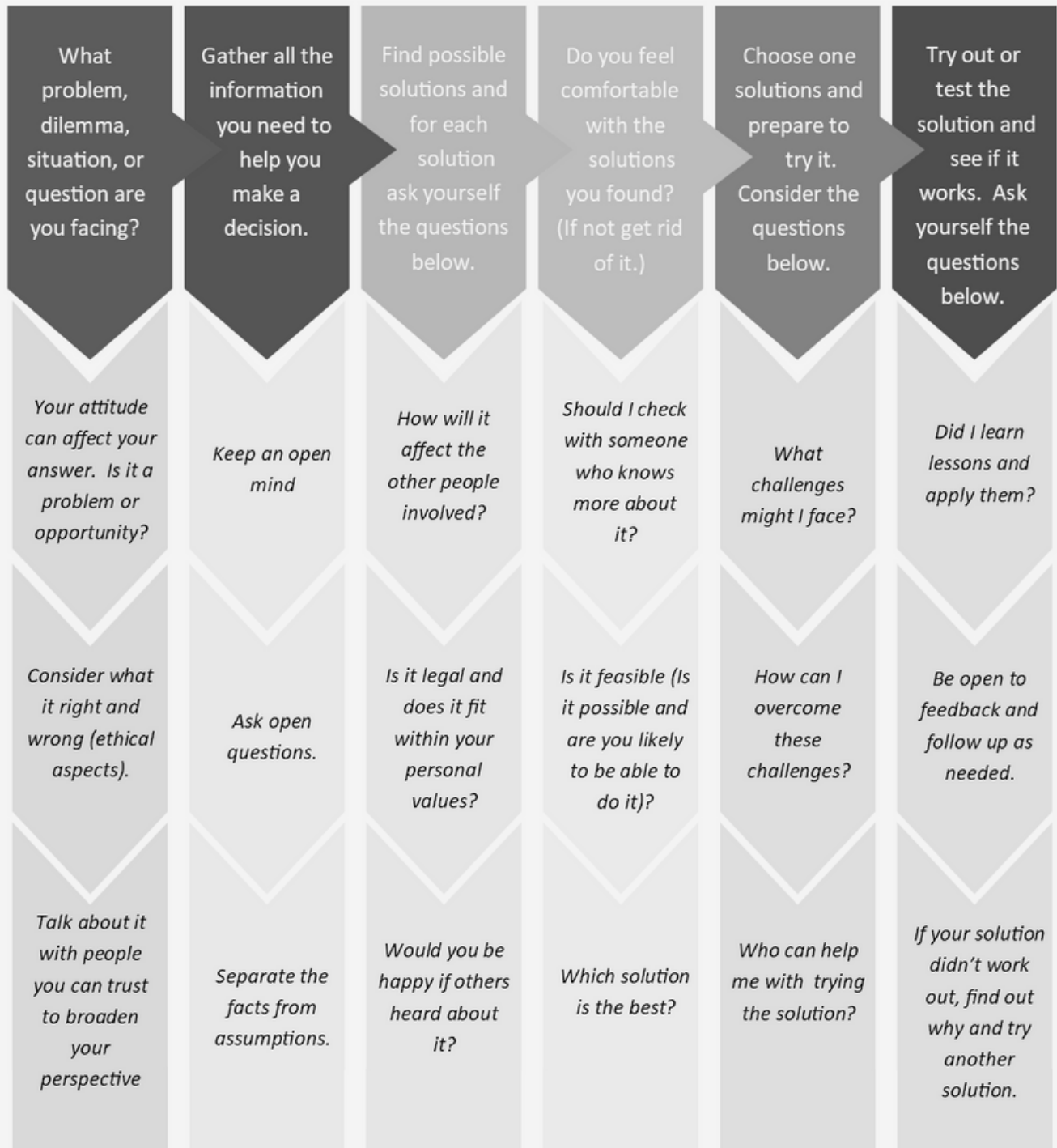
See if you can recognize the values or biases of others that affect which option each person may think is best.

2 Divide into two groups. Pick a scenario or use the one below. Each group will take a side and talk about the benefits of their position amongst themselves. Then the groups will try to convince the other group that their decision is best. Take turns debating.

Optional scenario: Bill got a new job offer that will take him out of town every other weekend but will give him more money, which he could use. The only time he gets to see his children is on the weekends. One side says he should take the job. The other side says he shouldn't.

3 Look at the Ethical Problem-Solving chart on the following page. Think of a problem or situation that you are facing and work through the steps.

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING MODEL



Christ-centered Corner

Extra encouragement from a Christian perspective.

It is important to make good choices and grow spiritually. God gives us wisdom and understanding, so we ask Him for help when making decisions. Proverbs 2:6 says, "For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding". It is also important to talk to wise people for guidance.

Christians try to think differently than the world and change their thoughts and actions to match what the Bible says is right. Romans 12:2 tells us to not be like the rest of the world and instead be transformed by renewing our minds.

We can have confidence that everything will work out according to His plan when we love Him. "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28)

It's important to have friends who believe in the same things. They encourage us, challenge us, and support us. Being with others who believe helps us make good choices and grow spiritually. Proverbs 27:17 describes it as just as iron sharpens iron, so one person can sharpen another.

Jesus taught that helping others is like helping Him, so we try to serve others, show kindness, and think about others before ourselves. This is part of growing closer to God and making the choices he wants for us. We also believe in forgiving others because God has forgiven us. We try to be kind, forgive others, and show love just like God has shown us (Ephesians 4:32). Understanding and accepting God's forgiveness helps us grow and make choices based on love and forgiveness.

Module 6
Section 3

RESILIENCY & PERSEVERANCE

Be strong during difficult times
and don't give up.

IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL:

Understand what resiliency and perseverance means and why it's important.

Find out different things you can do to develop resiliency and perseverance.

Discover how changing the way you think can affect how resilient you are.

Explore how to develop your inner strength.

RESILIENCY & PERSEVERANCE

Resilience is a skill that helps us stay strong when things are hard. It's like bouncing back after something bad happens or when we feel stressed. We can learn how to be resilient by doing different things and changing the way we think. This guide below will help you develop resilience.



1. **Develop a Growth Mindset**

Having a Growth Mindset means thinking that challenges are opportunities to learn and grow, not just really hard problems. It also means believing that when we make mistakes, we can learn from them. Even if things don't go well at first, we know they won't last forever.

2. **Cultivate Self-Awareness**

Knowing yourself is important. It means understanding what you're good at and what you're not so good at. It also means knowing what makes you feel upset. When you know yourself well, you can tell when you're feeling too stressed and do things to help you feel better.

3. **Build Strong Connections**

Having strong connections with others is important. It means having good friends, spending time with family, and getting to know people in your community. When you have people who care about you, it helps you feel better when things are hard. You won't feel alone because you have support from those who love you.

4. **Practice Adaptability**

Sometimes things don't go the way we want them to. That's when we need to practice adaptability. Adaptability means being able to change and go with the flow when things don't go as planned. It's like being flexible and adjusting our goals and plans when unexpected things happen. It's an important skill to have because it helps us handle different situations and challenges that come our way. So, let's remember to be adaptable and go with the flow!

5. **Develop Problem-Solving Skills**

Developing problem-solving skills means getting better at finding solutions to problems. It's like when you have a big challenge, you can make it easier by breaking it down into smaller steps.

You can also think of different ways to solve the problem and then take action to make those solutions happen. So, problem-solving is all about finding ways to fix things and make them better.

6. Cultivate Optimism

Being positive is important, even when things are tough. It's good to focus on the good parts of a situation and try to make it better or learn from it.

7. Practice Self-Care

It's important to take care of yourself by doing things that help you relax. You can exercise, meditate, or do hobbies that make you happy. When you take care of yourself, it helps you handle stress better and makes you stronger.

8. Set Realistic Goals

Taking care of yourself is very important. You can do things like exercise, meditate, or do hobbies that make you happy. When you take care of yourself, it helps you handle stress better and makes you stronger. So, remember to take time for yourself and do things that help you relax.

9. Develop Coping Strategies

When we feel stressed, it's important to have ways to make ourselves feel better. This is called developing coping strategies. Coping strategies are things we can do to help us calm down and feel less stressed.

Some examples of healthy coping strategies are taking deep breaths, writing in a journal, or talking to someone who can help us. These strategies can help us feel better when we're feeling overwhelmed.

10. Learn from Adversity

Some things in our lives can be really hard and make us feel sad or upset. But we can learn from these tough times and become stronger. It's like when we have a difficult problem, and we figure out how to solve it. We can use our past experiences to help us handle tough things in the future. So even though it might be tough right now, we can learn and grow from it.

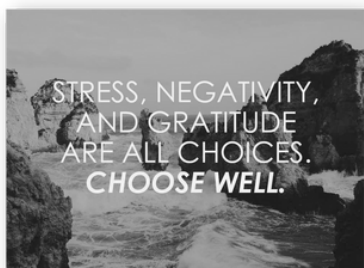
11. Maintain Perspective

When it feels like everything is going wrong, it's important to remember that tough times don't last forever. You've faced challenges before, and you've proven how strong you are. When things get tough, think about all the things you're good at and how capable you are. Stay positive and keep pushing through.

12. Seek Support When Needed

Remember that when times get tough, you don't have to face it alone. You can reach out to someone you trust for help and advice. It takes courage to ask for support when you need it, and it doesn't mean you're weak.

Remember, resilience is something you can get better at with practice and commitment. By doing these things every day, you can become more resilient and have the inner strength to handle challenges with grace and determination. So, keep trying and never give up!



Sheila's Story

I have experienced some difficult times in my life. I live on property my family has owned since I was three years old. It's our family home and it's also where my dad and sister died.

I was 12 years old when it happened. We all used to live happily together in that home until January 27th, 1980. That's when our house caught on fire. I was sleeping at the time. My dad came into my room holding my sister. It was around 5:30 in the morning. He woke me up and told me to follow him because the house was on fire. Our bedrooms were all upstairs. I was scared, but I could see the flames shooting up. Since it was extremely cold in Minnesota on January 27th, I was able to open my window because of the heat inside the house. I jumped from my second-story window and ran around the side of the house. My mom was about to go back inside because

she thought nobody had gotten out. I called her and she jumped too. Unfortunately, my dad and sister never made it out of the house. I went to the doctor, and they said I was very close to dying from smoke inhalation. My dad saved my life that day.

The day of the fire was also my mom's 33rd birthday. After the fire, my mom and I stayed with friends for a year. My mom was resilient and strong. She used that time to recover.

Later, we rebuilt on the same property where we lost our house. My great grandmother moved in with us in 1982. During that summer, one of my friends had a horse and I asked if I could ride it. I got on the horse, and she gave it a slap. The horse got scared by the traffic and ran away. I fell off and cracked my skull. I had to be taken by helicopter to a Minneapolis hospital. I was in a coma for about four to five days.

I wasn't there to remember this story, but my mom and her friend told me what happened. They said the doctors told my mom that I only had a 10% chance of surviving. And if I did survive, I might have problems with my body and my brain. At that time, there was swelling in my brain, and they were going to do surgery to fix it. But luckily, the swelling went down on its own overnight, so I didn't need the surgery. As far as I know, I don't have any physical or mental damage from the accident.



Joy, collected
over time, fuels
resilience.

BRENÉ BROWN

After that, my mom got married to a really nice man. I was about to graduate, and I felt really good about my life. I knew my mom wouldn't be alone anymore. I also met a man who I later married, and we had two sons together.

One evening, there was a knock on the door. When I opened it, there was a man there to tell me that my mom and stepdad had been in a car crash and they both died right away.

My boys were 6 and 8 years old at that time. They had just lost their grandmother. I was only 29 years old. My mom was the last family member I had left. But I kept going.

We made some decisions in the next few months. We decided not to sell the family property. I had many memories there. It was where my family lived and where my kids grew up. I just really wanted to stay there. So, we chose not to sell it.

Life went on, our boys grew up and we were happy and healthy. A couple days after I returned home from visiting my son in Minneapolis, we got a knock on the door around 5:30 in the morning. It was a state patrol officer telling me that my youngest son had been in a very bad accident. He was in critical condition in Minneapolis, and he died before we could get there.

For the past eight years, I have been keeping busy and helping out in the community. That's what works for me.

Your story may be different from mine and mine may be different from yours, but most of us have all had some bad experiences at one time.

I share my story because it's possible for us to move forward and not let our past define us. I'm always happy to share mine if it helps just one person. It's worth it because I have been through a lot and have strong connections and friendships in our community. That's how I have been able to keep going. I stay busy because that's what works for me. I like being involved in our community and reaching out to others.

I want to give you the message that sometimes things don't go as planned, like losing a job or a spouse. The life you imagined may not be turning out the way you thought it would, and I never would have expected my life to be like this either. But we can take what happens to us and make choices about how we want to live our one life. Find people who support you and make decisions that will help you overcome what has happened. You can move forward, too.

Bradford's Story of Perseverance

(Persistence is doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success).

I grew up in the "sticks" outside of Brainerd, Minnesota, which is in the middle of a rural area. I was never a kid who was expected to achieve much. In high school, I graduated with a GPA of 1.8. In college, I earned a GPA of 2.1. It took me eight years to get my bachelor's degree, and then another six or seven years to earn my master's degree. I realized I was not a typical learner. I enjoy understanding things from different perspectives and figuring out different ways to solve problems. While I was the kid no one expected to achieve great things, I now have a successful business and recently shook the hand of the Estonian Diplomat to the United States in Washington, D.C.

This section is about philosophical ideas that I have learned throughout my life. These ideas have been passed down through history from ancient times to the present. I often tell people that I am the friend they can rely on when life gets tough. I am the one who listens and helps them through their difficult thoughts. I remind people that when things seem dark, someone else has already experienced it. It is important for us to support each other because we can either make the world a better place or destroy it.

I want to be in control of all situations, even ones that are outside of my control. This is something that I find

difficult to deal with. So, I put myself in situations where I have no control at all. Why do I do this? It's because I can get a better sense of what I can control and what is most important to me. Is it my family? Is it my friends? Is it my cat? What matters to me the most? And it's not selfish to think about it this way. It's more about taking care of myself. How do I navigate through this world and live a life that I love?

I want to do things for others, but I want to do it in a way that doesn't harm me or make me feel overwhelmed by the problems of the world every day. How do I go to bed at night and make sure I get a good sleep? Well, it's because I know that I will be able to wake up again the next day without feeling like I didn't accomplish anything the day before.

Life isn't fair and it never will be. But that's what makes it fun because we all have different experiences. Don't spend too much time trying to understand yourself and the world. A true nihilist doesn't care about anything or anyone. But we have to care about each other. We need to build a community and trust each other, even when trust is lost. We can't expect trust without giving trust. Know who you are, where you come from, what you're capable of, and what you've been through. Use your experiences to move forward and learn.

Steve Jobs said that our time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't let other people's opinions drown out your own. Have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. Many people in this room want to do something big with their lives. You still have time to make a plan and work towards your goals. I had goals when I was young, but I haven't achieved all of them yet. I keep setting new goals to keep myself motivated. It's a journey and it gets better as we go.

Where do you feel like life is out of control? At those times it helps to control what you can. It's a good time to organize your clothes, clean the living room, or get the car washed. For the things I can't control, I figure them out. I don't need to lose control or react in a negative way. I can be in control of a situation that affects me and let go of situations I can't control.

Are you living the life you want? It's up to you. You don't have to go to work or do anything you don't want to do. But it won't be good for you and life will become harder. You don't have to fit in, and you can live life on your own terms.

Remember, failure teaches us important lessons. Successful people don't say, "Let's do that again!" after they succeed. They want to do better and reach a higher goal. They also learn from their failures. Failure is a journey

that helps us understand why we failed and how we can improve. Be determined and keep trying. Use determination to change your life. Determination is determination, whether you want one thing or another. It's about what you put into it and what you get out of it. So if you're determined to change your life, go for it. If you need help, be ready to listen and understand where you might have failed. You don't have to take all the advice, but there's a reason you're in the room with an advisor. You need to interact with something.

Whatever challenges you have experienced, you are here today and moving forward. You are learning to adapt to different situations and showing strength. You don't have to be a hero, but it's important to have courage and conviction.

When you want to change your life, some friends may try to hold you back. It's important to be smart and wise. Wisdom tells you not to put yourself in harmful situations again. Your experiences can teach you to be wise and help others. Remember to help yourself first and believe that you can achieve anything, no matter where you come from. Some of the best stories are about people who were not expected to succeed.



“Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan “Press On” has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race.”

Calvin Coolidge

30th President of the United States

NOTES

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

Think about a time when you made a mistake. How did you use that experience to get better?

2

What are you determined about? What other areas in your life could you show determination?

3

What are some things you can do to take care of yourself physically and mentally? How do these activities make you feel?

4

Reflect on a difficult time you've been through. What did you learn from that experience and how did it make you stronger?

5

Think about a time when you had to cope with stress. What healthy strategies did you use to manage your emotions and find balance?

6

Think of a time when you faced unexpected challenges. How did you adjust your goals and handle the situation?

7

What are some coping strategies that work for you when you feel stressed or down?

8

Describe a person in your life who supports and cares about you. How do they help you when times are hard?

RESILIENCY EXERCISES

1

Deep breathing helps you manage stress and anxiety. It helps your body and brain calm down so you can better handle what you are facing.

- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Inhale slowly and deeply, until your lungs fully inflate.
- Exhale just as slowly, until your lungs empty all the way.

2

Challenge any unhelpful thinking traps such as:

1. Black-and-White Thinking: That either everything is wonderful, or everything is terrible.
2. Catastrophic thinking: Expecting the worst possible outcome and believing you won't be able to handle it.
3. Predicting the future: Imagining negative things will happen in the future.

3

Practice gratitude: Write down or think about at least 3 things you are thankful for. (It can be something small like something you enjoyed doing, or a snack you had, etc.)

4

Be active:

- physical activity like exercise or dancing, etc.
- creative activity like painting, drawing or doing a puzzle, etc.
- learn a new skill like a musical instrument or a new language, etc.
- soothe yourself using your 5 senses by enjoying things you like to hear, see, touch, taste, and smell.

RESOURCES & FURTHER READING

Option B, by Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant

A New York Times-bestselling book from former Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg and psychologist Adam Grant, takes a personal and technical approach to rethinking adversity.

Rising Strong, by Brené Brown

Researcher and professor Brené Brown's *Rising Strong* acknowledges the anxiety of addressing pain. It's scary to face what hurts you — no matter how deep or shallow the wound — and Brown gives readers a practical guide for finding strength in any situation.

Resilient, by Dr. Rick Hanson with Forrest Hanson

Adversity may root itself in challenging events you can't control, and sometimes, a negative mindset makes those experiences worse. This book shows you how to cultivate gratitude and enjoy the fruits of a calmer, happier life.

Grit, by Angela Duckworth

Psychologist Angela Duckworth smashes the myth that only talent leads to success. Instead, purpose and hard work are what fuel achievements — and that takes resilience.

Freedom from Anxious Thoughts and Feelings, by Scott Symington

You can learn to control anxiety with the help of a mental health professional and books on overcoming adversity like this one.

<https://drarielleschwartz.com/6-pillars-of-resilience-dr-arielle-schwartz/>

<https://www.mindful.org/how-to-cultivate-the-resources-for-resilience/>

Christ-centered Corner

Extra encouragement from a Christian perspective.

In the Bible, there are lots of stories about people who never gave up, even when bad things happened to them. For example, Joseph in the Old Testament was betrayed and sold into slavery, but he still stayed faithful to God. And the Apostle Paul in the New Testament faced many hard times while spreading the good news about Jesus, but he never gave up.

Hebrews 12:1-2 says, "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God".

We believe that God promises to be with us no matter what and gives us the strength to get through hard times. Verses like Isaiah 41:10 and Romans 8:28 to remind us that God is always there for us and will help us. We are encouraged to keep believing in God even when things get tough.

We know that going through hard times can actually help us grow and become better people. James 1:2-4, says that facing challenges can make our faith stronger and help us become more mature. The Bible has lots of passages that offer hope and encouragement to people who are going through tough times.

Psalms 23 talks about how God is always there, even in the darkest times. And Jesus himself said in John 16:33, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation but take courage; I have overcome the world".

MODULE PRESENTERS & CONTENT PROVIDERS



Karl Samp has an extensive background in community service. He previously was the Executive Director of the Brainerd Lakes Area Community Foundation, and also worked in Supported Employment. As a former park ranger, Karl continues to love the outdoors.



Jill Casper is the Director of Marketing and Community Engagement at CTC. She has a master's degree in management and leadership and is involved with many non-profits with a focus on leadership development in women.



Brian Andrews is certified as a Stress Management and Resiliency Trainer, Peer Support Specialist, and Peer Recovery Support Specialist. He has over 30 years of extreme lived experience.



Sheila DeChantal was awarded the 2020 Brainerd Citizen of the Year. She is an Event Coordinator for 3 Cheers Hospitality and a lover of all things literacy and community. "You never know how strong you are until being strong is the only choice you have."



Bradford Fulta
Bradford deeply reflected on whether he pursued education for a job or to help others. His mission now is to empower others to achieve the same clarity and success in their own journeys.

This course was developed by My Neighbor to Love Coalition and Lighthouse Beginnings with a Community Impact grant from Sourcewell.