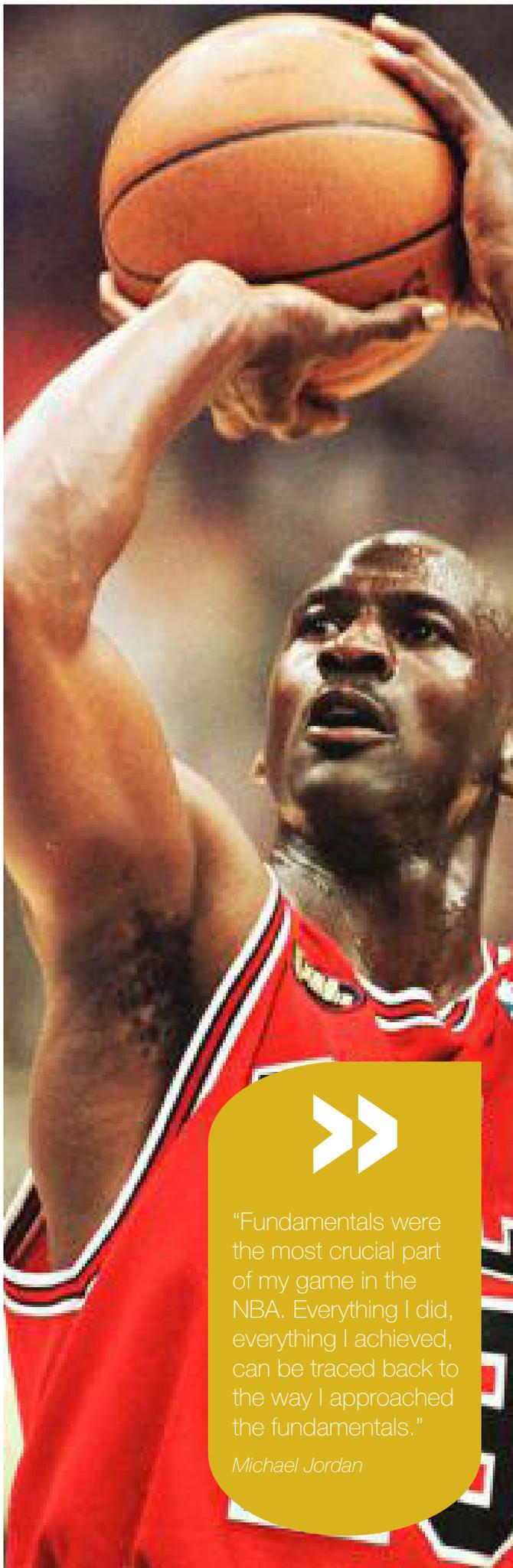


Mastering the Scales Before Composing Your Masterpiece

The Fundamentals of Resilience

Sleiman Abou-Hamdan



Resilience in the age of disruption

We already know that the speed of disruption and the exponential growth in technology are the two dominant forces in all sectors and industries. In the Bendelta white paper *'The Role of Human Potential in Creating Exponential Organisations'*, we noted that change will not only be rapid and continuous, but rather be "so sharply jarring that proven business models may be violently obsoleted while others rise to sudden prominence".

But without mastering the fundamentals of resilience, agility and psychological flexibility, the speed of this disruption can result in excessive maladaptive stress and an inability to unlock the human potential required to take advantage of the profound growth imbedded in these two dominant forces. And then there's the very real risk of being left behind.

Maladaptive Stress

We know there are at least three different types of stress, all of which carry physical and mental health risks to you and your people:

1. Routine stress related to the pressures of change (work, family and other daily responsibilities)
2. Stress brought about by a sudden 'negatively-perceived' change (losing a job, losing a major client, or illness)
3. Traumatic stress (from events such as major accidents or natural disasters)

Now, a good level of stress is healthy for continuous improvements, but left unaddressed, continued excessive strain on our bodies from routine stress can lead to serious health problems, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression, anxiety disorders, and other illnesses.ⁱ

These effects are well documented, with mental health conditions common among staff, representing a significant cost individually and organisationally. In fact, in a given 12-month period, 20% of Australians will have experienced a mental health condition.ⁱⁱ

Looking at differences between sectors, prevalence of mental health conditions is highest in the financial and insurance sector with 33% of people experiencing a mental health condition, while 32% of people in information, media, telecommunication and services (electricity, gas, water, waste) industries experience a mental health condition.ⁱⁱⁱ

Substance use conditions - often used to cope with stress, anxiety and depression - are most prominent in the mining, construction, accommodation and food services sectors, and anxiety conditions are most prominent in the IT, media, financial and insurance industries. Depression 'the silent killer' is most prevalent in the accommodation and food services, personal and other services, arts and recreation services, the professional, technical sector and essential services industries.^{iv}

All this has a big impact on Australian workplaces – in the vicinity of \$11 billion per year,^v comprising \$4.7 billion in absenteeism, \$6.1 billion in "presenteeism" and \$146 million in compensation claims.^{vi}



"Fundamentals were the most crucial part of my game in the NBA. Everything I did, everything I achieved, can be traced back to the way I approached the fundamentals."

Michael Jordan

Inability to Unlock Human Potential



Whilst impacts of maladaptive stress are obvious, the cost resulting from the inability to unlock human potential (see *'Creating the Human Potential Organisation'*) is much less visible. We know that chronic and acute stress, and certainly traumatic stress, significantly inhibit our ability to think creatively, innovatively and logically. After prolonged exposure to stressors, many of us will have impaired thinking patterns giving rise to unhelpful cognitive biases. This impaired cognitive ability - coupled with amplified fight/flight/flee responses in the brain that redirects blood flow away from empathy generating regions into the survival regions – significantly undermines our ability to capitalise on opportunities presented by disruptive change.

So what can be done to manage these two problems?

Let's go back to the words of Michael Jordan: "It's like they're so focused on composing a masterpiece they never master the scales".

No matter what you're doing or what you're trying to accomplish, you can't skip the fundamentals. The first step is recognising when your resilience is taking a hit. Whilst depleted inner resources is not necessarily a state of psychopathology, a wide range of evidence suggests that early intervention is key in the prevention of mental disorders.^{vii}

When maladaptive stress kicks in, introspection is critical to assess your levels of homeostasis and self-regulation, and initiate a recovery process that will return you to your ideal state.

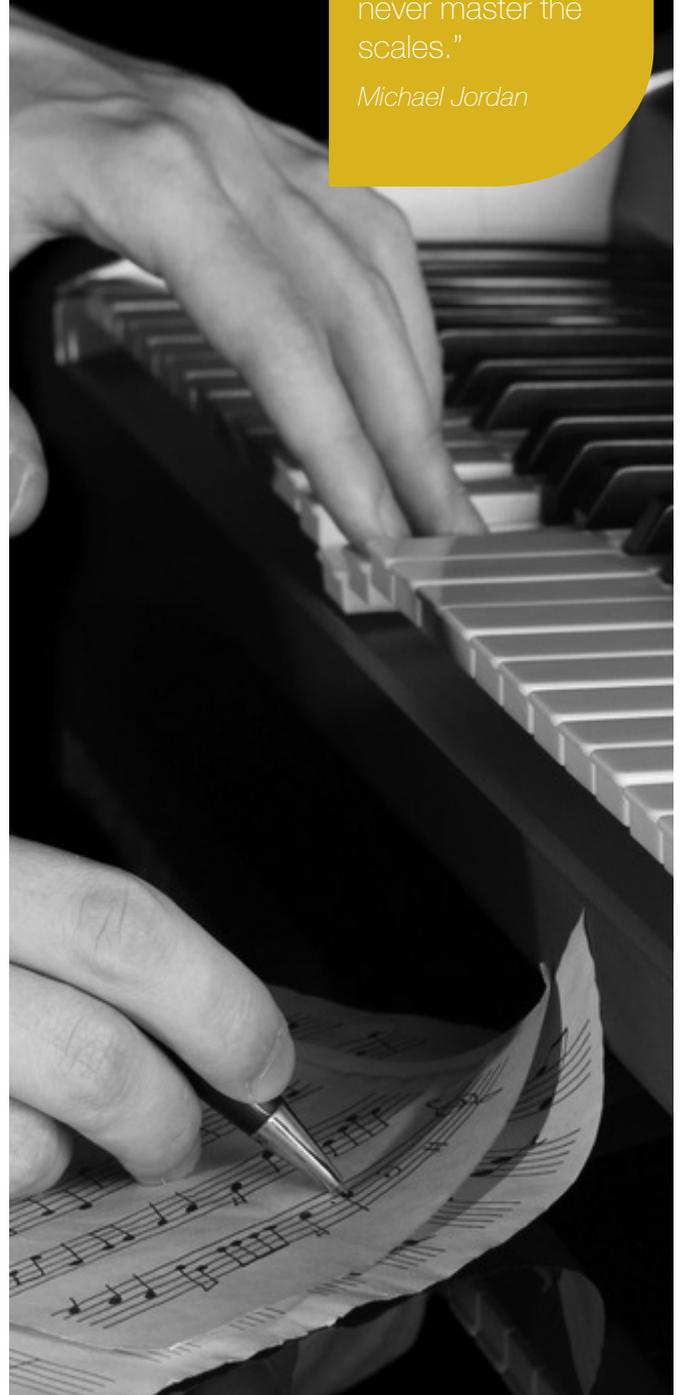
An example is the speed with which you can return to resting heart rate after exertion, or the speed with which you can return to a resilient and sharp mental state after being confronted with a stressful situation at work, or the speed through which you can reflect on what happened in your previous meeting and reset for your next task. Jordan was able to maintain consistency because he mastered the basics.

When you master the foundations of resilience, your baseline measures of physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual resilience will be at superior levels, creating consistently high performance in work, sport, career and life, and equipping you to deal with disruptive change and seize the opportunities that come with it.



"Some guys don't want to deal with that, they're looking for instant gratification, so maybe they skip a few steps. It's like they're so focused on composing a masterpiece they never master the scales."

Michael Jordan



So how will you master the fundamentals of resilience in order to compose your masterpiece?

The 5 processes for boosting your overall resilience:

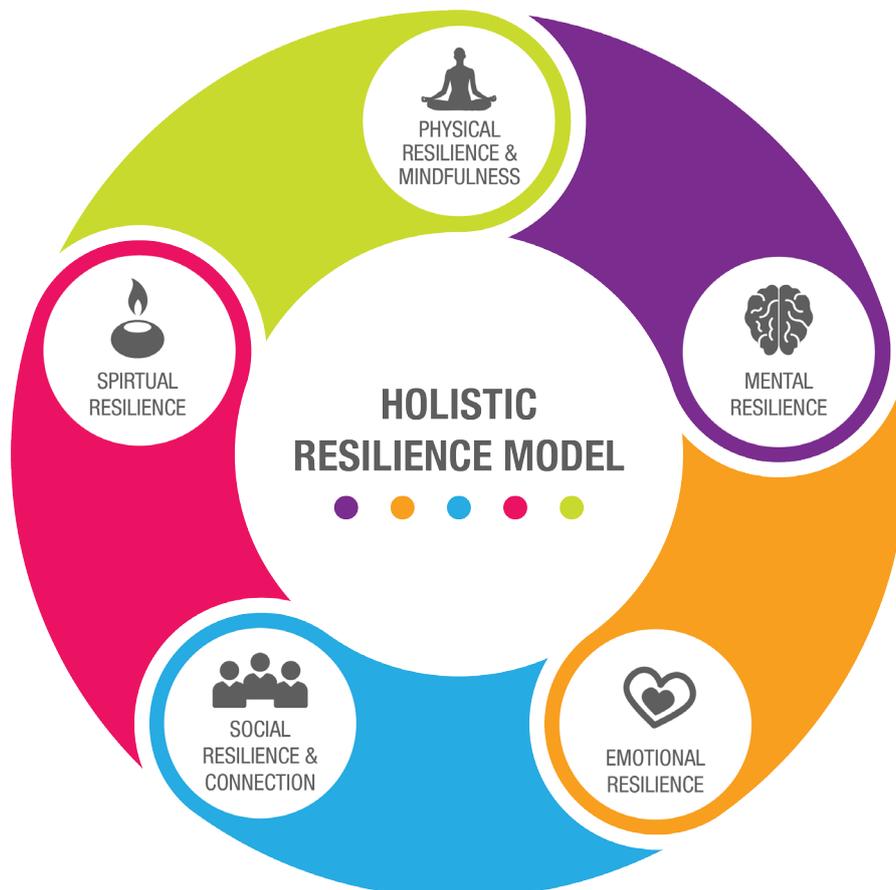
Our Holistic Resilience Model (HRM – see below)^{viii} is a meta-framework comprising of five domains which, developed holistically, will boost your overall resilience.

In developing our model we were cognisant of extensive research indicating that a holistic model is necessary to maximise resilience and mental toughness.^{ix,x} With this in mind, our model translates the best contemporary evidence based research into practical, sustainable actions.

The five domains are as follows:

-  **Physical Resilience and Mindfulness:**
Staying active, maintaining a healthy immune system, rest and recovery, and using healthy nutrition.
-  **Mental Resilience:**
Outlook and perspectives, optimising brain functioning, self-belief, and adopting a growth mindset.
-  **Emotional Resilience:**
Self-awareness, emotional regulation, and realistic optimism.
-  **Social Resilience:**
Social connections and empathy.
-  **Spiritual Resilience:**
Aligning with values and beliefs, meaning, engagement, purpose, and connection.

The HRM is based on existing knowledge of a number of pre-determining factors that influence how individuals respond to, and grow from, stress.^x This process of building the five foundations addresses proactive and protective factors that will build ongoing resilience. This way, you can truly “master the scales” and unlock your human potential.



Here is some initial guidance on each of the five domains:



Physical Resilience and Mindfulness:

(staying active, maintaining a healthy immune system, rest and recovery, healthy nutrition)

- **Mental training exercises and mindfulness meditation** target top-down regulation of specific neural circuits – e.g. mindfulness assists with emotional regulation by enhancing Prefrontal Cortex regulation of limbic/brainstem systems, boosting ability to gain control of stressful situations. ^{xii}
- **Quality of food, exercise, capacity to relax** are important in determining how body and brain respond to stress.
- **Aerobic exercise** reduces anxiety and depression, improves cognition and brain function with physical exercise generally shown to be beneficial to those facing depression or major stressors in a 10-year longitudinal study of 424 depressed adult patients. ^{xiii}
- **Cardiovascular training** can enhance your memory over and above benefits gained from brain training alone such as Lumosity. Better yet, do it in the great outdoors for even better results (see 'Getting Outside').



Mental Resilience:

(outlook and perspective, self-belief, optimising brain function, adopting a growth mindset)

“Your thoughts become your behaviour, your behaviours become your habits, and you become the product of your habits” - Mahatma Gandhi.

- **Mental resilience** can be enhanced through cognitive reappraisal and a growth mindset. When you appraise a situation as something you have the skills (or could develop the skills) to deal with you're more likely to see it as a challenge rather than a threat or something that is out of your control. ^{xiv}
- **Learning a new language** develops the hippocampus, a deep-lying brain structure involved in learning new material and spatial navigation, while Alzheimer's disease has a later onset in bilingual or multilingual groups. ^{xv}



Emotional Resilience:

(self-awareness, emotional regulation, realistic optimism)

Boost your emotional resilience through these hacks...

Research tells us:

- **Go for 3 to 1:** For every one negative emotion, experience three positive emotions! Ability to experience positive emotions is important in helping resilient individuals recover from stress. ^{xvi}

- Say thanks! Expression of gratitude and optimism can lead to reduction of depressed feelings.
- Boost your emotional resilience by loading up on emotional literacy; for example by building your emotional expression repertoire.



Social Resilience:

(social protective factors, empathy and staying connected)

“The strongest predictor of a species' brain size is the size of its social group. We have big brains in order to socialize.” - Matthew Lieberman.

Connect! Social resilience can be enhanced through social connections and empathy.

When stressed, many people tend to distance themselves from those who might provide emotional support. ^{xvii} A peer-intervention programme for police involved in the September 11 attacks was found to be effective in assisting a population whose members are usually reluctant to openness. The peers were trained volunteer NYPD officers. ^{xviii} This is supportive of the mentoring and experience-sharing approaches that can boost overall resilience.

Research tells us that:

- **We are wired to connect** when experiencing distress. Oxytocin, “the tend and befriend” drug, is released in high social stress change and leads people to seek out more and better social contacts. ^{xix}
- **People with greater perceived social support** are more likely to be resilient, according to research of people who have faced trauma. ^{xx}
- **Resilient individuals** tend to build supportive social networks to facilitate coping.



Spiritual Resilience:

(values and beliefs, meaning, intention, engagement, purpose, connection)

“We build emotional, mental and spiritual capacity in precisely the same way that we build physical capacity.” - Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz

Spiritual resilience is enhanced through identifying your personal values and using them to guide your thoughts, behaviours and decision making. You can also boost your spiritual resilience through knowing your “Why”. This can unleash energy and sustain you through challenges, boosting motivation, concentration and consistency.

Research tells us that as hopelessness is a risk factor to PTSD, spirituality is thought to be linked to building resilience for trauma. ^{xxi}

Through practical and experiential application of our HRM, Bendelta supports leaders, their teams and organisations build resilience to unlock human potential.

A call for action!

'Mastering the scales' is an apt metaphor. The key to resilience is building the five foundations, through simple daily routines, so that you move towards mastery. Practising scales may seem simplistic, but every virtuoso will tell you it's the bedrock of their excellence and something they never neglect.

The same is true in the world of work. In these times of disruptive speed and exponential technology, mastering the scales is what will enable you to compose your team's and organisation's masterpieces.

Through practical application of our Holistic Resilience Model, Bendelta supports leaders, their teams and organisations master their scales.

If you are interested in learning more about how we do this, or if you truly seek to embody the enablers of resilience and human potential for yourself and your teams in this age of disruption, drop us an email at:

resilience@bendelta.com



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