



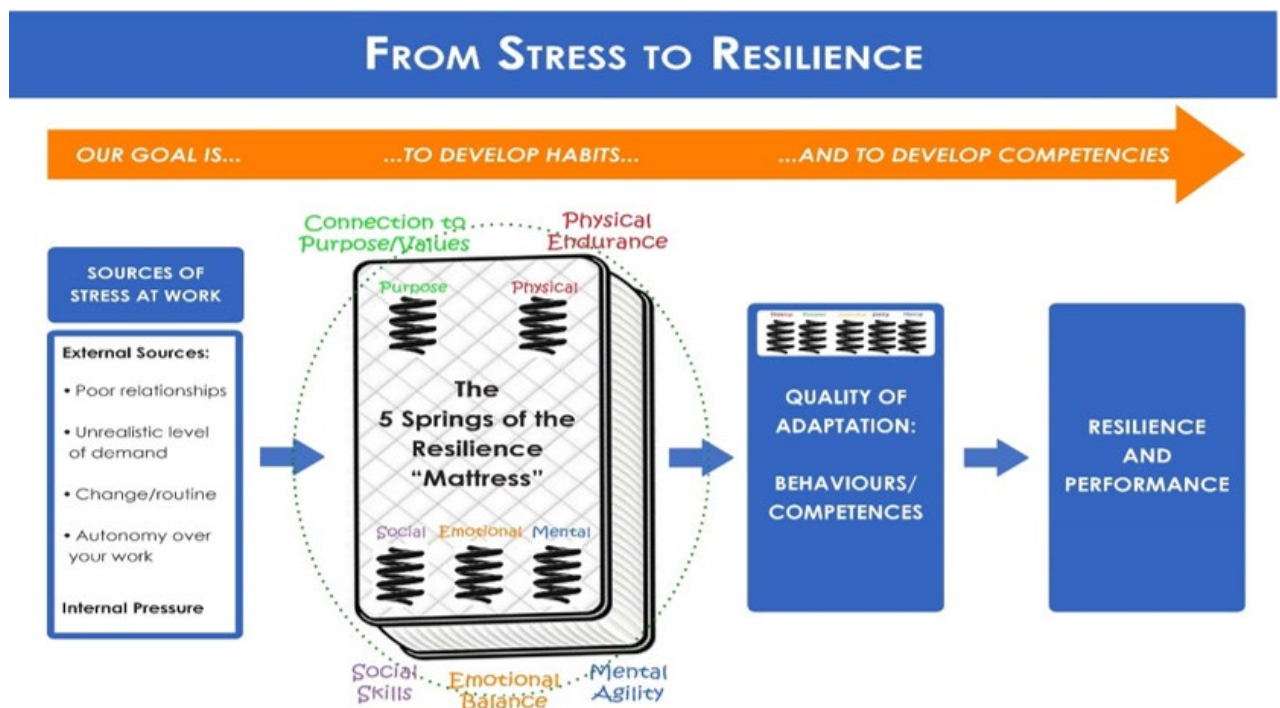
New HoU: Sustainable Leadership Journey

The Resilience Mattress

We have developed a framework model as part of this programme which is called the Resilience Mattress. The purpose of the framework is to bring clarity and structure to the wide range of resources you can use to develop behaviours and competencies which will enable you and your unit to be resilient.

This model reflects resilience as a process, underpinned by a set of behaviours and competencies which can help lead to sustained performance in the VUCA – volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous – context we all live and work in.

Starting on the left of the model you can see sources of stress categorised into 5 groups. These stressors put pressure on our internal resources (represented here in the model by a mattress with 5 springs). It is these internal resources which either help or hinder us to be resilient and develop competencies which in turn sustain or improve our performance.



We like to use the metaphor of a mattress which represents the protection or buffer we need to help us deal effectively with day to day or longer-term challenges. Just as a good quality mattress literally enables us to have a good night's sleep to sustain us through the day, so our figurative mattress provides us with the tools necessary to adapt and sustain our behaviour – to help us grow be able to develop further our own resilience and that of our unit.

There are five springs in our mattress. Each represents one of our primary internal resources we need to be resilient – physical endurance, mental agility, emotional balance, social skills and last but not least connection to purpose.



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Being resilient requires us to draw on all 5 separate, but related, sources of energy, strength and flexibility. And if we want the mattress to last, for it to be sustainable, we know that we need to keep these springs in good condition. To use them regularly. To maintain them. To develop them as the world around us changes and we are faced with new sources of stress to challenge us.

Like the springs of a mattress, we are not just looking for pure strength – the mattress would be very hard then! In this terminology a strong spring has enough energy to remain flexible and absorb the impact of stressors so that it springs back to its original position after being used.

Each of the springs has its own characteristics:

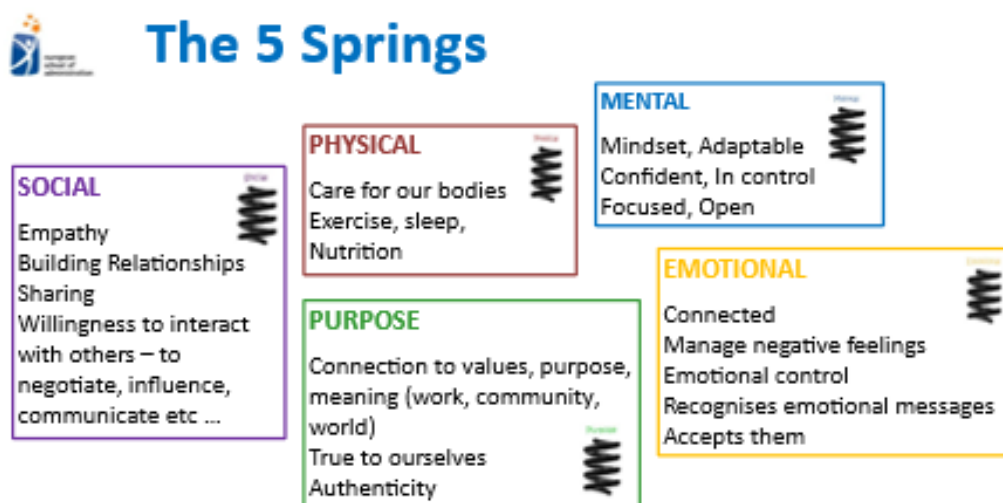
The **endurance of our physical spring** is regulated by what we eat and drink, how well we sleep, caring for ourselves as well as the quality and regularity of our exercise.

The **agility of our mental spring** is regulated by ability to take distance, to see things from a different perspective, to distinguish our interpretation of reality from reality itself, to be able to focus and concentrate, to be open to new ideas and different viewpoint.

The **balance of our emotional spring** is regulated by our ability to be aware of what we are feeling, manage our negative bias and to choose our response to negative emotions.

The **skills in our social spring** are those of empathy, warmth, of connecting with other people and of being able to build and maintain relationships whilst for example saying no, negotiating, influencing, and disagreeing with others.

And lastly the **connection to our purpose spring** is not only being aware of our purpose as a manager and that the work we do has meaning. It is also about being connected to our values – which means being aware of the most important ones, behaving in ways which are consistent with them e.g. when setting goals, or prioritising projects or making tough decisions.





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These springs are interlinked – via the dotted line – so that one can either re-enforce or weaken the other. If you are feeling physically tired, there is a high chance that your brain does not function optimally (mental spring) or that you easily get irritated with others (emotional) and your interactions with others may become more difficult (social). You may start asking yourself questions like “Why am I doing this?” or “What’s the point?” (Purpose spring). On the other hand, a strong sense of connection to our purpose can help us find the energy to do tasks when we are feeling tired or which may be repetitive and boring.

The mattress framework is **relevant both on a collective level and an individual level** for a manager wanting to develop resilience in their unit.

As a manager we can coach individual team members to identify, strengthen and maintain their springs which need it. Or give positive feedback and recognition when a person has used one of their springs in a way which has helped them be more resilient.

On the collective level we can leverage collaborative team processes such as appreciative inquiry, participative leadership, OPERA etc... to build a sense of common purpose and choose values which drive common behaviours everyone can stand behind which is related to the collective values spring. Or creative problem-solving techniques including brainstorming to benefit from the agility of the collective mental spring. Or meeting etiquettes which do not involve interrupting each other, listening to understand to build the collective social spring.

The stronger the individual and collective springs, the more resilient the unit is to deal with the challenges of the VUCA world we live and work in.