

PRACTICAL STARTER KIT · 2026 EDITION

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RESILIENCE

Protective Factors in Practice

A workbook for educators, families
and other professionals

Structured reflection on support, participation and context.

How to use this starter kit

Protective factors are not virtues a child must acquire. They are capacities, relationships and environmental conditions that can reduce the impact of adversity or support adaptive action.

1. Begin with a specific situation	Describe what is happening without labelling the person.
2. Map what is available	Review capacities, relationships and environmental conditions.
3. Choose one change	Select the smallest factor that can realistically be strengthened now.
4. Review the effect	Look for observable changes in participation, regulation or functioning.

This resource supports professional and family reflection. It does not replace individual assessment, safeguarding action, medical care or psychological treatment.

Three sources of protection

Resilience is dynamic and context-dependent. A useful assessment therefore looks beyond personal strengths and asks what support and opportunity are actually available.

CAPACITIES

Skills and functions
available in this situation

communication · emotion regulation · problem solving · realistic hope ·
help-seeking · task knowledge

RELATIONSHIPS

People and interactions
that provide safety,
guidance and belonging

predictable adults · warmth and respect · co-regulation · supportive peer
relationships · high but realistic expectations · repair after conflict

ENVIRONMENTS

Conditions that make
participation
understandable,
manageable and
meaningful

clear routines · accessible tasks · choice and voice · a safe climate · resources
and services · fair rules and responses

Four clarifications before you begin

Resilience does not mean coping alone.

External resources and relationships are part of the process, not optional extras.

A factor is not protective in every context.

Its usefulness depends on timing, developmental fit, access and the type of risk.

Support is not the same as rescue.

Good support increases present or future participation where this is safe and realistic.

Individual skills cannot repair harmful conditions.

Sometimes the proportionate response is to change the task, relationship or system.

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Brief protective-factor review

Rate only the current situation: 0 = absent or inaccessible, 1 = inconsistent, 2 = reliable. Record concrete, observable signs rather than impressions.

Area	0	1	2	Observable signs
The person understands what is expected and how to begin.	☐	☐	☐	
The challenge is meaningful without being persistently overwhelming.	☐	☐	☐	
At least one dependable adult is available.	☐	☐	☐	
Help can be requested without shame or punishment.	☐	☐	☐	
The person experiences belonging and fair treatment.	☐	☐	☐	
Communication, sensory and executive-function needs are considered.	☐	☐	☐	
Age-appropriate choice and responsibility remain possible.	☐	☐	☐	
There is a realistic route to further support when needed.	☐	☐	☐	

Protective-factor map

Choose one person and one specific situation. Avoid global judgements such as 'unmotivated' or 'not resilient'. Record what can be observed.

Situation

What happens, when, where and in response to what demand?

Capacities already available

What can the person do with current support?

Relationships available

Who is predictable, trusted and responsive?

Environmental supports

Which routines, adaptations or resources already help?

Missing or unstable protection

What is absent, inconsistent or difficult to access?

From map to action: the PRACTICE mini-cycle

P	Pinpoint the difficulty	Describe the observable situation.
R	Review risks and resources	Identify demands, existing protection and missing support.
A	Assess fit	Review developmental, communication, sensory and contextual fit.
C	Calibrate challenge and support	Make the next step manageable without automatically taking over the task.
T	Transfer meaningful agency	Preserve choice, contribution and responsibility where possible.
I	Implement one change	Name who will do what, and by when.
C	Check the effect	Review participation, regulation and functioning after the change.
E	Escalate when necessary	Seek further assessment or safeguarding action when indicated.

Classroom application

A student makes one mistake, closes the book and says, 'I'm bad at this.'

What may the behaviour communicate besides low motivation?

Is the task understandable and is the first step visible?

What response would preserve dignity and make re-entry possible?

What is the smallest useful support: clarification, modelling, co-regulation, reduced load or a short pause?

What sign would show that the support had helped?

Try: 'Let's find the point where it stopped making sense. Which part should we examine first?'

Family application

A child asks for help before attempting the first step of a manageable task.

Does the child understand the demand?

Is reassurance, information, co-regulation or direct assistance needed?

What can remain under the child's control?

Could you take the first step together, then pause?

When should support increase rather than be withdrawn?

Try: 'Show me what you understand so far. We will choose the smallest part to do together.'

Inclusive resilience: adjust support before forming a judgement

The same strategy does not suit every learner. Behaviour that looks avoidant or dependent may reflect communication difficulty, sensory overload, excessive demands on executive functioning, prior failure, shame or an inaccessible task.

Instead of	Consider
'They know what to do.'	Check receptive language, working memory and the visibility of the task.
'They need less help.'	Ask which scaffold enables participation and which part can be faded safely.
'They should calm down first.'	Reduce overload and offer co-regulation before expecting independent regulation.
'They must persist.'	Distinguish manageable challenge from repeated overwhelm or inaccessibility.
'The same rule is fair.'	Aim for equitable access while keeping expectations transparent.

Seven-day action plan

Protective factor to strengthen

Choose one only.

Action

What exactly will change?

Responsible person

Who will act?

Timing

When and how often?

Observable indicator

What would improved participation look like?

Review point

When will you decide whether to continue, adapt or stop?

Review tracker

Date	What changed?	Observed response	Next decision

- ☐ Did participation become more possible, or only quieter?
- ☐ Did the person gain usable agency, or did adults take over?
- ☐ Was the support accessible at the moment it was needed?
- ☐ What unintended consequence appeared?
- ☐ Should the action continue, change or stop, or should further professional support be involved?

When this starter kit is not enough

Move beyond informal strategies when difficulty is persistent, severe, rapidly worsening or present across settings; when development, learning, health or safety may be affected; or when the situation exceeds the role and competence of the adult involved.

- Immediate danger, abuse, neglect or a safeguarding concern
- Self-harm, suicidal thoughts, severe distress or loss of functioning
- Persistent developmental, communication, learning or behavioural concern
- Repeated exclusion, bullying, discrimination or environmental harm
- A strategy that repeatedly increases distress or reduces participation

Follow local safeguarding and referral procedures. In an emergency, contact the appropriate emergency service in your country.

Research basis and further reading

This starter kit translates findings from resilience research into reflection prompts. It is not a diagnostic instrument or a validated scale.

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