



BECOME MORE RESILIENT – LOOK TO THE ‘THE BIG 5’ FOCUS AREAS

Neil McGregor lays out how even tiny changes in your daily strategy can lead to quick wins whether it be in your way of thinking, your goals and plans, your health or your social connections.

Resilience is the ability to adapt, recover, and grow stronger in the face of challenges, setbacks, or distress. It sounds complex and a little hard to achieve, but it can be easier than you think. If you know what The Big 5 focus areas are, and practice integrating them into your daily life you'll be surprised how easily you can feel more resilient.

Here are The Big 5 focus areas and some simple, evidence-based strategies (because we're social scientists) for growing each area:

1. Meaningful activities (engagement and purpose)
 - Daily strategy: Dedicate at least 15 minutes a day to something that brings you joy or fulfilment – this could be reading, creating, volunteering, or learning.
 - Quick wins: Keep a gratitude journal, practice a hobby, or engage in acts of kindness to reinforce a sense of purpose.
 - Evidence base: Studies show that engaging in meaningful activities reduces

stress and enhances wellbeing by creating a sense of accomplishment.

- Example: Spend 10 minutes sketching, journaling, or playing a musical instrument after dinner – just for enjoyment, not perfection.

2. Healthy thinking (**cognitive flexibility** and positivity)
 - Daily strategy: Use the 'Name it to Tame it' approach – when you experience a negative thought, label it ("I'm having a thought that..."), then reframe it to focus on possibilities.
 - Quick wins: Start the day with positive affirmations or a 'three good things' reflection at night.
 - Evidence base: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) techniques show that challenging and reframing negative thoughts leads to improved mental resilience.
 - Example: When you catch yourself thinking, "I'm rubbish at this," reframe it to, "I'm still learning, and every attempt helps me improve." "I'm not proficient at this... yet!"

3. Goals and plans (clarity and progress)
 - Daily strategy: Follow the "1-3-5 rule" – identify one big goal, three medium tasks, and five small actions you can take daily.
 - Quick wins: Break goals into bite-sized, manageable steps and celebrate small wins to build momentum.
 - Evidence base: Research in motivation psychology suggests that small, achievable goals increase dopamine, reinforcing motivation.
 - Example: If your goal is to get fitter, set a tiny habit like doing one push-up after brushing your teeth – starting small builds momentum.
4. Healthy routines (structure and **stability**)
 - Daily strategy: Anchor your day with morning and evening rituals – e.g., stretching in the morning, a short walk at lunch, and a wind-down routine before bed.
 - Quick wins: Use habit stacking – pair a new habit with an existing one (e.g., do deep breathing while brushing your teeth).
 - Evidence base: Habit research (James Clear's Atomic Habits) highlights that consistent routines create automatic behaviours, making healthy habits stick.
 - Example: Place a glass of water by your bed to drink first thing in the morning, making hydration an effortless habit. And shop to eat – buy healthy foods that make a scrummy but quick breakfast (e.g. peaches, yoghurt and a nutty breakfast bowl)
5. Social connections (**belonging** and support)
 - Daily strategy: Reach out to one person daily – whether it's a friend, family member, or colleague – through a call, text, or in-person meetup.
 - Quick wins: Schedule micro-connections – even brief positive interactions (like small talk or a compliment) enhance mood and strengthen bonds.
 - Evidence base: Social connection is one of the strongest predictors of well-being, reducing stress and increasing happiness. A recent study showed that more frequent social activity in older adults points to a 38 percent reduction in dementia risk and a 21 percent reduction in mild cognitive impairment risk, compared to the least socially active.
 - Example: Send a quick "thinking of you" text to a friend during lunch or when you're on the bus – small check-ins strengthen relationships.

By embedding these simple strategies into your day, you'll create a foundation for resilience, wellbeing, and long-term success. Which area do you find easiest to integrate? Which one the hardest? Start doing the easy one now, and put a plan in place to achieve the hardest one. You can do it! As the artist William H. Johnsen said: "If it is to be it is up to me." ■



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Māori authorities thriving

Māori authorities are experiencing good growth over the past year, despite the current difficult economic climate.



In early April Stats NZ released Tauranga umanga Māori – Statistics on Māori businesses: December 2024 quarter which presents information on one subset of Māori businesses that contribute to the country's economy. Stats NZ says the release includes data on Māori authorities and related businesses. It does not cover all Māori businesses in Aotearoa. In the December 2024 quarter, around 1,450 Māori authorities and related businesses were in the Tauranga umanga Māori population.

The stats show that in the December 2024 quarter compared with the December 2023 quarter*:

- The total value of sales by Māori authorities was \$1,233 million, up \$48 million (4.1 percent).
- The total value of purchases by Māori authorities was \$897 million,

up \$13 million (1.5 percent).

- The total number of filled jobs for Māori authorities was 12,160, up 290 jobs (2.4 percent).
- The total value of earnings by employees of Māori authorities was \$253 million, up \$33 million (15 percent).
- Māori authorities exported \$254 million worth of goods, up \$35 million (16 percent).

Stats NZ says that Māori authorities are defined as businesses that receive, manage, and/or administer assets held in common ownership by iwi and Māori. "Māori authorities are largely identified through their tax codes as registered with Inland Revenue. Any business within a Māori authority ownership group is also included for the purposes of Tauranga umanga Māori." ■

* All figures are actual values and are not adjusted for seasonal effects. Click here for more information. [Tauranga umanga Māori – Statistics on Māori businesses: December 2024 quarter](https://www.stats.govt.nz/tauranga-umanga-maori)