

My Protective Factors

A RESEARCH-BASED CHECK-IN ON YOUR STRENGTHS & RESOURCES

NAME _____ DATE _____

Therapy often focuses on what's difficult — and that matters. But research on resilience shows that recovery and coping also draw on the **ordinary, everyday resources** you already have: relationships, personal qualities, your environment, and what matters to you. This isn't about proving you're "fine." It's about giving your therapist a fuller picture of what you can draw on, alongside what you're finding hard.

***You don't need to be "coping well" to fill this in.** You can be struggling significantly — even in crisis — and still have strengths, relationships, values, and resources worth naming. Having protective factors doesn't mean things aren't hard. If a section doesn't apply to you or feels hard to answer right now, that's useful information too — just leave it blank.*

HOW TO USE THIS FORM

Go through each section and tick whatever feels true for you — there's no minimum number to tick, and no score at the end. Some sections have a short question beneath them; write as much or as little as you like. You can fill this in on your own, or bring it into a session and talk through it together.

ABOUT YOU Your inner resources	YOUR PEOPLE Connection & support	YOUR WORLD Safety & resources	WHAT MATTERS Culture & purpose
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01 Connection & Belonging

Right now, I have or experience (*tick what's currently true for you — not what you wish for*):

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| ☐ People I can talk to honestly | ☐ Close friendships | ☐ Professional or peer support |
| ☐ A partner or intimate relationship | ☐ A sense of belonging somewhere | ☐ Reciprocity — support given as well as received |
| ☐ Family or chosen family | ☐ Community or cultural connection | ☐ Someone to contact when things are difficult |

02 Pleasure, Energy & Interests

These currently give me pleasure, energy, or something to enjoy:

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| ☐ Time in nature | ☐ Movement / exercise | ☐ Music |
| ☐ Creativity or creative expression | ☐ Reading / learning | ☐ Cooking / making things |
| ☐ Humour / play | ☐ Animals / pets | ☐ Travel / exploring |
| ☐ Quiet time | ☐ Being with people | ☐ Rest |

03 Self-Care & Regulation

This is currently true for me:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| ☐ I notice when I need a break | ☐ I can rest without feeling I have to earn it | ☐ I have routines that support me |
| ☐ I look after my physical health | ☐ I get enough sleep where circumstances allow | ☐ I eat regularly / adequately |
| ☐ I move my body in ways that suit me | ☐ I have ways to calm myself | ☐ I know what helps when I feel overwhelmed |
| ☐ I can ask for support | ☐ I can recover after intense emotions | ☐ Something else |

04 Coping Repertoire

When things are hard, I currently do this — at least some of the time:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| ☐ Problem-solving when something can be changed | ☐ Acceptance when something can't | ☐ Cognitive flexibility — can see more than one angle |
| ☐ Distraction used deliberately, not just avoidantly | ☐ I seek information when uncertain | ☐ I can tolerate distress without needing it to stop right away |
| ☐ I use humour to cope | ☐ I draw on past experience of getting through things | ☐ I adapt my strategies rather than relying on just one |

Which of these do you tend to reach for easily? Which feel harder to access when things are at their hardest? Both are useful to know.

My Protective Factors — Continued

COPING SKILLS, IDENTITY & VALUES

05 Specific Coping Skills I Use

There are skills I currently use:

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| ☐ Deep or slow breathing | ☐ Grounding techniques (e.g. 5 senses) | ☐ Going for a walk or changing my environment |
| ☐ Journaling or writing things down | ☐ Talking it through with someone | ☐ Physical exercise or movement |
| ☐ Listening to music | ☐ Prayer, meditation, or mindfulness | ☐ Making a list or plan |
| ☐ Taking a break or stepping away | ☐ Using a calming object, scent, or texture | ☐ Naming or labelling the emotion |
| ☐ Reminding myself "this will pass" | ☐ Doing something creative | ☐ Something else |

Which of these have you actually tried and found helpful — not just heard about?

06 Identity, Culture & Spirituality

This is currently true for me:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| ☐ A clear sense of who I am | ☐ Cultural identity or heritage that feels grounding | ☐ Spirituality / faith / religious practice |
| ☐ Connection to language, food, or tradition | ☐ Pride in an aspect of identity (e.g. culture, gender, sexuality, role) | ☐ A community that shares and affirms my identity |
| ☐ Something else | | |

07 Strengths & Capacities

These are strengths I currently have, or have shown before:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Persistence | ☐ Adaptability | ☐ Curiosity |
| ☐ Compassion | ☐ Creativity | ☐ Humour |
| ☐ Problem-solving | ☐ Courage | ☐ Self-awareness |
| ☐ Ability to learn | ☐ Ability to repair after conflict | ☐ Something else |

What have difficult experiences taught you that you now carry with you?

08 Values & Meaning

These currently matter to me:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Relationships | ☐ Integrity | ☐ Freedom |
| ☐ Learning | ☐ Contribution | ☐ Creativity |
| ☐ Justice / fairness | ☐ Growth / development | ☐ Security |
| ☐ Adventure | ☐ Legacy — what I want to leave behind | ☐ Something else |

What matters enough to you that you want your life to include it?

09 Environmental & Material Resources

I currently have access to:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| ☐ Stable, safe housing | ☐ Enough income to meet basic needs | ☐ Access to healthcare |
| ☐ Reliable transport | ☐ Stable employment, study, or role | ☐ A safe neighbourhood or environment |
| ☐ Legal or immigration stability | ☐ Digital access / connectivity | ☐ Something else |

My Protective Factors — Continued

REFLECTING ON THE WHOLE PICTURE

10 Future Orientation

This is currently true for me:

- ☐ I can imagine a future worth having
 ☐ I have goals, even small or short-term ones
 ☐ Some sense of agency over what happens next
☐ Hope, even alongside difficulty
 ☐ Something to look forward to
 ☐ Something else

11 What Has Helped Through Difficult Times?

Think of a time you got through something hard. What did you do? Who was there, if anyone? What did you discover about yourself?

WHAT'S ALREADY WORKING

Something you want to protect, continue, or make more room for:

WHAT COULD SUPPORT YOU MORE

A relationship, habit, resource, or part of yourself you'd like to strengthen:

12 Looking Across the Whole Picture

Is there anything that surprised you as you filled this in — something you had, or something you noticed was missing? Is there anything here you'd like to talk through further?

My Protective Factors — Continued

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

A REMINDER

There's no "right" number of ticks, and this isn't a test you can pass or fail. Whatever you've noticed — including what felt hard to answer — is useful and worth bringing into the conversation.

Anything Else?

Space for anything that didn't fit above, or anything you'd like your therapist to know before you begin.

What happens next: Bring this along to your next session if you'd like to. Your therapist may ask follow-up questions about anything you've written, and together you can think about how to build on what's already working for you.