

Missionary Resilience During Transition

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Thriving Through Change with God's Help



“Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.”

Romans 5:3-4

Learning Objectives

- Understand what resilience is and is not
- Explore biblical foundations of resilience
- Identify factors that contribute to resilience
- Learn practical resilience-building skills
- Practice several resilience exercises
- Develop a personal resilience plan for future transitions

Why Talk about Transition?

- Missionary life is full of transitions
 - Moving countries
 - Language learning
 - Role changes
 - Team changes
 - Marriage and family transitions
 - Re-entry
 - Grief and loss
 - Ministry successes and disappointments



What is Resilience?

- The capacity to adapt successfully, recover, and continue functioning when facing adversity, stress, loss, uncertainty, or significant life change.
- “Bouncing Forward”

Biblical View of Resilience

- Scripture never promises a life free from difficulty.
- Instead, God promises:
 - His presence
 - His comfort
 - His strength
 - His transforming work



What Resilience Is Not

- Resilience is NOT:

- Never feeling overwhelmed
- Being emotionally tough all the time
- Ignoring pain
- Pretending everything is OK
- Independent self-sufficiency

- Biblical resilience is:

- Honest
- Dependent on God
- Connected to others
- Willing to grieve
- Able to persevere

Is Resilience a Personality Trait?

- Resilience is primarily a learnable process.
- Resilience grows through:
 - Experience
 - Relationships
 - Skills
 - Meaning-making
 - Spiritual Practices

Major Contributors to Resilience

External Factors

Social support

Healthy relationships

Community

Mentorship

Internal Factors

Self-awareness

Emotional regulation

Hope

Meaning

Flexibility

Spiritual Factors

Prayer

Trust in God

Biblical worldview

Spiritual community

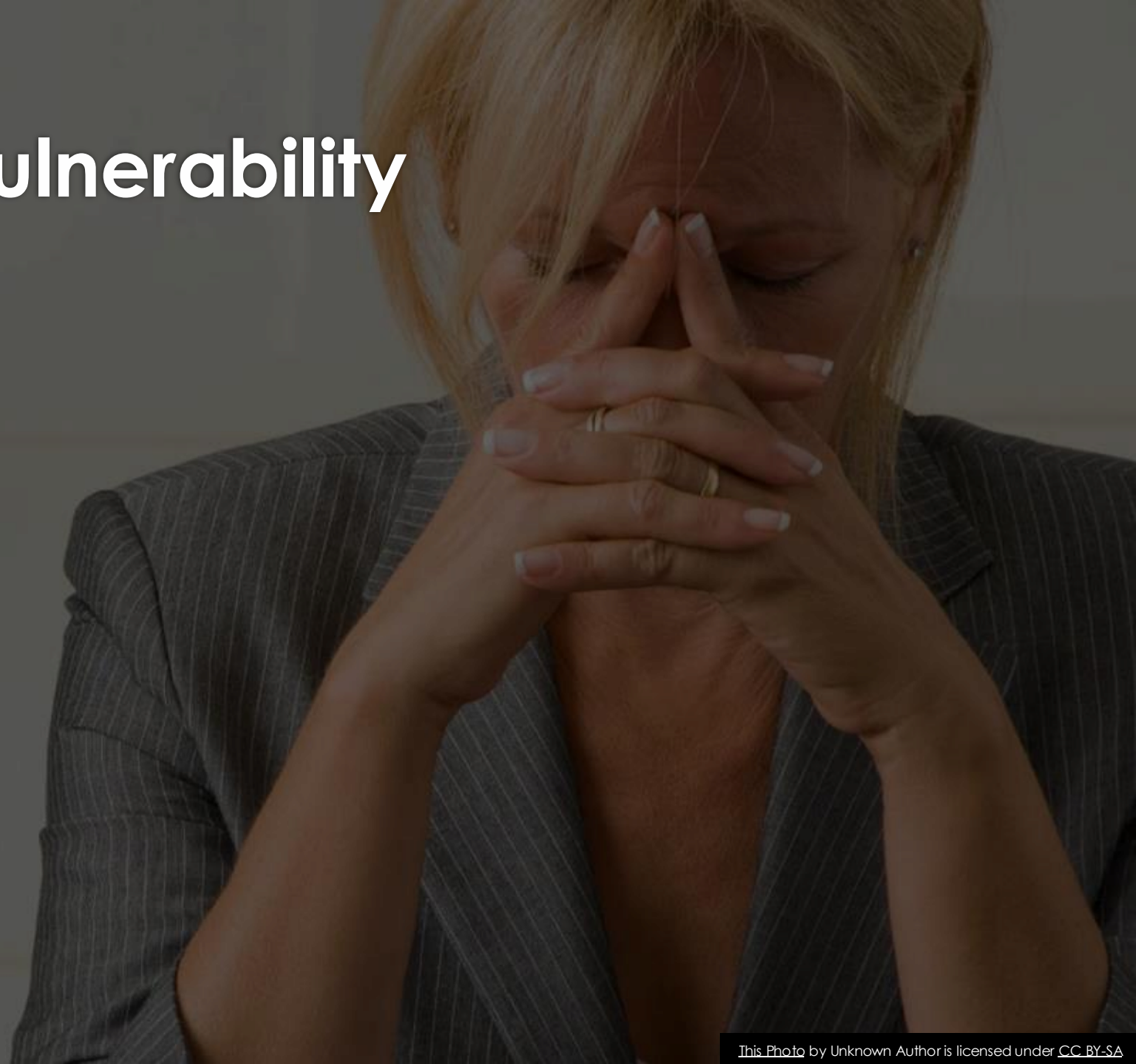
Protective Factors for Missionaries

- Healthy identity in Christ
- Strong support systems
- Emotional awareness
- Realistic expectations
- Healthy rhythms of rest
- Meaningful connection with God
- Ability to process grief and loss



Transition and Vulnerability

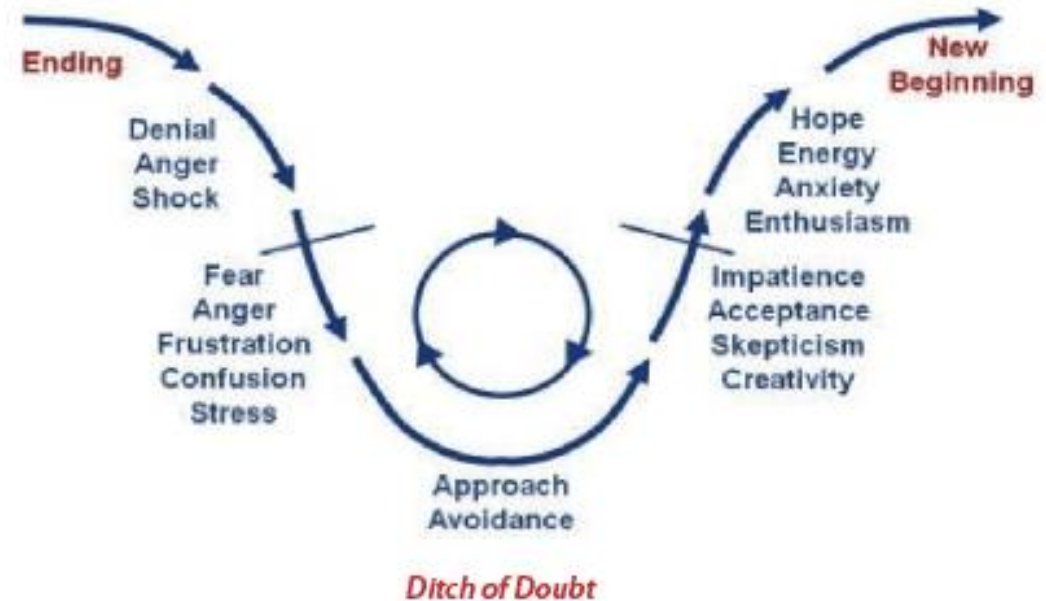
- Transitions often increase:
 - Stress
 - Anxiety
 - Fatigue
 - Identity confusion
 - Grief
 - Loneliness



The Transition Curve

- Transition is often experienced as:
 - Ending
 - Disorientation
 - Adjustment
 - Integration

The Transition Curve



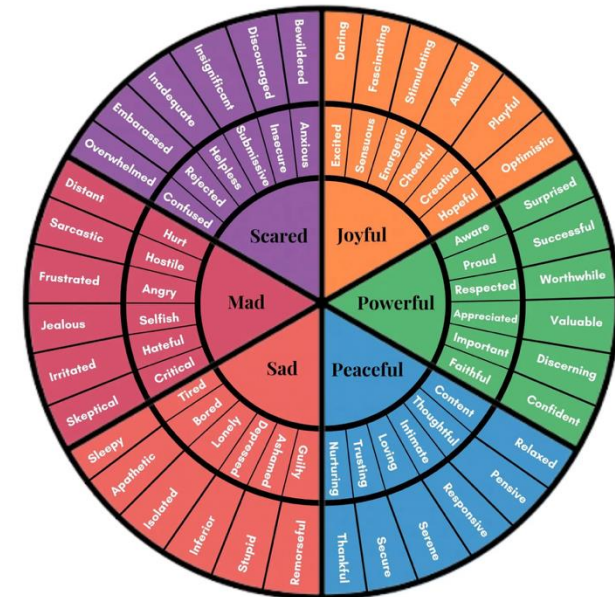
Resilience Practice #1: Honest Emotional Awareness

- Many missionaries have learned:
“Strong Christians don’t struggle.”
Scripture teaches something different.
- Examples:
 - David
 - Elijah
 - Jeremiah
 - Jesus in Gethsemane

Feel It to Heal It

- Emotional processing involves:
 - Naming feelings
 - Expressing feelings
 - Understanding feelings
 - Bringing feelings to God

The Feelings Wheel



Biblical Lament

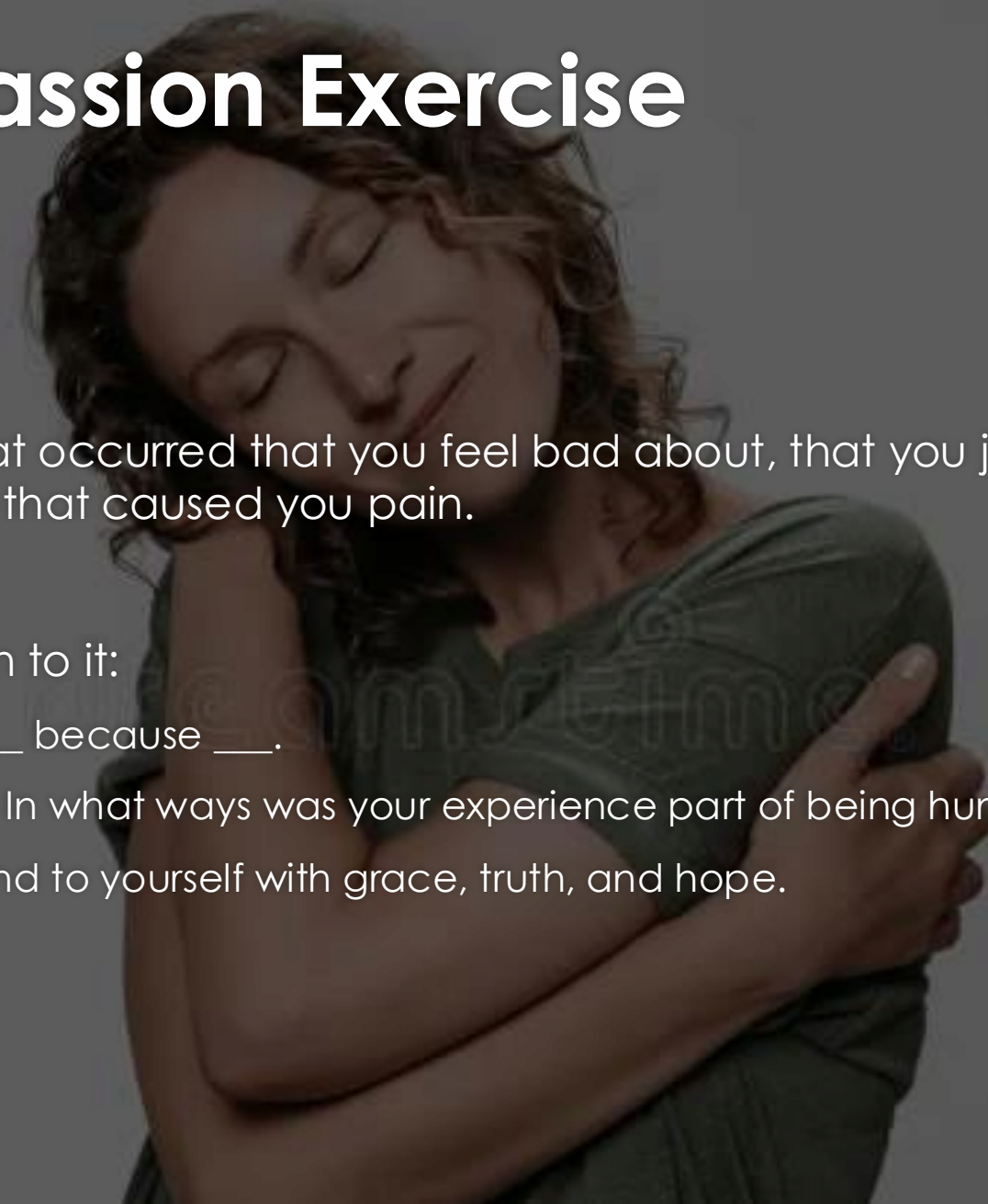


- Structure:
 - Turn toward God
 - Complain honestly
 - Ask boldly
 - Trust intentionally

Resilience Practice #2: Self-Compassion

- According to Kristin Neff:
 - Mindful awareness
 - Common humanity
 - Self-kindness
- Research consistently links self-compassion with:
 - Lower anxiety
 - Lower depression
 - Greater resilience
 - Better emotional recovery

Self-Compassion Exercise



- Think of a situation that occurred that you feel bad about, that you judged yourself for, or a difficult experience that caused you pain.
- Apply self-compassion to it:
 - Mindfulness: I felt ____ because ____.
 - Common humanity: In what ways was your experience part of being human?
 - Self-kindness: Respond to yourself with grace, truth, and hope.

Resilience Practice #3: Mindfulness Skills

○ Body Scan

- Sit comfortably
- Notice breathing
- Scan from head to toe
- Observe tension
- Release tension
- Invite God's presence

○ Grounding Exercise

- Name:
 - 5 things you see
 - 4 things you feel
 - 3 things you hear
 - 2 things you smell
 - 1 thing you taste

Resilience Practice #4: Breathing Prayer



Breathe in:

“Lord Jesus Christ”

Breathe out:

“Have mercy on me”

OR

Breathe in:

“The Lord is my shepherd”

Breathe out:

“I shall not want”

Resilience Practice #5: Meaning-Making

- Resilient people ask:
“What is God doing in
this?”
- Rather than
“Why is this happening to
me?”



Reflection Activity



JOURNAL:



WHAT DIFFICULT
TRANSITION HAS GOD
USED FOR GROWTH IN MY
LIFE?



WHAT DID I LEARN?



WHAT STRENGTHS
EMERGED?



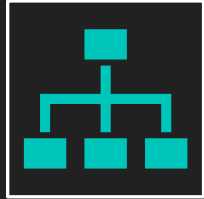
Transition Toolkit

- Practical Tools:
 - Body scan
 - Grounding
 - Breathing prayer
 - Lament
 - Self-compassion
 - Journaling
 - Rest
 - Community support
 - Meaning-making

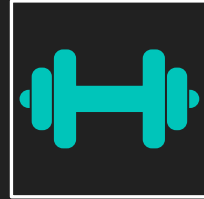
Personal Resilience Plan



Complete:



When stressed, I tend to



The practices that help me
most are



People I will contact are

Group Discussion

- Which resilience practice:
 - Was most helpful?
 - Feels most challenging?
 - Will you begin using this week?

Key Takeaways

- Resilience is:
 - Learnable
 - Relational
 - Spiritual
 - Strengthened through practice
 - Built during adversity
 - Developed in community

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is in the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water...and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green.”

Jeremiah 17:7-8

Resilience is not about the absence of storms.

It is remaining rooted while the storms come.