Resilience (as a notion)

What is it?
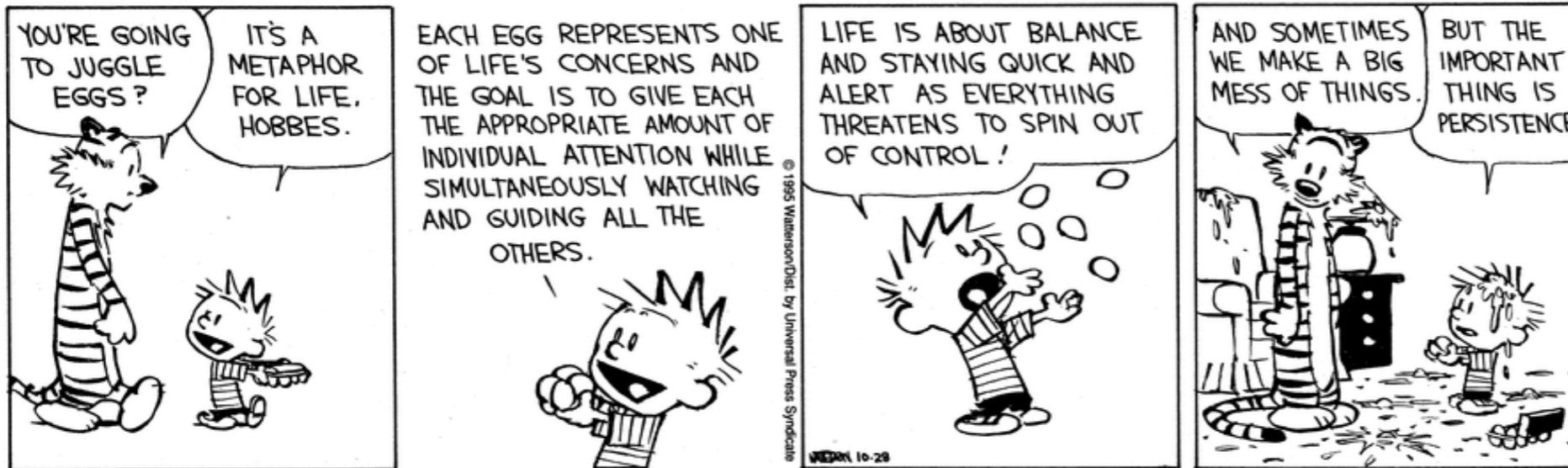
(Source: Calvin and Hobbes by Bill Watterson, October 28, 1995. No permissions granted for reproduction)

Resilience as a concept

Burgeoning interest in resilience as a *concept* – starts in ecological thought and spreads widely and rapidly…

"Resilience is now the top priority for the sustainable development and international aid agenda, key to international security concerns, from cyber conflict to the war on terror, and vital for disaster risk reduction, conflict prevention, climate change, and social, economic and institutional development"

(Chandler, 2014: 1)

"… in the last decade become one of the key political categories of our time"

(Neocleous, 2013: 3)

BUT

"It's a word that is somehow so conveniently vacant that it manages to be profound and profoundly hollow"

(Sehgal, 2015: no pagination)

Learning Resilience

Defining resilience in Higher and Further Education

OED - "[t]he capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness"

"Resilience can be defined simultaneously as the ability to recover rapidly from difficult situations as well as being the capacity to endure ongoing hardship in every conceivable way"

(Walker *et al*, 2006: 251).

"One of the key qualities of the effective real-life learner"

(Wells and Claxton, 2002: 28)

"positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity"

(Luthar et al, 2000: 543)

"a basic strength"

(Reivich and Shatte, 2002: 59).

Discussion

What makes a student resilient (or not)?

We all know that what makes students leave ≠ understanding what makes them stay…

So:

1. What makes your students stay? What helps them recover from difficulties?

2. What are the reasons for some withdrawing (passively and actively)?

Key features of resilience thinking

Summary of recurring features in literature

- Distinction between **crisis or endurance** or long and short term resilience (note also the use of 'buoyancy')

- Importance of **risk and protection** factors and ability to use these in analytics work

- **Scale** debates – resilience in face of disappointing essay grade vs bereavement (again, idea of 'buoyancy' here to mark distinction)

- Centrality of recovery and **toughness** of the individual

- That resilience is **not innate**, but is a set of **learned/developed** skills or qualities

- That resilience is **dynamic**

- And *always* **entwined with transitions** (between modes of study, subjects, levels, moving from work to study, etc.)

Defining resilience for learners

A starting point

The UK Higher Education Academy, suggest that resilience is "the ability to survive and thrive in the face of challenges", adding that:

Resilience is often referred to as a collection of skills that can help an individual perform under pressure. In the higher education context, students face various pressures, from the creation of their adult identity, to examinations, everyday peer pressure (both verbal and non-verbal), to the long-term uncertainty of their careers. A tutor has an important role to play in developing a learner's resilience. Resilience is a unique skill that enables an individual to perform under pressure.

https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/enhancement/definitions/resilience

Multiple and Concurrent Resiliencies?

"… it's difficult to accept that someone has the same belief in their capabilities or responds to adversity in the same way irrespective whether we are talking about relationships, bereavement, learning or health"

(Cassidy, 2015)

"The nature and extent of resilience is best understood, then, as a dynamic within a social system of interrelationships … [which] is particularly relevant to understandings of resilience among adults over their work and life span"

(Gu and Day, 2013: 25)

See also Friedli, 2009; Wilems, 2012; Martin, 2015; and Evans and Hardaker, 2015.

Acknowledging this is perhaps even more important for distance learners…?

Capability and Capacity

Gale and Parker (2014) - Success in transitions related more to capacity than capability… same principle should apply to resilience

Caruana *et al* (2011) point out that

> "…recent approaches have moved away from both universalistic and deterministic conceptions of resilience as 'inherent' or 'pre-existing' personal traits of an individual or group towards the recognition of locality, communities, and the continuous development and negotiation of identities and autonomous selves."

As Hoult (2013: 46) puts it, the emerging consensus is that "resilience is teachable, or at least... it is possible to create conditions where it may flourish".

Much has been and is being done on the former, but we need to be sure we don't lose sight of the latter.

Conditions matter. Circumstances matter.

A simple framework for fostering student resilience

We can allow resilience to flourish if we encourage students to…

1. Grow
- Help them to develop a growth-mindset = to believe that they can develop their abilities through time and effort, that they are not 'fixed'

2. Struggle
- Ensure that they understand the role of failure in learning (i.e. its essential) and guide them in learning from mistakes and set backs.

3. Delve
- Push them to learn things at a deeper level, to actively engage with their learning. If they are an active learner they will be more secure in their learning and better able to deal with difficulties

4. Organise
- Help them discover how to get organised and be prepared for their studies over short and long term, and especially during transitions

5. Reflect
- Encourage active reflection, assist them in figuring out what really works for them, and ensure that they have healthy perspective on their progress. Do they understand the importance of this and how to do it?

6. Ask
- Make sure that they understand the breadth and depth of support available to them as an OU student and encourage them to use this when they need. Normalise asking for help and outline how to find it..

7. Connect
- Encourage your students to make social and practical connections with others, by fostering a sense of community and inclusion, and highlighting the different ways students can support each other.
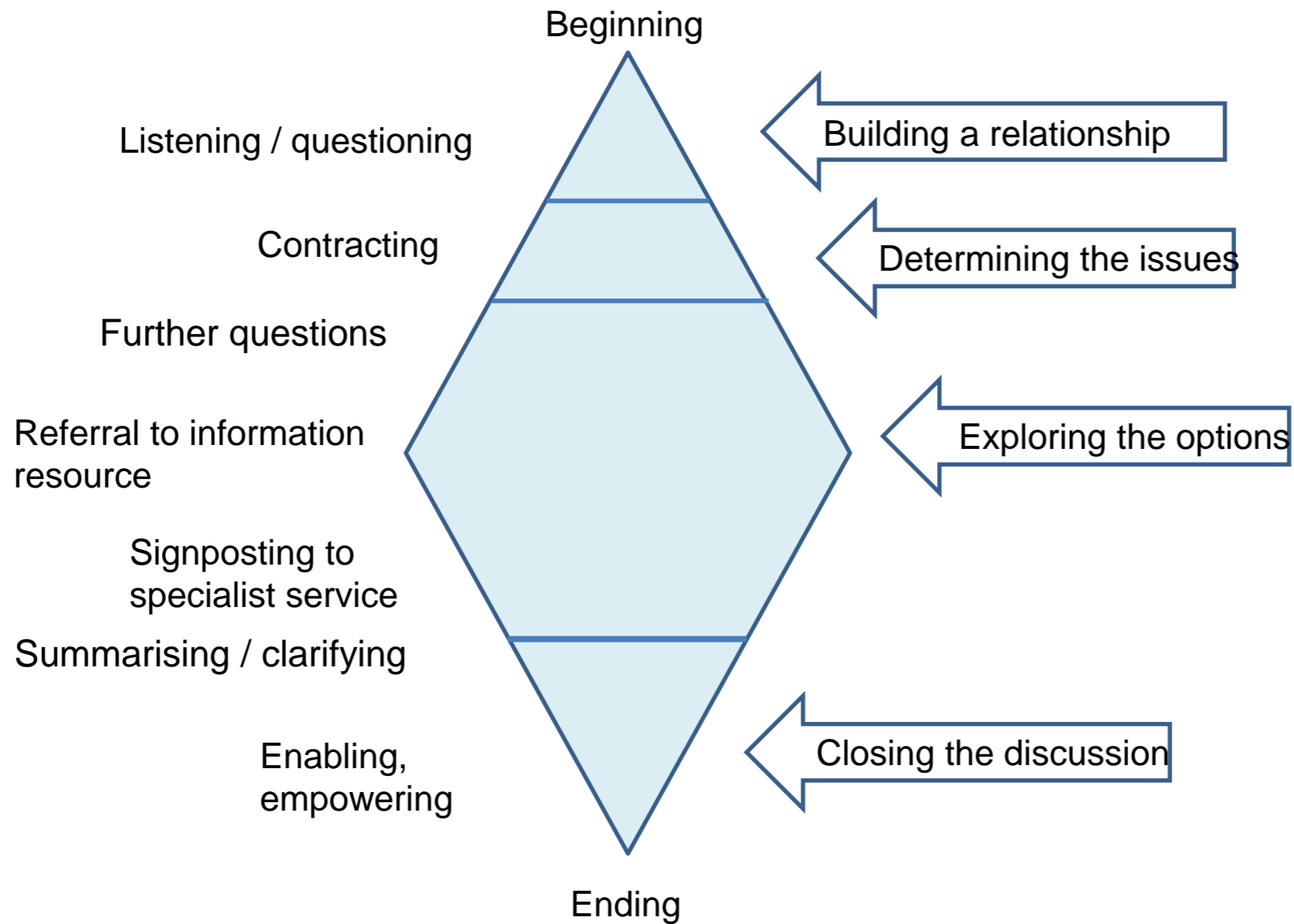
EGAN'S SKILLED HELPER MODEL

- 3 Stage model – useful in helping people solve problems and develop opportunities; become better at helping themselves;

- •Framework for conceptualising the helping process;

- •Provides a map which can be used in exploring;

- •Emphasis is on empowerment – seeks to move the person towards action leading to outcomes which they choose and value.

The IAG Framework

A framework and set of skills for supporting students to plan their studies, deal with challenges and make well-informed decisions.

Beginning

Listening / questioning

Building a relationship

Contracting

Determining the issues

Further questions

Referral to information resource

Exploring the options

Signposting to specialist service

Summarising / clarifying

Enabling, empowering

Closing the discussion

Ending

Professional distance maintained
Trust and rapport

'QUESTION THINKING'
CULTIVATING A LEARNER MIND-SET WITH LEARNER QUESTIONS

Where Am I now?	Where do I want to be?	How do I get there?
Expansive, exploratory and creative	Challenging, reality testing, and selecting	Focussing, committing, moving forward
•How did you feel? •What are you thinking? •What do you want instead? •What would be happening? •What would you be doing/thinking/feeling? •How many different ways are there for you to do this? •Who/what might help? •What about some wild ideas?	•How do others see it/you? •What does he/she feel/think? •What in all this is actually the problem for you? •How will you know when you've achieved your goal? •What's realistic? •Which idea is most likely to work for you? •Which is within your control?	•What is the important thing? •What would be best to work on now? •What is manageable? •What will be the benefits, and downsides, to doing this? •How will it be different for you? •What will you do first? When? •And after that? When?

The Toolkit

Getting the Full Picture
- SWOT
- PMI Scan
- Offa's Agenda
- Scaling tools

Decision-Making
- Force Field Analysis (Fishbone)
- Takeaway
- Honey's (1988) Four Options

Changing Perception
- Plan Your Escape (Re-framing tool)
- Blank Page
- The Other Boots

Positive Thinking Techniques
Replacing the Tape
NLP

Expanding Horizons
Mindmapping
Route Maps
The Pot of Gold

The Heart of the matter
Timeline

Learning/Coaching
GROW model
Kolb's Learning Cycle
Learning styles

Discussion: Distributed resilience?

Whose role is it?

The role of student support staff:

- **What do you currently do to achieve this?**

- **What else could you do?**

And who else should be involved?

- **Who else has a key role here?**

- **And how can we work together?**

The IAG Continuum
Collective approach to student support
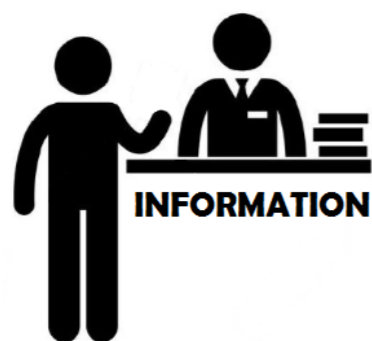
Student Recruitment & Support Centres (SRSCs)

Student Recruitment and Fees (SRF)

Student Recruitment and Support **Advisors**

Student Support Teams (SSTs)

Senior Student Recruitment and Support **Advisors**

Educational Advisors

INFORMATION

ADVICE

GUIDANCE

So what can we do?

Focus on demystifying support networks and normalising the use of these - Induction

Variety of engagement and development sessions for different staff

???????