Road to Resilience
Once upon a time, there was a little boy who was very frustrated and upset about things that happened to him. He felt like nothing would go his way, and became so disappointed and angry that he kept questioning why other people could get what they wanted with ease and live blissfully but not him.

As the little boy was moaning in dismay, an elf appeared and said, “Bad times can make us bitter, and also better. No one is exempt from adversity, and adversity can actually teach us things we cannot learn otherwise. All you need is one thing - resilience - which will help you to survive and thrive in times of adversity.”

Noticing the puzzled look on the little boy’s face, the elf continued, “Resilience is the ability to bounce back from difficult experiences. Don’t worry. It is something that can be learnt and built up in anyone. Just follow me. I will show you the way to resilience.”
R - Relationship building

Much research have shown that resilience is promoted through loving and trusting relationships. So, try making connections with the others, either your family, friends, faith-based organizations, or any local groups. Accept help and offer yours to the others. We become stronger when being connected.

E - Embrace change and focus on growth

Accept changes and challenges as part of life, embrace them and turn them into opportunities for growth instead of obstacles to overcome. Psychologists term it as a 'growth mindset', in which people see themselves learning, not failing. They believe that their basic qualities can be developed through dedication and hard work. A growth mindset encourages persistence and resilience.

B - Be mindful

Learn to be mindful about your own thoughts and feelings, and live fully in the present moment. Mindful people cope better with difficult experiences. Without being overwhelmed or shutting down themselves, they are able to respond to the adverse situations with wisdom rather than react in habitual and harmful ways.
Optimism allows us to see life through a positive lens. We can learn the optimistically-inclined way of explanation by choosing to view adversities as temporary setbacks or isolated circumstances that can be overcome through effort and abilities. It helps us to reduce the sense of helplessness and promotes constructive attitudes and behaviors in the face of adversity.

★ U - Understand the ABCDE of resilience

People get stuck in adversity sometimes because they cannot help themselves out of the vicious cycle of their thoughts and behaviors. Psychologists propose this ABCDE method of resilient thinking that helps us to cope with adversity more objectively and adaptively.

A = Adversity  Identify the event or situation that triggers your feelings and requires you to tackle. (e.g. I get a poor grade on a term paper.)

B = Beliefs  Notice your beliefs or interpretations about the adverse situation. (e.g. I am incompetent. I can't do well.)

C = Consequences  Recognize the emotional and behavioral outcomes that follow your thoughts and beliefs about the adversity. (e.g. I feel sad and helpless. I give up trying.)
D - Disputation
Examine the above beliefs for their veracity. What is the evidence for the belief? What is the implication and how useful is the belief in working out the situation? Is it the only interpretation of the evidence, or are there other possible alternative explanations? (e.g. I did well last time. Perhaps I just didn’t spend enough time and effort on it this time.)

E - Energization
Successful disputation leads to energization. The newly developed insights and beliefs about the triggering event are more realistic and positive, allowing you to act and carry on with more energy and resilience under adverse circumstances. (e.g. I feel less helpless. I can try working harder next time.)

N - Nurture yourself
Remember to take good care of yourself as you need a lot of energy to deal with the challenging situation. Pay attention to your needs, both physical and mental ones. Take time to eat well and sleep well. Exercise regularly, and engage in enjoyable or relaxing activities. Be kind and compassionate to yourself.
Character strengths are positive qualities of our “self” that influence our thinking, feelings, and behaviors. Psychologists have identified 24 character strengths in 6 categories that are universal across cultures.

**Strengths of Courage:**
Bravery, Honesty, Perseverance, and Zest.
Related to maintaining willpower in the face of opposition.

**Strengths of Humanity:**
Kindness, Love, and Social Intelligence.
Related to our relationships with others.

**Strengths of Temperance:**
Forgiveness, Humility, Prudence, and Self-regulation.
Related to protecting us from excess.

**Strengths of Justice:**
Fairness, Leadership, Teamwork.
Related the best possible interactions among a group.

**Strengths of Wisdom:**
Creativity, Curiosity, Judgement, Love-of-learning, and Perspective.
Related to the acquisition and use of new information.

**Strengths of Transcendence:**
Appreciation of Beauty, Gratitude, Hope, Humor, and Spirituality.
Related to forming connections with a larger whole.
Everyone possesses these strengths to different degrees. Emphasizing and utilizing these strengths in every domain of life have been shown to enhance one’s wellbeing and promote positive coping. To know the character strengths that you possess, you can think of a time when you were at your best in the past few weeks. Why were you feeling good? What strengths were you displaying at that time? Or alternatively, you can visit the following website (http://www.viacharacter.org) and take a survey there to learn more about character strengths.

★ E - Effort and Engagement

Set realistic goals for yourself and develop an action plan for them. You do not need to achieve something big, but it is important to engage yourself regularly and pay the effort to move towards your goals. You can feel proud of yourself for every accomplishment, even small ones, that you have achieved by keeping up your hope and effort.

The boy thanked the elf for teaching him the strategies to build up resilience. He felt more reassured and confident that he could rise from his situation now. The elf smiled and reminded him before he vanished, “Do remember that you are never alone in times of adversity! Go to your family and friends, or even professionals to seek support whenever necessary. You will realize that troubles shared are troubles halved indeed!”
24/7 HEARING and Counseling Service

If you want to learn more about resilience, or that you need assistance for your life’s challenges, please do not hesitate to make an appointment with our counselors. We are always ready to walk with you!

Counseling and Wellness Center, Room 5003 (via lift 3)
http://counsel.ust.hk
counsel@ust.hk
(852) 2358-6696

24/7 HEARING: (852) 8208-2688

This is a 24-hour helpline that supports HKUST students 7 days a week. The service is made available by our Counselors in collaboration with the Christian Family Service Center.

Meet our counselors:

More References:
