

Mindset Matters

Developing Mental Agility and Resilience to Thrive in Uncertainty

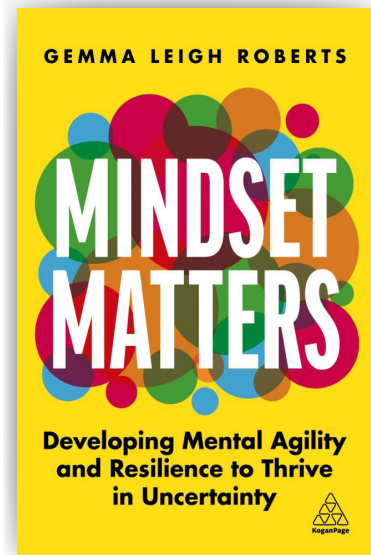
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ISBN: 978-1-398-60519-0

Estimated reading time of summary: 7 minutes



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- *Resilience* is the ability to recover and grow from adversity. Nurture the elements that promote resilience before you face adversity.
- In high-stakes situations, reframe thoughts that promote negative outcomes. When stakes are low, notice your thoughts without getting caught up in them.
- People with a *growth mindset* believe they can grow their skills and talents through hard work. To nurture a growth mindset, practice lifelong learning. The skills you need to maintain high performance are always evolving.
- Emotionally intelligent people understand their own emotions and those of others and demonstrate empathy. To improve your emotional intelligence, understand your triggers and pause before responding.
- To thrive, you need connection to others, a sense of meaning, and community. You can build connection by establishing personal and professional networks that offer guidance and encouragement.

OVERVIEW

In a world of near constant change, agility is key to future-proofing your business. It's also vital for succeeding in your career. In **Mindset Matters**, author, chartered psychologist, and executive coach Gemma Leigh Roberts shares how to thrive in uncertainty. You'll learn emotional flexibility, resilience, and how to embrace pivots.

WE'VE COME A LONG WAY

Change is an opportunity, but many people view it as threatening. You can learn to thrive during uncertainty by employing the following tips:

- *Practice acceptance.* Like the Kodak Company, which refused to accept that digital was the future of photography, refusing to address change can be catastrophic.
- *Look for opportunities.* Find opportunities that align with your risk tolerance. Ask yourself, "How can I make things better?"
- *Consider future change.* Minimize uncertainty by holding strategy sessions to consider future challenges and opportunities and how they might impact your role, division, organization, or industry.
- *Sharpen your skills.* Hone the skills required for dealing with change, including strategic and agile thinking. Agile thinkers are mentally flexible, curious, comfortable with complexity, and adept at problem solving. They grasp new ideas quickly and can think on their feet.
- *Problem solve.* Rather than acting on your first impulse, pause and take time to consider the full range of options available to you.

RESILIENCE

Resilience, the ability to recover and grow from adversity, is a key skill for navigating uncertainty. It can help you react to stress in a healthy way, reduce the impacts of stress, and protect against burnout. To build resilience, nurture its six pillars:

1. *Confidence.* Understand your strengths and believe in your ability to solve problems and plan next steps.
2. *Adaptability.* Fail fast, and learn from negative experiences by reframing them as opportunities for growth.
3. *Positivity.* Be hopeful but realistic. Understand where you are and what actions you must take to achieve your goals.
4. *Perspective.* View difficult circumstances as important elements of the learning process that can help you progress.
5. *Mastery.* Develop a growth mindset, set specific goals, and engage in activities where you experience flow—becoming so absorbed in an enjoyable activity that you lose track of time.
6. *Stamina.* Build social support.

COACHING: BOUNCING FORWARD

The following exercises will help you incorporate the six pillars of resilience:

- *Conduct a weekly review by reflecting on your challenges and achievements.* Note what was within your control, what was out of your control, and where you focused your energy.
- *Change your thinking.* Replace negative "always" and "never" thoughts with something more positive. "I'm always wrong," becomes, "Sometimes it takes me a few tries."
- *To build positivity, practice gratitude.* Take a few minutes every day to write down three things for which you're grateful.

- *Uncover the root cause of daily annoyances.* Ask yourself “why do I feel that way” until you reach your deepest values. Then, accept situations you can’t control and change something about situations you can control.
- *Note any activities that produce a flow state.* To recharge, build these activities into your week.
- *Map your support structure.* Who do you rely on for support and how do they help you? Can you benefit from additional support in any areas?

COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY

Your *mindset* is a set of beliefs and thoughts that impact your behavior. To improve your mindset, practice the following techniques:

- *Disrupt your beliefs.* If your boss or coach doesn’t believe in you, the disruptive belief of “I should give up,” can be replaced with a more effective approach such as, “I’m going to prove the coach wrong.” In what areas of your life would you benefit from disrupting your thinking?
- *Practice acceptance.* Instead of changing your thoughts, try acceptance. Allow your thoughts to flow. Don’t challenge them; just observe. Then, let your values guide your choices.

COACHING: THE ART OF THE EVERYDAY PIVOT

Productive employees navigate uncertainty by making small changes frequently. The following tools can help you master these daily pivots:

- *Reframe thoughts.* Describe, in a factual way, the challenging event, your beliefs about the event, and the consequences. Now challenge your perception. Imagine how it could have played out differently.
- *Beat confirmation bias.* Humans interpret information in ways that confirms their own biases. Before responding to challenges, consider all the alternatives. How might someone else respond? What’s the opposite approach to the one you want to take?
- *Nurture curiosity.* To understand alternate perspectives, seek them out. Read, watch, and listen to content from a variety of sources, learn new skills and activities, and ask plenty of questions.
- *Embrace novelty.* Change your usual routine by trying new food, clothing, conversation partners, and routes to work.

A GROWTH MINDSET

People with a *fixed mindset* believe their abilities are capped. People with a *growth mindset* believe they can grow their abilities and improve over time. To nurture a growth mindset:

- *Beware of complacency.* If you’re performing well, don’t assume talent alone can help you outperform. The skills you need to stay at the top of your game are always changing, so be sure to practice lifelong learning.
- *Focus on rewards.* Keep mistakes and challenges in perspective by focusing on the rewards you’ll achieve when you meet your goals.
- *Encourage psychological safety.* If you lead a team, empower your teammates to speak up, take calculated risks, and fail.

COACHING: LEARNING FORWARD

People who consistently perform at the top of their abilities have a growth mindset. The following exercises can help you to develop one:

- *Identify your mindset.* In what areas do you believe hard work will lead to improvement? In what situations do you think your abilities won't change?
- *Experiment.* The next time you want to learn a new skill, create your own test experiment. Then write down what went well, what didn't go well, what you learned, and changes to make in the future.
- *Be supportive.* Think about a time when someone you care about doubted their ability to achieve something and write them an encouraging note. Explain why you believe in them, provide evidence to support your belief, and mention challenges they've overcome in the past.
- *Add "yet."* A simple way to change your thinking is by adding the word "yet." For example, "I didn't get funding for my project" becomes a more empowering "I didn't get funding for my project yet."
- *Fail forward.* Document past efforts that didn't create your desired outcome. Celebrate the energy, motivation, and creativity you demonstrated.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotional intelligence is a key skill for navigating an uncertain world. Emotional intelligence has four key components:

1. *Self-awareness.* To gain emotional intelligence, you must recognize your emotions. Your thoughts and emotions control how you experience the world.
2. *Self-management.* We all react in the heat of the moment sometimes. With awareness, you can slow your reactions down and manage your emotions in a different way.
3. *Social awareness.* After you develop self-awareness and self-management, look outwards. Use your senses to develop a picture of what's going on with the people around you. Consider facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice.
4. *Relationship management.* Effective relationship management is key to building successful relationships and teams.

COACHING: INTERACTING WITH THE WORLD

These exercises can help you boost your emotional intelligence:

- *Personal reflection.* Choose a difficult situation from your past and describe it in detail. Next, describe the specific feelings you experienced and how you reacted. Finally, consider how you would approach the situation if it happened again.
- *Gather feedback.* Understanding how other people perceive you is an important part of self-awareness. Ask a variety of people you trust, "What could I do even better?" Then separate opinion from fact and use the feedback to help yourself grow.
- *Breathe.* When you feel your emotions rise, take a few moments to focus on breathing slowly and deeply.
- *Make sense with your senses.* Build social awareness by focusing on what your senses are telling you about the world around you. Try practicing in meetings. What can you see and hear? What does that information tell you?

- *Reflect with Intent and impact.* You might not come across the way you intend. So, before an interaction, identify what you want to achieve and the best way to achieve it. After the interaction, review your impact. Include what you don't know and any gaps between your intention and impact.
- *Interact with empathy.* To build empathy, ask questions to find out what other people are feeling and experiencing, imagine how other people might feel about their circumstances, and be supportive.

CONNECTION

To thrive in the workplace, you need connection to others, a sense of meaning, and community. Strong workplace relationships tie employees, customers, and communities together in a collaborative ecosystem. These ties are even more important for teams that don't work in the same physical space.

Meaningful work requires a healthy workplace culture where people feel like they can be themselves and work toward goals that are meaningful to them.

Community is the final element of connection. A sense of community makes you feel you're on a journey with other people who share similar challenges. By coming together with other people, it's easier to tackle the challenges of a changing workplace.

COACHING: THE MEANING OF CONNECTION

The following exercises can help you foster a sense of connection:

- *Map your connections.* Write down the top 10 people you feel connected to, including family, friends, and colleagues. Note any similarities, differences, or themes among these individuals. Does this exercise make you appreciate your connections more or want to focus on building additional connections? To build stronger relationships, demonstrate trustworthiness by fulfilling your promises, being authentic, and scheduling regular time to nourish connections.
- *Identify your values.* Your values are those things you think are most important in life. To uncover your values, download a values list. Identify your top 10 values, then your top five. Finally, identify the values opposite to your own. Create meaning at work by setting goals based on your values.
- *Build micro-meaning.* Consider the small moments that add meaning to your work. How can you build more of them into your day?
- *Build community.* Commit to building community into your life. Consider groups that cater to your industry, hobbies, and skills.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

In an uncertain world, you can develop the skills to thrive amid change, such as resilience, cognitive flexibility, growth mindset, emotional intelligence, and connection. If you don't know where to go from here, take control by practicing these skills. Change can lead you down a meandering road, but you don't need to have all the answers now. Just try to learn something along the way.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gemma Leigh Roberts is a chartered psychologist and the founder of the Resilience Edge, a research and coaching organization. She specializes in helping people, teams, and organizations understand what it takes to navigate challenges successfully, build resilience in the face of adversity, and create environments where it's possible for each individual to thrive and perform at their peak. Her clients include BP, Oracle, HSBC, Microsoft, Barclays, Nestlé, and Disney. A top five LinkedIn Learning instructor, Roberts has delivered her courses on work psychology, emotional wellbeing at work, and growth mindset to over 2.3 million people online. She has written for or been featured in *Stylist*, the *Guardian*, *Yahoo Finance*, *Forbes*, and *Business Insider* and has appeared on the BBC. She also regularly engages with an audience of over 200,000 people as part of the Mindset Matters newsletter series available through LinkedIn.

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