



An Introduction to the Devereux Adult Resilience Survey (DARS)

Authored by Mary Mackrain, the DARS is a 23-item reflective checklist that provides adults with information about their personal strengths. The information can be used to help individuals build on these strengths, such as creativity and setting limits, so that they can better cope with adversity and the stresses of daily life.

Statistical analysis shows that the DARS is an excellent tool for providing adults with an opportunity to gain valuable insights, particularly in these four areas:

- **Relationships**

- The mutual, long-lasting, back-and-forth bond we have with another person in our lives.

- **Internal Beliefs**

- The feelings and thoughts we have about ourselves and our lives, and how effective we think we are at taking action in life.

- **Initiative**

- The ability to make positive choices and decisions, and act upon them.

- **Self-Control**

- The ability to experience a range of feelings and express them using the words and actions society considers appropriate.

The purpose of the DARS is not to compare individuals' scores to the population, but to give adults, more specifically those caring for young children, the opportunity to become aware of personal strengths and areas of need. Upon completion of the Devereux Adult Resilience Survey, individuals are encouraged to use the *Building Your Bounce: Simple Strategies for a Resilient You* adult resilience journal. This journal provides suggested strategies for strengthening adults' protective factors shown to support resilience.

It takes a fair amount of reflection and practice to change any negative thoughts we might have and to integrate new behaviors that are good for us. You are worth it! Even if you are already a strong, happy person, you will want to continue building yourself up to maintain or increase your level of well-being.

Best wishes on your personal journey!



Devereux Adult Resilience Survey (DARS)

By Mary Mackrain, M.Ed.

This survey was created to support adults as they reflect on how to promote the capacity for resilience in themselves. Take time to reflect on and complete each item on the survey below. There are no right answers! Once you have finished, reflect on your strengths and then start small and plan for one or two things that you feel are important to improve. For fun and practical ideas on how to strengthen your protective factors, use the chapters of *Building Your Bounce: Simple Strategies for a Resilient You*.

| Items | Almost Always | Sometimes | Not Yet |
|---|---------------|-----------|---------|
| Relationships | | | |
| 1. I have good friends who support me. | | | |
| 2. I have a mentor or someone who shows me the way. | | | |
| 3. I provide support to others. | | | |
| 4. I am empathetic to others. | | | |
| 5. I trust my close friends. | | | |
| Internal Beliefs | | | |
| 1. My role as a caregiver is important. | | | |
| 2. I have personal strengths. | | | |
| 3. I am creative. | | | |
| 4. I have strong beliefs. | | | |
| 5. I am hopeful about the future. | | | |
| 6. I am lovable. | | | |
| Initiative | | | |
| 1. I communicate effectively with those around me. | | | |
| 2. I try many different ways to solve a problem. | | | |
| 3. I have a hobby that I engage in. | | | |
| 4. I seek out new knowledge. | | | |
| 5. I am open to new ideas. | | | |
| 6. I laugh often. | | | |
| 7. I am able to say no. | | | |
| 8. I can ask for help. | | | |
| Self-Control | | | |
| 1. I express my emotions. | | | |
| 2. I set limits for myself. | | | |
| 3. I am flexible. | | | |
| 4. I can calm myself down. | | | |

Examples and Reflection

Devereux Adult Resilience Survey (DARS)

Please use the extra space provided to further reflect on examples for each DARS item.

| Relationships | EXAMPLES |
|---|-----------------|
| 1. I have good friends who support me. | |
| 2. I have a mentor or someone who shows me the way. | |
| 3. I provide support to others. | |
| 4. I am empathetic to others. | |
| 5. I trust my close friends. | |
| Internal Beliefs | EXAMPLES |
| 1. My role as a caregiver is important. | |
| 2. I have personal strengths. | |
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| Initiative | EXAMPLES |
| 1. I communicate effectively with those around me. | |
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| Self-Control | EXAMPLES |
| 1. I express my emotions. | |
| 2. I set limits for myself. | |
| 3. I am flexible. | |
| 4. I can calm myself down. | |

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Action Plan

Once you have completed the survey, reflect on your strengths and identify some goals. Make a simple plan, with specific action steps, for one or two items that you feel are important to improve. Regularly check in on your progress and then revisit the DARS.

Strengths

Highlight some of your almost always responses here. Recognize and celebrate the ways that you are already being resilient.

Goals

Review your DARS responses and decide on the one or two goals you would like to set. Your goals can be items under the category of “Sometimes” or “Not Yet” that you would like to strengthen.

Strategies

Decide on strategies that can help you meet your goals. Feel free to identify strategies from various sources.



Simple Strategies for the Resilient Adult

Taken from *Building Your Bounce: Simple Strategies for a Resilient You* (adapted)

• Relationships

- Find a Mentor: A mentor is someone who offers support and encouragement to you in a specific area of your life. Choosing a mentor takes careful thought. We need to know what we want and why we want it. Choose someone who inspires you!
- Good Friends: Acknowledging and supporting the good, positive people who surround you helps to create a safety net for yourself. Letting others help and support us is a gift to us and to them. Think about the people in your life who surround you with comfort. These are the people you should be reaching out to and spending more time with.
- Circle of Trust: Think about the people in your life you can tell anything to – the ones who listen without offering too much unsolicited advice, and are always there for you. Draw a circle, put the names of these people in the circle, and hang it up somewhere in your home to remind you to reach out to them more often. You can be a support for them as well!

• Internal Beliefs

- I Have Personal Strengths: It's easy for most of us to think about all of the things we'd like to change about ourselves and lose sight of the good things we hold within. By recognizing our strengths, we can build ourselves up and use these strengths to solve our problems. Try writing down your many talents and gifts, and make a commitment to practice those talents and gifts throughout your week.
- Counting Compliments: Compliments count! Tell yourself one nice thing about you every day. Try putting it on a sticky note and hanging it on a mirror. You can also try to be aware of the compliments you receive each day from others, and write them down where you can read them to yourself.
- Grow Your Gratitude: Gratitude helps us notice all of the everyday moments that happen each day that are special and rewarding. When we feel grateful for the many good things we experience, we are filled with joy. Try keeping a gratitude journal and record in it several times each week.



Simple Strategies for the Resilient Adult [cont'd.]

Taken from *Building Your Bounce: Simple Strategies for a Resilient You* (adapted)

• Initiative

- Listen to Your Inner Voice: When thinking about a challenge, listen to the messages you are sending yourself. How many times did your voice say, “I can”? How many times did you hear, “I can’t” or other negative, self-defeating statements? If you find you use a lot of negative self-talk, use this awareness to make some improvements by practicing more positive messages.
- Be Open to New Ideas: If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you’ve always gotten! Try to open new doors. When you turn the knob and open the door, you allow the bright sunlight in. Think of a time when you resisted a change. Can you think of ways you might have tried handling it in a new way?
- Learn to Say No: We are ineffective and stressed when we take on more than we can handle. It is important to know your limits and express them lovingly to others. Just because someone asks something of us doesn’t mean we always have to do it. It is sometimes helpful to wait before responding to a request and tell the person who asked that you will get back to them. This allows you time to consider if it is something you can realistically do.

• Self-Control

- Put a Label On It: It can be very helpful to recognize and **name** our emotions as we experience them. Pay attention to your body and the ways your body experiences different emotions. Naming a feeling helps us to better understand it and manage it.
- Your Safe Place: Try to identify a place where you feel protected, soothed ... the place where you would like to go when things get tough. Try to spend time there as often as you can and reflect on your feelings. If you can’t get your safe place, close your eyes for a moment and take yourself there in your mind when you need to.
- Practice Deep Breathing: Deep breathing can help you return to a state of calm. It is important to follow proper techniques to ensure you get the maximum benefit:
 - Get comfortable
 - Inhale air slowly and deeply through your nose or mouth; count to three
 - Slowly exhale the air through your mouth
 - Repeat several times