

Well-being in a changing world

The modern world is dynamic, uncertain, and ambiguous, ‘fluid’ (Bauman 2007). Although each of us approaches change differently and perceives it in our own way, it is inevitable and beyond our control. A constant, ever-accelerating, multidirectional, multidimensional, and multipolar (UNCTAD, 2025) change can make us feel as though we are sitting on a high-speed train that is constantly gathering pace, which is on a merry-go-round, and to make matters worse, the merry-go-round unexpectedly changes its height and direction of travel...., and on top of that, we feel all of this...

Constant change affects all areas of life – from technology to social relationships. Some of these changes improve our quality of life (e.g. technological development) which is why we readily accept them. Others, however, introduce instability, uncertainty, and increased demands across all areas and roles of life.

Constant change can have an ambivalent effect on us, because on the one hand it gives us greater freedom in making choices and the opportunity for self-fulfillment and shaping our own life story whilst on the other hand it exposes us to uncertainty due to a lack of fixed points of reference, forces us to constant learning and adaptation, makes decision-making difficult and poses a huge risk of feeling lost, lonely, influencing our mental health. A constant change means a constant loss of stability. So is it easy to lose one’s balance? The answer is so obvious that one should rather ask how to learn consciously to ‘find’ balance, how to consciously maintain balance in such a rapidly changing world. How can one persevere and live whilst playing a ‘game’ in which the rules and roles change every moment, and one must figure out for oneself that the current rules have changed again?

In seeking answers to these questions everyone looks for their own ways of understanding the world which will help them make sense of it and define their place in it. When seeking a more general point of reference, the theoretical framework of Transcultural Positive Psychotherapy (PPT) developed by Nossrat Peseschkian (Peseschkian 1987), may prove useful. One of the key elements is the model of balance (Figure 1) across four spheres of life.



Figure 1. Balance Model in Transcultural Positive Psychotherapy (PPT).

In seeking balance, according to Peseschkian (Ciesielski 2024), we balance between four spheres:

Body/Health,

that is, our relationship with the body and the most physical foundation of mental resilience. In short: the ability to regenerate, taking care of sleep, exercise, nutrition, awareness of the body's signals, and regulating stress at a somatic level. Without care for the body and health, other areas quickly become overburdened.

Performance/Achievement

related to a sense of agency and effectiveness. This includes the ability to cope with tasks, perseverance, a realistic assessment of one's own capabilities, and the ability to learn from mistakes. This sphere encompasses the belief that 'I can do it' – which builds and supports resilience – rather than the limiting 'I can't handle it'.

Relationships/Contact

or what is known as social resilience – a key transcultural concept. It encompasses: the ability to form and maintain relationships, asking for help, empathy and boundaries, and a sense of belonging. A resilient person is not a lonely hero; they have a group to which they belong.

Meaning, Values/Future,

the deepest level of resilience. It encompasses: a sense of purpose in life, a value system, hope, and the ability to view a crisis within a broader context. It is this sphere that enables one to survive even when the other three temporarily fail.

Balance, in the model presented, means striving for balanced activity / mindfulness in each of the four spheres of our functioning. Consciously maintaining balance in all areas will increase our resilience (flexibility and resilience) whilst also promoting a sense of well-being. On the other hand, if we imagine that each of these spheres is a leg of the stool on which we sit, we will be able to sit on it when all four legs are of similar length. If one is shorter and another longer, we are bound to fall.

Is it possible to maintain balance constantly? No. But simply being aware of these interconnected and interdependent spheres allows us to identify which sphere we are over-exploiting, which means we are neglecting another, causing destabilization and a sense of discomfort, at the very least.

Another part of the PPT theoretical framework refers directly to resilience. There are many definitions of resilience, but it is worth quoting the one cited by Hamid Peseschkian (2022). In his view, resilience is a form of emotional and psychological flexibility that allows one to cope with traumatic and critical events and recover from them. It is linked to the resources a person possesses and the ability to utilize those resources. It is the capacity to maintain a stable level of mental health in the face of significant adversity. It does not mean the absence of suffering, but rather the ability to quickly regain balance. Thus, our resilience will determine our well-being.

Figure 2 illustrates a model of building resilience, based on seven key pillars supporting an individual's stability. The American Psychological Association divides these into two categories: attitudes and coping strategies.

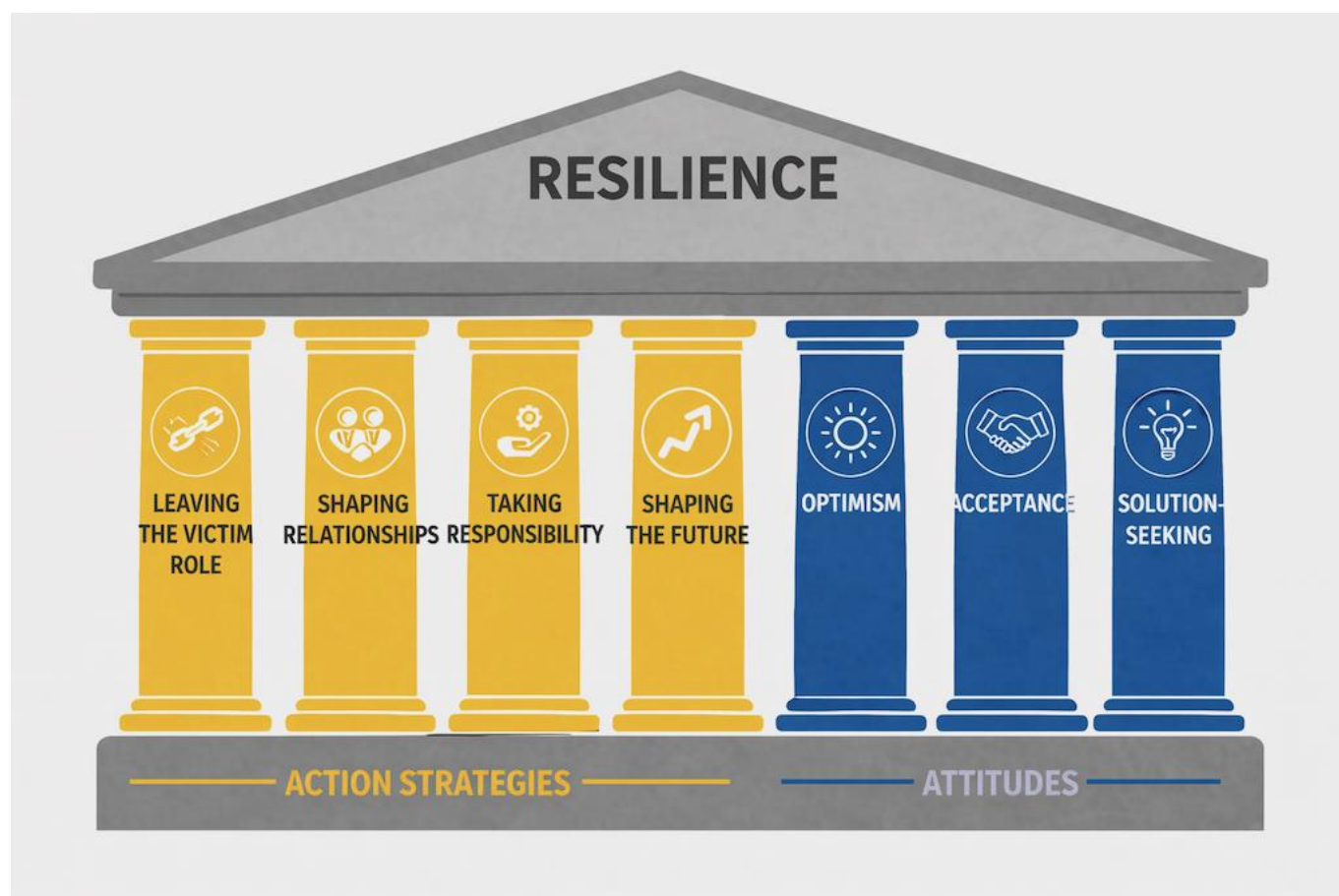


Figure 2. Resilience in terms of: coping strategies and attitudes.

Action strategies include: **abandoning the victim role, shaping relationships and taking responsibility for one's own life.** If we accept that being in the world is not a passive existence

but rather an engagement and active existence shaped by daily actions, relationships with objects and other people, then the role of action strategies (not to be confused with declarations regarding actions) seems to be of key importance to what we choose: whether we wish to remain victims of various events, as this relieves us of responsibility for what happens to us, or whether we recognize that we have an influence on our relationships with others and the world and a sense of agency in how we steer our adult lives. We take the wheel without being sure exactly where we will end up, but with influence over the journey. It is an acceptance of the journey, of uncertainty, an acceptance that not everything needs to be immediately understandable, but that we will still take risks and make choices – the best ones we can and are able to make at that moment.

Amongst these attitudes, the following stand out: **optimism, acceptance, and a focus on finding solutions.** After all, it's up to us whether we view every situation from the perspective of 'this always happens to me' – remember Eeyore, Winnie-the-Pooh's friend? Or whether we think "What can I do about this? And what is next?" Acceptance means accepting what has happened anyway, even if it was extremely difficult, and allows us to move on. As children, we had no influence over our lives, but as adults, we can take responsibility for a part of our lives. We cannot replicate the lives, social roles, or challenges faced by our parents or earlier generations because the world we live in is different, and any 'carbon copies' of past behaviors will, like a distorted mirror, expose their inadequacy for today's situations. So what can we do? And what does make sense? It seems that it is a conscious work on changing our attitudes (Marody, 2019).

Integrating our life experiences can become a resource, helping to rebuild the hope that gives us the strength to overcome difficulties (and thus builds resilience), and can give new meaning to where we are and who we are. The journey towards well-being, guided by the signposts provided by the balance model, defines the place where we are, to which we give meaning, and which becomes for us 'a space for experiencing the world – a meaningful space' (Męczkowska, 2006) – it is a space for the exchange of different views, a space of meanings, a space of interpersonal relationships. At the same time, we associate space with openness and freedom, and home with confinement but also with security (Mendel, 2006).

A constant balancing act:

- between the desire for freedom and the desire for security, between being in the world and being at home and with oneself;

- being 'nice' – because that is what I have learnt from experience, and being 'open' – 'sometimes a person has to, otherwise they'll suffocate', as Jerzy Stuhr once sang;

and an awareness of the theoretical model of balance in TPP in relation to resilience allows us to think of our own well-being as something we can strive for, which is possible and which we can take care of entirely on our own, regardless of how much the world may change.

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