

. PROTECTIVE FACTORS

In academic research on children who experienced high-stress events, at one point, researchers noticed that there was always a group of children that seemed less affected, was recovering faster or actually came out stronger. In one word: this group showed more *resilience*. Research then focused on what the conditions for resilience were and came up with what was called 'protective factors'. These protective factors were translated into an activist setting for the goal of S&R and the list was fine-tuned with Ecodharma training content as well as S&R experiences. Roughly, these protective factors can be divided into eight categories. From these categories, people can define concrete activities that restore energy and enhance resilience: the *resilience strategies*.

1. Basics

Food, sleep, rest, medical care, safety, rhythm and routine

- (re)install a daily rhythm and routine
- make sure you eat and sleep well, in a healthy and regular way
- don't ignore physical or mental reactions and get extra help if you need it
- invest time and energy in a safe setting, space or location

2. Time for yourself

Resourcing, self-awareness, rest

- reflect on your personal resilience strategies/activities for time alone and integrate these in your daily rhythm
- check in with yourself on a physical, mental and emotional level before taking decisions: make it a conscious decision instead of a reflex
- practice non-judgmental observation

3. Time with others

Connection, recharging, relaxation, celebration of what has been accomplished. We heal best in well-functioning communities and groups. This also counters the sense of disconnection that often occurs during or after a high stress event.

- celebrate together what has been accomplished
- invest in moments of play, nature, music and all other things that make life beautiful and worthwhile. Activities that practice group rhythm such as music, dance and collaborative sports are especially useful for restoring a sense of connection.
- deliberately create moments to check in on a personal and interpersonal level
- participate in trainings and prepare your actions thoroughly as a group
- commit yourself to resolve conflicts from a positive starting point, use non-judgmental observation

4. Care

Tutorship, care

- take care of each other by using buddy systems, not only during actions but also afterwards
- set up after-action affinity groups
- take the care for yourself seriously and be aware of avoidance mechanisms such as isolation, substance abuse or workaholism
- make use of supportive structures such as a legal team, the ABC and a S&R team

5. Nature

Connection, rootedness

- open up to the restorative power of nature
- integrate flora, fauna, season/day cycles, the diversity of landscapes and the elements in your resilience strategies
- utilize the benefits of sunlight

6. Creativity

Imagination, expression. Creative work supports healing on a neurobiological level.

- integrate creative forms of expression (music, dance, arts, construction, poetry, story telling etc.) on a personal level (e.g. for processing high-stress events) and also on a group level (e.g. in different action forms)
- find a balance between the good practices of the *known* and innovatory exploration of the *out-of-the-box* (e.g. in organisation, decision taking, action forms)

7. Cognitive development and practical problem solving

Problem solving skills, self-control, self-efficacy, learning processes. This reestablishes a sense of ability and control, counteracting the feeling of helplessness that is often involved in high stress events. Learning new things also supports healing on a neurobiological level.

- provide yourself with meaningful tasks that are within your reach
- invest in evolutionary learning (action, reaction, reflection, analysis, planning) and incorporate strategy and long-term visions in your action planning
- share knowledge, wisdom and experience, by using the 'each one teach one' principle and skill-sharings
- practice meditation or mindfulness for self-regulating skills

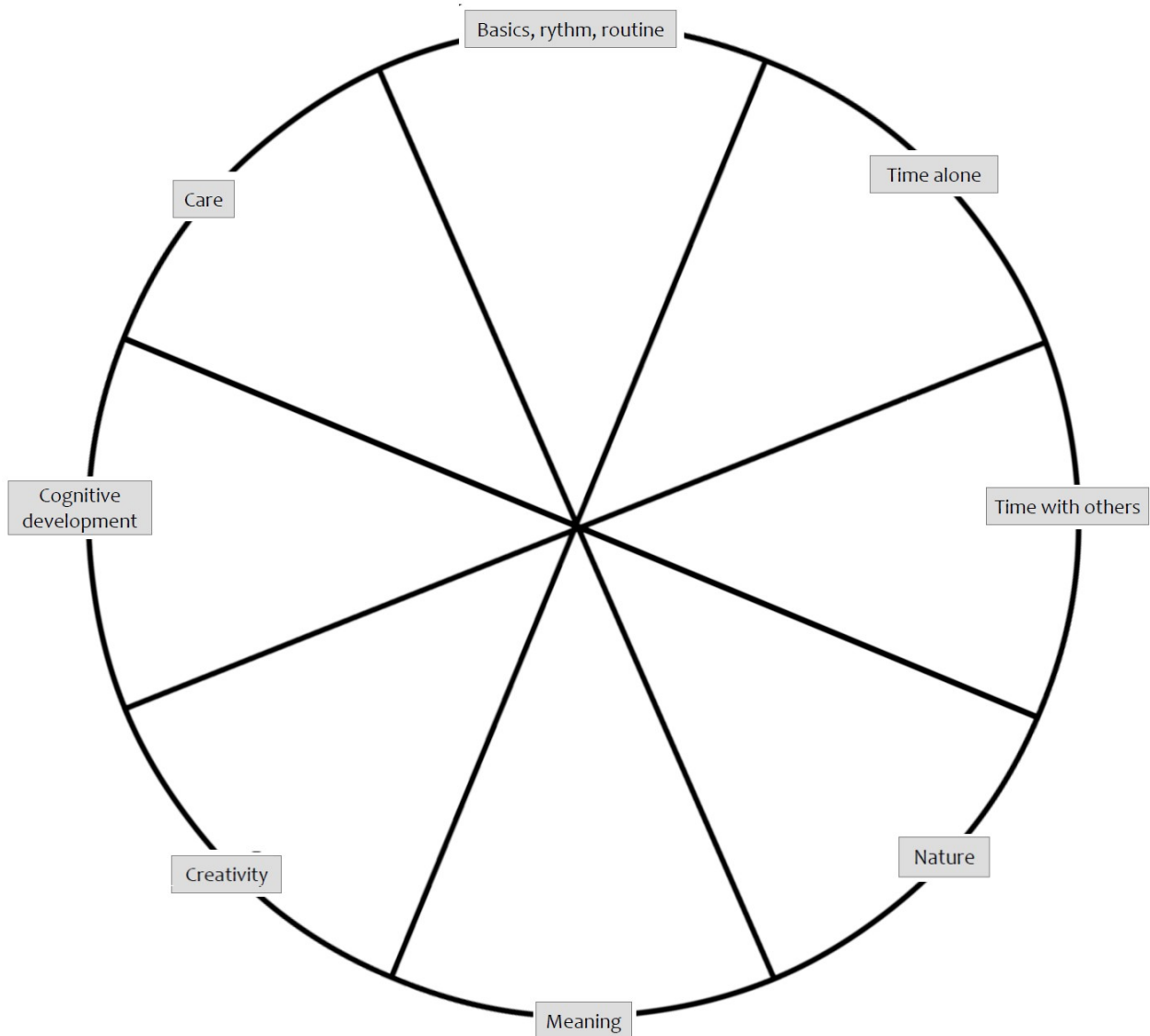
8. Meaning

Motivation, life questions

- reflect on your personal motivation for activism and deliberately value this
- combine a long term vision with 'pacing' (it's a marathon, not a sprint!)
- consciously invest in a connection with the here and now
- search for your own form of spirituality and deeper meaning, create your own rituals to mark important moments in processes

Resilience strategies are not identical to 'coping mechanisms'. A coping mechanism is a term generally used for anything that gets you through a difficult time. A coping mechanism may also be a resilience strategy, but that is not always the case. Some coping mechanisms may serve the purpose of allowing space for a high stress reaction. For example: expressing your rage attacks by going all-out on a punching bag. Some coping mechanisms, like substance use, may be useful in the short term but harmful in the long term. It is important not to be judgmental of coping mechanisms, (remember: reactions serve a function), but to differentiate between resilience strategies and coping mechanisms. It is only a resilience strategy if it contributes to one or more of the 8 protective factors.

RESILIENCE THROUGH PROTECTIVE FACTORS



Recovery can also be understood as:

1. Feeling safe again (Basics, Care)
2. Reconnecting to yourself (Time alone), others (Time with others) and your environment (Nature)
3. Processing the experience (Creativity, Cognitive development, Meaning)