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# THE RESILIENT LEADER'S TOOLKIT

AN ESSENTIAL GUIDE FOR LEADERS  
UNDER PRESSURE

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## An Essential Guide for Leaders under Pressure

### Why you need resilient leadership now

The best time to prepare yourself for adverse events was 10 years ago, the second-best time is now. The world is changing fast. Technology and changes in the economy are creating a new set of challenges, while at the same time presenting opportunities for leaders to lead change.

But what is resilience? How do you become resilient? How do you develop your resilience skills as a leader so that when times get tough, you can still thrive?

I'm Anna Hemmings. I am a leadership and high-performance coach. I help individuals and companies – but most of all I help leaders – either emerging or established - to develop the skills, attitudes and behaviours that strengthen resilience and enhance performance

As a an Olympian and former world champion, I draw on lessons learned from the world of elite sport and high performance to inspire, educate and connect teams and individuals to their resilience.

My unique combination of high performance in elite sport and 12 years leading Beyond the Barriers - a successful training consultancy and working alongside senior leaders, gives me a clear understanding of the challenges that leaders and teams face and how to overcome them to deliver outstanding results.

I work with leaders around the world who want to be able to thrive in uncertain times. Through this work, I've developed an approach you can deploy immediately to develop your resilience.

It's based on the "Resilient Leaders Elements" framework and will give you tools that enable you to lead change effectively now and into the future.

*Anna Hemmings*





A resilient leader knows where they are strong and their areas for development, what takes them from pressure to stress and how to rebalance.

A resilient leader has confidence in **who they are** and **what they do**, so that they create, build and take opportunities; bouncing back, knowing they will find a way through uncertainty, change and even crisis.



*Resilient Leaders Elements*

The need for resilient leaders, able to thrive in uncertain times is greater than ever. If you want to develop resilience and have impact as a leader now as we recover from the global pandemic and in the future as we develop new and hybrid ways of working, then you need to develop 4 key elements.

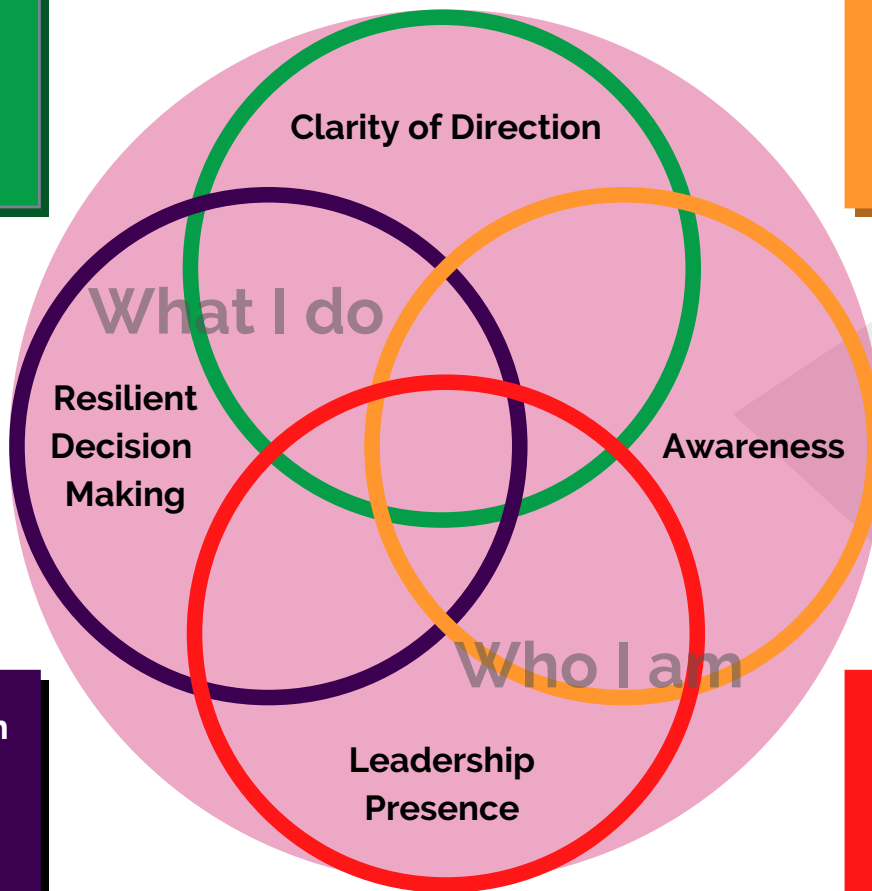
### Clarity of direction

- Strategic Intent
- Unifying Purpose
- Determination

## Resilient Leaders Element

### Awareness

- Self
- Others
- Environment



### Resilient Decision Making

- Robust
- Creative
- Versatile

### Leadership Presence

- Authentic
- Serving
- Intentional



# CLARITY OF DIRECTION

## Finding Your True North

The first Element in the Toolkit is **Clarity of Direction**.

I come from the world of elite sport where most athletes are inherently goal-focused, the targets are clear and from a young age, they discover the power of a vision. When I was 8 years old I declared to family and friends that I wanted to become an Olympian and without realising it I was creating clarity of direction for myself and the people supporting me.

## **Here are my 4 top tips for developing your Clarity of Direction:**

Clarity of Direction is the first element in the Resilient Leaders Elements model and is all about having a vision and a realistic strategy for the future, communicating effectively to align people to your vision and having the determination to keep going in the face of adversity.

Whilst at 8 years old I had no idea how I was going to achieve my dream, I did develop strategies throughout my career to bring the vision to life and fulfil it.

### Describe your vision

Take a moment to clearly describe your vision. What is the impact that you want to make? Be specific and clear about what it is that you want to achieve. Then ask yourself, why is this important to you, what will this give you? Having clarity of the intention will provide the fuel to keep you moving towards your goal when things get tough.



As a young athlete my sports psychologist introduced me to a powerful technique called visualisation and it became one of my favourite elements of my mental training.

Visualisation is seeing in your mind's eye the outcome that you want to achieve. When you can bring that vision to life, vividly in your mind, using all of your senses your mind won't know the difference between a vividly imagined experience and a real-life experience.

Having your strategic intent in mind is important when faced with distractions or setbacks that are out of our control.

## The Power of Visualisation

The impact of visualisation is three-fold:

- i.** It activates your creative subconscious which will start generating creative ideas to achieve your goal.
- ii.** It programs your brain to more readily perceive, recognize and draw into your life, the resources you will need to achieve your dreams.
- iii.** It builds your internal motivation to take the necessary actions to achieve your dreams.

Give visualisation a try. Imagine yourself at a point in the future and visualise what has been accomplished, make it vivid and descriptive and imagine everything from what are you feeling and how you are behaving to what others are saying about you.

Remember, it is better to focus on what you want, as opposed to what you don't want!

## Control the Controllables

Take a moment to identify a challenging situation you are currently facing:

- i.** Make a list of what you cannot control including things like other people's attitudes and actions.
- ii.** Make a list of what you can control, including things that you haven't before considered. They may even be internal variables that you haven't thought of controlling.

Remember, stay focused on what is important and where you can have an impact.

Another infamous adage from the world of sport is the concept of controlling the controllables. My sports psychologist used to say there are two types of things in life: things you potentially have control over, and things you have no control over.

When I was competing at the world championships, I couldn't control what other people's expectations were. I couldn't control how fast the German or Hungarian girls were going to be and focusing on that would just fuel worry and anxiety and drain my energy. It also means I'm spending less time focused on what is in my control.

When I noticed my attention drifting towards what was out of my control, it was time to put those uncontrollables aside and focus my attention on where I could have an impact, such as my race plan, how fast I could make my boat go – all of the things that would move me towards my goal.

As a young athlete I was never going to achieve my ambitions on my own and in the beginning, my team included my family, a few training partners and my coach. I couldn't make them buy into my mission but I could inspire them to join me on my journey.

As a leader in business, you can use your vision and strategy to inspire others to join you and use your actions and behaviours to demonstrate what is possible.

## Create a unifying purpose and communicate regularly

You need to communicate effectively to align others in the strategic intent. Keep checking for understanding, don't assume people have interpreted your message as you intended it. We all have different communication preferences and we receive information in different ways.

Don't get disheartened if your people don't seem engaged in the vision, instead try communicating differently. Consider how you can communicate regularly and in a variety of ways so that people fully understand the priorities and main focus at any given time. Find ways to keep people informed, engaged and aligned, even when things change.

**To summarise: as a leader, when you have strategic intent, a unifying purpose and determination this is the impact:**



People know where they are going, why they are going there and know you are determined to succeed. Each individual can work out what to do for themselves to get to the endpoint.





# **AWARENESS**

## **Developing your Superpowers**



The second element is **Awareness**. This is about having an awareness of our own and others motives, attitudes, strengths and weaknesses as well as the forces that affect our changing environment.

Self-awareness is a foundation component of resilient leadership, and yet it is a quality that is often overlooked or poorly executed in leadership development. Whether you use behavioural profiling, get a coach or engage in journal keeping – if you want to survive and thrive in this challenging environment that we're faced with daily, then you must continue to get to know your "self" so that you can be the best you each day.

As an athlete I knew all too well the importance of awareness; over the years I discovered the importance of knowing my strengths, knowing what motivated me on a dark, damp winter morning, through to a heightened awareness of my inner voice and what took me from pressure to stress.

As a leader we must build our awareness of both ourselves, others and the environment; the focus of my tips in this element is awareness of self as you need to start with yourself first if you're going to be a resilient leader for your teams.

I remember turning up at the start of the racing season one year and there was a noisy voice of doubt that was consuming my thoughts. The previous year I had finished second on a sprint finish at the World Championships, losing by just 0.4seconds. I arrived at the first race of the year, the doubts crept in and prompted a pesky little voice in my head saying, "Everyone is expecting you to win this time, but what if you don't? What if you're still not quick enough on that sprint finish?"

I'm sure everyone has moments with that nagging little voice, perhaps before an important client meeting. Whilst these doubts are quite normal, they are not helpful.

This is where having an awareness of your strengths plays a crucial role:



## Awareness of your strengths

Focusing on your strengths helps to quieten the voice of doubt. Your strengths remind you of what you are great at and that the doubts are unfounded. Have a go at listing your top 5 super powers - the attributes that you know with **ABSOLUTE** confidence that you can always rely on.

Have these at the tips of your fingers for when that pressure situation arises or your confidence has been knocked.

If I didn't know my strengths I'd be sitting on the start line of the race focused on my weaknesses, which would make my confidence fragile and my chances of performing at my best rather slim.

Whenever I work with clients to identify their strengths, we always see a huge improvement in confidence. They can turn up to a client meeting or deliver an important presentation having absolute confidence in their contribution and the value they are bringing.

When the pressure rises, knowing what you've got in your toolkit will give you the resilience and confidence you need to cope with the situation and the certainty that you have the resources within you to deliver in the face of pressure.

I encourage you to take the resilient leaders elements free lite assessment and identify your top strengths from the 4 elements.

<https://lite.resilientleaderselements.com/>

In the days before a race, I became adept at recognising when that voice of doubt was popping up too regularly and the negative thinking was taking over and I was going from relishing the pressure to feeling stressed about the challenge ahead. It was an alarm bell that warned me that unless I did something about it, it would destroy my performance.



## Awareness of what takes you from pressure to stress

What are the most common triggers that take you from pressure to stress? A trigger is something that happens to you on the outside that impacts you on the inside. It shifts you from calm, content, thriving under pressure even to anger, frustration and stressed. Take a moment to identify your most common triggers, here are some questions to consider:

- What is it?
- Who is it
- Where is it?
- When is it?

The more aware you are of your triggers, the more you can see them coming and then you can choose how you respond and then take action to rebalance.

During challenging times, you must dial up your awareness of yourself and others in your team and understand what takes you and them from pressure to stress and therefore what action is needed to rebalance.

## What motivates you and your team?

Dean Spitzer identified 8 motivational human desires:

**POWER**

**AFFILIATION**

**ACHIEVEMENT**

**OWNERSHIP**

**RECOGNITION**

**ACTIVITY**

**COMPETENCE**

**MEANING**

It's so important that we have awareness of what our main driver is and then you can ask yourself, 'Is my main driver being fulfilled at work or do I need to ask for it?'

As a leader, it's also critical that you have awareness of what drives those in your team. My clients find it illuminating when they identify what motivates them and then realise that it's not the same as what motivates their team.

To raise awareness of our motives, it's helpful to explore what Dean Spitzer called motivational desires so that we can draw on motivation from the inside rather than being externally motivated. The thing with extrinsic motivation such as salary, bonus, and rewards or in my world of sport, the medals and awards, they're temporary motivations and if you're doing the same thing every day, then you need more than that. You need to have some intrinsic motivation otherwise you'll just be miserable.

On some days I was motivated to turn up for training by the competitive nature of the training session ahead and the sense of achievement I'd get from it, on other days it was having a laugh with my team mates that would get me out of my warm cosy bed.

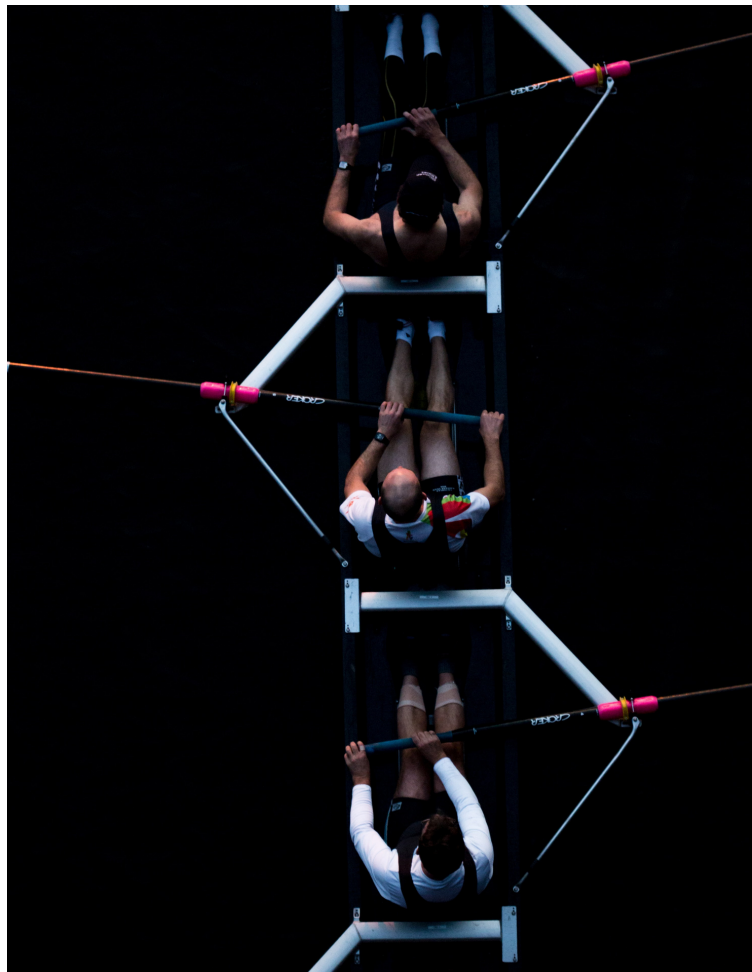
What gets you out of bed each day? What is your driver? Is it the desire for recognition, or is it the sense of achievement that you crave or maybe it's the desire to make a meaningful contribution and feel like your efforts are making a difference?



If I was leading a team and my motivations are achievement and recognition, and I'm constantly creating recognition for my team, but they might be driven by affiliation, and they're all about the people and the team around them, then that's not going to work. When motivators are not aligned or addressed, you don't get the best out of people.

It's important to ask yourself, 'Am I projecting my top driver on to others?'

When you can identify the motivational drivers of each individual in the team you can then tune in to it and the result is increased motivation and productivity. You'll find a longer more sustained motivation when it comes from within.



**To summarise, as a leader when you have awareness of self, others and the environment this is the impact:**

“ Everyone including you works at their best, resulting in higher productivity and motivation. Diversity is appreciated and used to the benefit of all. Systems and processes serve people in achieving their goals. ”



# LEADERSHIP PRESENCE

Know how you show up

The third element is **Leadership Presence** – this is when you have ‘presence’ even when you’re not in the room. It’s about being true to yourself, your values and ethical code and being in service to others.

One of the facets of leadership presence is being authentic and it was only when I reflected on the biggest setback of my sporting career that I began to understand what that means and why it’s so important.

That setback happened in April 2003 when I was diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome, a serious illness that rendered me in a near-permanent state of exhaustion, devoid of all energy. The muscles in my body ached to the degree where it became painful. Those were just some of the physical symptoms.

The doctors said there was no treatment or cure, all I could do was rest. They said I would never race again.

To cut a long story short, eventually after 12 months I discovered a treatment called Reverse Therapy and finally, I was on a road to recovery. The first and most powerful step that I took was opening up to the people closest to me, sharing what I was experiencing with them and exposing my weaknesses. Allowing people to see my struggles and vulnerability and letting them help me began to make me stronger. This was a big departure for me, I’m not someone who accepts help easily, but I learnt to ask for help and I ask for help a whole lot more now!

I learnt that being vulnerable enough to ask for help is a huge part of our resilience. We need to find the courage to ask for and accept support from others.

This ability to be vulnerable is the foundation for open and non-judgemental communication. Taking off the mask and showing vulnerability isn’t a sign of weakness, it’s the boldest act a leader can make.

**There was a recent survey conducted by Wiley who asked 4000 people this question**

**“When co-workers admit their mistakes does it make you trust them more?”**

**84% said yes**

## Become an authentic leader

Vulnerability isn't commonplace in the workplace but it fuels trust and that is at the foundation of strong relationships.

How valuable would it be to the relationships and effectiveness of your team if you and others admitted mistakes?

What are some of the obstacles that keep you from sharing weaknesses? What steps can you take to overcome these obstacles?



People will naturally want to build a relationship with you and follow you as a leader when they know what you stand for. To help you stay true to yourself and your ethical code, you need to first be clear on what your values are.

## Identify your values

Your values are deep within you and define who you are and what you want in your life. What values matter most to you? Your values can be anything from honesty to respect or inclusion and collaboration.

I spend a lot of time with clients delving into this question because once you have identified those values, then you can articulate them, live them and breathe them and only then will people experience you as authentic. In times of crisis, people will know what you stand for and will be ready to follow you, you'll already have a leadership presence.

Take a moment to identify your top 3 values that you absolutely live by and then allow your values to inform your decision making, this will help you stay true to them and to lead with authenticity.

Try this assessment to help you get clarity on your values:

<https://www.valuescentre.com/tools-assessments/pva/>



Remember that at the heart of leadership is relationships. The most resilient leaders are constantly building and reinforcing relationships and they do this when things are calm, it will pay dividends when the urgency ramps up. Trying to do it in a crisis is too late. As you move from equilibrium into chaos, people are more likely to follow you if you've already put in the foundations of strong relationships.

## Build relationships

We know from research that the strength of our resilience is based on the quality of our connections and relationships.

American psychologist William Schutz said, great relationships are based on 3 principles:

1. Shared Inclusion which leads to Commitment
2. Shared Control which leads to Accountability
3. Shared Openness which leads to Trust

I've worked with leaders who have developed these principles and the impact on their relationships and subsequent performance are huge.

**To summarise, as a leader when you are authentic, serving and intentional this is the impact:**

“ You have **presence** even when you are not in the room. The best person takes the lead and is fully supported by all around them, leading to greater effectiveness and better results. People know each other well enough to anticipate other's actions and act accordingly ”



**4**

**RESILIENT DECISION  
MAKING**

**Lead through quality decisions**

The fourth element is **Resilient Decision Making**, which is about being able to take a valuable idea from concept to reality, challenging your own and others biases and considering the impact, pace and style of your decision making.

The sport of marathon kayak racing is fuelled by resilient decision making under pressure. A marathon race in kayaking is akin to being in the peloton in a road cycling race; the competitors are moving positions, you have to think quickly and correctly in the heat of the moment. Here are my top tips for strengthening your decision making in the face of challenge.

During a kayak race, it's essential to be creative in your decision making and work

outside of the usual frame of reference, making it harder for your opponents to predict your next move.

I learnt that to assist with creative decision making, in any domain, it's useful to always assume there are different questions to be asked and different ways of seeing the same situation. To do this it helps to involve diverse opinion in your decision making when you have time. If you collaborate with others who have different perspectives, together you will create new options.

Cognitive diversity is critically important as the pressure rises because it will give you the richest solution to a crisis due to the diversity of perspective.

### Collaborate with others to create new options

Next time you're faced with a decision where you need to be more creative, ask yourself these 3 questions:

- What other perspectives would be helpful?
- Who can I collaborate with?
- Who would take a very different approach to me and could help generate several new options?

### Combine intellectual rigour, evaluation and awareness – this will help you to be more robust in your decision making.

Some useful questions to ask and have answers to are the following:

- What's the decision?
- Why are we making it?
- What are the possible outcomes – positive and negative?
- What are the implications for the Organisation? Team? Individuals?

Then before you make the final decision, stay objective by facilitating robust debate that tests assumptions and biases, then ask, what are the next steps?

In our training throughout the year, we used to have specific training sessions where we would play out different race scenarios, working out what is the best move in each situation. Over a year we had played out so many eventualities that when it came to racing I felt prepared and confident that I'll make the right decision in the heat of the moment.

This is crucial because if you come across a pressure situation that you haven't experienced before and the chips are down, you might choke. But if you've thought through the different scenarios that could play out, then you are more likely to stay calm and make the correct decision under pressure.

## Scenario Plan

What are the pressure situations in your world? What are the 'what if' scenarios that you need to prepare for? Is it sales pitches, client meetings, when a crisis happens? When you've identified the situation, ask yourself some of these questions:

- i. What could happen?
- ii. What is your environment?
- iii. Who might be with you or should be with you?
- iv. What is your most likely reaction under pressure?
- v. What is your preferred reaction under pressure?
- vi. What is the best way to handle the situation?
- vii. What strengths can you draw on?

If you regularly prepare for potential pressure situations in this way, when it happens you'll be confident and ready to make the right decision in the heat of the moment.

**To summarise, as a leader, when decision making is creative, robust and versatile, this is the impact:**



Great decisions are made at the right time, with the right people, in the right place. Contingency options are always available so that the unexpected can be dealt with effectively and confidently



## Making the elements of a resilient leader work for you

If you want to have an impact as a leader both now and in the future you need to consistently apply all four resilient leaders elements.

Resilient leaders will be at the heart of the post-pandemic recovery and there will be a need for every person to lead both themselves and others. There has never been a more important time to equip yourself and your people with the tools to thrive in the face of adversity.

I invite you to think about how you can become a resilient leader for your organization.

### Are you ready to take the next step and become a resilient leader?

I work with 12 individuals each quarter to develop their capability and capacity to lead themselves and others through challenging and uncertain times.

The Resilient Leader's Toolkit will help you identify the strengths that you can rely on even in the face of change and adversity. It will help you find blind spots and areas for development that will rapidly change your approach now and on an ongoing basis.

Above all it will boost your confidence as a leader, giving you the tools to lead yourself through challenging situations and support others when they need guidance most.

Taught across 12 weeks, in an intimate group setting, you get:-

- **Six 90-120** minute online masterclasses
- **One to one** coaching session directly with Anna Hemmings MBE, OLY
- **The RLDP Online coaching tool** available for 3 months
- **Small group size** — limited to 12 participants

To find out when our next 12 week course starts and to get more information go to <https://www.beyondthebarriers.co.uk/high-performance-leadership/the-resilient-leaders-toolkit/>



## About Anna Hemmings MBE

As a sportswoman, Anna is best known as Britain's most successful ever female kayaker, a two time Olympian and 6 times World Champion. In 2009 she retired from elite sport and founded training consultancy Beyond the Barriers and now works globally as a training consultant and Executive coach.

She is recognised as an expert in the field of resilient leadership and helps leaders to develop the skills, attitudes and behaviours to sustain high performance in the face of high pressure and challenging environments.

Anna's unique combination of experience in sport combined with 12 years leading a successful business gives her a broad understanding of the challenges that leaders and their teams face and how to overcome them to deliver outstanding results.

If you want to get in touch - [anna.hemmings@beyondthebarriers.co.uk](mailto:anna.hemmings@beyondthebarriers.co.uk)

If you want to discuss your own development - The Resilient Leader's Toolkit | Beyond the Barriers

If you want to connect on LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/in/anna-hemmings-mbe/>

## About Resilient Leaders Elements

The RLE mission is to make world-class leadership development available to all. Their approach to providing training and action-focused tools on leadership and resilience has been developed over the last 20 years.

Their tool, the Resilient Leaders Development Programme (RLDP) is a development programme and online tool centred around exploring and challenging the self in a leadership setting. You explore four elements and twelve facets of resilient leadership in-depth which help stimulate your bespoke development through a series of challenges and feedback loops.

If you would like an insight into your own resilient leaders elements profile, you can take the free RLE lite assessment here: <https://lite.resilientleaderselements.com/>



Resilient  
Leaders  
Elements