



# Resilience & Founder Mindset

Inner strength in times of uncertainty

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# What Resilience really means

**Founding is not a linear path — it's a living experiment.**

It demands both vision and vulnerability, persistence and pause. You are constantly navigating between outer uncertainty and inner steadiness — between the drive to deliver and the capacity to stay open, grounded, and creative.

Resilience is what allows you to stay whole inside that movement.

It is not about pushing harder, numbing discomfort, or staying “strong” at all costs. True resilience is the art of recovering your natural rhythm after disruption. It's the ability to notice when you are out of balance, to self-regulate, and to reconnect with what gives you energy, meaning, and perspective.

**Resilience is not endurance — it's renewal.**

In a founder's life, moments of stress, doubt, or failure are not signs of weakness; they are data — signals from your system that something needs attention.

Resilience gives you the self-awareness to interpret those signals wisely. It helps you restore clarity before decisions, re-engage after setbacks, and sustain the joy that fuels your work.

## What Resilience Really Means

Psychologically, resilience is the capacity to adapt successfully in the face of change and challenge. Biologically, it's your nervous system's ability to return to equilibrium after stress. And existentially, it's the deep trust that you can meet life — as it is — and still create from there.

I hope this booklet serves you in the best way.

Soulfully

*Julia*

# Why Resilience Matters for Founders

Resilience weaves together three intelligences:

- Body intelligence (Regulation): sensing what's happening in you – tension, fatigue, activation – and using movement, breath, or rest to restore balance.
- Emotional intelligence (Compassion): allowing yourself to feel, express, and connect with others rather than contracting in isolation.
- Cognitive intelligence (Meaning): reframing challenges, finding purpose, and seeing problems as part of growth.

Together, these form your resilience system – an inner ecosystem that you can learn to tune, not just endure.

## The Body–Mind Perspective

When we face uncertainty, our nervous system automatically scans for safety. If it senses threat, it activates one of three instinctive responses:

- Fight (mobilise, control, push)
- Flight (avoid, distract, overwork)
- Freeze (shut down, disconnect, lose motivation)

In the short term, these reactions protect us. But when they become our default mode, they drain creativity, empathy, and decision-making – the very qualities founders rely on.



# Why Resilience Matters for Founders

Resilience begins the moment you notice this shift and choose a different response.

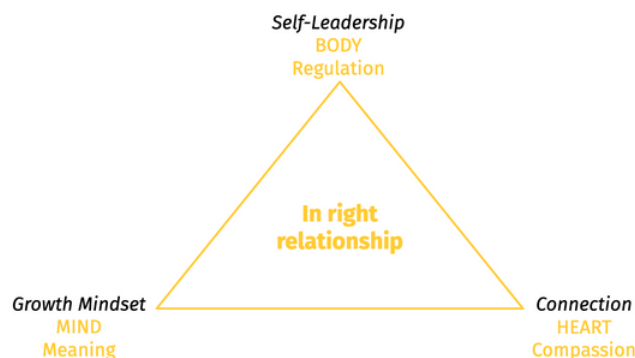
Through awareness, breath, or connection, you send your body the message: "I am safe enough to stay open." This physiological safety re-engages the prefrontal cortex – the brain region responsible for vision, innovation, and empathy. Your nervous system is your first leadership tool – it influences how you think, relate, and lead. A regulated leader leads a regulated team. Calm is contagious.

## Reflection

Where do you usually feel stress first – in your body, your thoughts, or your emotions? How do you know when you are slipping into "fight," "flight," or "freeze"? What helps you come back into flow?

Resilience lives in three places — the body, the heart, and the mind.

Each responds differently to stress and offers its own doorway back to balance. Together, they form the foundation of a healthy Founder's Mindset the inner structure that lets you stay creative under pressure, lead with clarity, and keep learning while the world moves fast around you



# The Three Foundations of Resilience

## 1 Self-Leadership — The Body — Regulation

**Regulation before reaction.**

**Self-leadership starts in the body.**

It is the ability to notice what's happening inside you — tension in your shoulders, shallow breath, the urge to check email for the tenth time — and to pause long enough to respond consciously instead of automatically.

When the nervous system is overloaded, your thinking narrows. When you slow down, breathe, or move, the system recalibrates; new options appear.

For founders, this means learning to:

- Recognise early signs of burnout or over-drive.
- Build micro-rituals that reset your energy (a walk, a breath, a moment of stillness).
- Honour your body as a strategic asset, not a disposable resource.

### **BodyMind insight:**

Every act of self-regulation re-opens the brain's creative and relational capacities. Leadership begins with physiological safety.

# The Three Foundations of Resilience

## 2 Connection — The Heart — Compassion

We co-regulate before we self-regulate.

Connection is the reminder that you don't have to carry it all alone.

Isolation amplifies stress; belonging softens it.

When you share honestly with a peer or team, you signal safety to your nervous system.

The heart rate steadies, perspective widens, and problem-solving improves.

For founders, connection means:

- Cultivating trusted relationships — mentors, partners, peers.
- Creating psychologically safe spaces where questions and vulnerability are welcome.
- Asking for feedback not as evaluation, but as dialogue.

### BodyMind insight:

Human connection releases oxytocin, which lowers cortisol. Co-regulation is biology's most effective resilience mechanism.

# The Three Foundations of Resilience

## 3 Growth Mindset — The Mind — Meaning

**Curiosity over control.**

**A growth mindset reframes failure as feedback.**

It shifts the inner narrative from “I should already know this” to “I’m learning something new.”

It is the mental flexibility to stay open even when outcomes are uncertain.

In practice, it helps founders:

- Interpret setbacks as data rather than defeat.
- Replace perfectionism with experimentation.
- Celebrate progress, not only results.

**BodyMind insight:**

When the mind moves from threat to curiosity, the prefrontal cortex lights up — creativity, empathy, and long-term vision return.

# The Three Foundations of Resilience

## How They Work Together

Foundation	Restores	When You're Stuck In...	Practice That Helps
<b>Self-Leadership</b>	The body	Fight / Flight	Breath, grounding, pausing
<b>Connection</b>	The heart	Freeze / Isolation	Conversation, eye contact, support
<b>Growth Mindset</b>	The mind	Fear / Rigidity	Reframing, journaling, learning

Resilience is not one skill – it's a dance between these three intelligences. When one wobbles, another can bring you back into alignment.

### Reflection

Which of these three foundations feels strongest in you right now?

Which one do you tend to forget when things get hard?

What would change in your leadership if you balanced all three?

# Self-Leadership Practice — Returning to the Body

## The 90-Second Rule — Riding the Wave of Emotion

Neuroscientist Dr Jill Bolte Taylor discovered that a strong emotion — anger, fear, frustration — triggers a chemical surge that lasts about 90 seconds.

After that, if we stop feeding it with thoughts, the wave naturally subsides.

Practice (5 min)

1. Close your eyes. Bring to mind a recent moment of rejection, pressure, or uncertainty.
2. Locate where you feel it in your body. Heat? Constriction? Weight?
3. For 90 seconds, breathe and simply allow the sensation.
4. Notice what happens when you no longer resist it.
5. Exhale fully, open your eyes.

### Reflection

What changed when you stopped fighting the feeling?

What did you learn about how your body processes stress?

### BodyMind Insight

Feeling a difficult emotion without judgement re-engages the vagus nerve and calms the amygdala — the brain's alarm centre.

You're literally teaching your system that discomfort can be safe.

# Self-Leadership Practice — Returning to the Body

## Box Breathing (4-4-4-4 Method)

Used by athletes and astronauts alike, this simple rhythm resets the nervous system in under two minutes.

How to do it

1. Inhale through your nose for 4 seconds
  2. Hold your breath for 4
  3. Exhale through your mouth for 4
  4. Hold again for 4
- Repeat 4 cycles

Afterwards, pause and notice: Has your heartbeat slowed? Is your focus clearer?

“Safety is the foundation of creativity.” – Stephen Porges

## BodyMind Insight

Box breathing stimulates the vagus nerve, lowers cortisol, and re-opens the prefrontal cortex — the part of the brain responsible for strategy, empathy, and innovation.

# Self-Leadership Practice — Returning to the Body

## Micro-Variations for Busy Founders

If you have 30 seconds

- One deep belly breath before answering a difficult message.
- Roll your shoulders and soften your jaw while listening to someone.

If you have 2 minutes

- Stand up and shake out your arms to discharge adrenaline.
- Place a hand on your heart and one on your abdomen — feel your own rhythm return.

If you have 10 minutes

- Walk slowly without your phone and notice five things you see, four you hear, three you feel, two you smell, one you taste. Grounding reconnects sensory reality and resets mental loops.

## Reflection Prompts

When during your workday does your system tip into over-activation?

What are your personal early warning signs — in the body, in your behaviour?

Which quick practice could become your daily “reset button”?

# Connection Practice — The Power of Compassion

**Resilience doesn't grow in isolation.**

It grows in connection — in those moments when you are met, seen, and understood by others. When we connect, our nervous system relaxes; our body receives the message, "I am not alone."

"We co-regulate before we self-regulate."

## **Why Connection Matters for Founders**

Building something new often means carrying vision, risk, and responsibility alone. Yet sustained leadership comes not from heroic independence but from interdependence — knowing when to reach out, listen, or be held by someone else's presence.

Psychologist Amy Edmondson calls this psychological safety — the belief that you can speak openly, share uncertainty, and learn through honest dialogue without fear of blame. It is the soil from which innovation and trust grow.

## **BodyMind Insight**

Connection releases oxytocin, the hormone of bonding, which lowers cortisol and supports repair. Feeling safe with others literally changes our biology — our heart rate synchronises, breath slows, and our capacity for empathy expands.

# Connection Practice — The Power of Compassion

## Mini Practice – Listening to Connect

1. Step 1. Pair up with someone.
2. Step 2. Person A speaks for two minutes about a challenge or current pressure.
3. Step 3. Person B listens without interrupting or fixing.
4. Then reflect back one sentence beginning with: “What I hear is ...” or “It sounds like what matters to you is ...”
5. Switch roles.

## Reflection

What shifted when you were listened to without judgement?

How did your body feel before and after?

## BodyMind Note

Listening with full attention activates the social engagement system — part of the vagus nerve network that signals safety and trust.

# Connection Practice — The Power of Compassion

## The Founder's Network of Support

Founders often think they need to be the most capable person in the room. True resilience, however, comes from surrounding yourself with people who can mirror your strength and remind you of your humanity.

### Consider mapping your Support Circle:

- Mentor: who expands your perspective
- Peer: who understands your daily reality
- Friend: who reminds you who you are beyond your role
- Body practice: a teacher, therapist, or coach who helps you regulate

### Reflection Prompt:

Who is in your circle of support — and who might you want to invite in?

## Everyday Micro-Practices for Connection

When stress rises:

- Make eye contact and exhale slowly while talking.
- Ask a team member, "What would help you most right now?"
- Share one honest sentence about how you're really doing — and notice how it softens the room.

When energy drops:

- Step outside with someone for a short walk.
- Express appreciation out loud.
- End your day with one message of gratitude.

### Reflection Prompts

When do you tend to withdraw or isolate under pressure?

How does your body signal that you need connection?

What one conversation could restore energy and trust this week?

# Growth Mindset Practice — Turning Setbacks into Meaning

Every founder faces uncertainty: an investor declines, a product fails, a team changes direction. What defines your long-term success isn't how often you fall, but how you relate to falling.

A Growth Mindset invites you to see every challenge as part of your learning curve. It replaces "I should already know this" with "I'm still learning." This simple shift transforms frustration into fuel. "Failure is not the opposite of success – it's information."

## **The Science of Growth**

Psychologist Carol Dweck (Stanford University) discovered that people with a Growth Mindset activate curiosity rather than self-protection when facing setbacks. This re-engages the brain's prefrontal cortex – the centre for innovation and empathy – instead of the amygdala, the threat detector.

## **BodyMind Insight**

When curiosity replaces control, your nervous system moves from contraction to openness. Your breath deepens, posture straightens, and your mind re-enters creative problem-solving.

# Growth Mindset Practice — Turning Setbacks into Meaning

## Practice – Reframing Setbacks

- Think of a recent frustration, rejection, or mistake.
- Write it down in one clear sentence.
- Now, reframe it using the language of learning or strength.
- 

Examples:

- "I failed." → "I'm discovering what doesn't work yet."
- "No one reacted to my idea." → "I'm learning what people truly need."
- "I feel behind." → "I'm building foundations that will last."

## Reflection

What shifts when you rewrite your story this way?

How does your body feel – lighter, more grounded, more open?

## Your Personal Resilience Statement

A Resilience Statement is a sentence that centres you when uncertainty rises - a phrase you can return to again and again, like a breath.

Examples:

- I can learn as I go.
- I am bigger than this moment.
- Clarity comes through action.
- Setbacks are invitations to grow.

My Statement:

Tip: Write your statement on a sticky note or background it on your phone – a reminder that mindset is a daily practice, not a theory.

# Growth Mindset Practice — Turning Setbacks into Meaning

## Micro-Practices for a Growth Mindset

### Daily:

- End the day by naming one thing you learned today.
- Replace criticism with curiosity: “What else could this mean?”
- When your inner critic speaks, add “...for now.” (“I’m not good at this... for now.”)

### Weekly:

- Share a “failure of the week” with your team — and what you learned.
- Ask a peer, “What surprised you most this week?” (surprise = growth in disguise).

## Reflection Prompts

What story of failure do you keep telling yourself — and how could it become a story of growth?

How would your leadership change if you treated uncertainty as a training ground, not a threat?

Where could curiosity replace control in your next step?

# The Everyday Toolbox — Integrating Resilience into Daily Life

Resilience isn't something you "achieve."

It's a rhythm — a daily dialogue between your body, mind, and heart.

Small rituals repeated with intention create stability far more powerful than grand resolutions.

"What you practice, grows stronger."

Every micro-moment of awareness — a conscious breath, a pause before reacting, a curious question instead of judgement — strengthens the neural pathways of resilience. The more you practise, the faster your system remembers how to return to calm, trust, and perspective.

## Micro-Rituals for Busy Founders

If you have 30 seconds:

- Take one conscious breath before replying to an email.
- Feel your feet on the ground before entering a meeting.
- Name silently what you're grateful for.

If you have 2 minutes:

- Step away from your screen, roll your shoulders, and look out the window.
- Write one sentence in your notebook: "What feels most alive in me right now?"
- Share an honest "how are you, really?" with someone you trust.

If you have 10 minutes:

- Walk without your phone and notice five things you see, four you hear, three you feel, two you smell, one you taste.
- Journal: "What gave me energy today — and what drained it?"
- Stretch, breathe, and reset before your next decision.

# The Everyday Toolbox — ChatGPT prompt

Technology can become a mirror — if we meet it with intention.

Beyond efficiency or answers, AI can help us pause, notice, and name what's happening inside. Sometimes, the most human thing we can do is to ask better questions. "The quality of our life depends on the quality of the questions we ask ourselves." When you invite ChatGPT into reflection, see it as a companion for inner dialogue, not as an expert. Let it hold space for you — to explore your patterns, your longings, your truths.

## Guided Self-Inquiry (slow, one question at a time)

### Step 1

#### Prompt (copy & paste):

I want to enter a deep, personal reflection process. Please guide me with this structure:

1) Ask me 10 deep self-reflection questions, one at a time.

- Wait for my answer before you offer the next question.
- Keep your questions gentle, specific, and courageous.
- Invite me to name what I feel in my body, what I believe, and what I long for.

2) When all 10 questions are answered, shift into Analysis Mode:

- Read my answers through the lens of my wiser / Higher Self.
- Show me where I may still be hiding behind old roles, control patterns, perfectionism, or people-pleasing.
- Reveal limiting narratives or blind spots you notice with compassion and clarity.
- Offer 2–3 soul-aligned "upgrades" (shifts in language, behaviour, or daily practice) that would help me live and lead with more truth, ease, and courage.

Tone: clear, kind, and penetrating. Be brave enough to reflect what I might not yet see — while staying warm and non-judgmental.

Please begin with a short grounding invitation (one sentence) and then your first question.

# The Everyday Toolbox — ChatGPT prompt

Guided Self-Inquiry (slow, one question at a time)

Step 2

Prompt (copy & paste):

I'd like a candid, compassionate developmental perspective on my reflections. Please examine my answers through these adult-development lenses (for orientation, not diagnosis):

- Loevinger's Ego Development
- Robert Kegan's Constructive-Developmental Theory
- STAGES Model
- Spiral Dynamics (Clare Graves)
- Barrett's Seven Levels of Consciousness

Please illuminate:

1. What centre of gravity or meaning-making pattern my answers suggest.
2. How I currently construct identity, control, and uncertainty.
3. Where I seem attached to roles or old success scripts that limit growth.
4. What my answers reveal about my current transition (competing commitments, big assumptions).
5. Blind spots and old narratives around belonging, value, or safety.

Then offer:

- Two invitations (mindset or language shifts) that would gently stretch me.
- Two practices (micro-rituals, conversations, or experiments) I can try this week.

Tone: courageous and benevolent; challenge my thinking without shaming. Help me see through illusion and step into more inner freedom and service.

# The Everyday Toolbox — ChatGPT prompt

## “On the spot” Prompts (for busy days)

When overwhelmed

“Guide me through a 2-minute reset. Ask what my body needs, what my heart is longing for, and one thing I can release right now.”

When stuck in control

“Ask me 5 questions that help me move from control to curiosity — and name one tiny experiment I can try today.”

When purpose feels far away

“Ask me 5 questions that help me remember why I began, who is served by my work, and how I can act from that place in the next 24 hours.”

Gentle reminder

You’re not asking a machine for answers — you’re inviting better questions so you can hear your own.

# About Julia



Julia von Winterfeldt is an entrepreneur, coach, and space-holder who guides people through personal and professional transitions – especially those standing at the threshold of midlife.

After an international career in leadership, brand strategy, and cultural transformation, she founded SOULWORX in 2015 with a simple but radical mission:

**to bring more depth, humanity, and truth into how we work and how we live.**

Through her SoulShift® Method, Julia combines over 15 years of training in systemic coaching, embodiment, breathwork, meditation, and energy work into a holistic approach that makes transformation tangible – scientifically grounded, practical, and lasting in its impact.

She supports leaders, founders, and creatives who sense that the old ways of striving no longer serve them. Her retreats and workshops – such as Soulution, The Midlife Call, and The Essential Process – invite people to pause, reconnect, and lead from their centre.

Julia creates spaces where people don't have to optimise – they can remember. Spaces of truth, softness, and renewal, where masks fall and the real self comes forward.

[Soulworx](#)

[Soulworx.life](#)

[The Midlife Call](#)

# The Art of Returning

There will be days  
when the sky feels too close,  
and your mind too loud.  
When the plans you drew  
lose their lines  
and the horizon blurs.  
Pause there.  
Not to fix — but to feel.  
To remember that even uncertainty  
is a rhythm.  
A pulse between what ends  
and what begins.  
You were never meant to be unbreakable —  
only whole enough to bend,  
to breathe,  
to begin again.  
And each time you do,  
you come home  
to a deeper kind of strength —  
the kind that listens,  
the kind that leads,  
the kind that stays.

TO CLOSE

# A personal note

Dear Founder,

If there's one truth I've learned from a decade of guiding leaders and creators, it's this:

The most powerful shifts don't happen when we push harder.

They happen in the pause – in the breath between striving and surrender.

Resilience isn't about becoming bulletproof.

It's about becoming real – responsive rather than reactive, guided by something steady inside you.

It's about trusting that your work, your idea, your impact all flow more freely when you lead from your centre.

So as you move back into your everyday – pitching, building, managing, dreaming – keep returning to the simple practices that bring you home: one breath, one connection, one act of courage at a time.

You are already leading the most important project of all – the evolution of yourself.

With warmth and faith in your becoming,

*Julia*

Founder & CEO, SOULWORX

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**Thank you for  
showing up for yourself  
and others.**