

# Resilience Tools for Tough Times

## Tool: Gather glimmers

During a recent business trip, strolling through the airport, I happened upon fleeting yet profound instances of human connection and joy: a mother and daughter holding hands. Young sisters giggled nearby as their parents watched, smiling. A poignant, heartwarming conversation with a recently widowed woman, who was joining her son and his family on a Caribbean cruise.

These little “glimmers” have the power to momentarily lift us from our daily frenetic distraction, enlivening in us a greater sense of safety and connection. Introduced to the concept of glimmers by trauma therapist and Polyvagal Theory expert Deb Dana, I began to watch for them.

The concept of “glimmers” in Polyvagal Theory refers to moments of positive experience, connection, or safety that can be found even in challenging or uncertain situations. These glimmers provide small, subtle cues that signal safety to our nervous system, promoting feelings of calmness, connection, and resilience.

Glimmers abound in small random moments: an encouraging text from a friend, a playful pup in the park, or a ray of sunlight in the forest. With regular practice, we notice them more and more, giving our nervous systems a steady calming source of joy and grounding in the present moment.

### What’s the connection to resilience?

Engaging in the practice of noticing glimmers and savoring them can have several positive effects on our well-being and resilience. They can help us to shift our focus from negative aspects of a situation to the positive ones. This shift in attention can help reduce feelings of stress, anxiety, and overwhelm, making it easier to navigate through challenging circumstances. With regular noticing of these glimmers, we train our nervous system to recognize and respond to cues of safety and joy more readily. Savoring glimmers can also help us to cultivate a more positive outlook on life. By actively appreciating the small moments of joy, connection, and safety, we develop a greater sense of gratitude and contentment, which can buffer against the negative effects of stress and uncertainty.

### How to use this tool

Begin your glimmer hunt by acknowledging the first one you encounter, identified by the emotion it stirs: a smile, a feeling of warmth, or even a sigh of contentment. Pause to absorb it, mentally capturing the experience before resuming your day, feeling more centered and present for whatever lies ahead. You can recall this glimmer at any time for an additional lift, either when you’re feeling safe and connected or when you’re caught in some experience of anxiety or worry, to help you get reconnected with what really matters.

## Your turn

What glimmers have you experienced recently? A funny or heartfelt interaction in your life out in the world? A special connection on the phone with a dear friend? A passing moment of beauty in nature? And what impact have these glimmers had on your perspective in the moment?

I'd love to hear about your glimmers and what feeling they left you with. For an extra boost, connect with someone close with whom you've shared a special glimmer moment. This is a highly reliable way to give your own nervous system a positive boost and put yourself into a deeply fulfilling and easeful state of safety, connection, and positivity.



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