

The Psychology of Founder Resilience — Workbook

Len P. van der Hof

2026

The Psychology of Founder Resilience: Companion Workbook

Living templates from *The Psychology of Founder Resilience*. Copy each section into your notes app or print it. Update weekly; do not treat these as one-time exercises.

Chapter 0: Stress Signature (four lines) — Artifact 1

When: Every evening for one week, then monthly check-in.

Field	Prompt
Pressure	What was the main load today?
First signal	Earliest body or mood signal (jaw, chest, irritability, rumination)?
Cost	What did it cost work or relationships?
What helped	One thing that genuinely reduced load (even slightly)?

Founder tip: If the same trigger appears three nights in a row, route to the chapter that owns it (reappraisal → Ch 3, attention → Ch 5, recovery → Ch 7).

Chapter 1: Identity Fusion Audit

Objective: Map self-complexity; reduce fusion with the company.

1. List every role you occupy (Founder, Partner, Parent, Friend, Athlete, etc.).
2. Estimate % of waking identity each role gets *this month* (honest, not aspirational).
3. If Founder > 70%, pick **one dormant role** to reactivate this week with a calendar block.
4. Write one sentence: *If the company failed tomorrow, who would I still be?*

Chapter 2: RESILIENT Dashboard (nine capacities) — Artifact 2

Daily (2 min): Rate each capacity *full / low / empty*.

Letter	Capacity	Group
R	Reappraisal	Interior
E	Emotional granularity	Interior
S	Somatic regulation	Interior
E	Executive function protection	Interior
I	Identity flexibility	Exterior
L	Learning orientation	Exterior
I	Interpersonal support	Exterior
N	Narrative integration	Integrative
T	Titrated exposure	Integrative

Weekly: Mark the two lowest capacities. That pair is your intervention priority for the coming week.

Founder tip: Never make Type 2 or 3 decisions (Ch 6) on a day when Somatic regulation and Executive function are both *empty*.

Chapter 3: Reappraisal Protocol (six steps)

When: After a hard meeting, bad news, or rumination loop.

1. **Event** — Facts only, no story.
2. **Appraisal** — The story your mind told (raw).
3. **Distortions** — Catastrophizing, mind-reading, filtering, personalizing.
4. **Alternatives** — At least two *defensible* other readings.
5. **Resources** — Cash, team, allies, experience, next step.
6. **One action** — Single concrete move in 24 hours.

In-room checks (before high-stakes meetings): Scope (what is actually at stake?) · Time (is this permanent or this quarter?) · Resource (what do I still have?).

Chapter 4: Granularity Check-In

When: You feel generically “stressed,” “fine,” or “off.”

1. **Arousal:** High or low?
2. **Valence:** Positive or negative?
3. **Precise label** — One word from your personal vocabulary (dread, exposure, friction, determination, etc.).
4. **Action implied** — What does *this* label need (sleep, conversation, data, boundary)?

Board / investor prep: Replace “nervous” with: unprepared · exposed · competitive · resigned. Each implies a different last-five-minutes protocol.

Chapter 5: Attention Audit

Objective: Find highest-cost leaks; design one boundary.

One-day log: For each interruption, note source (Slack, email, AI alert, person, rumination) and whether it was truly urgent.

Three layers: 1. External (notifications, dashboards, open tabs) 2. Social (meetings, “quick questions”) 3. Internal (rumination dressed as problem-solving)

Output: One **protected block** (90–120 min, same time daily) + one **input boundary** (e.g., no Slack before noon, AI drafts batched at 4 p.m.).

Chapter 6: Decision Architecture

Five-line decision journal (write *before you act*) — Artifact 3

Line	Content
Decision	What you choose; what it forecloses
What I believe	Key assumptions
What I expect	Checkable outcome + confidence %
Why	Reasoning, including gut/bias
Review date	When you compare prediction to result

Type classification

Type	Rule
Type 1	Reversible, low cost → decide fast
Type 2	Reversible but costly → sleep on it; check emotional label
Type 3	Irreversible → pre-mortem + journal + dissent

Pre-mortem (Type 3 only)

It is 12 months from now and this failed. List three plausible causes. For each, one mitigation you can apply today.

Chapter 7: Recovery Architecture (minimum viable)

Component	Your spec
Sleep anchor	Fixed wake time: _____
Wind-down	Start time + worry list ritual: _____
Movement MVD	Minimum viable dose (e.g., 20-min walk): _____
Cognitive rest	One non-problem-solving activity: _____
Shutdown ritual	Last work action + first recovery action: _____

Signal rule: When attention collapses (Ch 5 audit), recovery is overdue—not a reward for later.

Travel variant: Three non-negotiables only: sleep floor, one movement minimum, one evening input boundary.

Chapter 8: Support Architecture Map — Artifact 4

For each significant relationship, mark which functions they actually provide (not wishful):

Person	Emotional	Instrumental	Informational	Appraisal
--------	-----------	--------------	---------------	-----------

Rules: - Do not ask investors for emotional holding. - Match disclosure to function (panic → emotional; strategy → informational). - Quarterly raw truth ≠ daily raw truth (cadence matters).

Gap action: If no peer group, schedule one exploratory conversation this month with a founder at a similar stage.

Chapter 9: Titrated Exposure Calendar

Quarterly inoculation plan:

Domain avoided	Smallest exposure	Recovery paired	Log (1 sentence)
----------------	-------------------	-----------------	------------------

Five conditions checklist (all must be present for training stress): - Predictable context - Some controllability - Matched recovery (Ch 7) - Narrative integration (reappraisal + decision journal) - Social holding (Ch 8)

Founder tip: Endurance is not training. If dread does not decrease over three exposures with recovery, reduce dose or add witness—do not “push through.”

Chapter 10: Weekly Founder Review (30 min)

Anchor: Same day/time weekly; phone in another room.

1. **Capacity scan** — Two most depleted RESILIENT letters.
2. **Input log** — Sleep avg, movement days, attention blocks, peer contact, boundaries held.
3. **Decision audit** — One good decision, one bad; state preceding sleep/mood.
4. **Pattern note** — What preceded best vs worst days?
5. **One change** — Single test for next week (not an overhaul).

Share headline with one appraisal-support person: “Hard week; held sleep; struggling with ____.”*

Implementation intention bank — Artifact 6

If (trigger)	Then (action)	Last fail date
--------------	---------------	----------------

Season variants (one page)

Variant	When	Minimum set
Baseline	Normal ops	Full protocol
Compressed	Launch, fundraise, crisis	Sleep floor + one reappraisal + one peer call + one protected block
Recovery	After acute push	Sleep, movement, reduced decisions, integration conversation

Crisis card (keep visible) — Artifact 5

1. **Sleep floor** — Protect tonight; no irreversible decisions today.
 2. **Call appraiser** — One person from Support Map for reality-testing.
 3. **Compress protocol** — Run Compressed variant only.
 4. **Log one line** — Event + one action + review date.
-

One-Page Protocol Template

Version: ___ Date: ___ Season: [] Baseline [] Compressed [] Recovery

RESILIENT weekly marks: R _ E _ S _ I _ L _ I _ E _ N _ T _

If-then #1: If ____, then ____

If-then #2: If ____, then ____

If-then #3: If ____, then ____

Micro-practices (anchor → behavior):

1. ____

2. ____

3. ____

Protected: Weekly review ___ | Monthly revision ___

Track: Sleep ___ | Movement ___ | Attention blocks ___

Support: ___ knows this protocol exists | Peer cadence: ___

Compressed (5 lines): ___

Recovery (5 lines): ___

Resilience is not what you are. It is what you run.