Resilience Building Activity (Building Resilience Mini Module)\(^1\)
Discussion Facilitator’s Guide

Goal
- To help students understand more about their own personal resilience skills
- To help students begin to uncover and develop additional skills related to resilience
- To help students discover themes, patterns, stories, and connections in their life for the purpose of understanding their own identity and becoming resilient.

Possible Activities
[Create an activity plan for your discussion that selects elements of the following activities making sure that you address the topics highlighted above.]

1. **VisualsSpeak Cards:** See attached document (for this activity, you will need to contact Natalee in advance to check out the VisualsSpeak card set)
2. **SIGNPOSTS Cards:** See attached document (for this activity, you will need to contact Natalee in advance to check out the SIGNPOSTS card set)
3. **Wandering Map Activity:** See attached document
4. **Six Word Memoirs**

**Description:** Six-Word Memoir\(^\circledast\) is a creative tool from SMITH Magazine, [www.sixwordmemoirs.com](http://www.sixwordmemoirs.com). This activity allows students the opportunity to get their point across in six words.
- This activity works well when combined with another activity from the list. Students who complete the Wandering Map or either Card activity are self-reflective and have language to use to think about their Six-Word Memoir\(^\circledast\).
- The only instruction is that there can only be six words, but you can use punctuation to make a point or transition in your statement.
- Additional information can be found on SMITH Magazine’s website, [http://www.smithmag.net/](http://www.smithmag.net/)

**Conclusion:**
The activities listed promote self-discovery and reflection. Students are able to communicate their own personal story, discover themes and patterns in their life, understand their own identity, manage change and transition, and build the skills necessary to become resilient. We hope these tools will serve as a starting point for students to understand resiliency and transition.

For further questions or support please contact Anne Reed at the Center for Student Professional Development, [anne.reed@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:anne.reed@vanderbilt.edu) or 615-322-2750

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\(^1\) Activities and instructions provided by the Vanderbilt University Center for Student Professional Development.
1. **VisualsSpeak Cards**

**Description:** The VisualsSpeak Image Set is a set of 200 photographs chosen as tools “to understand the underlying visual language and how that can move conversations forward, get people engaged, and help spark new ideas and understandings.” For more information or to order, visit [http://www.visualsspeak.com/products/imageset/](http://www.visualsspeak.com/products/imageset/).

**Logistics:** The VisualsSpeak cards are available for use, to be checked out through Natalee Erb.

**Outcomes:** Student will gain initial insights into their values and have a visual depiction of what’s important to them. Students will be able to talk about transition and goals in their life. Students will be able to share their personal story in a meaningful way and build resiliency skills.

**Senses:** Visual/ Tactile/ Hands on

**Time needed to complete:** 5 - 10 to select cards / 30 minutes for debriefing

**Use day of:** Yes

**Instructions for VisualsSpeak**

1. Scatter the cards throughout the room for the students to review, take a few moments to look at them and suggest each student select a couple of cards which most appeal to them as they enter their first year at Vanderbilt.

**Suggested Questions**

1. Have the student go through each of their cards and describe why they selected each one. What was it about that cards that resonated with them?
2. Have students lay out their cards on the desk and ask “What themes/patterns do you see in the ten cards that you chose?” Have student write these down.
3. Discuss with the students how they can achieve the meaning of each card.
4. Have student take a picture with camera phone of these cards so they can look back and reflect upon the cards they have selected.
5. Encourage the students to share their personal stories with the group. Self-awareness and reflection can promote resiliency.

**Facilitating in Small Groups**

1. Works best with groups no larger than 30 people. Some students will want to share cards with each other.
2. Divide the room into multiple groups of 3-5 students.
3. Have each person of the group select 3 cards that resonate with them and then explain why to the group.
4. Go around the room and have each small group talk about their discoveries and whether they observed any patterns.
2. SIGNPOSTS

Description: SIGNPOSTS is a set of 48 cards for building meaningful conversations about spirituality, connectedness, faith and transformation, while recognizing and celebrating the diverse ways in which people express their innermost beliefs. This tool is not based on particular theology or philosophy, but offers ways to reflect on life's purpose and to convert values into actions. Each card combines a powerful, evocative, full-color photograph with a few simple words. The result is a beautiful set of cards that can revitalize the practice of contemplation and create dynamic conversations with others about matters we hold closest to our hearts. It’s marketed as ways for exploring everyday spirituality and can be adapted as a values exercise helpful in professional, personal, and career exploration.

Logistics: One deck of SIGNPOSTS cards are available for use, to be checked out through Natalee Erb.

Outcomes: Student will gain initial insights into their values and have a visual depiction of what’s important to them. Students will be able to talk about transition and goals in their life.

Theory behind this assessment: SIGNPOSTS is not based on a particular theology, doctrine or philosophy. It draws on a range of religious, mystical and spiritual traditions, and offers a simple way for ordinary people to further search for meaning in their everyday worlds. The cards explore different ways to reflect on one’s values. They were developed by a team at Innovative Resources led by clinical psychologist, David Mitchell and with photos by Brent Seamer.

Senses: Visual/ Tactile/ Hands on

Time needed to complete: 5 - 10 to select cards / 30 minutes for debriefing

Use day of: Yes

Instructions for SIGNPOSTS

1. Scatter the cards throughout the room for the students to review, take a few moments to look at them and suggest each student select a couple of cards which most appeal to them as they enter their first year at Vanderbilt.

Suggested Questions

1. Have the student go through each of the ten cards and describe why they selected each one. What was it about that cards that resonated with them?
2. Have student lay all their cards out on the desk and ask “What themes/patterns do you see in the ten cards that you chose?” Have student write these down.
3. Discuss with the students how they can achieve the meaning of each card. (Some students will choose cards based on the words and some by pictures)
4. Have student take a picture with camera phone of these cards so they can look back and reflect upon the cards they have selected.
5. Encourage the students to share their personal stories with the group. Self-awareness and reflection can promote resiliency.

Facilitating in Small Groups

1. Works best with groups no larger than 30 people. Some students will want to share cards with each other.
2. Divide the room into multiple groups of 3-5 students.
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3. Wandering Map

**Description:** Wandering Map is a creative brainstorming exercise developed by Katharine Brooks and fully outlined in her book, *You Majored in What?* The Wandering Map helps students view their lives in new ways and identify previously hidden themes, patterns, stories, and connections as well as skills, interests, and values.

**Logistics:** The student only needs a blank piece of paper (8 ½ x 11 or larger) and colored pencils / markers.

**Best audience:** Any student, but especially those who would benefit from a creative approach to thinking about their life and experiences.

**Outcomes:** Ideally, as students take a fresh look at the themes, patterns, and connections in their lives, they will gain a renewed excitement and energy around their strengths, interests, and potential.

**Theory behind this assessment:** Chaos Theory

**Senses:** Visual / Auditory

**Time needed to complete:** 15 minutes for assessment / 30 minutes for debriefing

**Use day of:** Yes

**Instructions to Share with Students to Create the Wandering Map**

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2. Give thought to the significant events, people, unusual experiences, memories, activities, awards, hobbies, classes, and proud moments in your life. Using the blank piece of paper and colored pencils/ markers, jot these down in any random way on the blank piece of paper, using short words, phrases, or even drawings. Go back as far in life as you wish, even to early childhood. Do this quickly and don’t be concerned about organizing your thoughts or if they are career related.

(You can show the student the sample Wandering Maps in *You Majored in What?* – p.24ff. Or use this sample Wandering Map that’s posted online: [http://www.immaculata.edu/pathways/documents/getamap/WanderingMap.pdf](http://www.immaculata.edu/pathways/documents/getamap/WanderingMap.pdf). If the student is having difficulty or seems stuck in writing things down on their Map, share some ideas to consider such as the following: jobs, internships, volunteer/leadership activities, adventures/risks, sports, creative projects, summer activities, high school or college organizations, significant teachers / mentors, vacations, holidays, awards, hobbies, innovative ideas, family memories, favorite high school or college courses, travel, study abroad, failures, and accomplishments.

3. As you review your Map, let’s begin by looking for connections. *What categories do you see in some of the items on your map?*

4. Draw lines using different colored pencils connecting these items and then make a list of the basic categories (at least 5, if possible) on the back of the Map. *Are there surprises in your categories? Any you would have expected? Anything significant or especially interesting to you?*

5. Next, look more closely at your Map and see if you can identify any new connections beyond the more obvious categories. *Do you see any themes, threads or patterns that have been a part of your
life? Any common ground in things that, on the surface, appear to be quite different? Have you consistently demonstrated a particular strength in various life experiences?

6. Draw lines to connect these various themes and threads and then make a list of the themes on the back of the Map. (If the student is having trouble digger deeper beyond the categories to identify themes, show them a list of possible themes and threads, taken from You Majored in What? - Exhibit A. If the student still seems stuck, share some of the themes and patterns that you see and ask the student for their thoughts on your observations.)

7. Would you talk a bit about each theme and what it means in your life? Which 2 or 3 themes would you rank as most important? What insights have you gained about yourself? What new possibilities open up for you?

8. Add any further notes or comments to each theme you’ve identified. Highlight the themes you’d like to further explore and develop.

9. Encourage the student to take time to think more about his Wandering Map in the coming weeks and to make changes and additions as needed. Suggest that the student show his Wandering Map to others (friends, parents, professors) who might help the student add to his Map and/or identify additional themes.

Exhibit A
Possible Themes (taken from You Majored in What? by Katharine Brooks)
A few ideas:
- Achievement / Awards
- Alone or with others
- Animals
- Art
- Computers
- Creative ideas
- Equipment or tools I use
- Family
- Fun
- Hobbies
- Indoors or Outdoors
- Internally or externally rewarded
- Knowledge I’ve acquired
- Learning
- Locations
- Music
- Reading
- Research
- Risky or safe
- Roles I’ve played
- Solving problems
- Things I want to change
- Topics of interest
- Types of people
- What comes naturally to me

Other Possible Themes: Skill Areas
- Analytic
- Artistic
- Communication
- Counseling
- Creative Thinking
- Detailed
- Interpersonal Skills
- Research / Investigative
- Leadership
- Negotiating
- Mathematical
- Organizational
- Athletic
- Presentation / Performing
- Problem Solving
- Serving
- Teaching
- Thinking strategically
Other possible themes: what’s important to you?

Adventure – taking risks, trying new things
Challenge – testing skills, seeking stimulating experiences
Contribution – making a difference, helping others
Creativity – self-expression, ideas as in art and music
Diversity – being around people from many cultures and appreciating differences
Expertise – possessing knowledge or skills
Family – nurturing, children, family gatherings
Harmony – peace, calm surroundings
Health – exercise and eating well
Independence -- freedom and autonomy
Joy – pleasure, humor, happiness
Justice – helping society, fairness, important causes
Leadership – organizing, inspiring
Learning – acquiring knowledge, life-long learning
Leisure – finding time to relax, pursuing hobbies
Physical Work – using your hands, building
Prestige and Recognition – being successful, attaining a high status
Productivity – accomplishing, hardworking, excellence
Security – safety, stability
Spirituality – practicing religion meditating
Variety – different tasks, exploring new territories
Wealth – acquiring money, economic security

Adapting to a Group Setting

1. Break into pairs or triads and encourage everyone to share their “Wandering Map” with the others in the small group.
2. Encourage participants to discuss how their map reflects interests, skills, values, connections, and themes and request the input of their small group members, who can often identify connections that the individual may not have seen.
3. Request that a few volunteers share their Wandering Map with the larger group.