

Mental Resilience Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research study

This study aims to examine whether mental resilience is being developed in university levels musical theatre training.

All participants must be over the age of 18

The information is will be anonymous and confidential.

If you have any further questions about the survey, you may contact me at conor.oboyle96@gmail.com

I have read and understand the information above



Agree

I consent to participating in this study, the results of which may be published



Agree

QUESTIONNAIRE

Mental resilience is defined as ones ability to adapt or cope in situations of high stress, as well as their ability to use emotional resources to adapt to adversity.

Upon entering the professional musical theatre industry, did you feel mentally prepared for it?
Please explain your answer

Yes and No. I felt like I had the mental 'ability' to go into the industry and accept what comes my way. As a very recent graduate, I found myself 'raring to go' but that can be very short-lived when the reality of the industry and its mental strains hold.

Part of me expected the industry to hold the same challenges as drama school, but in reality they are completely different - neither one is easier or less challenging, just a surprisingly different ball park.

What skills did you learn to help develop your mental resilience?

-Disassociation; I used to get highly stressed and frustrated in Uni, especially with self-lead, group work. Working with a bunch of young creatives who haven't yet worked out how to share a space was hard, and I found myself learning to distance myself from that as an individual and look at the work from an outsider's perspective.

-Taking a break/learning when to step away; as a perfectionist (like many in this industry), I am guilty of trying to push to get something right when it's not happening. Learning when to step away from a task and reconvening later is important to me.

-Challenging mental blocks/re-framing.

Did you learn the above skills in University, in the professional industry, or both?

Disassociation - learned through uni and helped me in an education setting, but in a professional setting, I have learned, it is less effective.

Breaks/Stepping Away - Both. Learned about it more in my MA when I had particularly bad performance classes I would step outside and take 5 to focus on myself and my own feelings. I then built on this in my professional practice further once I left uni.

Re-framing - In professional industry.

Are there any skills of mental resilience that you wish you had learned earlier?

Re-framing.

Does the culture of your University match the culture of the professional industry?

I'm not yet sure. I have been lucky enough to book jobs in the short period between finishing uni and now. One job was an exceptionally bad experience, not something I will attach to the industry. From doing one-off concerts and performances, however, there is still an air of 'where did you train?!' pressure, which is something, as someone who has just completed an MA, I have experienced in my past year of training. It comes from the competitive nature of drama schools which I was not fond of, and something I can imagine is still a part of the industry, but can't speak on as I haven't yet experienced.

Are the skills of mental resilience needed for university the same as those needed for the professional industry?

No. Because university and drama schools are so intensive, and there's so many people who are still developing their emotional maturity, there can be a lot of toxicity within drama schools which is a challenge in itself and, for me, was a large contributor to my stress. Everyone at uni is on an individual journey and that very often clashes with each other's, whereas in the industry, you are either in an audition with someone and part ways, or you book a job. Those people on that job are then, in contrast, are working on a collaborative journey and have the same goal, so the stakes, in my experience, have felt less high.

However, in the professional industry, you have less security, and more uncertainty which is a completely different struggle.

Has performing ever been a form of stress release for you? If yes, did that change when it became your career?

Yes. Despite the stresses of rehearsal periods etc, performing and being on stage is always a release of sorts.

When I have a stressful day, I always have a sing. I did when I was younger and still do now that it's my job.

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Please explain your answer

i wasn't prepared for the waiting. we al get prepared for auditions - but waiting to get called to an audition or for a reply from an audition is so hard

What skills did you learn to help develop your mental resilience?

i learnt to try to forget an audition as i finish it - to not focus on the audition mentally

Did you learn the above skills in University, in the professional industry, or both?

in the industry

Are there any skills of mental resilience that you wish you had learned earlier?

100% doing self tapes once or twice without retaking hundreds of times

Does the culture of your University match the culture of the professional industry?

no - my uni was so bad for me mentally - the industry is SO much nicer than my drama school and teachers were

Are the skills of mental resilience needed for university the same as those needed for the professional industry?

drama school is the industry magnified incredibly in my opinion- everything's turned up so much at uni - where as in the industry it's so much nicer and calmer

Has performing ever been a form of stress release for you? If yes, did that change when it became your career?

yes, it was - performing in shows acts as a stress release - where as audition i find stressful

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e.matysakova@gmail.com

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Upon entering the professional musical theatre industry, did you feel mentally prepared for it?
Please explain your answer

I didn't really know what to expect as usually I just focus on acting.

What skills did you learn to help develop your mental resilience?

Giving myself a break & celebrating the small victories!

Did you learn the above skills in University, in the professional industry, or both?

Both.

Are there any skills of mental resilience that you wish you had learned earlier?

All of it.

Does the culture of your University match the culture of the professional industry?

My university hated actors. However my drama school was tough but fair and always supportive.

Are the skills of mental resilience needed for university the same as those needed for the professional industry?

Yes. Be your mad, unique, beautiful self.

Has performing ever been a form of stress release for you? If yes, did that change when it became your career?

Yes. I could release inner thoughts and feelings as well as stress in performances. I find it powers the character.

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Upon entering the professional musical theatre industry, did you feel mentally prepared for it?
Please explain your answer

Yes, I've been in the professional work since I was 3 so have been lucky enough to grow up in the world.

What skills did you learn to help develop your mental resilience?

Fake it til you make it, rejection is part of the job. Kindness goes a long way.

Did you learn the above skills in University, in the professional industry, or both?

Both

Are there any skills of mental resilience that you wish you had learned earlier?

It's perfectly fine to say no to projects you're not invested in

Does the culture of your University match the culture of the professional industry?

No

Are the skills of mental resilience needed for university the same as those needed for the professional industry?

I think they're all universal principles to follow

Has performing ever been a form of stress release for you? If yes, did that change when it became your career?

I don't think it's ever been a stress release. It's been a rush rather than a release

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Upon entering the professional musical theatre industry, did you feel mentally prepared for it?
Please explain your answer

I felt over-prepared, because drama school teachers told us it was 'brutal' and 'cut throat' and constantly told us horror stories about the 'industry'. In reality, auditions and jobs were never traumatic, it was just relentless and mostly disheartening in its nature.

What skills did you learn to help develop your mental resilience?

My main coping strategy was distraction, by having other things to look forward to after auditions. Eg. Organising to meet friends afterwards for coffee etc. I don't think I had any skills aside this.

Did you learn the above skills in University, in the professional industry, or both?

This was something we all did at drama school - after a horrible day we would all go to the pub/to have dinner. This would probably balance out our hormonal levels, lowering the cortisol/adrenaline I'd imagine!

Are there any skills of mental resilience that you wish you had learned earlier?

I now have other hobbies, and friends outside the industry which would've helped. Also attending regular therapy sessions has enabled me to see things in a more balanced and less egotistical way. I felt a lot more jealousy and negativity before engaging in therapy, and now I'm much more at peace with my own ability levels and what I have to offer.

Does the culture of your University match the culture of the professional industry?

No. Drama school made me fearful of the industry and less confident than I was before I joined. The culture of the profession is much more supportive and kind. I received nicer feedback in auditions than I did at drama school.

Are the skills of mental resilience needed for university the same as those needed for the professional industry?

I would say not always, it depends on the institution. The performers I know who have not attended drama school are much more confident and self assured. They have not been pitted against others for 3 years minimum. I think drama school can be extremely tough, as you are in a pressure cooker of constant feedback, which can be overwhelming. Not to mention the pressure of being in once social circle for a long period of time. In auditions there isn't so much of a hierarchy as you're mostly all strangers, so you're less likely to judge yourself based on others.

Has performing ever been a form of stress release for you? If yes, did that change when it became your career?

Yes when it was a hobby (under 18) the whole process of rehearsing and performing was a endorphin booster, it became much more stressful when it was my profession (except for the actual time spent on stage (which of course is a small percentage of the total time!))

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Upon entering the professional musical theatre industry, did you feel mentally prepared for it?
Please explain your answer

No. I went to one of the top MT schools in London and felt that there was a certain arrogance in not prepping us for the reality of the industry. They told us the hard bit would be getting the job. There was never really a question of whether or not we'd even get the auditions in the first place. They definitely didn't prepare us for that eventuality.

What skills did you learn to help develop your mental resilience?

I tried to take responsibility for my further training by doing workshops and classes which helped me to feel like I was in the industry, even if I hadn't had an audition for months.

Did you learn the above skills in University, in the professional industry, or both?

After I'd graduated.

Are there any skills of mental resilience that you wish you had learned earlier?

Yes, I think we should have had more of an emphasis on jobs outside the industry, following your passions and hobbies, and an encouragement of doing what's right for you, whether that is in the industry or not.

Does the culture of your University match the culture of the professional industry?

Difficult to say currently as I left the industry in 2019. However, I found generally that my university culture was quite negative which I didn't find during the jobs I worked on.

Are the skills of mental resilience needed for university the same as those needed for the professional industry?

They definitely overlap. I think the culture of training up to 12 hours a day needs to be stopped in drama schools. It was almost frowned upon if you didn't stay behind for hours to practice, I rarely left on time in 3 years. That's just not realistic when you enter the industry. I think that the skills you learn at drama school need to be a lot wider as it very much becomes a bubble that isn't representative of the outside world.

Has performing ever been a form of stress release for you? If yes, did that change when it became your career?

Definitely! I started to lose the love of the career (not actually being on stage) but everything it took to get to that stage made me not want to do it.

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Upon entering the professional musical theatre industry, did you feel mentally prepared for it?
Please explain your answer

No, wasnt aware of how minimal auditions can be that was tough not even getting in the room

What skills did you learn to help develop your mental resilience?

Learning what i enjoy and what makes me feel good - going for walk, exercise, singing for fun etc

Did you learn the above skills in University, in the professional industry, or both?

We did have wellness classes but these didn't really teach me much i didnt know

Are there any skills of mental resilience that you wish you had learned earlier?

Just knowing how to cope with the rejection - i do think this is something that comes with time

Does the culture of your University match the culture of the professional industry?

No - uni was very intense

Are the skills of mental resilience needed for university the same as those needed for the professional industry?

No, constant critique to not much

Has performing ever been a form of stress release for you? If yes, did that change when it became your career?

Yes - since graduating i have realised how much i love singing and how much adrenaline i get from it. However, i now dont like to dance due to the judgment put on myself

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Upon entering the professional musical theatre industry, did you feel mentally prepared for it?
Please explain your answer

No I did not. My First steps into the UK theatre culture were very challenging .

What skills did you learn to help develop your mental resilience?

I learned through attending psychotherapy to understand myself my challenges and to be more resilient. I don't believe resilience in the MT industry is separate from personal resilience. I worked on myself in all areas of my life.

Did you learn the above skills in University, in the professional industry, or both?

I did not have any mental health supports available through my university. Most of my mental health improvement came after studying.

Are there any skills of mental resilience that you wish you had learned earlier?

I cannot pin point an exact skill but I do wish mental health supports had been available to me during my BA

Does the culture of your University match the culture of the professional industry?

To a degree yes. My uni held some old fashioned views regarding mainly aesthetics which I personally found harmful. I still experience this in certain areas of the industry. The difference I find in the professional industry is the level of control I am able to have which I find to be very positive. I am able to form my own views, and work with those who's values align with mine. This was less encouraged in my Uni or perhaps I perceived it that way as I was young, very eager to learn and respected my tutors more than some had earned.

Are the skills of mental resilience needed for university the same as those needed for the professional industry?

Yes absolutely

Has performing ever been a form of stress release for you? If yes, did that change when it became your career?

Yes. It has changed post Uni but I mainly attribute that to the fact I get to do it less. In Uni I did it all the time. Work as an actor is less frequent at times so I have to take responsibility to carve out time to be creative.

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Upon entering the professional musical theatre industry, did you feel mentally prepared for it?
Please explain your answer

Yes. I graduated in 2007. I attended a drama school where we were given the skills to be independent artists, self-motivation, attention to detail and work ethic were high on the agenda. I had an excellent understanding at that time of how I should expect the industry to be. And the audition process and working environment lived up to that expectation.

What skills did you learn to help develop your mental resilience?

We didn't learn specific skills to develop resilience during my training.

Did you learn the above skills in University, in the professional industry, or both?

I don't understand the question.

Are there any skills of mental resilience that you wish you had learned earlier?

I don't understand the question.

Does the culture of your University match the culture of the professional industry?

yes.

Are the skills of mental resilience needed for university the same as those needed for the professional industry?

yes.

Has performing ever been a form of stress release for you? If yes, did that change when it became your career?

Yes.

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Upon entering the professional musical theatre industry, did you feel mentally prepared for it?
Please explain your answer

Definitely not. I don't think anyone can physically prepare you for the constant judgment and constantly comparing yourself to others etc.

What skills did you learn to help develop your mental resilience?

I feel like it's hard to use skills to develop mental resilience. I think it's just a matter of putting yourself out there more and more, going to as many auditions as possible, that's the only way to build up the resilience.

Did you learn the above skills in University, in the professional industry, or both?

Both. Even just auditioning against each other for smaller roles in college helps build resilience.

Are there any skills of mental resilience that you wish you had learned earlier?

Yes. I wish I learnt to be confident in myself and not rely on others opinions, something I still struggle with.

Does the culture of your University match the culture of the professional industry?

I don't think so. I think things are far cushier in college.

Are the skills of mental resilience needed for university the same as those needed for the professional industry?

To an extent yes. This is quite a toxic industry and there's always going to be cattiness amongst people. I think college does prepare you for working in tough situations and feeling judged from other people. It also prepares you for the intensity of the industry to an extent.

Has performing ever been a form of stress release for you? If yes, did that change when it became your career?

It used to be purely a hobby for me. It definitely changed the more serious I started to take it. A lot of the time now it is a cause of stress rather than relief.

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Upon entering the professional musical theatre industry, did you feel mentally prepared for it?
Please explain your answer

Yes - I knew that this industry would be 90% rejection with only 10% reward and I was prepared for that feeling or 'failure' and learned how to bounce back from it

What skills did you learn to help develop your mental resilience?

Reshaping your mindset and how you look at things

Did you learn the above skills in University, in the professional industry, or both?

University

Are there any skills of mental resilience that you wish you had learned earlier?

Obviously in hindsight you wish you knew everything you knew now earlier!

Does the culture of your University match the culture of the professional industry?

Absolutely!

Are the skills of mental resilience needed for university the same as those needed for the professional industry?

Yes

Has performing ever been a form of stress release for you? If yes, did that change when it became your career?

Yes - it has always been a stress release and still is

INTERVIEWS

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Do you fall into one of the following categories?

- ☐ Recent Graduate (1-3 years)
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- ☐ Individual who hires West End Professionals
- ☒ None of the above

If you fall into one of the above categories, and are willing to be contacted and interviewed, please leave your email below

Yes - aoifembarrett@gmail.com

FORM COMPLETE

Thank you for completing this survey. Your time and effort is greatly appreciated.

If you wish to find out more about my research, or have any further questions, please feel free to contact me on conor.oboyle96@gmail.com

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Mental Resilience Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research study

This study aims to examine whether mental resilience is being developed in university levels musical theatre training.

All participants must be over the age of 18

The information is will be anonymous and confidential.

If you have any further questions about the survey, you may contact me at conor.oboyle96@gmail.com

I have read and understand the information above

☒ Agree

I consent to participating in this study, the results of which may be published

☒ Agree

QUESTIONNAIRE

Mental resilience is defined as ones ability to adapt or cope in situations of high stress, as well as their ability to use emotional resources to adapt to adversity.

Upon entering the professional musical theatre industry, did you feel mentally prepared for it?
Please explain your answer

I felt mentally prepared in that I felt excited to finally get to do what I have always wanted to, but there was obviously apprehension due to not knowing whether I was actually going to be able to be good enough.

What skills did you learn to help develop your mental resilience?

I keep looking back at videos of me dancing when I first started the course and comparing them to more recent ones and the difference is enormous (I am very proud of myself). That and focusing on the positives no matter how small, I can't do the splits (yet) but I can touch my toes which I couldn't do in September. As for mental resilience in singing, I'll let you know when I manage to develop it as at the moment it is visibly lacking.

Did you learn the above skills in University, in the professional industry, or both?

I learnt a few of them before coming to university but I have found that I needed to use them more since coming as there are days where it feels like everything you do is wrong.

Are there any skills of mental resilience that you wish you had learned earlier?

Not really, as I said previously I didn't really need them to the same extent before. I would like to learn more though.

Does the culture of your University match the culture of the professional industry?

I have no idea since I'm still at university and am not in the professional industry. However, having had workshops with industry professionals and having got a glimpse of how they work, I would say that the culture is very similar.

Are the skills of mental resilience needed for university the same as those needed for the professional industry?

I presume that they will be needed more in the professional industry as university feels very much like a safe space to make errors. I also benefit on a regular basis from my classmates encouragement (which I try to give in return), I doubt that I would be getting this in the industry.

Has performing ever been a form of stress release for you? If yes, did that change when it became your career?

I wouldn't describe it as a form of stress release (it can extremely stressful), I would describe it as a from of excitement and extreme joy which makes the stress bearable.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

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Upon entering the professional musical theatre industry, did you feel mentally prepared for it?
Please explain your answer

probably not, the idea of auditioning for things scared me

What skills did you learn to help develop your mental resilience?

being able to stay on track with what i needed to do for myself

Did you learn the above skills in University, in the professional industry, or both?

university

Are there any skills of mental resilience that you wish you had learned earlier?

how to deal with imposter syndrome and feeling that you aren't as good as others

Does the culture of your University match the culture of the professional industry?

no they are more laid back

Are the skills of mental resilience needed for university the same as those needed for the professional industry?

no it seems to be more relaxed in university

Has performing ever been a form of stress release for you? If yes, did that change when it became your career?

yes, but sometimes the idea of having to perform as a career can be stressful

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Mental resilience is defined as ones ability to adapt or cope in situations of high stress, as well as their ability to use emotional resources to adapt to adversity.

Upon entering the professional musical theatre industry, did you feel mentally prepared for it?
Please explain your answer

I feel like I was prepared for the aspects I had trained in, for example being in audition rooms and the quick turnaround of learning material etc, however I felt most mentally unprepared for aspects my training didn't allow me to experience. These included periods without auditions, finding stable income that gave enough time to keep up skills and commit to auditions etc - these were the aspects I found most difficult.

What skills did you learn to help develop your mental resilience?

Meditation and mindfulness skills

Compassion to myself and checking in with how I was feeling often

Perseverance, particularly working through physical fatigue and seeing myself get stronger over time

Lessening comparison to others around me

Did you learn the above skills in University, in the professional industry, or both?

Mainly in university

Are there any skills of mental resilience that you wish you had learned earlier?

I wish I had learned earlier how much comparison to others cripples your confidence - breaking away from that and staying in your own lane so to speak helps you focus on your goals without beating yourself up for not being on the same timeline as others

Does the culture of your University match the culture of the professional industry?

I found both to be competitive and somewhat brutal, however the university culture felt much more mentally difficult to deal with being surrounded by the same people every day and the complexities of the social dynamic

Are the skills of mental resilience needed for university the same as those needed for the professional industry?

I think the professional industry challenges your motivation and consistency - in training even through being in classes so regularly your skills are maintained, whereas they can be lost so rapidly once in the industry especially between contracts

Has performing ever been a form of stress release for you? If yes, did that change when it became your career?

performing used to be an amazing creative outlet for me and definitely relieved stress, but this did change when it became my career

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christian.broad@hotmail.com

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Mental resilience is defined as ones ability to adapt or cope in situations of high stress, as well as their ability to use emotional resources to adapt to adversity.

Upon entering the professional musical theatre industry, did you feel mentally prepared for it?
Please explain your answer

I didn't know - it felt like a blur and a whirlwind. I think that there was a lot of focus on getting my "talent" ready for the industry, but I wasn't as prepared for the mental challenges of auditioning and rejection and finding a rent paying job. However, because I had been in professional training for such a long time, I did feel like I had built up and developed more resilience and coping strategies compared to some peers entering at the same time as me

What skills did you learn to help develop your mental resilience?

Managing rejection, working with my nerves, building self-esteem, know how to distance myself slightly from the work/finding joy and purpose outside of the arts

Did you learn the above skills in University, in the professional industry, or both?

In the industry, through friends and colleagues, personal therapy

Are there any skills of mental resilience that you wish you had learned earlier?

how to cope with rejection in practise, we are all told there will be lots of it, but how do we build the tool kit to cope with it, perfectionism - something that held me back whilst training and in the industry. It is an important concept as if we can challenge the negative impacting parts of perfectionism and learn to hone the positive impacting parts it will create a resilient performer who knows how to push themselves but also nurture themselves

Does the culture of your University match the culture of the professional industry?

this is hard to answer - as university/colleges have a want and need to try and reflect the landscape and culture of the industry to best prepare students. But, the industry is pushing for change and so should colleges and vice versa. There are parts of training that feel very familiar in the industry, and some that feel entirely off. So do we train people within a culture we would LIKE to see, or the one that already exists? Or is there space to do a bit of both?

Are the skills of mental resilience needed for university the same as those needed for the professional industry?

In some ways yes - prioritising, plate spinning, multi tasking, learning material fast, stamina, working as a group, rejection, failure, success etc. But there is a different resilience needed when you fly solo out in the industry, because suddenly all the structure and routine is gone. That can be a hard difference felt when leaving.

Has performing ever been a form of stress release for you? If yes, did that change when it became your career?

Yes it started that way and still can be. But when you turn anything from a hobby to a job there will always and naturally be an element of it turning from stress releaser to stress causer. I don't think that is a bad thing, but it can be hard for some people who relied on it as their only stress releaser when they find their hobby has gone

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