Denise, a young veteran, recently honorably discharged from service, comes in with a diagnosis of PTSD and depressive symptoms for which she is in treatment and states difficulty staying in a job for long. She states she does well for a short time, then “messes up” and the supervisor “gets on me” and then her depression and PTSD symptoms have her feeling she can’t do it and she “gives up” stating “what’s the use?”

Using the Strengths-based Resilience Model questions, her therapist works with her searching for strengths to start building her personal model of resilience.

* Therapist: In the past, how have you been able to rise to challenges?
* Denise: Well, I guess I try to get more active, spend time with people who seem to “get me.” (laughs)
* Therapist: When people say good things about you, what are they likely to say?
* Denise: I don’t know. That I’m a good friend, that I’m pretty smart.
* Therapist: What do you think they mean when they say you’re a good friend?
* Denise: They tell me I’m really funny - it makes me feel good to get people laughing.
* Therapist: And when you think about those things they say, what changes for you?
* Denise: It puts things more in perspective. I don’t spend ALL my time thinking about how I’ve screwed up and feeling like a complete loser!
* Therapist: So, would you say it gives you a bit of energy to bring to the challenge, and more hopefulness that it will be something you can work through?
* Denise: Yeah, it almost always does – when I can really believe what they say!
* Therapist: What helps you really believe it? Take it in?
* Denise: Not many people know this, but I really like to write. So, sometimes I’ll write down the good stuff that happens, not just the bad stuff and try to go back and read it when I’m really feeling down. I can see us all having a good time, laughing and feeling relaxed and it feels good.

Together, the therapist and client continue to generate a list of things that help Denise continue to move forward, to “bounce back.” Notice that the therapist does not focus on whether Denise’s negative self-assessments are accurate or not. Rather, they work together on the factors in her life that help her maintain resilience.

An important note is to make sure the client understands that *resilience is not about being happy with challenges. It means that, at the end of each day, they are still standing.*