

# Strength drawn from others

**AMY KENWORTHY**



Everyone has challenges. Some you see, some you can't.

For many, including me, resilience is what helps us through.

My story of resilience started in 2011 when I found out I had a rare and aggressive cancer.

I would end up fighting for my life through 11 years of treatment.

At the time of my diagnosis, my children were four and eight. I had just married the love of my life and had been promoted to the rank of professor.

Then I was told I had cancer.

My first reaction was shock and disbelief. I was a healthy, active 41-year-old woman with no symptoms. My tumour was identified during a routine health check.

The saying that "life is a precious gift" is never held more closely than when you are faced with death.

My second reaction, which hit not long after the first, was immense gratitude.

I was so grateful it was me and not my children or husband.

My diagnosis and treatment changed everything.

I had to stop working. That was really hard.

I had seven major surgeries in the first two years, and I was away from my children way too much.

It broke my heart every time I had to leave them.

I have a vivid memory of walking outside the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne, wearing my hospital gown and a long jacket over the top.

My father had come to be with me while my husband was with our children back home.

I remember the leaves were blowing around us, it was autumn, and I felt hopeless after another failed surgery.

I cried deeply, sharing that I didn't want to die.

I grieved my past life. I



Children study in an underground metro station in Kharkiv, Ukraine.

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missed so many things I had taken for granted including the simplest of things like going for a walk with my husband and our dogs every evening before dinner.

I had to learn to be gentle with myself. As someone who had pushed hard to be a high achiever all of my life, that was hard.

I only had the energy to focus on two things: doing the best I could navigating life during treatment and being the best mother and partner I could be.

As part of this journey, I had to learn to push myself less and accept that just trying to do a bit more every day was enough. That part was also really hard.

In my third year of treatment my daughter's ballet school announced they were having a parent dance routine.

I ended up doing the dance in a wheelchair, rolling around the stage to the beat of the music along with the other parents dancing around me.

It was so special that I was able to be there for her doing normal parent things — things that in my pre-cancer life I might have tried to get out of because I was so busy.

Thankfully the resilience which lifted me through those years is still with me now.

It grew out of an unrelenting gratitude, self-nurturing and kindness.

And yet mine is just one story.

There are so many stories of resilience.

My current research is with educators in Ukraine who are actively teaching through war.

I am in awe of their resilience.

Their bravery, strength and ability to keep fighting for their people, their country and their independence is inspirational beyond words.

With these examples around us, we are left asking, what is resilience and how do we get it?

A resilient person is someone who has strong coping skills and is able to marshal their available resources, ask for help when needed, and find ways to manage the situation.

People with psychological resilience are able to use their skills and strengths to respond to life's challenges, like the death of a loved one, financial issues, job loss, medical emergencies, ongoing health issues, natural disasters or war.

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difficulties in ways that foster strength and growth, often emerging stronger than before.

Fortunately, resilience is something we can build within ourselves.

Finding ways to realise who we want to be can help us live more fulfilling, meaningful lives in line with our core values, protecting us from stress and maintaining a more resilient outlook.

Focusing on hope and optimism and setting and working towards goals to build psychological capital are powerful approaches.

Caring for and believing in oneself are keys to resilience, as is acknowledging, rather than turning away from, the challenges we are confronted with.

Most importantly, research has shown us that resilience is enabled by strong relationships and networks.

It's our connections with people around us that help us become more resilient in our most challenging times.

I'm currently leading a study of resilience through war with colleagues from Bond and the Ukrainian Catholic University.

We found that of the 82 Ukrainian organisational leaders we surveyed, the No.1 thing they credited to their businesses' resilience and survival was their people.

What we need from relationships to help us be more resilient will be different for everyone.

What we can learn from this is to spend time with those who help to strengthen us and recharge our internal batteries.

The strength we get from those relationships will help us be more resilient; and that helps us be well.

As I fought for my life through cancer treatment, those relationships were with my children and husband, my friends and extended family, and even my dogs.

They were all there to give me the hugs and love I needed every single day.

**Amy Kenworthy is a professor at the Bond University Business School**

## Just like with GST, WA gets ripped off in Hottest 100, too

**OWEN WHITTLE**



Three things come to mind when thinking of an Australian summer. Sun, sand and Triple J's Hottest 100.

Signalling the end of a sun-soaked holiday season, the Hottest 100 has long been the soundtrack of the Australian summer. While I'm probably past the age of attending an all-day listening party, it's clear to me that WA hasn't always gotten the recognition it deserves.

As always, an unfortunate reality is that we get drowned by the voting numbers on the eastern seaboard when it comes to highlighting the top 100

songs across the country. WA punches well above our weight. Our local music scene pumps out some of the best music in the country, year after year.

It doesn't matter what genre, be it metal, electronic, country and everything in between — our local music scene has it all over our Eastern States counterparts.

Barriers to touring and accessing the national stage is a perennial problem for WA musicians. Costs of flights, transport and accommodation all add up and are often insurmountable for both established and emerging artists.

There is assistance available by way of the WA Government's Contemporary Music Fund, but even with this

getting broader exposure remains difficult and expensive. The lure of work on the other side of the country is also a siren song for many resulting in the loss of some brilliant WA talent.

These barriers are both a blessing and a curse. Local audiences get dished up incredible local music on a nightly basis.

But WA artists are often overlooked for recognition on the national and international stage.

Look at Spacey Jane, arguably one of WA's most successful exports in recent times and undoubtedly a household name. The foursome placed 20th in 2023's Hottest 100 awarded earlier this year, the highest ranked WA artist. The

Old Mervs, representing regional WA clocked in at 47th, an incredible achievement for a band from Kojonup, a Wheatbelt town about 2000 people.

Sure, we can claim Troye Sivan, in the same way Aussies claim pavlova and Russell Crowe, who had three songs in the top 40 — even if he no longer lives in WA. Perth-based Dice also featured, rounding out the WA contingent at number 72. The highest a WA band has finished has been second. Both Spacey Jane and iconic WA band Eskimo Joe lay claim to that honour. Tame Impala's Elephant won top spot only when being covered by The Wiggles. It seems nostalgia rules.

WA doesn't just get

short-changed on our GST share; it's a crying shame that with all the fantastic music being produced in our State, it isn't always reflected on the national stage.

Given what has been created locally over the past year, one would expect WA bands to dominate the top 20. But the only way to make this happen is if we get behind our own and make sure we are giving our local music the respect and credit it deserves.

Don't believe me or give a fig for the Hottest 100? Then head out to some local gigs in January. I promise you won't regret it.

**Owen Whittle is the chief executive officer of West Australian Music**