



SHE\*T FOR BRAINS

**CULTIVATING  
RESILIENCE IN  
LEADERSHIP:  
INSIGHTS FROM  
GLENN PACKIAM**

## Introduction: The She\*t for Brains Initiative

In an era where the demands on leaders are ever-increasing, the need for resilience has never been more critical. This e-book stems from a groundbreaking initiative called “She\*t for Brains,” a movement dedicated to addressing mental health, wellness, and sustainability in the business world.

The insights presented here are drawn from a webinar featuring Glenn Packiam, a senior fellow with the Barna Group and lead pastor of a multi-million dollar faith-based nonprofit. Glenn’s expertise in cultivating resilience and helping leaders thrive in rapidly changing environments provides a foundation for the strategies and reflections offered in this document.

### Understanding Resilience

Resilience isn’t about never experiencing stress or challenges. Instead, it’s about how quickly and effectively we can recover from difficulties. Glenn illustrates this with a poignant story about Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, the former Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth:

*Rabbi Sacks went for his first physical examination, not knowing what to expect. The doctor asked him to get on a treadmill and attached various sensors to his body. “Start running,” the doctor instructed. Confused, the rabbi asked, “What are you testing? How fast I can run?” The doctor simply replied, “Just keep running.” As the test continued, Rabbi Sacks wondered if it was about how far he could run or how many miles he could log. Again, the doctor told him to keep going.*

*Finally, after the test was complete and Rabbi Sacks was catching his breath, he asked the doctor what the purpose of the test was. The doctor explained, “I was testing how quickly your heart returns to its resting rate.”*

*This experience led Rabbi Sacks to a profound realization: one of the key markers of health is the rate of recovery. It’s not about never experiencing stress or exertion, but how swiftly we can bounce back to our baseline.*

This anecdote underscores a crucial point: **health is not the absence of stress, but the rate of recovery from it.** In the context of leadership and resilience, this story reminds us that facing challenges is inevitable. What sets resilient leaders apart is not their ability to avoid stress altogether, but their capacity to recover quickly and effectively when faced with difficulties

## Reflection Question:

- How quickly do you typically recover from stressful situations in your professional life?

## The Universal Challenge of Leadership

While industries may differ, the human dynamics of leadership share common threads. Glenn presented a profile of a leader named “Tom” to illustrate these shared challenges:

- Difficulty sleeping due to multiple projects and responsibilities
- Juggling various roles (fundraiser, visionary leader, coach, counselor, etc.)
- Feeling the weight of stacked vocational expectations

Does this resonate with your experience? Many leaders across various sectors face similar pressures.

## Key Statistics:

- 38–42% of pastors considered quitting in 2021–2022
- 45% of founders reported poor or very poor mental health
- 85% of entrepreneurs experienced high stress in the past year
- 75% reported anxiety in the same period
- 61% considered leaving their company

These numbers highlight a widespread issue: **it's not just a resignation crisis, but a discouragement crisis.**

## Three Keys to Cultivating Resilience

Glenn Packiam presents three crucial areas where leaders can activate their agency to build resilience:

1. Personal Limits
2. Keystone Habits
3. Relational Orbits

Let's explore each of these in detail.

# 1. Personal Limits

Understanding and respecting our personal limits is counterintuitive but essential for building resilience. It involves:

- Listening to our bodies and emotions
- Recognizing the state of our soul

## Are You Weary or Wounded?

A critical distinction in understanding our limits is determining whether we are simply tired (weary) or dealing with deeper issues (wounded).

- Weary: Can be addressed with rest and time off
- Wounded: Requires deeper help and healing

Glenn illustrates this concept with a powerful story from his own experience:

Several years ago, Glenn worked for an organization that underwent two significant crises within a 13-month span. First, there was a public scandal involving the founder, resulting in their removal. A year later, under new leadership, a tragic shooting occurred on the organization's campus, resulting in fatalities and injuries

In the aftermath, the entire staff was provided with extensive counseling. When the counselors reported back to the board about the team's mental state, they made a striking observation:

**While staff members initially discussed the recent shooting, their deeper wounds actually stemmed from the earlier scandal.**

**This example highlights a crucial aspect of trauma and stress:**

1. In high-stress situations, our bodies have coping mechanisms that help us function.
2. It's often when life returns to "normal" that the impact of trauma surfaces.
3. The effects of a traumatic event may not be immediately apparent and can be triggered by subsequent stressors.

Glenn draws a parallel to military veterans returning from deployment. They might seem fine during active duty but struggle with PTSD symptoms once they're back in civilian life. Everyday situations like standing in line at a store or sitting in traffic can suddenly trigger intense reactions.

This understanding leads to two important insights:

1. If you're wounded, no amount of vacations or work-life balance adjustments will fully address the issue. You need deeper, more focused help to heal.
2. If you're merely weary, then rest, time off, and rebalancing your life can be effective solutions.

The key is to honestly assess which state you're in. Are you experiencing temporary exhaustion that can be remedied with rest, or are you dealing with deeper, unresolved issues that require professional help or more substantial life changes?

Remember, seeking help for wounds is not a sign of weakness, but a crucial step towards true resilience and long-term wellbeing.

## Exercise:

Reflect on your current state. Are you experiencing:

- Temporary exhaustion (Weary)
- Deeper, unresolved issues (Wounded)
- A combination of both

## Recognizing Seasons

Glenn elaborates on this concept by sharing insights from his father-in-law, who retired after 50 years of farming in the Midwest. His father-in-law's experience with beef cattle, corn, and alfalfa taught Glenn valuable lessons about the importance of timing in work and life

In farming, there are specific times for various activities:

- When to chop firewood
- When to plant crops
- When to harvest

Similarly, in our personal and professional lives, we go through different seasons that require different approaches:

- **Winter Seasons:** These might be times when we need to focus on internal work, infrastructure, or personal health. It's a time for reflection and preparation.
- **Spring Seasons:** These are periods of growth and new beginnings, where we might need to focus on nurturing new projects or relationships.
- **Summer Seasons:** Times of high productivity and output, where we capitalize on previous preparation.
- **Fall Seasons:** Periods of harvest and evaluation, where we reap the benefits of our work and assess what's working.

Glenn emphasizes that one of the most important jobs we have as leaders is to pay attention to what season our company or team is in. Are we in a winter season where we really need to do work that's subterranean on our infrastructure, on our health, on our rhythms? Or are we in a spring season where things are blooming, and we need to capitalize on growth opportunities?

Moreover, this concept applies to our personal lives as well. Glenn shares a poignant story of a well-known counselor whose wife was diagnosed with cancer. The counselor found himself unable to perform simple tasks like grocery shopping due to the emotional impact of the diagnosis. This illustrates how personal seasons (in this case, a season of crisis) can profoundly affect our capabilities and needs.

Other examples of personal seasons that can impact our work include:

- Health challenges (personal or family)
- Major life changes (new relationship, end of a relationship)
- Adding a child to the family
- Taking on a new role or responsibility

In these seasons, we need to be honest about our personal limitations and adjust our expectations accordingly. We might need to say, "I'm going to be kind to myself in this moment. I can't do what I did in this other season. I'm going to have to change the way I'm working."

## Reflection Questions:

1. What season do you feel your organization is currently in?
2. What season are you personally experiencing right now?
3. How might you need to adjust your work or leadership style to align with these current seasons?
4. Are there any “out of season” activities you’re currently engaged in that might need to be postponed or reevaluated?

Remember, recognizing and respecting the season you’re in—both personally and professionally—is key to sustainable leadership and long-term resilience.

## 2. Keystone Habits

Keystone habits are practices that, when implemented, tend to create positive ripple effects in other areas of our lives. Glenn suggests taking inventory of habits in three key spheres:

1. **Rest:** What will you stop doing to create space?
  - o Example: Not checking work emails for 24 hours a week
  - o Example: Designating one evening per week as a “no-work zone” where you engage in non-work-related activities
2. **Renewal:** What recharges your battery?
  - o Example: Taking a walk, practicing gratitude
  - o Engaging in a creative hobby or reading for pleasure
3. **Work:** How can you organize your time to match your energy?
  - o Identify tasks that are energizing, draining, or neutral
  - o Align high-energy periods with important tasks

### Exercise: Habit Inventory

For each sphere (Rest, Renewal, Work), list:

1. Current habits
2. Habits you’d like to develop
3. One keystone habit to focus on in the next month

### 3. Relational Orbits

In the journey of leadership and personal resilience, the people around us play a crucial role. Glenn introduces the concept of “Relational Orbits,” emphasizing that instead of seeking one perfect mentor or relationship, we should cultivate a “constellation” of supportive relationships.

#### The Constellation Approach

Glenn shares a valuable insight from a mentor: “Instead of looking for one North Star, look for a constellation.” This metaphor beautifully captures the idea that we need diverse relationships to guide and support us through life’s challenges.

Why is this important?

- No single person can fulfill all our relational needs
- Different perspectives provide a more comprehensive view
- Varied relationships offer support in different areas of life

#### The Relational Orbit Framework

To help conceptualize and build your relational constellation, Glenn presents a framework inspired by “Lord of the Rings” characters:

Role	LOTR Character	Description	Contribution
Sage	Gandalf	Seasoned, experienced	Wisdom
King/Queen	Aragorn	Can tell you “no”	Authority
Peers	Elves/Dwarves	Same role, different context	Solidarity
Companions	Sam, Merry, Pippin	Different role, same context	Companionship
Healer	Arwen, Elrond	Trained professional	Healing

#### Understanding Each Role

##### 1. Sage:

- o Someone who has been where you want to go
- o Provides wisdom from experience
- o Offers guidance on long-term vision and strategy

##### 2. King/Queen:

- o Someone who can tell you “no” and speak truth to you
- o Provides accountability and honest feedback
- o Helps maintain integrity and ethical standards

##### 3. Peers:

- o People in similar roles but different contexts
- o Offer understanding of shared challenges
- o Provide benchmarking and industry insights

##### 4. Companions

- o Close friends or family members
- o Offer emotional support and life balance
- o Remind you of who you are beyond your professional role

##### 5. Healer

- o Trained professionals like therapists or coaches
- o Help process emotions and overcome mental blocks
- o Provide tools for personal growth and self-improvement

## Building Your Constellation

### 1. Assess Your Current Orbit:

- o Identify who currently fills each role in your life
- o Note any missing or underdeveloped relationships

### 2. Set Intentions:

- o Determine which relationships you want to develop or strengthen
- o Consider what you can offer in each relationship (remember, it's a two-way street)

### 3. Take Action:

- o Reach out to potential new connections
- o Nurture existing relationships with intentional communication

### 4. Maintain Balance:

- o Ensure you're not overly reliant on one person or role
- o Regularly reassess and adjust your constellation as needed

### Exercise: Relational Orbit Mapping

1. Draw five concentric circles on a piece of paper, representing different levels of closeness (innermost circle being closest).
2. Write your name in the center.
3. Place names of people in your life on the circles based on their role and closeness to you.
4. Use different colors for each role (Sage, King/Queen, Peers, Companions, Healer).
5. Reflect on your map:
  - o Are all roles represented?
  - o Is there a good balance across roles?
  - o Are there any gaps you'd like to fill?
6. Create an action plan:
  - o Identify 2-3 relationships you want to develop or strengthen
  - o List specific actions you'll take in the next month to nurture these relationships

## Reflection Questions

1. Who has been a 'Gandalf' figure in your life? How has their wisdom impacted your leadership?
2. In what areas of your life or career do you need more peer support?
3. How comfortable are you with seeking professional help (Healer role) when needed? What barriers, if any, do you face?
4. How has your 'constellation' changed over the years? What prompted these changes?
5. In which role do you often serve for others? How does this impact your own resilience?

By intentionally cultivating a diverse constellation of relationships, you create a robust support system that enhances your resilience, provides varied perspectives, and supports your personal and professional growth. Remember, building and maintaining these relationships takes time and effort, but the returns in terms of resilience and personal fulfillment are immeasurable.

## Practical Applications for Teams

As a leader, you can help cultivate resilience in your team:

1. **Generational Awareness:** Understand that different generations may have varying approaches to work-life balance and self-care.
2. **Regular Check-ins:** Implement frequent one-on-ones, especially with younger team members who may desire more feedback.
3. **Holistic Approach:** Help team members inventory their habits across various life spheres (rest, renewal, work, relationships).

### Exercise: Team Resilience Plan

Outline steps to implement:

1. Generational awareness training
2. Structured check-in schedule
3. Team habit inventory sessions

## Conclusion: The Journey to Resilience

Building resilience is an ongoing process that requires self-awareness, intentional habits, and supportive relationships. By focusing on personal limits, keystone habits, and relational orbits, leaders can not only enhance their own resilience but also foster it within their teams and organizations.

Remember, as Glenn emphasizes:

*"You're doing a good job. You're here because you care, and I want you to treat yourself with the same level of care as you would to the person that's most important to you in your life, because you only got one you."*

Continue to invest in your resilience journey, knowing that every step taken is an investment in your leadership, your team, and your overall well-being.



## About Glenn Packiam

Glenn Packiam, a Senior Fellow with the Barna Group and Lead Pastor of Rockharbor Church, a multi-million dollar faith-based non-profit in Orange County, is a sought-after expert on cultivating resilience and helping leaders thrive in a rapidly changing world.

As a pastor and researcher, Glenn has coached hundreds of leaders on navigating entrepreneurial challenges. He draws on insights from his doctoral research on hope and new social research from the Barna Group to address pressing questions about leadership, credibility, and cultivating a deeper life amidst the stress of running high-pressure organizations.

Glenn is the author of 8 books, including two best-sellers, "**The Resilient Pastor**" and "**The Intentional Year**," co-authored with his wife, a trained counselor. These books offer strategies for leaders to develop meaningful relationships, foster unity, and welcome the presence and power of a higher power in their lives and organizations.

Glenn is an engaging and dynamic speaker who has captivated audiences around the world. He has spoken to tens of thousands of people across various industries and cultures, delivering keynote addresses, leading workshops, and participating in panel discussions. His ability to connect with audiences, share practical insights, and inspire positive change has made him a sought-after speaker.

With over 20 years of experience leading teams and helping organizations thrive, Glenn speaks to leaders on activating their own agency by living with limits, curating the right habits, and calibrating their relationships. His personal experience and insights on mental, emotional, and spiritual health, resilience, and work-life balance allow him to connect with diverse audiences on a deep, personal level.

Through his work at Rockharbor Church, Glenn helps thousands of people flourish by embracing ancient wisdom for today's world. As a recognized thought leader and published author, he is uniquely positioned to provide valuable insights and strategies to entrepreneurs and leaders who seek to prioritize mental health, wellness, and sustainability.

### Educational Background

- Doctorate of Theology and Ministry – Durham University, UK (2013–2018)
- Graduate Certificate of Christian Studies – Fuller Theological Seminary (2011–2012)
- Masters of Arts in Management, emphasis in Non-Profit Organizations – Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA (1999–2004)
- Bachelor of Arts in Theological/Historical Studies – Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma, US (1996–1999)

For more information or to engage with Glenn Packiam for speaking or consulting, please contact: [Glenn@glennpackiam.com](mailto:Glenn@glennpackiam.com) To watch the on-demand webinar, go here: <https://youtu.be/zrOwmJYRVCQ>



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