

Team TenaCity

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A Science-Informed Board Game to Strengthen Team Resilience at Work

Across the world and in Singapore, workplaces are becoming more complex, fast-paced, and emotionally demanding. Many employees report feeling stressed, stretched, or overwhelmed — and organisations are recognising that resilience is no longer just an individual skill. It is something teams need to practise together.

Team TenaCity was created to meet this need. Designed as a serious game grounded in positive psychology, resilience research, and adult learning principles, it offers teams a safe, engaging way to explore common workplace stressors and practise supportive, constructive behaviours.

This document summarises the research and design considerations that shaped Team TenaCity. It aims to help organisations understand why the game was created, what scientific principles it draws on, and how it supports resilience building in an accessible and enjoyable way.

Why Team Resilience Matters Today

Workplace stress is now one of the most common challenges in modern organisations. Studies from Gallup and Cigna show that employees in Singapore consistently report high levels of stress, with many finding it increasingly difficult to cope. Persistent stress can affect not only individuals — through burnout, fatigue, or reduced well-being — but also team cohesion, problem-solving, and organisational performance.

Many organisations have invested in individual well-being programmes. While these efforts are valuable, research shows that stress often arises from work environments, team interactions, and systems that individuals cannot change on their own. Supporting resilience only at the personal level may therefore be insufficient.

Team-level resilience can make a meaningful difference. Research shows that resilient teams communicate well, recover from setbacks more quickly, maintain psychological safety, and feel more capable of managing uncertainty. Strengthening resilience at both the individual and team levels offers a more holistic and sustainable approach to well-being at work.

Team TenaCity was designed with this perspective: resilience is strongest when it is practiced *together*.

The Science Behind Team TenaCity

To ensure that the game is both enjoyable and evidence-based, its design is grounded in established theories from psychology, resilience science, and adult learning. These principles influenced how the scenarios, strategy cards, gameplay dynamics, and reflection prompts were created.

1. Resilience as a Social and Environmental Process

Social Ecological Model of Resilience (Michael Unger)

Ungar's work emphasises that resilience is shaped not just by personal traits but also by the support, resources, and relationships around us. In the workplace, this means teams and organisations play a role in enabling individuals to thrive.

Team TenaCity incorporates this by:

- Encouraging players to negotiate and share resources
- Allowing team members to support one another during challenges
- Highlighting that different people need different kinds of support

This mirrors how resilience plays out in real teams — through interaction, shared responsibility, and mutual care.

2. Stress Appraisal and Coping

Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman)

This theory explains that stress depends not only on the situation but also on how we interpret it. In the game, scenario cards prompt players to talk about how a workplace challenge *feels* and what they might *appraise* as stressful. Team members then propose strategies based on limited options — mirroring real-life uncertainty.

This builds awareness of how people interpret stress differently and encourages supportive conversations about coping.

3. Conserving Resources and Preventing Burnout

Conservation of Resources Theory (Stevan Hobfoll)

This theory suggests that stress increases when people lose important resources or feel they cannot replenish them. In Team TenaCity, resource cards — bricks, wood, and steel — symbolise the emotional, social, and practical resources teams rely on. Crisis cards simulate unexpected disruptions that require teams to work together to “recover” and continue.

The game reminds players that managing resources well — including emotional energy and team capacity — is central to resilience.

4. Broadening Thinking Through Positive Emotions

Broaden-and-Build Theory (Barbara Fredrickson)

Positive moments expand our thinking and build long-term psychological reserves. Positive Moment Cards in Team TenaCity intentionally create pauses for reflection, gratitude, and connection. These moments may seem small, but research shows they can strengthen team cohesion and reduce stress over time.

5. Adults Learn Best Through Experience

Adult Learning Theory (Malcolm Knowles) & Experiential Learning (David Kolb)

Adults prefer practical, relevant learning that connects to their real-life experience. Team TenaCity uses scenarios, choices, and shared decision-making to create an experiential learning environment where teams can:

- practise real workplace conversations
- explore resilience strategies without real-world consequences
- reflect on what works for them
- try again in new rounds

This learning-by-doing approach is central to the game's design.

Resilience Strategies Embedded in the Game

Team TenaCity includes two sets of strategy cards — *personal resilience strategies* and *team resilience strategies* — each based on well-established research.

Personal Resilience Strategies

These include micro-actions related to:

- **Reframing** (shifting perspectives to reduce stress)
- **Mindfulness and emotional regulation**
- **Optimism and hope**
- **Self-efficacy** (confidence in one's abilities)
- **Work-life balance practices**

Players are encouraged to offer these strategies to each other during the game, helping teammates understand what kind of support each person finds most helpful.

Team Resilience Strategies

These are actions that teams can take collectively, based on research on high-performing and resilient groups. They include:

- Aligning team norms and mental models
- Strengthening social connection and support
- Practising shared leadership
- Building collective efficacy
- Engaging in team learning and reflection

By using these strategies in gameplay, teams rehearse behaviours that support resilience in real work situations.

Why Use a Serious Game?

Traditional well-being programmes sometimes struggle to sustain interest, feel top-down, or require significant resources to run. Serious games offer an alternative approach that is:

- Engaging and interactive
- Cost-effective and scalable
- Suitable for self-directed team use
- Safe for experimenting with new behaviours

Research on serious games shows they can improve knowledge retention, problem-solving, team collaboration, and motivation. Team TenaCity draws on these strengths to make resilience both accessible and enjoyable.

How Team TenaCity Works

The game is collaborative, not competitive. Teams win only when they work together effectively. A typical session lasts about 60–90 minutes and includes:

1. Setup

- Each player receives a Role Card with a “superpower” that supports the team
- Each receives a Location Card and five Strategy Cards

- The team agrees on the buildings to construct

2. **Gameplay Rounds**

Every round includes two phases:

- **Challenge or Opportunity Phase:** A player draws an Event Card (scenario, positive moment, or crisis)
- **Action Phase:** Players decide how to move, build, repair, or trade

3. **Endgame and Reflection**

The game ends when all buildings are completed or resources run out. A guided debrief helps teams extract insights, discuss resilience strategies, and connect learning to real work.

Each round is highly social, reflective, and interactive — mirroring the collaborative nature of team resilience.

What Teams Can Gain

While outcomes vary depending on team dynamics, Team TenaCity aims to help teams:

- Build a shared language and understanding of resilience
- Strengthen trust and psychological safety
- Identify stressors and explore science-informed ways to cope
- Practise supporting one another in meaningful, constructive ways
- Experience positive emotions through storytelling, recognition, and connection
- Develop collective confidence to face uncertainties together

For organisations, the game can complement existing well-being or team-building efforts, providing a practical tool that teams can use repeatedly.

Limitations and Considerations

Team resilience is a complex topic, and no single tool can address all factors. While the game provides a safe space to explore strategies, real-world challenges are likely to require broader organisational changes. Some teams may also need facilitation support, especially if trust levels are low.

To maximise relevance, organisations are encouraged to customise scenario cards, include additional reflection questions, or integrate the game into broader development programmes.

Conclusion

Team TenaCity blends research, game design, and adult learning to create a practical, engaging way for teams to strengthen resilience together. By combining evidence-based strategies with meaningful interaction, it offers a warm, human, and accessible approach to supporting well-being and teamwork in today's demanding work environments.

It is not a solution to every challenge, but it is a helpful starting point — a way for teams to talk, reflect, and practise resilience in a way that is both grounded in science and enjoyable to experience.