

## Is resilience written in our DNA?

### In the blood: Film featuring Simon Weston CBE, Dr Michael Pluess and Dr Aneta Tunariu

SW: I'm here at the Genome centre in London to find out what makes me resilient. I was aboard the Sir Galahad during the Falkland's war when she was destroyed. I suffered 46% burns to my body and I've received numerous operations. But I've always said, it's not about what happens to you, it's what you're prepared to do about it.

Researchers here think there might be a gene for resilience. So I'm here to get tested, to see if I've got it.

So guys, I've been through a huge amount in my life, surely that must mean that I have the resilience gene? Is that right?

AT: Each one of us has some capacity for resilience, although this depends primarily on the personal and emotional resources we acquire through life. And very importantly, in terms of the mental attitude that we take towards frustration, struggles and adversity.

MP: A lot of research suggests that there is a genetic component to people being resilient or not resilient. So, there are actually a lot of gene versions that have been associated with resilience. And we can measure some of these by collecting a small sample of saliva.

SW: So Michael, once I've given you my sample, what happens to it then?

MP: So, once the sample is collected we have to extract the DNA out of the cells. So this will happen on the Biomek machine. And then we can look at the result on a screen.

So what you can see here at the bottom is actually the result from the genetic analysis. And this peak here suggests actually that you have the gene variant that is not associated with resilience.

SW: So what does that mean for me?

MP: Well, it may mean that your resilience is less the function of a genetic predisposition to be resilient, and maybe more the result of a lot of support that you experienced that helped you through difficult times.

AT: So how do you feel about this, Simon?

SW: I don't know, I think I'm probably leaning towards being slightly happy about that, in the sense that it's, it's the sort of, the nurture element rather than the nature element. I always wanted it to be about who I am, not what I am. I've found out that everyone has the capacity to be resilient. But like I've always said, it's not what happens, it's what you're prepared to do about it that counts. I wasn't

born with the gene, so what that proves is, that everyone can be resilient as long as you're prepared to put the effort in, and you're lucky enough to have the right type of support, family, and friends around you. Everything is achievable. It's a mind-set. It's what you want to do with your life that really