

# Building resilience



**Mental health and Wellbeing is a major component of our general health and is as important as our physical health. Regrettably it is often not properly understood or ignored until we are forced to confront it.**

## *Personal Resilience and Wellbeing*

Emotional Well-being and developing personal Resilience will better equip you to manage the pressures of modern life. This is a vitally important life-skill which everyone needs to know.

## *Why is this Important?*

A person's emotional well-being is their ability to be able to function in society and meet the demands of everyday life. Understanding and being able to recognise these challenges will enable you and to seek help at the earliest opportunity.

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## What is Resilience?

Resilience is the ability to cope and thrive in the face of negative events, challenges or adversity.

Key attributes of resilience include:

- ▶ Social competence
- ▶ A sense of agency or responsibility
- ▶ Optimism
- ▶ A sense of purpose or hope for the future
- ▶ Attachment to family and to work
- ▶ Problem-solving skills
- ▶ Effective coping style, pro-social values
- ▶ A sense of self-efficacy
- ▶ Positive self-regard.

Research shows that people with strong social and emotional skills are more likely to be resilient.

## Why are some people more resilient than others?

An individual's resilience depends upon the balance of risk and protective factors that they have in their lives. Risk factors

include poor self-esteem and lack of social support, while protective factors include positive self-esteem and strong social networks.

Due to different life situations resilience varies from person to person and can fluctuate throughout the lifespan due to changes in experience and circumstance.

Some factors which impact upon resilience include:

- ▶ Individual health and wellbeing
- ▶ Sense of self and sense of purpose in life
- ▶ Individual factors such as genetics, personality, ethnicity and economic background
- ▶ Degree of social and community connectedness
- ▶ Life history and past experiences
- ▶ The magnitude of the stressor

Some of these factors are outside our control. But a great many are things we can do something about, both for ourselves and for those around us. Have another look through the list. What are some of the areas you could work on to build your own resilience and those around you?

## The Benefits of Personal Resilience

The benefits to resiliency are many, when faced with a challenge, resilience pushes us to gain the knowledge, to develop our skills, and hone our talents to overcome and grow.

With resilience we can face the struggles and rely on our strengths and succeed. Maybe things won't turn out exactly the way we would like, but resilience will give us the ability to accept the outcome and move forward in a positive way.

Some experts claim, given the cycle of life, that we will face unexpected challenges or crises every 3-4 months. It seems to me that it would be a good idea to consider creating a guiding philosophy to drive our thoughts, assumptions, and actions and be better prepared for the challenges.

So create a philosophy for your life. Use that philosophy as the foundation for future opportunities and success. You're not

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losing...you're learning. This is not a breakdown...this is a break through. This is research and development.

Become your own talent development department. There are many benefits to developing resiliency. To enjoy the benefits of resiliency, consider this: Know where you've been, know who you are, and know where you are going. Then setbacks will turn into steppingstones to success.

## How to build resilience...

Whether or not you have any of the things mentioned previously, you can build your own resilience by taking the following steps:

- ▶ **Make connections** Good relationships with close family members, friends or others are important. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you strengthens resilience. Some people find that being active in civic groups, faith-based organizations, or other local groups provides social support and can help with reclaiming hope. Assisting others in their time of need also can benefit the helper.
- ▶ **Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems** You can't change the fact that highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to these events. Try looking beyond the present to how future circumstances may be a little better. Note any subtle ways in which you might already feel somewhat better as you deal with difficult situations.
- ▶ **Accept that change is a part of living** Certain goals may no longer be attainable as a result of adverse situations. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter.
- ▶ **Move toward your goals** Develop some realistic goals. Do something regularly — even if it seems like a small accomplishment — that enables you to move toward your goals. Instead of focusing on tasks that seem unachievable, ask yourself, "What's one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?"
- ▶ **Take decisive actions** Act on adverse situations as much as you can. Take decisive actions, rather than detaching

completely from problems and stresses and wishing they would just go away.

- ▶ **Look for opportunities for self-discovery** People often learn something about themselves and may find that they have grown in some respect as a result of their struggle with loss. Many people who have experienced tragedies and hardship have reported better relationships, greater sense of strength even while feeling vulnerable, increased sense of self-worth, a more developed spirituality and heightened appreciation for life.
- ▶ **Nurture a positive view of yourself** Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps build resilience.
- ▶ **Keep things in perspective** Even when facing very painful events, try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Avoid blowing the event out of proportion.
- ▶ **Maintain a hopeful outlook** An optimistic outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life. Try visualizing what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear.



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## Resilience at Work

The value resilience at work adds to the workplace is now well recognised. Resilient staff cope better with the demands of a modern workplace such as changing priorities, tight deadlines and heavy workloads.

Here are 4 resilience at work tips you may like to build into your day:

- ▶ Use challenges as learning experiences. Highly resilient people are open to trying new things and will view the occasional failure as an essential stage in the process of achieving final success. If a problem occurs during your day use it as a learning experience to develop or practice a new skill and be aware of how you respond to the problem being aware of your emotions will help you manage them more appropriately.
- ▶ Practice realistic optimism. Even the most pessimistic thinker can develop more realistic, optimistic views.
- ▶ Build relationships. Good relationships with family, friends, work colleagues and the wider community are a vital part of resilience. Resilient people will reach out and ask for help without feeling inadequate or intimidated. Remember to treasure the social support you have and spend a little time each day reaching out to others.
- ▶ Practice gratitude. Ask yourself, what went well today? "We are quick to notice even the smallest of problems, yet we rarely spend any time at all dwelling on the good things."

## Conclusion

Resilience is the development of psychological strength to assist the individual to overcome and grow from challenges.

It requires a close review of the environment in which the person exists and an honest examination of oneself.

It is not a one-hit wonder but requires a long-term consistent commitment to working towards a stronger self. It requires some underlying traits such as courage, appropriate event appraisal, honesty, tolerance of frustration with positivity, an ability to connect with others, self-acceptance and adaptability.

Resilience has the potential to assist an individual to live a happy and fulfilled life and when encouraged by employers can also transform the organisation towards being flexible, able to accept change with minimal disruption and being seen as a good place to work.

## Further Resources

### American Psychological Association. The road to resilience.

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience.aspx>

### The Mayo Clinic. Resilience: Build skills to endure hardship.

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/resilience-training/in-depth/resilience/art-20046311#>

### 27 Resilience Activities and Worksheets for Students and Adults (with PDFs)

<https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/resilience-activities-worksheets/>

### Mind. Developing Resilience.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/stress/developing-resilience/>

### CIPD. Developing resilience: a guide for practitioners

<https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/resilience-guide>

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