

Resilience in the Workplace

John Liptak



JOHN LIPTAK

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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John's work has been featured in the Associated Press, in numerous newspapers including the Washington Post, Tampa Bay Times, and The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, and on MSNBC television and CNN Radio. John also appeared in the PAX/ION television series "Success without a College Degree." John earned a Doctor of Education degree in Counselor Education from Virginia Tech. He lives in Radford, Virginia and works as the Associate Director of the Center for Career & Talent Development at Radford University in Virginia.



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PREFACE

Employees face stress from a variety of internal and external sources in the workplace. Only people who have developed resiliency can survive and thrive in today's competitive workplace. Resiliency skills can significantly reduce stress, help to manage change, maintain a positive attitude, reduce the risk of burnout, and prevent major crises from occurring. Researchers have suggested that workplace stress is on the rise and that it will continue to do so. Resilience is a skill that allows one to adapt to stressful situations, problems, or crises. According to most of the research, resilience is *the* most critical skill for employees of the twenty-first century to develop.

Many people ask, "Is resiliency innate, or is it something that people can develop?" In reality, although some people are born with characteristics that lend themselves to being naturally resilient, *all* people can learn how to develop resiliency. Resiliency has less to do with one's personality and more to do with developing effective resiliency skills. Resilience is a set of skills that anyone can learn and master with practice. The purpose of this book is to help you understand....

- How the workplace has, and continues to, to be a source of stress for employees. You will what stress is, explore the effect of stress on employees, name the major types of workplace stress, identify the symptoms of workplace stress, and explore how chronic workplace stress can lead to employee burnout.
- What resilience is and how it can help employees bounce back after experiencing stress, adversity or a crisis in the workplace.
- What some of the current models of resilience are, and how these models can help you to develop workplace resilience skills.
- What some of the ways are that people can not only survive, but thrive in the stressful workplace. You will explore ways to manage workplace attitudes, stress, change, adversity, and a plethora of relationships with the people with whom you work.

1 OVERVIEW OF WORKPLACE STRESS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

There's no doubt about it, we live and work in a society in which we experience a great deal of stress. Everyone faces day-to-day stress in trying to balance work and life, moving from one obligation to another, juggling multiple roles, dealing with the endless barrage of e-mails and social media postings, and in dealing with ineffective relationships.

For a long time, workplace stress went unchecked because of the stigmas perpetuated about it by society. Some of these stigmas become obvious in such statements as:

"The workplace is supposed to be stressful."

"I work best under stress."

"I want to get ahead, so I will endure the stress."

"If I am not stressed, I am not doing a good job."

Because of thinking like this, the workplace typically gets a pass when talking about stress. However, recent research suggests that employees are experiencing excessive pressure in their jobs. Workplace stress is a significant concern for both the organization and its employees. For organizations, stress is associated with increased attrition rates, absenteeism, reduced productivity and general organizational dysfunction. For employees, workplace stress can cause problems such as headaches, stomach aches, sleep disturbances, irritability and difficulty concentrating on assigned tasks. Chronic stress can result in anxiety, insomnia, high blood pressure, and a weakened immune system and contribute to health conditions such as depression, obesity, and heart disease. Compounding the problem, employees experiencing excessive stress often cope in unhealthy ways such as overeating, eating unhealthy foods, smoking cigarettes or abusing drugs and alcohol.

When stress persists, it can take a toll on a person's overall health and well-being. This chapter aims to give participants the opportunity to develop an understanding of the dynamics of workplace stress, the difference between healthy workplace stress and unhealthy workplace stress, what constitutes chronic stress, and how chronic stress can lead to burnout. This book will then provide some essential skills people need to learn to build resilience to successfully manage workplace stress and help them learn how to thrive and excel under workplace pressure.

1.2 WHAT IS STRESS?

Simply stated, stress is your body's way of responding to demands or threats in your environment and a stressor is any event, situation, condition, or demand that causes you to stress by disrupting your life balance in some way.

Regardless of whether your body senses real or imagined danger, its defense mechanisms are triggered in a rapid, automatic process known as the fight-or-flight reaction or the acute stress response. This stress response is the body's natural way of protecting you from danger. In true emergencies, it can save your life by providing you an extra shot of adrenaline to defend yourself against the threat. This stress response was meant to solve short-term, life-threatening problems, not extended difficulties such as stress from having too much work or feeling like you are not trained well to do an assigned task. Prolonged or repeated arousal of the stress response, a characteristic of the modern workplace, can have harmful physical and psychological effects, including heart disease and depression.

In ordinary situations, the stress response helps you to remain focused, energetic, and alert. For example, when you encounter stress in the workplace, such as fear of losing your job, adrenaline, cortisol, and a cascade of hormones are triggered. These hormones surge through the body, speeding your heartbeat and the circulation of blood, mobilizing fat and sugar for fast energy, focusing attention, and preparing muscles for action. After this surge, it generally takes some time for the body to calm. Our bodies are designed to handle small doses of this type of stress, but people are not equipped to handle long-term, chronic stress without detrimental consequences.

Researchers have studied the effects of stress on people for a long time. The first person to develop a name for what we refer to as stress was Hans Selye in 1936, who defined stress as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change." Selye's research identified the fact that increased stress results in increased productivity up to a point, after which things go rapidly downhill and lead to burnout. Although all people feel stress from time to time, ongoing stress can be very detrimental to employee health and wellness.

Once the threat has passed, other body systems act to restore normal functioning. Problems occur if the stress response goes on too long such as when the source of stress is constant or if the response continues after the danger has subsided. It may appear that stress is not harmful, but in actuality, it can lead to a variety of health problems.

Fight or Flight?

The fight-or-flight response, also known as the acute stress response, refers to a common physiological reaction that occurs in the presence of something that is mentally or physically threatening. The response triggers a release of hormones that prepare you and your body to stay and deal with a threat or to run away to safety. The term fight or flight represents the choices that our ancient ancestors had when faced with danger in their hunter-gatherer environment. Regardless of the choice a person makes, the physiological and psychological response to stress prepares the body to react to the danger.

The fight-or-flight response was first described by American physiologist Walter Cannon, who realized that a chain of rapidly occurring reactions within the body helped to mobilize its resources to deal with these threatening circumstances. Thus, every time an employee experiences excessive stress, whether from internal worry or external circumstances, the body reacts.

In response to acute workplace stress, the body's sympathetic nervous system activates and produces a sudden release of hormones, your heartbeat quickens, you begin breathing faster, and your entire body becomes tense and ready to take action. This activation increases heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing rate. After the threat is gone, it takes between 20 to 60 minutes for the body to return to its pre-arousal levels. In the workplace, the fight-or-flight response can happen in the face of an imminent physical danger (being bullied by another employee) or as the result of a psychological threat (meeting a deadline to complete a project). Because of this, the development of resilience has become more important than ever for employees in the modern workplace.

1.3 WORKPLACE STRESS

Workplace stress (often also referred to as “occupational stress” or “job stress”) has become a significant source of tension in people’s lives, and it continues to escalate. As work environments demand more work for the same or less pay, provide less time off, expect greater amounts of accountability, allow less worker control, and offer less opportunity for promotion, they naturally become more stressful for employees.

In the modern workplace, the fight-or-flight response occurs in a variety of situations including:

- long hours, tight deadlines, and more work than can be completed in the time allotted to work.
- limited loyalty on the part of employers.
- Expectations that employees be connected to technology 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Job insecurity and the fear that of being fired or downsized
- A lack of participation in workflow decision making and a lack of control over the work process

There are two types of workplace stress: healthy stress or eustress and unhealthy stress. While most people believe that all stress is bad for employees, some stress can be quite beneficial. This healthy type of stress, referred to as eustress, can help you be a more productive employee. Eustress is a motivating factor that moves you forward, pushes you to accomplish things you might not try, and enhance productivity in the workplace. On your job, eustress helps you complete assignments, tasks, goals, and projects as well as prompt you to push the limits beyond your immediate comfort zone. The secret, however, is to plan for this good stress, embrace it and to learn to make effective changes when experiencing distress.

Some Characteristics of Eustress in the Workplace:

- Focuses your energy and motivates you to accomplish tasks
- Is necessary for gaining top results by improving performance
- Allows you to plan and work toward your goals
- Tells your body when you need to act and helps you make changes when necessary
- Maintains a healthy body and mind
- Provides an energy boost and helps you to cope
- Helps you to develop the courage to take positive risks

On the other hand, unhealthy stress, referred to as distress, is a normal physical response that is triggered by events that make you feel threatened or upset your balance in some way. When you sense danger, real or imagined, the body's defenses kick into high gear in a rapid, automatic process that was described earlier as the "fight-or-flight-or-freeze" reaction or the stress response. When stress exceeds your ability to cope effectively or is not comfortable and out of your control, the stress stops being helpful and begins to affect your attitude, cause damage to your health, reduce your productivity, and darken your mood. This inability to cope then causes employees to begin to experience job and life dissatisfaction, and are unable to bounce back from adversity in the workplace.

1.4 TYPES OF WORKPLACE STRESS

Workplace stress is increasing because many employees feel like they have greater demands placed on them, yet they also have less control. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines work-related stress as the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that do not match their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope. They define a healthy working environment as one in which there is not only an absence of harmful conditions but an abundance of health-promoting ones. WHO claims that overwhelming stress in the workplace leads to low employee morale and motivation, health-related problems, work-related accidents, and low productivity. WHO divides stress in the workplace into two categories: Work Content Stress and Work Context Stress.

<p>Work Content Stress is any stress related to the job content or the work a person does. Examples include employees who have work that:</p>	<p>Work Context Stress is any stress related to the job context of the organization. Examples include employees who have work that:</p>
<p>is monotonous or repetitive.</p> <p>is under-stimulating and not challenging.</p> <p>includes meaningless tasks that are unimportant.</p> <p>lacks variety and diversity, and is thus boring.</p> <p>cannot be completed during regular work hours.</p> <p>puts them under time pressure with strict deadlines.</p> <p>is unpredictable or has poorly designed shift systems.</p> <p>limits lack of participation in decision-making and lack of control over work processes.</p> <p>is too hard or too easy to complete.</p>	<p>has limited job security.</p> <p>lacks promotion opportunities.</p> <p>is of 'low social value,' and may not meet any needs.</p> <p>is a pay-for-performance reward system.</p> <p>has unclear or unfair performance evaluation systems.</p> <p>has unsupportive supervision or poor leadership.</p> <p>is done in an environment with poor relationships.</p> <p>is done in an environment of bullying and harassment.</p> <p>causes conflicting demands of work and home.</p>

In today's economic upheavals, downsizing, layoffs, mergers, and bankruptcies have cost hundreds of thousands of workers their jobs. Millions more have been shifted to unfamiliar tasks within their companies and wonder how much longer they will be employed. Adding to the pressures that workers face are unrealistic expectations, computer monitoring of production, fewer health and retirement benefits, and bullies in the workplace.

1.5 THE SYMPTOMS OF WORKPLACE STRESS

It is important to know when you are experiencing too much workplace stress to function effectively and productively. There are many symptoms associated with excessive stress in the workplace that can interfere with employee performance. Figure 1 below shows the emotional and behavioral symptoms associated with workplace stress. Figure 2 shows the physical and attitudinal symptoms associated with workplace stress. As can be seen below, stress can affect all aspects of your life but sometimes the symptoms can be vague.

EMOTIONAL	BEHAVIORAL
<p>You feel....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ irritable, aggressive, or impatient ▪ over-burdened ▪ anxious, nervous or afraid ▪ scared ▪ unable to enjoy yourself ▪ sad a lot of the time ▪ uninterested in life ▪ like you've lost your sense of humor ▪ a sense of dread ▪ neglected or lonely ▪ helpless 	<p>You display behaviors such as....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • difficulty making decisions • constantly worrying • avoiding situations and people • snapping at people • biting your nails • picking at your skin • being unable to concentrate • eating too much or too little • excessive smoking or drinking alcohol • feeling restless, like you can't sit still • being tearful or crying.

Figure 1: Emotional and Behavioral Symptoms of Workplace Stress

PHYSICAL	ATTITUDINAL
<p>You experience physical effects such as....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shallow breathing or hyperventilating • panic attacks • muscle tension • lack of energy • grinding teeth or clenching jaw • headaches • chest pains • high blood pressure • indigestion or heartburn • feeling sick, dizzy or fainting • change in appetite or sleep pattern 	<p>You exhibit such attitudes as....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not wanting to get up in the morning • feeling helpless • lacking work motivation • detaching from your work • isolating yourself from co-workers • skipping work or coming in late • lacking a sense of accomplishment • feeling overwhelmed or worn out • an inability to meet work demands • losing hope that the situation will change • feeling trapped with no way out

Figure 2: Physical and Attitudinal Symptoms of Workplace Stress

Symptoms can vary from person to person, but if you are feeling any of these symptoms, then it is essential to consult a medical practitioner. By continuing to read the rest of this book, you will learn more about resilience, how resilience helps employees to build skills that can be used to rebound from chronic stress in the workplace, and learn some tools and techniques for building resilience.

1.6 CHRONIC STRESS LEADS TO BURNOUT

When stress is intense and ongoing, it can become chronic. Chronic stress results from a state of continuous physiological arousal, regardless of whether it is real or imagined. This arousal occurs when your body experiences stressors with such frequency or intensity that the autonomic nervous system does not have a chance to activate the relaxation response on a regular basis. Thus, the body under stress remains in a constant state of physiological arousal. People are built to handle acute stress for short periods of time, but not chronic stress for an extended period. When employees experience this type of chronic stress over long periods of time, it leads to feelings of burnout.

Occupational burnout is thought to result from long-term, unresolvable, job stress. In 1974, Herbert Freudenberger used the term burnout to include a set of symptoms that included exhaustion resulting from work's excessive demands and physical symptoms like headaches and sleeplessness, being quick to anger and exhibiting closed thinking. Freudenberger described burnout as "a depletion or exhaustion of a person's mental and physical resources attributed to his or her prolonged, yet unsuccessful striving toward unrealistic expectations, internally or externally derived." He suggested that burned-out workers exhibit the same symptoms as someone suffering from depression. Burnout has recently come to be characterized by emotional exhaustion, physical fatigue, depersonalization, cynicism, inability to motivate yourself, disengagement at work, feelings of dread in going to work, pessimistic outlook, lowered immunity to illness, and reduced feelings of work-related personal accomplishment.

1.7 CONCLUSION

As you can see, everyday stress can affect any workplace, and workplace stress that is chronic and severe can then lead to burnout, a deeper level of stress. Given the fact that the workplace has changed and is increasingly becoming more stressful, employers and employees have been searching for ways to reduce the levels of stress so that they are neither chronic nor severe. A great deal of research suggests that building resilience skills is the best way for employees to effectively cope with workplace stress and to bounce back quickly when facing adversity. The next chapter will discuss what resilience is and how it can help to protect employees from chronic and severe workplace stress.

2 Building Workplace Resilience

Resilience isn't a single skill. It's a variety of skills and coping mechanisms. To bounce back from bumps in the road as well as failures, you should focus on emphasizing the positive.

– Jean Chatzky

2.1 INTRODUCTION

When in stressful situations, some employees exhibit stress-related performance and health issues. They tend to worry about job-related tasks and performing well in the eyes of their supervisors. They feel hopeless and helpless in their current situation and get stressed when asked to complete assignments outside of their comfort zones. They begin to get sick a lot and miss work. They act like victims, become bitter and angry, and start to procrastinate or not finish tasks at all. Over time, this worry and stress lead to significant illness and disease, burnout and exhaustion.

On the other hand, when in stressful situations, some employees can thrive at work despite the stress and adversity. They perform well in the face of disruptive changes and workplace stress, and even see these situations as opportunities for personal growth and advancement. These employees resolve conflicts, turn adversity into learning opportunities, and utilize stress-management techniques to reduce the effects of stress. They enjoy getting up in the morning and going to work and demonstrate high levels of productivity while in the workplace.

Which of these two types of employees sound more like you? It is important to remember that these two examples are at the extreme ends of the resilience continuum. However, you will probably associate with one of the examples over the other. It is important to remember that while you cannot control everything in the workplace, that doesn't mean you are powerless. Whatever the demands and conditions are like at work, there are skills you can learn to protect yourself from the damaging effects of workplace stress, enhance your level of job satisfaction, and increase your level of overall well-being. Now that we have explored what stress is and how it is affecting employees in the workplace, we can move on to the antidote for all of this workplace stress – Resilience.

Resilience is a personal strategy for surviving and thriving amid workplace adversity and stress. Most of us think of resilience as the ability to bend but not break, bounce back, and perhaps even grow in the face of adverse life experiences. The American Psychological Association defines resilience as a process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress. Resilient people can “roll with the punches of life,” adapt to adversity without lasting struggles, deal effectively with life's challenges, thrive in stressful circumstances, cope with crises, and even learn the skills needed to prevent crises from happening altogether.

In the face of life's challenges, resilient employees maintain physical and psychological well-being to cope with and prevent crises. They deal with minor stresses and handle major crises with ease. On the other hand, people who lack resiliency skills will dwell on the past, are incapable of solving problems, get overwhelmed easily, use ineffective stress management techniques, and are prone to various mental health issues.

FACTS ABOUT RESILIENCE

- Resilience is a skill that allows one to adapt to stressful situations and recover quickly from difficulties.
- Resilience is being able to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.
- Resilience is being able to transform emotional and physical pain into something positive.
- Resilience is being able to transform emotional and physical pain into something positive.
- Resilience is the ability to move from being a victim to becoming a "thrivor."
- Resilience is the ability to be "stress hardy" and adapt to whatever life sends your way.

Being resilient does not mean that you don't experience difficulty or distress. You are going to experience stress in the workplace, but resilience allows you to bounce back and not be incapacitated when stress does occur.

2.2 GENERAL FACTORS IN RESILIENCE

Resilience is a difficult concept to describe because it is multifaceted with many factors working in unison. Many studies show that one of the primary factors in resilience is having caring and supportive relationships within and outside the family. Relationships that create love and trust provide role models and offer encouragement and reassurance help bolster a person's resilience. Several additional factors are associated with resilience, including:

- The capacity to make realistic plans and take steps to carry them out.
- A positive view of yourself and confidence in your strengths and abilities.
- Skills in communication and problem-solving.
- The capacity to manage strong feelings and impulses.

The good news is that all of these are factors that people can develop, and the remainder of the book is designed to help you increase your resilience in the face of workplace stress and adversity. Developing resilience is a personal journey, and not all people react the same to traumatic and stressful events at work.

2.3 HOW PEOPLE DEMONSTRATE RESILIENCE

Resilient people can effectively thrive under workplace pressures. Resilience is the ability to recover from or easily adjust to changes occurring in your life and in the workplace and the ability to bounce back from adverse events that occur. Resilience is that ineffable quality that allows some people to be knocked down by life and come back stronger than before. For these people, rather than letting failure overcome them and drain their tenacity, they find a way to rise above the stress and continue to thrive.

In their work with military personnel, Leutenberg & Liptak identified the many ways that resilient employees are different from other employees:

Resilient people “roll with the punches of life,” adapt to adversity, manage challenges, thrive in stressful circumstances, and cope with crises. They have the skills to adapt well and recover quickly from stress, trauma, tragedy, and all types of adversity. In the face of challenges, they maintain physical and psychological well-being.

Resilient people do not dwell on the past, solve problems effectively, do not become overwhelmed easily, make wise decisions, and use effective stress management techniques. They do not beat themselves up about their failures; they acknowledge the situation, learn from their mistakes, and then move forward.

Resilient people view difficulty as a challenge, not as a paralyzing event. They learn from failures and mistakes, and use them as an opportunity for growth. They set goals and are committed to their goals. They have solid goals, a desire to achieve those goals and a plan for how to go about attaining the goals.

Resilient people spend time and energy focusing on situations over which they have control. They put their efforts on what they can have the most impact, and where and when they feel empowered and confident. Resilient people never think of themselves as victims. They bounce back from setbacks by embracing change.

Resilient people have a favorable view of the future. They maintain a positive outlook and envision brighter days ahead. They are empathetic and compassionate. They don't waste time worrying about what others think of them. They maintain healthy relationships and do not bow to peer pressure.

2.4 MODELS OF RESILIENCE

Workplace stress has severe implications for the quality of an employee's work and their general psychological functioning. Thus, interest in the concept of resilience has multiplied in the last decade with researchers across various discipline areas (e.g., psychology, nursing, business) investigating the relationship between an individual's level of psychological resilience and reported levels of stress, burnout, compassion fatigue, and general indicators of well-being.

There are many definitions of resilience and research findings that tout the importance of resilience. However, there is not a unified theoretical model of individual workforce resilience that can be applied across disciplines and organizational settings. Even without a unified theoretical model, psychological resilience is best viewed from a multi-level perspective that includes a variety of components such as optimism, self-esteem, personal competence, social competence, problem-solving skills, self-efficacy, social resources, insight, independence, creativity, humor, control, hardiness, family cohesion, spiritual influences, and initiative.

2.5 DIMENSIONS OF RESILIENCE

Many dimensions of resilience have been researched and discussed as it relates to employees in the workplace. However, most experts agree that there are five dimensions in building workplace resilience. These five dimensions are discussed in Figure 3 and will be used as a format for the remaining chapters of this book.

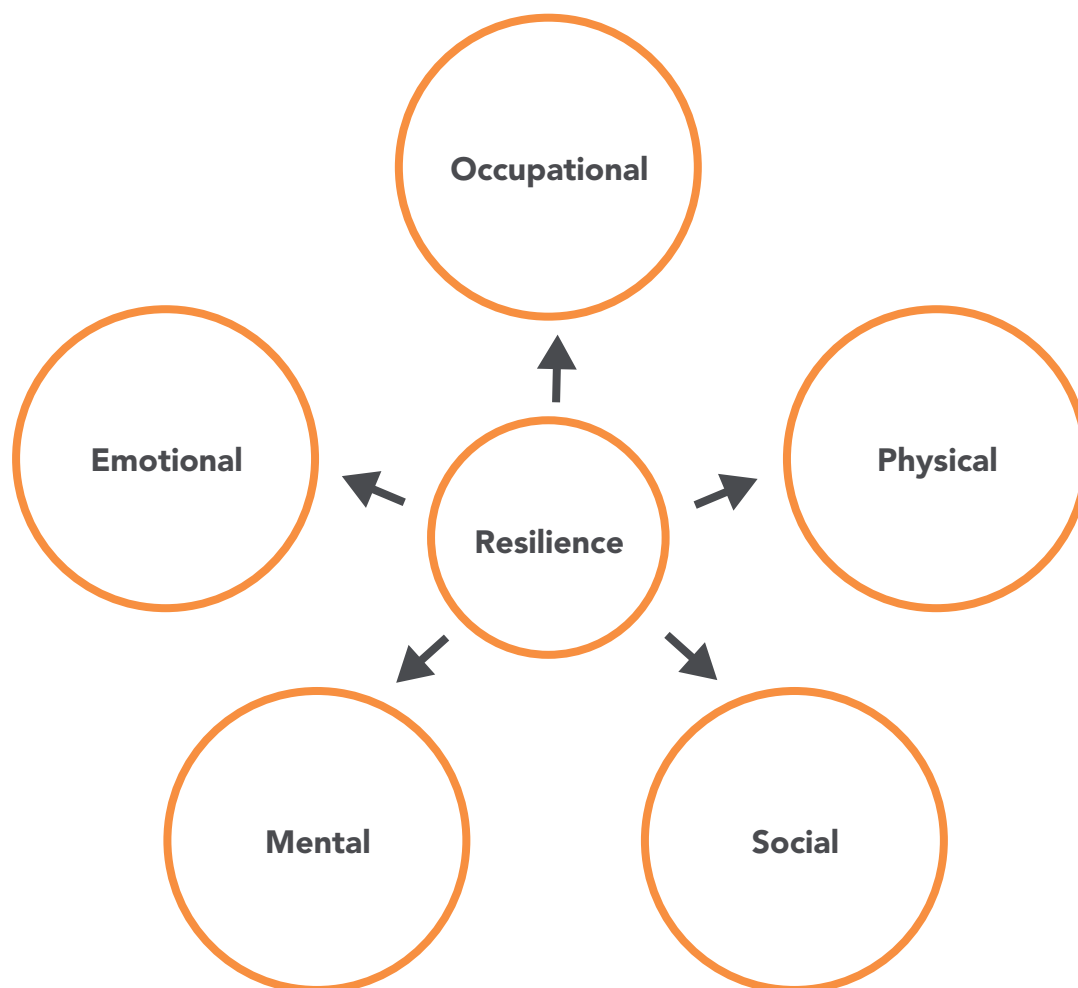


Figure 3: Five Dimensions of Resilience

Physical: This dimension of resilience relates to the need for regular physical activity, diet, and nutrition while discouraging the use of tobacco, drugs and excessive alcohol consumption. It is met through the combination of proper exercise, getting sufficient sleep, and maintaining healthy eating habits.

Social: This dimension of resilience is related to initiating better communication with those around you. It is about sending effective verbal messages, understanding your body language and that of others, listening actively, and ensuring that your written communication is efficient and effective.

Mental: This dimension of resilience is related to engaging in creative, stimulating mental activities at work. At the center for mental resilience is developing mental flexibility and agility, taking a step back to observe and label your thoughts and emotions, and develop skills in concentration.

Emotional: This dimension of resilience is related to developing awareness and acceptance of your feelings, feeling confident and enthusiastic about your life and career, and having the capacity to manage your feelings and related behaviors.

Occupational: This dimension of resilience is related to one's attitude about one's work. It is about finding purpose in your job and contributing your unique gifts, skills, and talents to work that is both personally meaningful and rewarding.

2.6 CONCEPTUALIZING RESILIENCE

What is resilience and how can you leverage it? While most agree that resilience is the ability to grow and move forward in the face of stress and adversity, ambiguity continues to exist surrounding the underlying paradigms that comprise resilience. Because resilience is a comprehensive concept, it is viewed in many ways including:

A Trait – resilience is a trait that moderates the negative effects of any stressful situation. Therefore, it is something you are born with and includes such characteristics as empathy, internal locus of control, humor, flexibility, an ability to learn from mistakes, and friendliness. Some people, by their very nature, are more upset by stress than others and more sensitive to workplace difficulties. Playing a large part in this trait model are your age, gender, and exposure to trauma.

A Skill – resilience is a skill that can be learned and developed. Therefore, many regard resilience as a strength that can be developed and applied in the workplace. In this conceptualization, resilience is a dynamic construct rather than a fixed trait that people either have or do not have. In this model, people can develop a resilient mindset by building confidence through skill-based experiences that develop their competence.

An Attribute – resilience is a set of social and intra-psychic processes that develop over time under challenging circumstances. In this conceptualization, there are a variety of attributes and familial, social, and cultural aspects that support the development of this attribute. Therefore, people display patterns of attributes that either promote or hinder an individual from being persistent and flexible in dealing with stress and exhibiting the capacity to receive and bounce back from stressful situations in the workplace.

2.7 CONCLUSION

Resilience is the ability of employees to bounce back after experiencing stress or adversity. Resilience is probably not any one of these dimensions or conceptualizations in isolation. Instead, it probably forms from a combination of constructs. For example, a person who exhibits high levels of resilience may have inherited personality traits for resilience, grown up in a resilience-building family, and learned some effective resilience skills in school. The remainder of this book will illustrate how to develop effective resilience skills for dealing with any stress you encounter by utilizing a multifaceted approach.



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3 THE PHYSICAL DIMENSION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

There are many physical lifestyle changes employees can make to ensure they have ample amounts of resilience available to cope with stress in the workplace. Employees can reduce stress as it occurs in the workplace and build resilience through lifestyle changes like increasing cardiovascular flexibility and regular physical activity, learning about healthy food and nutrition, and getting proper amounts of sleep.

3.2 BUSTING STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE

There are many different ways that you can physically control stress as it occurs in the workplace. Following are some useful techniques for building resilience and managing stress.

- **Find Your Quiet Place** – Find a quiet place where you can take a few deep breaths and calm yourself down.
- **Be Kind to Yourself** – Learning to be kinder to yourself can help you control the amount of pressure you feel in workplace situations, which can help you feel less stressed. Forgive yourself when you make a mistake. Try to remember that nobody's perfect, and putting extra pressure on yourself doesn't help.
- **Take Breaks** – You often need to move around and get a change of scenery. You might want to go outside, even if it's just for a short time. Time away from your usual work routine can help you relax and feel refreshed.
- **Activate Your Support System** – You might be able to find co-workers who can cover for you, and you for them, when family conflicts arise.
- **Stay in the Present** – Workplace stress is often the result of not staying in the present, and dwelling on the past or worrying about future events. When you learn to live in the present moment, you no longer worry about a presentation that you must do next week. Of course, you must prepare for these types of events, but not dwell on them. Your attention then becomes focused on what you are currently doing, preparing for the presentation. When you begin to approach your work in this manner, you will find that your worries and fears are not as powerful. As you begin to focus your attention, you will notice that thoughts of the past and future will arise. When this happens, note it in your mind and gently turn your awareness back to the present.

Experiential Exercise – Staying in the Present

Try the following exercise to see if you can stay in the present. Sit still for several minutes and try to quiet your mind. Close your eyes and stop the internal chatter going on in your mind. Focus on your breath as you inhale and exhale. Let go or block out any interfering thoughts, anxieties, or emotions that pop into your head. As thoughts arise, make a note of them and return to your breathing. Try not to think about the past or the future. After several minutes open your eyes and explore how you feel.

- **Be More Mindful** – Mindfulness is that state of mind in which you are being present to what you are doing at the time you are doing it in a nonjudgmental way. The type of attention associated with mindfulness increases your awareness, clarity, and allows you to accept the reality of the present moment. Without mindfulness you create problems for yourself because you begin to give in to unconscious patterns and automatic ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting.

Experiential Exercise – Being Mindful

Mindfulness is the ability to become aware of what you are doing when you do it. Let's try it. Sit down and become aware of your surroundings. Breathe and be still. Permit yourself to allow these moments to be as they are. Just let go and fully accept the present moment. If that does not work, focus your attention on any object for several minutes. Pick out an object and stare at it for several minutes. What thoughts kept coming back into your head? With mindfulness practice, you will be able to be mindful while completing tasks at work.

One of the reasons your mind attempts to escape the present moment is the fear of being mindful. Your mind wants you to think about the past, which has gone, and the future, which has not yet and may never come. You will slowly notice differences in your awareness over time.

- **Breathe Deeply** – Proper breathing is essential and can even be an excellent form of stress reduction. The pace at which you breathe and the depth of your breathing is vital in relaxation and stress reduction. When you encounter stressful situations, your breathing quickens and becomes shallower. Breathing, then, can also help to relax and quiet your body. Diaphragmatic breathing in which you take in long, very deep breaths is an extraordinarily powerful tool for relaxation. In diaphragmatic breathing, you push out your stomach and draw in a long deep breath. Then you exhale as slowly and as long as possible. Then, repeat this until relaxation occurs.

Experiential Exercise - Breathing

Pay attention to your breathing. Don't try to change it, but just become more aware of it. This awareness will quickly bring you into conscious awareness. Notice the parts of your body or ways your mind is attempting to interfere with the natural movement of your breathing. If your attention wanders and takes you away from the focus on your breathing, just bring back your attention so that you return to your focus. Dwell on the rise and fall of your chest as you inhale and exhale. Simply allow your attention to settle you and stop distracting thoughts.

- **Relax Your Body** – Intense emotions manifest themselves through physical symptoms in your body and these physical symptoms often reinforce negative thoughts and intense emotions. Total-Body Relaxation (often called Progressive Muscle Relaxation) is a simple technique used to stop negative emotions by relaxing all of the muscles throughout your body one group at a time.

Read through the following script several times before you do this exercise.

- 1) Take a few deep breaths, and relax. Get comfortable and put aside all of your worries.
- 2) Let each part of your body begin to relax starting with your feet. Imagine your feet relaxing as all of your tension begins to fade away.
- 3) Imagine the relaxation moving up into your calves and thighs. Allow the relaxation to move into your waist, hips, and stomach. Let go of any strain and discomfort you might feel.
- 4) Allow the relaxation to move into your chest and let the relaxation move through the muscles of your shoulders, then spread down into your upper arms, into your elbows, and finally down to your wrists and hands.
5. Let yourself be present at the moment and allow all the muscles in your neck unwind and let the relaxation move into your chin and jaw. Feel the tension around your eyes flow away as the relaxation moves throughout your face and head.
- 6) Do this with the rest of your body until you relax from your head to your feet. Block any distractions out of your mind as you concentrate on relaxing your entire body.

3.3 LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Employees who make lifestyle changes outside of the workplace build resilience and feel less stressed. Make sure you:

1) Get Enough Sleep

Stress can often make it difficult to sleep and cause sleep problems. Getting enough sleep can help you feel more able to deal with difficult situations. It's also important to avoid using personal electronic devices, such as tablets, just before bedtime. The blue light emitted by these devices decreases your level of melatonin, the hormone associated with sleep.

2) Eat Healthy Foods

When you're stressed, it can be tempting to skip meals or overeat the wrong kinds of food. However, what you eat, and when you eat, can make a big difference in how well you feel. Eating a healthy diet which emphasizes fresh fruits and vegetables and lean protein enhances the ability to retain knowledge as well as stamina and well-being. A poor diet contributes negatively to your reactions to stress and stressful situations. Although there is no best diet for every person, the following are some general guidelines to help you eat more nutritiously:

- Reduce the fat in your diet and eat plenty of fruits and vegetables
- Eat a balanced diet with sufficient calories, vitamins, and minerals
- Reduce cholesterol consumption and eat foods low in sodium
- Increase the consumption of fish, poultry, lean meats, and low-fat dairy products
- Eat less food with high amounts of refined sugar
- Avoid excessive alcohol consumption

3) Exercise

Exercise is another excellent method for combating and managing stress. In our society, the time needed to exercise is often tough to find. Therefore, it is essential that you put aside time each week in order to exercise your body and relieve tension. Be active. Being physically active is vital for both our physical and mental health. Even making small changes such as going for a regular walk outside may help you to feel less stressed. Several different types of exercises are available for you to use in reducing stress:

- Aerobic exercise uses sustained, rhythmic activity involving primarily the large muscles in your legs. Aerobic exercises include such activities as jogging, running, brisk walking, swimming, bicycling, kickboxing or other high-intensity martial arts, and aerobic training. The goal of aerobic exercise is to increase your stamina and enhance your cardiovascular system.

- Low-intensity exercise is used to increase muscle strength, enhance flexibility, and quiet your mind. Low-intensity exercises include slow walking, light gardening, walking in the woods, calisthenics, and “soft” martial arts like Tai Chi.

4) Meditate

Meditation is the practice of attempting to focus your attention on one thing at a time. It is a method in which you use repeated mental focus to quiet your mind, which in turn quiets your body. In meditation, focusing on one thing allows your mind to stay concentrated and excludes all other thoughts. There are many different forms of meditation. When doing meditation, you can focus by repeating a word like “OM”; count your breaths after you exhale with each breath; or gaze at an object like a candle or a piece of wood without thinking about it in words.

5) Scan Your Body

Sit back for a few minutes and tune in to the sensations present in your body. You should become aware of the sensations rather than trying to change them. Pay particular attention to the parts of your body that feel tense. Now notice the parts of your body that feel relaxed. Remain focused on your physical sensations for a few minutes and note those things that come into your awareness that have not been present before. Of what are you aware? What is occurring throughout your body?

3.4 AFTER WORK

The time you spend relaxing after work can contribute to your resilience on the job. It is crucial that you learn to relax and engage in leisure activities that are re-energizing and rejuvenating for you. Following are some tips for effectively spending leisure time after work:

Develop leisure interests and hobbies. Finding an activity that’s completely different from the work tasks you do on your job. Find hobbies and leisure time activities that are enjoyable and stress reducing.

Make time for your friends. Being with other people can help you feel supported, more positive, and less isolated. Chatting to friends about the things you find difficult can help you keep things in perspective, and you can do the same for them. Laughing and smiling with them will also produce hormones that help you to relax.

Find balance in your life. Be aware of how much your job is physically taking out of you. Try deciding to focus some of your time and energy on other parts of your life, like family, friends or hobbies.


Enjoy healthy pleasures. You may already know what helps you relax, like having a bath, listening to music or taking your dog for a walk. If you know that a specific activity helps you feel more relaxed, make sure you set aside time to engage in it every day. Make time for pure fun and relaxation. Set aside time each day for an activity that you enjoy, such as practicing yoga or reading. Better yet, discover activities you can do with family or friends like hiking, dancing or taking cooking classes.

3.5 CONCLUSION


The physical aspect of resilience involves aspects of life that are necessary to keep yourself in top condition and your life in balance. By striving for optimal physical wellness, employees can build resilience and reduce the stress they experience in the workplace. This physical wellness component is achieved by getting beneficial physical activity, exercising daily, getting plenty of sleep at night, maintaining healthy eating habits, relaxing when not at work, spending time with friends and family, building muscular strength and endurance, and enhancing flexibility.

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4 THE SOCIAL DIMENSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Your social relationships can help to either bolster or reduce your capacity for resilience. Social skills are the skills you use to communicate and interact with other people verbally and non-verbally. Social skills help you to build and maintain relationships, develop active networks of other people, communicate effectively, understand the importance of active listening skills in building rapport, and become more aware of the impact of nonverbal communication in conversations.

Communication - the human connection - is the key to personal and career success.

– Paul J. Meyer

4.2 FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

Communication is the process people use to establish, develop, maintain, and modify relationships. Often people associate communication with only verbal communication. In reality, this is only a tiny portion of the way that people communicate with one another. Communication is the process of transferring signals/messages between a sender and a receiver through various methods such as:

- Verbal Communication (verbal/spoken words, the volume of the words spoken, conflict resolution)
- Listening (listening actively, reflecting feelings, asking questions)
- Nonverbal Communication (body language, posture, facial expressions, actions, and hand gestures)
- Writing (written words, word processing technology)

Your use of these forms of communication is meaningful because they form the foundation for your relationship with others in the workplace. They will go a long way in determining the boundaries you can establish, the respect you receive, the trust you develop, and the overall effectiveness of your interactions. The following quick quiz will help you to determine your communication tendencies in the workplace.

Building communication skills is important in developing social strength and building resilience. For each of the following statements that follow, how many describe your communication tendencies? Answer the items based on your workplace relationships.

My Communication Tendencies

When I am communicating verbally....

- I send effective messages
- I reach compromises rather than conflicts
- I do not use generalizations and stereotypes
- I self-disclose information appropriately
- I maintain eye contact
- I am assertive but do not hurt others

When I am listening to others....

- I listen attentively to hear the message accurately
- I restate the person's point of view ("Your point is.....")
- I listen for the feelings behind the message
- I do not interrupt the person sending the message
- I ask for an explanation if I do not understand
- I ask questions for accuracy

When I am communicating nonverbally....

- I understand the body language of others
- I adjust my behavior based on emotional cues from others
- I understand the messages I send with my body language
- I know how body language is different in all cultures
- I use nonverbal behavior to express my attitudes and feelings
- I use nonverbal communication to support other people

When I am communicating in writing....

- I write effective e-mails
- I avoid clichés and jargon
- I am always professional
- I keep it simple and understandable
- I always check for mistakes
- I write for the intended audience

WHAT YOUR SCORE MEANS

The higher your score in each category, the more effective you tend to be in communicating with others in the workplace. The four categories of the quiz (Verbal Communication, Listening, Nonverbal Communication, and Written Communication) make up the four primary forms of communication and will be used to organize information and activities in the remainder of the chapter.

4.3 VERBAL COMMUNICATION

When most people think of communication, they think about talking to other people. Verbal communication is critical in your interactions with others in the workplace including supervisors, co-workers, and customers.

4.3.1 SENDING MESSAGES

You should make sure that you send explicit messages and that the messages can be understood by people with whom you work. Miscommunication is the cause of many workplace disagreements. Specific skills to ensure that your messages will be understood by others include:

Be Assertive

Assertive people are resilient in the workplace because they ask for what you need, stand up to others, and resolve conflicts before losing control and acting impulsively. Following is a comparison of the various communication styles.

Passive	Aggressive	Assertive
People do not express their own needs, wants, and feelings, and does not stand up for them.	People express that only their own needs, wants, and feelings matter. They bully others and ignore their needs.	People stand up for their own needs, wants, and feelings, while listening to and respecting the needs of others.

To communicate assertively:

- Use assertive body language with direct eye contact, head up and shoulders back, hands relaxed with limited gestures, and a calm voice.
- Use “I” statements such as “I feel angry when you take all the credit.”
- Avoid words like “you never” or “you should have.”
- Express your feelings rather than repressing them. Unexpressed feelings tend to blow up into larger conflicts.

Solve Conflicts Effectively

Conflict is an inevitable part of everyone's work life, and conflict management skills are critical social skills for your professional growth and development. Employees who can manage and resolve conflict effectively tend to be the most successful in their careers. Conflicts are not necessarily dangerous as long as the conflict is managed effectively and resolved in a calm, respectful way. Following are a few things to keep in mind concerning workplace conflicts:

- Conflicts can be incredibly destructive to workplace relationships.
- Conflict is positive if handled well and relationships often flourish after a well-handled conflict.
- Conflict resolution habits can be learned

Your ability to communicate and interact on an interpersonal level will largely determine whether problems get solved and disagreements get settled. You will not always agree with everyone in the workplace, but you will have to solve conflicts by working cooperatively with other people. Following is a process for managing workplace conflicts calmly and effectively:

Step 1 – Describe what you want and how you feel by using phrases like “I think,” “I feel” and “We should” rather than “I know,” “We must” or “You’d better.” For example, “I get frustrated when you dominate the conversation in meetings. I would like for everyone to have a chance to provide input.”

Step 2 – Explain specific and concrete reasons for what you want in the situation. For example, “I have been getting feedback from others, and they feel that you are getting favorable treatment.”

Step 3 – Try to understand the motives of other people. For example, “I completely understand why you feel like it’s so important for you to talk about your work. However, others in the meeting need to share also.”

Step 4 – Brainstorm many potential agreements or compromises that would be beneficial to you and the other person. For example, “How about if everyone has ten minutes to speak. We could also extend the length of our meetings, or maybe even let the most important projects take priority in the meetings.”

Step 5 – Choose the agreement that seems the best for both. For example, “I think that everyone is allotted a certain amount of time in each meeting is the best way to go. Do you agree?”

Step 6 – Agree to abide by the conditions of the agreement. For example, “Let’s implement this in the next meeting!”

Unhealthy responses to conflict:

- Feeling fearful or avoiding conflict, rather than standing up for yourself
- Refusing to respond to the things that matter to another person
- Acting in an explosive, angry, hurtful, and/or resentful way
- Being unaware of the things that matter to another person
- Inflicting rejection, isolation, and/or shame
- Being unable to manage negative and disruptive emotions
- Ignoring the other person's point of view
- Walking away with no resolution to a conflict
- Causing fear by threatening through verbal or non-verbal communication
- Declining to compromise, even though you may want to

Disclosing Personal Information Wisely

Self-disclosure is revealing important stories about yourself to others. By providing information about yourself, people get to know you better, and you create the potential for trust, growth, and acceptance in interpersonal relationships. However, you need to remember to disclose information about yourself only when it is appropriate. Too much or too little information can be ineffective. Tips for self-disclosure:

- Include information about your hopes, dreams, goals, fears, successes, personal life, and past issues.
- Allow others an opportunity to self-disclose information. If they seem uncomfortable, stop!
- Increase self-disclosure in small amounts over time as your relationship builds with others.
- Be confident that you can completely trust the person and always be aware of others who gossip.

4.4 LISTENING SKILLS

Actively listening to other people sounds easy. In reality, it is one of the most challenging aspects of effective communication. Active listening takes commitment and knowledge of barriers that are keeping you from listening effectively to others. Following are some potential blocks to active listening:

BLOCKS TO ACTIVE LISTENING

- I. **DAYDREAMING:** When your attention wanders to other events or people.
- II. **REHEARSING:** When you are busy thinking about what you are going to say next.
- III. **FILTERING:** When you listen to certain parts of the conversation, but not all.
- IV. **JUDGING:** When you have stopped listening because you have already made judgments.
- V. **DISTRACTIONS:** When you allow your attention to wander.

4.4.1 ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

Effective communicators do not overlook the power of listening to others. Most people think that listening is merely trying to hear what other people say. However, there is much more to active listening than actually listening! Following are critical active listening skills.

- 1) **Paraphrasing:** Restating, in your own words, what you think the other person is **saying**. You can use such phrases as “In other words...” or “What I hear you say is....”
- 2) **Reflection of Feelings:** restating what you think the speaker is **feeling**. You can reflect feeling by saying something like, “I think you are feeling angry with a member of your team.”
- 3) **Clarification:** Telling others what you thought you heard, learn whether you were right or wrong, and then ask questions to clarify. You might say something like, “I am hearing you say that you are thinking of quitting. Is that accurate?”

4.5 NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Nonverbal communication is more important than the words that you communicate. Following are some tips for enhancing your nonverbal communication when talking with other people.

Essential Tips for Effective Body Language

Following are some additional tips for ensuring you use effective body language in the workplace.

Facial Expression: Recognize emotions expressed by eyebrows, forehead, eye contact, and mouth.

Voice: Use a moderate volume, vary the tone and pitch, and relax the pace of speech.

Positive Movements: Lean toward rather than away from the speaker and keep arms open. Face the other person, make eye contact with the person speaking, and nod your head in approval.

Distance: Keep an appropriate distance between you and the other person and not too close or too far away. Be aware of when it is appropriate to hug, kiss and touch other people.

Consistency: Make sure your body language sends messages that are consistent with your tone and words. You also need to pay attention to the body language of others in a conversation.

Remember that when communicating with people from cultures different from yours, be aware of some of the subtleties of differences in culture including values, body language, and personal space.

4.6 WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Written communication skills are critical for career success. When writing in the workplace, your objective is to create a positive, professional impression. When you send a memo to a colleague, a report to your team or an email to a client, remember to use crisp, highly-focused and error-free writing. When you do, others will know you are organized and detail oriented. On the other hand, written communication that is long-winded, imprecise or filled with typos leave readers wondering how you handle other aspects of your job. The good news is that you can develop effective written communication skills. Following are some of the skills for providing effective written communication:

1. Gather the necessary information, research, and facts you need to present. Take time to organize your thoughts and identify the primary purpose of written communication. Think about some of the following questions:
 - Who is your audience?
 - Does the writing need to be formal or informal?
 - What do you want people to know or do when they finish reading what you've written?

2. Develop a game plan for your writing. Think about whether what you are about to write can be completed quickly or does it require an outline that will help you to maintain a logical order. What is the message, and will it require graphics, pictures, or only words?
3. Write straightforwardly to get to the point immediately with any message, or you may lose your audience. Do not use buzzwords, jargon, clichés unless they are warranted. Keep your writing as simple as possible.
4. Stay professional at all times by taking everything you write seriously, and avoiding controversial or sensitive subjects. Make sure that you check and double-check your information for spelling errors, misinformation, typos, and errors with tone.

Workplace communication can significantly enhance or reduce your professional image. Written communication is one of the most essential workplace skills that you can develop. You should continue to monitor your writing to make sure that you are getting your point across in a professional manner.

4.7 CONCLUSION

Communication is one of the most important skills in reducing conflict and building resilience in the workplace. It is not always easy to initiate, develop, and maintain positive relationships. It takes work and considerable skill. Sometimes your communication with others is clear and other times you will misunderstand each other. Employees who develop effective communication skills tend to be less stress and more resilience to challenges they encounter because they build lasting relationships with supervisors, co-workers, and customers. Stress-free communication prevents misunderstandings, miscommunication, and conflict.

5 THE MENTAL DIMENSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The mental dimension of resilience is overlooked and undervalued, but it is essential in developing the necessary skills to overcome workplace stress. The mental dimension is related to learning new skills, expanding your knowledge, seeking out new and exciting challenges, maintaining a sense of creativity and curiosity, searching for lifelong learning opportunities, stimulating mental activities, and being open to new ideas. Mentally resilient people can approach new ideas and situations with enthusiasm. They are creative, always looking for ways to improve themselves, and approach life with passion to understand and embrace opportunities to learn new things. They have the tools and techniques to cope with stressful life situations through being open-minded, able to pick up on new ideas, and interested in improving themselves.

5.2 MENTAL FLEXIBILITY

The essence of mental flexibility is the ability to handle different situations in different ways, especially to respond effectively to new, complex, and problematic situations. By increasing your mental flexibility, you become a better listener, a keener observer, a more skilled thinker, and a more effective problem solver. It is going with the flow and adjusting quickly to new circumstances, challenges and situations as they arise.

ASSESS YOUR MENTAL FLEXIBILITY

Check the mental flexibility skills you possess:

- I learn from my mistakes
- I solve problems in new and innovative ways
- I see things from different perspectives
- I like to take calculated risks
- I don't mind new and novel situations and experiences
- I can tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity
- I can handle deviations from my original plans

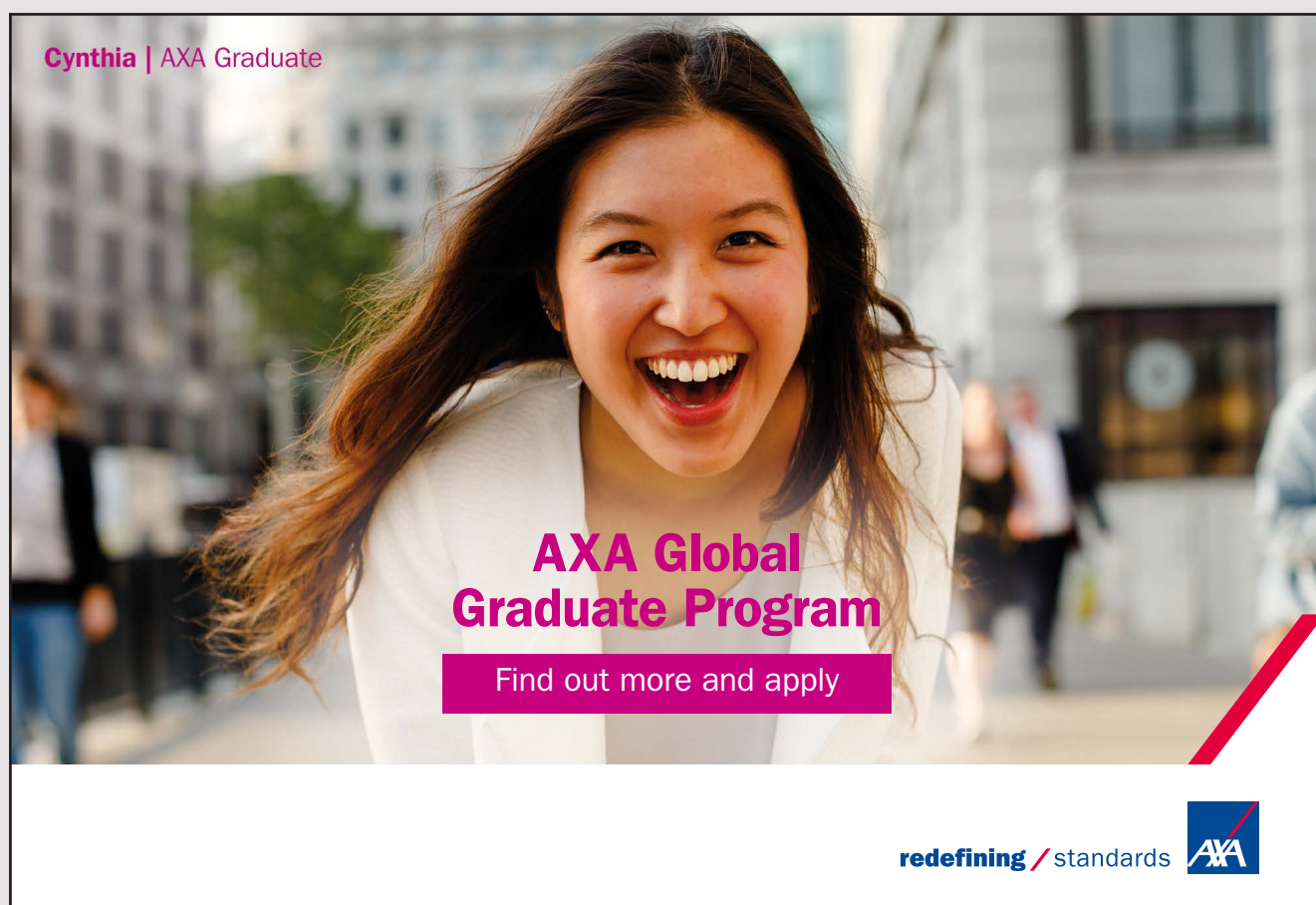
The more skills you checked off, the more mentally flexible you tend to be.

Following are some of the ways that you can exhibit mental flexibility:

- When you begin to feel stress in a situation, ask yourself if you are being flexible or inflexible in this situation. If you are inflexible, try to determine what makes you anxious and how can you be more open and flexible in how you approach the situation.
- Embrace new experiences and take healthy risks.
- Be aware of when and where you are being inflexible. You should try and determine if it is in your routines or with someone in particular.

5.3 DO YOU HAVE GRIT?


While Grit is the motivational drive that keeps you on a difficult task over a sustained period of time, Angela Duckworth's work has shown that you can change your mindset. Her research found that when students had a growth mindset; a mindset which perceives a challenge as an opportunity to learn rather than an obstacle to overcome, they responded with constructive thoughts and their behavior showed persistence rather than defeat.



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From Dweck's research into the growth mindset and its effects on achievement, especially in an educational setting, she discovered four factors that affect ongoing tenacity or grit:

- Change your thinking about professional goals. Stop negative thoughts such as “I can't do this” or “This is too hard.” Challenge these defeatist thoughts and replace them with positive thoughts such as “I have achieved difficult goals before, so these will be easier” or “I got through tough times much worse than this before.
- Visualize yourself being successful. Use your passion for your goals to keep you motivated and picture yourself achieving your goals.
- Remain optimistic no matter what happens. Review your successes so far and remember how you were able to overcome setbacks and mistakes.
- View failure as feedback on how you can be more successful in the future. See mistakes and disappointments as opportunities to do things differently and be successful next time.
- Focus your attention on achieving your next small goal. While it's important to keep your overall goals in mind, focus your immediate attention and actions on the next milestone.
- Never give up. Giving up ensures that you will not achieve your goals. Start small and try to take a few small steps to achieve your results. That will give you the energy needed to stay the course, while also building your competence and confidence.

5.4 DEVELOP CREATIVITY

Most common definitions suggest that creativity is your ability to come up with new ideas that are surprising yet intelligible, to perceive the world in new ways, to find hidden patterns, to make connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena, to create works that last, and to generate solutions to problems.

GENERATING NEW IDEAS

People who are creative generate new ideas in the following ways:

- a) Combining familiar ideas into new ones.
- b) Exploring and structuring concepts in new ways.
- c) Transforming of some dimension of a structure in order that new structures can be generated and identified.

Creativity is a part of the human mind that involves generating fantastic possibilities. By enhancing creativity, you can increase your ability to achieve your goals and accomplish great things in your life.

- **Try new things.** Engage in new experiences at work and explore new endeavors.
- **Develop new interests.** Expand your interest base by exploring interests that you have never had the opportunity to do. What are three interests you have that you would like to expand?
- **Foster new talents.** You have specific talents in which you are comfortable. Focus on developing and expressing your creativity in three areas that you know best in which you are naturally good.

5.5 REMAIN POSITIVE

Optimism is not something that some people are born with and some people are not. You can develop an optimistic attitude if you want to. People who have chosen to develop this type of attitude have a natural barrier against stress. They can cope quickly and effectively with stress, challenge, and hardship in their lives. Some ways to remain positive:

- Surround yourself with positive people.
- Understand that life has ups and downs, good times and bad times, and victories and defeats.
- Do not think things will always go as you expect.
- Remember that you cannot control everything. Focus on what you can control.

How Am I Negative?

Negative thinking can trigger negative emotions. In the spaces that follow, identify the thoughts you have that lead to negative emotional reactions:

- I focus on the negative aspects of situations and ignore the positive aspects
- I blow situations way out of proportion
- I judge situations as either good or bad
- If anyone disagrees with me, I consider it a personal attack
- I believe that things will never turn out the way I wanted it to
- I anticipate and expect the worst to happen in a situation
- I blame myself, regardless of the circumstances of a situation
- I blame other people
- I think everything is a catastrophe
- I worry about what people think of me

In building resilience, it is essential to remain positive regardless of what is occurring. Be aware of how your thinking triggers unwanted emotional reactions.

5.5.1 RESTRUCTURING MY NEGATIVE ATTITUDE

When you find yourself getting stuck in a cycle of negative thinking, you can try the following method for restructuring your attitude.

1. Identify your negative thoughts (“I’m not good enough” or “I’m not smart enough”).
2. Think about how accurate these thoughts are for you. What is the proof these thoughts are accurate?
3. Think of positive ways of restructuring these thoughts (“If other people can do it so can I” and “I’m as talented as anyone else in this department”).
4. Take action and volunteer for the next available project.

5.5.2 BUILDING AN OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK

Regardless of what is occurring at your job, it is important to remain optimistic as you pursue your professional goals. Optimistic people are not happy all the time and like everyone else, struggle with the challenges of life. Optimism means that people have an outlook on life that is generally positive and upbeat. They can see the bright side of a situation and look for the good qualities in other people. Take the following quick assessment to see if you are optimistic or not:

Circle the TRUE or FALSE in the statements below to find your level of optimism.

I believe that constructive criticism is helpful	TRUE	FALSE
I see the good in a situation	TRUE	FALSE
When disappointed, I can regroup and move on	TRUE	FALSE
If something gets too rough, I will persist	TRUE	FALSE
I view bad situations as temporary	TRUE	FALSE
I try to help others see brighter possibilities	TRUE	FALSE
I am resilient and bounce back from setbacks	TRUE	FALSE
I am willing to take helpful advice	TRUE	FALSE
I do not dwell on setbacks from the past	TRUE	FALSE
I view the glass as half-full, not half-empty	TRUE	FALSE

Scoring and Interpretation

For the assessment you just completed, count the number of TRUE responses you circled. The more TRUE responses you have for the ten statements, the more optimistic you tend to be.

5.6 SOLVE PROBLEMS EFFECTIVELY

No simple step-by-step process will guarantee you a solution to every problem you encounter in your life or on the job. Following are a variety of approaches you can take, though be aware that no single approach will work for every kind of problem. Over time you will develop your method for solving problems and will learn to adapt your method to the problem at hand.

- Dividing – break big problems into small, more-easily-solved problems.
- Brainstorming– list all of the possible solutions, no matter how outrageous they seem.
- Trial-and-error – create and implement solutions one at a time until one of them works.
- Incubation – stop focusing on the problem, and allow the subconscious to work so that the solution will just come to you while you work on other things.
- Hypotheses testing – Pose possible solutions to a problem and then try to prove their accuracy.
- Logical Method – Clarify the problem, analyze significant causes of the problem, identify alternatives, assess them, choose and implement an option, and evaluate the outcome.

5.7 MANAGE TIME WELL

One of the leading causes of stress for people in the workplace is a lack of time management skills. Good time managers tend to have productive work habits, effective relationships, and success. For poor time managers, time brings anxiety, stress, and exhaustion. Learning how to manage your time can help you to alleviate stress, reduce anxiety, and build resilience. Figure 4 shows the benefits of good time management and the symptoms of poor time management.

Benefits of Great Time Management	Symptoms of Poor Time Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve your productivity • Make time for things you value • Find greater life-career balance • Find greater life and career satisfaction • Set and achieve long & short-term goals • Get things done on time • Experiencing less stress and anxiety • Focus your energy on important tasks • Stay on task easily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forgetting assignments • Difficulty concentrating on tasks • Tired at work • Feeling overwhelmed on the job • Juggling work activities and priorities • Inability to sleep at night • Irritability in relationships • Physical problems • Lack of career enjoyment

Figure 4: Great Time Management vs. Poor Time Management

5.8 CONCLUSION

Mental wellness is a critical component in building resilience in the workplace. It is the ability to open your mind to new ideas and experiences and apply them to personal decisions, group interaction and community betterment. Mentally resilient people have the desire to learn new concepts, improve skills and seek challenges in pursuit of lifelong learning that contributes to their professional development and enhances their contribution to workplace productivity.

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6 THE EMOTIONAL DIMENSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

What are the most critical factors in how successful a person will be in the workplace? Is it Intelligence Quotient (IQ) or the amount of education a person has completed? While both of these are important and play some part in personal and professional success, they do not tell the entire story. Emotional skills facilitate both personal and professional success. Thus, Emotional Intelligence (EI) theories suggest that the higher your EI, the better chance you have of being personally and professionally successful.

6.2 EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

Emotional intelligence skills are used in all aspects of your professional career. A summary of this research results suggests that training in EI skills can enhance:

- Social and emotional maturity
- Problem-solving ability
- Listening and communication skills
- Adaptability and creative thinking
- Personal management, self-motivation and goal attainment
- Development of leadership and teamwork skills
- Conflict-resolution skills
- Interpersonal skills and the ability to collaborate with others

6.2.1 HIGH AND LOW EI

Research suggests that people with high EI are prone to be more successful in the workplace. Following are some of the distinctions between people with low and high EI.

Benefits of Great Time Management	Symptoms of Poor Time Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve your productivity • Make time for things you value • Find greater life-career balance • Find greater life and career satisfaction • Set and achieve long & short-term goals • Get things done on time • Experiencing less stress and anxiety • Focus your energy on important tasks • Stay on task easily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forgetting assignments • Difficulty concentrating on tasks • Tired at work • Feeling overwhelmed on the job • Juggling work activities and priorities • Inability to sleep at night • Irritability in relationships • Physical problems • Lack of career enjoyment

6.3 EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

In order to successfully develop resilience on your job, you need to be both aware of your emotions and then to manage these emotions when they occur. Emotional awareness is the ability to know your internal states, label your feelings, recognize your emotions as they occur, understand the triggers of your various emotions, know your strengths and weaknesses, understand the impact of your feelings and actions on you and others, and build self-esteem and your self-image. Emotional management is your ability to handle emotions appropriately so that they do not interfere with tasks at hand, relationships, and changes that occur. You can cope with strong feelings and not be overwhelmed by them, manage your emotional reactions and keep disruptive emotions and impulses in check, delay gratification, be more aware of rising emotions and exercise control before acting on them, and learn to express emotions without conflict.

ADVANTAGE OF EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

Understanding your emotions can help you to...

- Understand when people in your life are experiencing negative emotions.
- Build better relationships.
- Communicate feelings.
- Connect with others not only through words but also through nonverbal communication.
- Help others know what you need or want.
- Identify how you feel, and why.
- Use communication skills to seek conflict resolution.
- Let others know what you do not need or do not want.
- Recognize when you are experiencing negative emotions and find a healthy outlet for them.
- Reduce stress and negative emotions quickly before they escalate.

6.3.1 NOTICING EMOTIONS

Before you can manage your emotions, you need to begin developing emotional awareness by noticing, naming and understanding your emotional triggers. Most people believe that emotions occur without warning when in fact there is often ample warning before they become troublesome. So, imagine that your supervisor has just given you negative feedback about your latest performance review. How do you react? If you would get angry, there are probably signs that will alert you to the emotions you are feeling. It is vital to develop a deep awareness of your emotions as they are occurring. This awareness can help you take action to reduce the impact of your emotions and manage them effectively. You notice emotions:

In Your Body. Some people express emotions physically through their face and their posture. Examples include clenched fists for anger, gritting your teeth when anxious, and feeling a weight off your chest after you completed a project.

In Your Thoughts. Some people express emotions as thoughts, so it is important to develop an awareness for how thoughts and feelings are connected. For example, if you got upset when you received the negative review, you might be thinking “I might get fired,” which continues your stress. On the other hand, if you think “I will take and implement the information and do better next quarter, you will notice how your negative emotions dissipate.

In Your Actions. Some people express emotions behaviorally by reacting immediately in a certain way based on how you feel about it. Learn to be more aware of how you act or react when you experience intense emotions. For example, noticing that you suddenly begin speaking faster might be a cue that you are getting angry.

The majority of problems in the workplace arise from lingering unmet emotional feelings. Some of these unmet feelings include feeling disrespected, unappreciated, exploited, overworked, insecure, replaceable, unchallenged, and bored. When employees are experiencing these types of emotions and are unskilled in effectively expressing them in a practical way, they end up becoming defensive and prone to personal attacks. As you start to become more aware of your emotions, it is essential to provide them with a name. Take a day and start by just noticing different emotions as you feel them. Name them to yourself. For example, you might say, “I feel proud” if a work project goes well, “I feel disappointed” at not doing well on an evaluation or “I feel happy” when sitting with a group of friends at lunch.

EMOTIONAL AWARENESS CHECKLIST

For the items that follow, identify how well you notice your emotions.

- I know what I feel
- I often know why I feel the way I do
- I can label my feelings in my mind
- I can express my emotions well with words
- I express emotions with appropriate body language
- I understand how my thinking affects my emotions
- I rarely deny or suppress my negative emotions
- I can notice my feelings without reacting to them
- I understand the link between my emotions and actions
- I understand the information conveyed in feelings

Emotional awareness is a critical component in developing greater emotional intelligence. The more items you checked off, the more aware you are of your emotions.

6.4 UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS

You should make every effort to understand your emotional triggers. When you think about work, are there certain people or situations that trigger certain emotions in you? You need to be aware of these people and situations so that you can manage the emotions that accompany them. Triggers are anything that prompts emotional upset without you consciously thinking about it.

6.4.1 CONSIDER AN EMOTIONS JOURNAL

A great way to explore your workplace emotional triggers is to write about them. You can get in the habit of writing their feelings down in a journal. Putting feelings into a practical form will help them organize, clarify and express feelings. Journaling has been shown to drastically reduce stress and increase overall well-being. Some general rules include:

- Set aside just a few minutes each day to journal. Don't worry about grammar or punctuation. Write quickly to block out any unnecessary thoughts.
- Start by writing about something that happened at work to trigger negative emotions. Write about negative emotions, process how it made you feel, and explore how you handled the situation or should have handled the situation if it went poorly.
- After each week, read your journal and look for patterns related to various emotions and their triggers.

6.5 MANAGING EMOTIONS

Your thinking affects your emotions and the intensity of these emotions. Being resilient doesn't mean you don't experience emotions. Instead, it means you have become acutely aware of your emotions so you can regulate them. Even though they are very complex, explosive emotions can be managed effectively. Therefore, it is important to learn a variety of tools that you can rely on when you feel like your emotions are about to explode. Here are some tools. Try some of the tools below and notice how effective they are for you.

- Remind yourself that it is just a minor annoyance and not to lose perspective.
- Pay attention to your perceptions. What you feel reveals how you perceive an event or action. Make it a habit to question your perceptions and assumptions and ask yourself where they come from and whether there's evidence that they are correct.
- Find a place to sit quietly by yourself for a few minutes.
- Try to determine what set your emotions off and avoid the situation if possible.
- Find ways to effectively and appropriately express your feelings (go for a walk or find a place to calm down).

Reverse Negative Thinking

One of the best ways to manage your emotions is to be aware of the negative thought that goes through your head prior to emotions. Right before you get angry, negative thoughts are going through your head. This process happens to everyone, but the good news is that it is possible to turn negative thinking into positive emotions. It is important to be mindful of what you think as you experience emotions. Look at an example:

- ♦ Negative thoughts in my head: "She gets better assignments than me."
- ♦ Feelings that follow: low self-esteem, fear of losing my job.
- ♦ Find evidence: There is no evidence. "I have my special expertise."
- ♦ How I could reverse my thinking: Keep telling yourself positive thoughts such "I will get good assignments too" or "I will stop comparing myself to others."

Stay in the Present

Paying attention and attending to what you are doing in the present is one of the best ways to reduce the negative thoughts in your head and calm intense emotions. Being attentive can lessen the impact and help you to step back from thoughts and feelings. To be mindful, you develop your mind so that it is fully attending to what's currently happening, to what you doing in the present moment, and detaching from any judgment about it.

Control Your Emotions

Negative emotions are a natural and inevitable part of everyday life, and it is vital that you learn how to effectively manage negative emotions. You will get frustrated at work, and certain people and situations will test your ability to control your emotions. Controlling your anger and frustration will be critical for you to be successful in the workplace. The first step in learning to control your anger is to become more aware of your anger triggers. Some steps that can help you manage negative feelings:

Step 1 – Recognize Negative Feelings: Based on the reactions of your body (heart beating faster, face getting red and hot, body tenses, and sweating), recognize what you are feeling.

Step 2 – Stay Calm: Begin to calm your body using relaxation techniques such as taking a time out, breathing deeply, relaxing your muscles, meditating, counting to ten, or taking a walk.

Step 3 – Change Negative Thinking: Change your negative thinking into self-talk that is more positive, rational and clear.

By controlling your emotions, you will be better prepared to develop and maintain relationships at work. This five-step process is designed to help you control your emotions in the workplace.

6.6 CONCLUSION

Emotional resilience is related to the ability to understand ourselves, be aware of emotions as they occur, and deal with them effectively in the workplace. Emotional awareness, management, and the ability to acknowledge and productively share feelings can help you to build resilience and cope with the challenges in the workplace. By learning to identify, manage, and control your emotions, you can ensure that you do not overreact to stress.

7 THE OCCUPATIONAL DIMENSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to develop resilience in the workplace, you need to recognize maximum personal satisfaction and enrichment in your life through work. You need to feel like you are contributing your unique gifts, skills, and talents to work that is personally meaningful and rewarding. Building workplace resilience requires you to achieve a balance between work and leisure time, manage stress, building supportive relationships with co-workers, and use your leisure time well.

7.2 BALANCE WORK AND LIFE

Juggling the demands of work and life is an ongoing challenge. Resilient employees utilize some of the techniques listed below to achieve work-life balance:

- **Set limits on your time.** You may have to start respectfully saying “no” to activities in which you are not interested.
- **Leave work at work.** With the technology to keep you connected, there is a limited boundary between work and home. Make a conscious decision to separate work time from personal time.
- **Unplug.** Start checking your e-mails, texts, and phone calls less often and do not feel the need to be connected with work 24/7.
- **Fill your spare time by doing what you love.** Rather than wasting your spare time, spend every spare moment you can doing what you love to do. Leisure activities can energize and refresh you after a long day at work.
- **Develop a Strong Support Network In & Out of the Workplace.** Resilient people have a secure support network they can depend upon to help them get through difficult times. Social support means having friends and family to turn to in times of need or crisis to give you a broader focus and positive self-image. Social support enhances the quality of life and provides a buffer against workplace stress. Social support has been shown to reduce the psychological and physiological consequences of stress and may enhance immune function.

7.3 CHANGE THE WAY YOU WORK

In addition to seeking balance in life, resilient employees change the way they complete their assigned work. Remember that you cannot be all things to all people and try to focus on your strengths and outsource as much as possible to others.

Prioritize Your Work

It is important to begin to prioritize your tasks into four categories:

- Urgent and important
- Important but not urgent
- Urgent but not important
- Neither urgent nor important

By focusing on the most urgent and important, you will make sure to do what is needed first. Then you can prioritize based on the other categories.

Try to shorten commitments and minimize interruptions. Most people can sustain a maximum level of concentration for no more than 90 minutes. After that, the ability to retain information decreases dramatically. When interrupted during a task, you need double or triple the time of the interruption to regain full concentration on your task.

Take breaks

Remember to take time out throughout your work day. You might not have time every day to quietly sit, but do your best to give yourself a lunch break. Also, make a point of getting up and stretching every 15 minutes. It will help you become clearer, more focused and more productive.

Be a Lifelong Learner

Learning does not stop because you have a job. As a lifelong learner, you should try to get as much training as you possibly can in order to reduce the stress in your job. Ask your supervisor if the organization offers any training programs including seminars, workshops, retreats, conferences, and on-the-job training. Employees greatly value technical and leadership skills in the workplace.

There are many different ways to use lifelong learning to build resilience:

1. Read professional magazines and journals to learn about the newest breakthroughs in your industry. Articles can help you in conversations during networking and help you do your job more effectively.
2. Participate in Internet discussions and chat groups to enhance your network of contacts. Join professional groups on LinkedIn and initiating discussions or providing your thoughts and opinions to ongoing discussions.
3. Attend seminars and conferences in areas of interest. These educational programs can provide you with new information, tools, and techniques that you can use on the job. Many seminars and conferences provide certificates of completion that you can put in your professional portfolio.

7.4 WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships in the workplace can either enhance or decrease the amount of stress you experience. You should strive to learn how to communicate with people from different cultures as well as difficult people. The next sections will show you how.

7.4.1 VALUE DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

One result of an increasingly interconnected global market is that today's workers must be open to working with people from a wide variety of ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds. An inability to do so will be stressful because diversity is a valuable resource in that it provides a variety of ideas, solutions to problems, and creative ways of thinking. Those who make the most of those difference will become more resilient over time. Therefore, it is crucial that you learn to communicate well with people from all cultures and find ways to learn about people who are culturally different from you. Some general attitudes that you need to develop in developing and maintaining relationships with diverse individuals in the workplace include:

- Recognize that diversity exists and is a vital resource. Diversity contributes to productivity, creativity, moral reasoning, creative problem solving, and perspective-taking ability.
- Respect fundamental differences among people.
- Diversity can include differences in culture, religion, generations, ethnicity, gender, handicapping situations, sexual orientation, and social class.
- Work consistently to reduce internal barriers to effectively interacting with diverse individuals.

7.4.2 DEAL WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

In the workplace, you will encounter many different types of people. Some of these people will be easy to work with and some will provide a challenge for you. Following are some of the most common types of difficult people you might encounter in the workplace.

- **The whiner** feels nothing is ever right, complains, gripes rather than searching for solutions knows how things ought to be and they never are, and is impatient with change.
- **The know-it-all** shares an opinion on every issue and knows it's the right one, is never wrong, acts defensively if challenged, and feels superior.
- **The aggressor** tends to be abusive, criticizes others, accuses others, lacks patience, and bullies and intimidates others.
- **The wallflower** never offers ideas, shies away from participating in conversations, is hesitant to share personal information, is non-assertive, and seems detached.
- **The negative-nelly** thinks things will never work, seldom says anything positive, brings others down, see the glass half empty, and drains the energy out of a meeting.
- **The yes-person** seems phony, commits to too many actions, lacks follow through, says what people want to hear, will do anything asked, takes ownership of too much, and craves approval.




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When working, you will encounter some of the above types of difficult people in your co-workers, supervisors, and customers. Often how much they affect you depends on your level of resilience.

Workplace Tip

Encountering difficult people is a part of life. If you ignore a difficult person, things often get worse. You will begin to experience stress, and your emotions will eventually erupt. When you are able to face difficult people and resolve problems yourself, you will begin to feel more self-confident. You will feel more in control of your life and your career. Inability to cope with difficult people will lead to resentment, anger, frustration, and misunderstanding.

7.4.3 ACCEPT FEEDBACK AND CRITICISM

Feedback should not be a source of stress. Resilient employees are open to constructive criticism from supervisors and experienced coworkers. You should actively solicit feedback from supervisors about how you can improve your work performance and help the organization achieve its goals. You may not always like what supervisors have to say, but it gives you an opportunity to improve your skills and be more successful on the job. When actively soliciting feedback from a supervisor:

- Ask for feedback on your behavior, not your personality.
- Ask for feedback that is descriptive, not judgmental.
- Ask for perceptions, not judgments.
- Ask for feedback about specific actions, not generalities.

Resilient people are attentive to feedback and develop a plan to use it to enhance their performance. If the criticism is accurate, work to correct the problem. If it is not accurate, discuss how the misunderstanding occurred.

7.5 BE ACTION-ORIENTED

Resilient employees take responsibility for their careers by being action-oriented and looking at problems from a different direction, challenge assumptions, push boundaries, and are decisive in taking action.

7.5.1 SOLVE PROBLEMS

Resilient employees make logical, informed decisions and stick with them. No simple step-by-step process that will guarantee you are successful, but the following are a variety of approaches you can try.

- Break big problems into smaller, more-easily-solved problems that build upon each other.
- Brainstorm and list all of the possible solutions no matter how outrageous they seem.
- Stop focusing on the problem and allow the subconscious to work so that the solution will “just come to you” while you work on other things.
- Pose possible solutions to the problem and then try to prove the accuracy of the solutions.
- Work logically by clarifying the problem, analyzing causes of the problem, identifying alternatives, assessing them, choosing, implementing an option, and evaluating the outcome.

7.5.2 MAKE GOOD DECISIONS

Resilient employees are great decision makers with an ability to generate and weigh many alternative solutions and make sound decisions regarding the best plan of action. The decision-making process involves examining what you know, gathering information about what you do not know, and developing a strategy for attaining what you want. Following is an example of an effective decision-making process:

Step 1 – Identify that there is a decision to be made and clearly define the nature of the decision.

Step 2 – Gather relevant information needed to make an effective and timely decision. This information may come from self-analysis, other people, or external resources such as books and videos.

Step 3 – Identify alternatives or paths of action to take based on the information that you have gathered. List all possible and desirable alternatives.

Step 4 – Weigh each alternative you have identified based on the information you have already gathered. You should prioritize each of the alternatives based on the most desirable outcomes for each alternative.

Step 5 – Choose the alternative which provides you with the best possible outcome.

Step 6 – Take action to begin to implement the alternative you chose in the previous step.

Step 7 – Evaluate whether or not your decision has solved the problem you identified in Step 1. If it has, you may choose to stay with this decision. If not, gather more information and begin the process over.

7.6 CHANGE YOUR ATTITUDE

You need to work at developing and maintaining a positive attitude and a strong work ethic. You may think you are a hard worker, but you will now need to show your work ethic to those around you. You can do this by being on time (or even early) and staying late to help others out. You can also choose to volunteer for extra projects and work diligently to complete them on time. You may not always think your supervisor's decisions are the best, but you may not have the "big picture" of the vision of management in the organization. Some other ways to show a positive attitude include:

- Examine yourself to identify mannerism that may negatively affect how others feel about you such as smoking, chewing gum, and using profanity.
- Keep track of assignments, meetings, and appointments.
- Get to know your co-workers on a personal level.
- Be assertive, but avoid conflicts.
- Be honest and direct. Let coworkers know when they do something that bothers you.

7.7 CONCLUSION

Resilience in the occupational dimension involves engaging in work in which you gain personal satisfaction and find enrichment. Occupational development consists of maintaining a positive attitude about the work you do, find ways to effectively balance work, leisure and relationships, and deal with difficult people you encounter in the workplace. Resilient people value the benefits of a diverse workforce, are able to deal with difficult people they encounter, and are willing to take constructive feedback from supervisors and implement the suggestions to enhance their performance and productivity.

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