

Development Suggestions for Resilience

Suggested Readings

Title	Author/Publisher
Watercooler Wisdom: How Smart People Prosper in the Face of Conflict, Pressure, and Change	Bailey, Keith and Karen Leland/2006/ New Harbinger Publications
What's Stopping You: Why Smart People Don't Always Reach Their Potential and How You Can	Kelsey, Robert and Luke Johnson/2011/Capstone
First Things First: To Live, to Love, to Learn, to Leave a Legacy	Covey, Stephen A. and Roger and Rebecca Merrill/ 1996/ Fireside Publishers
Fish Tales	
Building Resiliency: How to Thrive in Times of Change	Mary Lynn Pulley and Michael Wakefield/ Center for Creative Leadership, 2001.

Activities

→Coping with Stress

Recognize and avoid the vicious circle that anxiety and stress can create.

As your anxiety rises beyond an optimal level, it begins to hinder your performance. Poor performance will lead to more anxiety, and a vicious circle can ensue. The most effective way to eliminate this self-defeating cycle is to limit your emotional involvement in stressful situations. Identify and learn to recognize the symptoms of excessive emotional involvement: seek the input of others, and monitor your own behavior. Look for signs such as clenching your fists or your jaw, irritable behavior and a tendency to react too quickly to negative stimuli.

Use coping mechanisms.

Identify and use coping strategies to help you reduce your anxiety level. Some strategies (e.g., pausing to step back from the situation, deep breathing, or taking a short walk) are effective at dealing with acute stressors and the associated anxiety. Others (e.g., physical activity, pursuing hobbies or other outside interests) are effective at coping with the anxiety that can accumulate over the longer term. Use coping mechanisms that work for you.

Aim high and learn from failures.

Acknowledge that everybody fails from time to time. Take comfort and pride in aiming high and working hard to meet those standards, and accept your failures as necessary building blocks for future success, without dwelling on them.

Discuss your worries with someone you trust.

Talking over your problems with a trusted colleague or family member can be a very effective way of relieving stress. At the same time, keeping them to yourself may actually create an additional source of stress. Talk over your worries and do not be afraid to ask for help. When you do so, be careful not to take your anger out on other people.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Should you find yourself confused or overwhelmed by career and/or personal concerns, you might consider seeking the assistance of professionals trained and experienced in dealing with such issues. The EAP is a service available to all employees at no cost. Professional counselors who will help you address problems that can adversely affect job performance, reliability and personal health. A counselor will discuss the problem with you and after helping you determine the problem they may provide short-term counseling. If needed, the counselor will also refer you to other professional services and resources within your community for further information and assistance.

Reduce stress through preparation.

Aim for the best-case scenario while being prepared for the worst. Identify situations that cause stress and list the circumstances that make you feel the most anxiety. Imagine the worst-case scenario, and then identify the method you would use to cope with the stress of that scenario. Then, identify the steps you can take to avoid the stimuli that cause the stress (if possible), and focus on the potential positive outcomes. Develop multiple contingency plans so you are not locked into any single course of action.

Avoid creating rigid systems that are difficult to change. The objective is to design systems that can be constantly adjusted around the changing needs of the organization.

Learn to laugh at yourself.

Learn to take yourself less seriously. For some people, the greatest frustration they experience is directed at their own failure to meet a standard of performance they set for themselves. Maintain a sense of humor and encourage your staff to keep theirs.

Learn from experience.

Debrief projects and other initiatives with your organization regardless of whether they were successes or failures. When goals are achieved, determine what led to success. When projects are less successful, identify problems and how they can be avoided in the future. Share insights and publicize lessons learned throughout your organization. If a situation arises that is similar to the situation in which you experienced a setback, use the knowledge gained previously and attempt to resolve the situation successfully.

Do not dwell on failure or spend time trying to rationalize or blame others.

Instead, identify your role in the reversal or setback, how it could have been avoided, how you will handle similar situations in the future, and move on. Focus on learning from failure by asking yourself what you can learn from such situations and by soliciting feedback from others.

→Maintaining Stamina**Know your limits.**

Recognize when you have reached your limits. It is inevitable that, as a leader, you will be called upon at times to increase your workload to meet heavy demands. The ability to meet those heavy demands requires that you maintain a balanced, healthy perspective on your work, and that you are able to “pace” yourself during periods of lower demand. It is erroneously considered by some to be a “badge of honor” to have worked themselves “into the ground”. Others exceed their limits because they are unable to say “no” to the demands of their job.

Nurture outside interests. In order to maintain a high energy level (which is necessary to both minimize and cope with the inevitable stressors associated with the work performed by leaders), it is important that you nurture outside interests (family, friends, and the non-work activities that give you pleasure), and don't allow your work to dominate your life to the point that it is no longer enjoyable.

Know yourself and your reactions to last minute crises. Build in extra time up front if you are uncomfortable with last minute changes

Set a good example.

Recognize that it is neither effective as a long-term strategy, nor an appropriate example to set, to demonstrate complete disregard for the effects of stress. If leaders do not demonstrate self-preservation, their employees may feel obliged to emulate that behavior.

Develop constructive coping skills, such as time management strategies, reframing issues in cognitive rather than emotional terms, breaking problems down piecemeal, addressing the problem in bits rather than all-at-once.

Resilience Quick Tips

1. Be factual when analyzing setbacks; avoid personalizing the causes of failure.
2. Develop a support system that you can turn to for help with obstacles and setbacks.
3. If you are having trouble reaching a goal, list any obstacles that are impeding you and decide if the obstacle needs to be addressed, or if it will go away if left alone.
4. Break challenging or large tasks into smaller, manageable tasks.
5. Develop interim goals, set timeframes, and force yourself to adhere to the schedule.
6. Make a list of your work activities and keep a record of how much time you spend on each activity for a week. Analyze to see where you are spending your time.
7. Be aware of the goal and what must be accomplished, and accept the goal as something you are willing to work for.
8. If feasible, force yourself to finish a project before moving on to another by establishing short, proximal (rather than distant) deadlines for each of the projects.
9. If you encounter temporary setbacks, analyze the causes of failure and attempt to problem solve around each.
10. Reward yourself for achieving goals.
11. Draw on peers and superiors to understand your strengths and weaknesses as an aspiring leader.
12. Look at issues and problems from all possible angles. Generate a list of alternatives.
13. Make a habit of thinking “outside the box.” Look for novel and nontraditional solutions.
14. Participate actively in professional organizations, and stay current in the professional literature to keep track of the newest developments in your field.
15. Develop multiple contingency plans so that you are not locked into any single course of action.

16. Think about how to use your environment and conditions to your advantage.
17. Keep track of lessons learned; refer to them periodically to reinforce your learning