

Network to Work Meeting

Resource Materials – October 2017

CAREER RESILIENCE

What is Career Resilience?

Career resilience is the ability to adapt well to the stresses, uncertainty and challenges or adversity connected with work-related changes. It is the capacity to adjust in a positive way to new situations as they happen, to roll with the punches, bounce back, and use what life throws at us to make us grow and become stronger. It also means taking ownership of our careers and the ongoing development of characteristics identified with employability – including flexibility, adaptability and agility.

How do you usually respond to situations where you are not in control? We can't normally control the people and events around us, but we can control our ability to respond to the challenges presented. Resilience can help us *feel* more in control, maintain a healthy perspective, be more pro-active in responding to events, and allow us to "take aim" rather than "cast blame".

There are many ways to model and develop career resilience. What is important to remember is that developing resilience is an ongoing process – a way of being over time; it's not a singular response to a single event.

Perspectives on Dealing with Change in the Work Realm

In our work we are generally task oriented, focusing on the things we need to do and the actions we need to take. So when we are dealing with unexpected changes and stressors in our work lives, our tendency is to think about new tasks to do or actions to take, such as updating our resume, networking with our professional contacts, etc. However, we often overlook the emotional impact associated with these changes, which can make it hard for us to move forward.

At times, major career transitions can shake us to our core. We may feel that we are losing or have lost our professional identity and sense of self, of value, of purpose and that we are facing a void where our direction and destination are unknown. This can be extremely unsettling, yet it is often not talked about.

The fact is, significant workplace changes can make us feel alone, isolated, and cause us to face our fears, vulnerabilities, self-doubts, shame and even anger. Ignoring these emotions keeps us stuck in place. So part of developing career resilience is being open to expanding our sense of self – letting go of “what was” in order to be able to move towards “what will be”. It’s somewhat like the caterpillar’s journey to becoming a butterfly – it’s not easy, it takes time, and it’s often “one step forward, two steps back”. The first step is recognizing the reality and importance of this emotional journey and understanding that it shouldn’t be ignored. Then we are able to take steps to help us move forward, beyond the emotions that may keep us stuck.

As mentioned above, one way to move towards a new career identity is to expand and grow our sense of self.

How do we expand and grow our sense of self? It starts with reflection and introspection that helps us to **gain clarity** about who we are, what we want, our gifts and talents, and the ways that we provide value in our work and in our lives. Then, acting on that knowledge, we can set goals and plans for ourselves that align with how we want to use our talents in the workplace. We can begin to see new possibilities for ourselves and different ways to “fit in” professionally.

Tips for Developing Career Resilience

1. Look at changing circumstances with curiosity, optimism and an open mind – seeing it as an opportunity for personal growth that comes from challenge.
2. Focus on reframing a challenging situation in a way that stresses the positive.
3. Think creatively and flexibly, and allow time for reflection to gain new insights and perspectives.
4. Take ownership of your personal and professional development and learning.
5. Strive for your own personal excellence.
6. Visualize a future that reflects your personal goals and the things that lend a sense of meaning and purpose to your activities.
7. Develop meaningful personal and professional relationships that will sustain you in difficult times
8. Practice self-care: eat well, exercise in a way that you enjoy, and spend time with caring friends. This helps us to cope and bring our best self forward.

Adapted From:

<http://blog.careerminds.com/blog/developing-career-resilience-while-in-career-transition>

“Holding Space for Change at Work”, 8/29/2016; Michele Martin, Career Development Facilitator Instructor;

<http://www.michelemmartin.com/thebambooprojectblog/2016/08/on-holding-space-for-change.html>

“As the World of Work Changes, Focus on Developing Career Resilience”, 3/18/2013; Michele Martin, Career

Development Facilitator Instructor; <http://idealisticareers.org/as-the-world-of-work-changes-focus-on-developing-career-resilience/>