

## **Network to Work Meeting – December 2019**

### **RESOURCE DOCUMENT – Career Resilience**

#### ***Understanding Career Resilience***

#### **Traveling the Bumpy Road of our Careers**

In our working lives, most of us we will likely face a number of bumps, hurdles and even adversity along the way, such as:

- Career transition;
- The loss of a job;
- A changing job market requiring new skills and offering fewer opportunities;
- The possibility of layoffs.

These challenges have the potential to knock us for a loop and greatly affect our success in the work world, if we lack the ability to respond in a positive way.

Some people respond to these difficulties by keeping their heads down, trying to plow forward and power through the hurdles, often languishing in negativity.

Others find a way to bounce back in the face of adversity, to pick themselves up and carry on. They are the ones who have career resilience.

#### **Career Resilience – What it is and Why we need it**

Resilience is one's ability to adapt when faced with adversity. Individuals who have career resilience have the skills and positive energy to recover quickly from failure or difficulties – and the attendant emotional distress - and not only return to the status quo but actually use the opportunity to grow and further their professional development. Those with career resilience can ultimately hope to enjoy a balanced, productive and engaging career.

Those who have developed career resilience are:

- Able to respond positively to uncertainty and change as it occurs;
- Able to handle ambiguity;

- Able to be proactive – to take charge of their careers by focusing on ongoing skill development;
- Able to recover when knocked down and to recharge;
- Able to hold an optimistic attitude and be open to learning;
- Able effectively to manage both positive and negative transitions in the workplace.

Those who lack career resilience are more likely to experience:

- Workplace or career burnout;
- Exhaustion;
- Depletion of energy;
- Lack of interest;
- Lack of motivation;
- Lessened ability to develop new workplace skills and abilities;
- Constant frustration;
- Difficulty focusing on work;
- Decreased job satisfaction;
- A corresponding decline in job performance;
- Higher absenteeism;
- Greater vulnerability to illness;
- A decrease in overall well-being.

Career resilience should be recognized as a career competency or skill that is just as important to one’s professional success as other skills such as project or time management, for example.

## ***Fostering Career Resilience***

### **Tips for Developing Career Resilience**

Resilience isn’t an inherent trait that one either has or doesn’t. The path to resilience involves:

- **Resilient Thinking:** How we interpret and frame events significantly affects how we react to them.
- **Effective Relationships:** Close connections and social support are key to developing resilience and adapting to change.
- **Managing Emotions:** Emotions - even intense and negative emotions – are a normal part of life. Learning how to manage and regulate our emotions is an important piece of resilience.
- **Building on Strengths:** Identifying and building on our strengths is a fundamental way to both be our best selves and to develop resilience.

We all can develop resilience at any age, and there are many ways to do it. **Here are some fundamental strategies and tips you can follow to develop career resilience:**

**1. Make connections.**

It is important to have good relationships with close family members, friends or others who care about you and will listen to you. Be willing to accept their help and support. Being active in local, civic or faith-based groups can help you to reclaim hope, as can assisting others in their time of need. The building of strong connections is one of the strongest predictors of how satisfied you will be with your life and career.

**2. Don't look at crises as being insurmountable.**

You can't change the fact that highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to these events. Look to the future to envision how circumstances may be a little better.

**3. Accept that change is a part of living.**

While adverse situations may preclude you from reaching certain goals, accepting that certain things can't be changed can allow you to focus instead on circumstances that you can alter. A sense of curiosity about potential untapped opportunities change offers is also helpful.

**4. Move toward your goals.**

Recognize what you value and what motivates you, and develop some realistic goals to have more of that in your work and life. Take charge of your professional development and become a lifelong learner. Then do something regularly — no matter how small — that enables you to move toward your goals. Ask yourself, "What's one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?"

**5. Take decisive actions.**

When faced with an adverse situation, take whatever decisive actions you can rather than detaching completely and wishing the problems and stresses would just go away.

**6. Look for opportunities for self-discovery.**

In the struggle with adversity and challenge, we can learn things about ourselves that can lead to personal growth. Reflect on your experience to gain broader self-awareness, and challenge yourself to explore and develop new interests and skills.

**7. Nurture a positive view of yourself.**

Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps build resilience. Recognize the strengths that you can call upon to help you confront challenges and difficulties.

**8. Keep things in perspective and maintain a hopeful outlook.**

When facing difficulties and challenges, try to avoid blowing things out of proportion and instead put the situation in a broader, long-term context. Reframe your response to reflect the belief that you do have control over your personal and professional life. Learning to reframe negative experiences into a positive outlook is imperative for successfully moving forward. An optimistic outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life.

**9. Take care of yourself.**

Pay attention to your own needs and feelings, and take part in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Taking care of your physical and mental health helps to keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience.

**10. Cultivate a sense of adventure and be courageous.**

Doing things that scare us is an excellent way not only to neutralize our fears, but also to build self-confidence and resilience.

## **Resilience in the Face of Severe Challenges**

Resilience isn't always easy to develop if the hurdles along the way have been severe. Clinical psychologist Meg Jay describes resilience as a heroic struggle – an ongoing process that is more of a battle than a bounce. This is because each of us - in our unique complexity - responds to change and challenge differently. Others may not always appreciate how difficult the response has been for you. She offers these essential tips for becoming more resilient:

**1. First, recognize that your struggle is valid, no matter with what you are struggling.**

Don't be ashamed of what makes you stressed. Some people may say, 'Well, I wasn't in a war'; but even the most common work adversities faced by most of us are legitimate and chronic stressors.

**2. Then, realize the ways you are already resilient.**

Most of us have been through challenging situation and probably already know something about being resilient. So, ask yourself: What were the three toughest times in my life? How did I get through those things?

**3. Don't wait for the situation to fix itself.**

Resilient people tend to be active in how they choose to cope with a situation, asking themselves, 'What am I going to do about this?' Those who lack resilience instead tend to think, 'When will I be released from this?' Every problem can be addressed somehow, even if the solution takes time.

**4. Know your strengths and use them.**

Generally speaking, resilient people use the strengths they have to get through difficult circumstances. This could be their intelligence, their personality, their work ethic, a particular skill, etc.

5. **Don't try to do it alone.**

Resilient people seek the support of caring family, friends, or professionals to help them navigate adversity. They allow themselves to need others. They get out there and feel like there are people who see them, understand them and care.

6. **Find your favorite way to take a mental break.**

You may not be able to fix a problem right away, but you can protect yourself from feeling overwhelmed by it. Read a book, or dive into your hobbies, or hang out with your friends, and turn off the news alerts on your phone. This allows you to take a mental break from a situation you cannot solve overnight. There is a lot in the world right now that feels overwhelming. Resilient people fight back where they can, but they also learn to take a mental break.

7. **Be compassionate with yourself and realize all the ways adversity has made you strong.**

People who face some adversity in their lives become stronger, although they may not always recognize this. By learning to cope with stress and having that experience, we gain confidence and preparation that will serve us in the future. So, focus on the resilience and see yourself as someone who is even better prepared for life than others because you've already lived so much of it.

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**Adapted from:**

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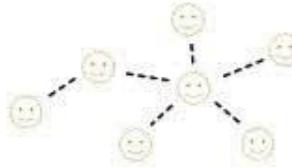
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# Ten Ways to Build Resilience Infographic

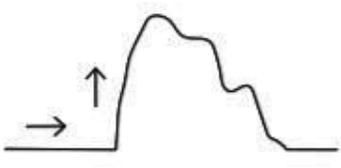
**Ψ 10 Ways to Develop Resilience**

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**1. Make connections and build your social support network.**



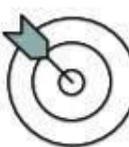
**2. Avoid the tendency to view crises as insurmountable challenges.**



**3. Accept that change is a natural and unavoidable part of life.**



**4. Move towards your realistic goals.**



**5. Take decisive action that will help you face your challenges.**



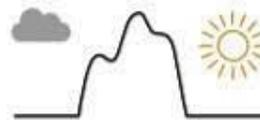
**6. Look for opportunities that promote self-discovery.**



**7. Nurture a positive view of yourself and your abilities.**



**8. Keep things in perspective and in context.**



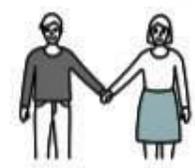
**9. Maintain a hopeful outlook on life.**



**10. Take care of yourself.**



**Four Themes of Resilience training:**

Resilient Thinking	Effective Relationships	Managing Emotions	Building on Strengths
			

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