



Network to Work Meeting

November 2021

RESOURCE DOCUMENT – *CAREER RESILIENCE*

Career Resilience during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Career Resilience during Covid-19

Resilience is the process of adapting and persisting when confronted with challenges. Covid 19 and its accompanying fatigue anxieties, fears and physical isolation have put our capacity for resilience to the test. People are feeling increased levels of worry and stress about their careers and job security, about going into the community to look for new jobs, about returning to their physical work places and training sites, and just in general being around people in the office or community.

Now more than ever it is important to understand how Covid is affecting our resilience and our career resilience and to learn some strategies to bolster our resilience.

As Covid-19 has dominated the news and social media, we have all seen and experienced the parallel and unavoidably painful spread of worry, anxiety and instability. Much of the anxiety is due to things we can't control, such as severe illness and death, travel restrictions, training site closures, supply shortages, etc.

These worries and anxieties then do a number on our minds, which naturally tend to get distracted anyway. Distractions become obsessions: *Will I get sick; will my family members get sick; will I be able to buy necessities; will I be able to return to training; will life ever return to normal?* This emotional and psychological response to the Covid crisis is very human and natural. But as this distress clutters our minds, it also hinders our ability to clearly see a healthy course of action forward. Our vision of what is possible narrows so that we can't recognize and consider creative options available to us. We lose touch with an important strategy for remaining resilient.

Covid has also made people feel increasingly afraid and helpless. For so many it triggers the worst possible fears and suspicious about other people. Perspectives become distorted and shut down our capacity to connect with others, thereby robbing us of another crucial condition

for maintaining resilience. In the face of such worry, suspicion and fear, the natural impulse is to isolate ourselves. Unfortunately, this isolation only serves to make our worries and fears seem that much worse.

However, despite all that is happening, we do still have the capacity to choose and control our reactions and responses. The following strategies are just some that can be chosen to help us overcome harmful and limiting fears, restore ourselves and develop career resilience.

Strategies for Developing Career Resilience

There are a wide variety of approaches to developing career resilience put forward by experts in the field. We're going to look at just a few:

1. **Calm and clear your mind.** This allows you to pay better attention to what is really going on around you and what you are feeling within. Then you can observe and manage your thoughts and emotions and stop them before they start running away towards doomsday scenarios. You can focus on what you choose to focus on. Doing this keeps your mind from wandering and builds a muscle of resilience that keeps serving us in the future. The practice of bringing ourselves back to the present moment deepens our capacity to cope and weather all sorts of crises, whether global or personal.
2. **Disconnect from the swirl of bad news by spending time reflecting.** For example, rather than sitting with uncomfortable emotions, look out the window or focus on an image or item that pleases you. This can make you feel more stable, and from there good ideas and planning to meet your challenges can emerge.
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. Also, try being curious about potential untapped opportunities that might now be available to you.
4. **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.
5. **Take care of yourself.** Pay attention to your own needs and feelings, and do things 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. *See the Self-care and Resilience Plan, below.*

6. **Reach out and connect with others through compassion and empathy.** It is important to have good relationships with family members, friends or others who care about and listen to you. Having these connections, getting involved in outside activities and accepting social support are crucial for our well-being and our resilience. These connections, and participating in activities where we are assisting others in need, can help us to find hope in challenging circumstances.

Unfortunately, efforts to contain the spread of Covid have closed off many of the circles of community that usually provide support in times of stress. Schools and public buildings are shut down, events have been cancelled, and businesses have enacted work-from-home policies and travel bans. As mentioned above, the result of this is a ***growing sense of isolation and separation from the people and groups who can best quell our fears and anxieties.***

The present climate of fear creates stigmas and judgments about who is to blame and who is to be avoided. Many adopt an “every person for him/herself” mindset and behaviors. When this happens, ***it is easy to forget our shared vulnerability and interdependence.***

However, even while social distancing, it is possible for meaningful connection to occur, and one way to make this happen is to hold a mindset of compassion. Compassion is the intention to be of benefit to others and it starts by considering each day this one question while connecting — virtually and in person — with others: ***“How can I help this person to have a better day?”***

With that simple question, the mind begins expanding, the eyes open to who and what is really in front of us, and we see possibilities for ourselves and others that are rich with hope and ripe with opportunity. These are all fuel for personal and career resilience.

Resilience Guides

Create a Self-care and Resilience Plan:

Self-care and Resilience

When life gets busy and our sense of well-being and balance is affected, we often forget to take care of ourselves or we look for quick fixes or solutions to problems. Building self-care into your daily or weekly routine can greatly improve resilience and prevent burnout.

Create a self-care and resilience plan: Use this worksheet to map out how and when to use these self-care practices and resilience building strategies. Identify what you need support with and find people and resources that can support you. Take time to discover these supports now so they will be easier to access when you actually need them.

Put a checkmark next to the items that you think might be helpful and that you are willing to try. Pick some key ones for you – many strategies may look interesting but focus on those you feel you will have time to work on and incorporate them into your daily or weekly routines:

- Write in a journal
- Volunteer for a cause meaningful to you
- Make a gratitude list
- Take a fresh air break
- Meditate or listen to guided visualization
- Cuddle with pets
- Treat yourself to a nice meal
- Take a nap
- Listen to music
- Practice yoga
- Lay in the grass
- Photography
- Read a good book
- Write a blog
- Spend time outdoors, if possible
- Go for a drive
- Exercise
- Join an online social club
- Listen to enjoyable podcasts or videos
- Turn off electronic devices
- Have a movie marathon
- Play a game
- Dance
- Wear something that makes you feel confident
- Join an online support group
- Have a virtual game night with friends
- Work in the garden
- Get creative: draw, paint, write a song, or cook a new meal
- Try a new hobby
- Have an adventure day
- Creative arts
- Spend time with your children – read to them, listen to their laughter, play with them, etc.
- Create a poster with images of a positive vision
- Nutrition – increase healthy food choices

Source: Adapted from Self-care starter kit, Homewood Health

Understand the levels and elements of resilience and the Resilience Pyramid:



Adapted from:

Build Your Resilience in the Face of a Crisis by Rasmus Hougaard, Jacqueline Carter, and Moses Mohan, Harvard Business Review, March 19, 2020. <https://hbr.org/2020/03/build-your-resiliency-in-the-face-of-a-crisis>

The Working Mind; Self-care and Resilience; https://theworkingmind.ca/sites/default/files/twm_self-care-resilience-guide.pdf

Building Resilience, Cornell University / Cornell Health. <https://health.cornell.edu/resources/health-topics/building-resilience>