

THRIVE

enmasse

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN YOUR TEAM

Team resilience can be an elusive quality to build and maintain, particularly during periods of stress or change. Fortunately there are some aspects of resilience that can be taught. Here are some ways you can lead by example when it comes to resilience building.

WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

Resilience is the ability to 'bounce back' from challenging experiences. Being resilient does not mean that we never feel upset or lack in coping skills – it's about being able to recover. In a workplace context, being resilient is often associated with managing change. So resilience is also about positive adaptation, or the ability to maintain or regain mental health, despite experiencing adversity.¹

Factors that can influence resilience within individuals include:

- genetics
- life experiences
- individual development
- levels of optimism
- financial and social or cultural position in society
- available social supports.

Other influences, which are more specific to the workplace include:

- alignment with organisations values and mission
- perceived levels of collegial support
- positive relationship with manager
- our mindset while at work
- our ability to play to our strengths
- how successful we feel professionally

BUILDING RESILIENCE AT WORK

As a manager it is very important that you remain mindful of your actions and understand that you have a significant impact on your work environment. Rather than focusing only on how the workplace impacts you, consider what you say, how you behave and how the decisions you make impact others (e.g. how you choose to allocate and organise work within your team).

Resilience is an important personal characteristic in the management of professional and organisational workplace stress.² It's easy to appear resilient when things are going well and people do not feel under pressure. We tend to notice just how resilient our team actually is, when things go wrong. Next time difficulties arise, step back and take the time to observe how people react – are they more likely to blame each other, compete against one another, revert to the old ways of doing things, problem solve collaboratively or support one another?

Rather than automatically stepping in to solve the problems, encourage them to come up with solutions. Talk the process over with the team afterwards and help them raise their awareness about how things are dealt with and areas for improvement. Tell them clearly what you expect them to do (e.g. pull together and think flexibly) when things don't go to plan, and avoid apportioning blame or being punitive.

As a leader it's important to:

- consciously observe our own behaviour in various situations, noting the impact we have on people and the way things play out
- show genuine empathy for others we deal with – tune in to what its like from their perspective
- be receptive to feedback from trusted family members, friends, and colleagues

- ❑ listen to what people have to say, without becoming defensive
- ❑ try to think in new flexible ways without fear of failure.

To build a more resilient team you can:

- ❑ make sure your team take some time out to relax and talk together
- ❑ encourage a connected environment where your colleagues can seek support from others – resilient people are very rarely isolated people
- ❑ aim for a diverse team where differences are celebrated and people play to their strengths
- ❑ break issues into bite-sized chunks and deal with things together one step at a time, making sure everyone is involved in the process
- ❑ leave them alone in meetings at times and encourage them to use their problem-solving skills – pros and cons, brainstorming, listing multiple options, etc
- ❑ help people take control of their individual problems rather than fixing them for them
- ❑ help your team find a sense of meaning in their work – ask them what they like best in their role and pass on feedback from others so they feel appreciated
- ❑ evaluate situations together in a realistic and accurate way, avoid catastrophising issues
- ❑ set an example by remaining flexible and learning to accept compromises
- ❑ help your team manage change, discuss fears and challenges and give them maximum choices

- ❑ if there is a barrier or challenge that may not be removable, share it with the team to keep them informed and so together you can accept the issue and work out the way forward
- ❑ encourage your team to reflect on how they have coped with adversity before, highlight these and re-apply any effective techniques.

FOR INFORMATION AND SUPPORT AT TELSTRA

- 📍 Thrive
thrive.inside.telstra.com
- 📍 Work Life Coaching (EAP)
<http://www.in.telstra.com.au/ism/hse/eap.asp>
- 📞 HR Direct 1800 030 303

REFERENCES

1. Herrman, H., Stewart, D., Diaz-Granados, N., Berger, E., Jackson, B., & Yuen, T. 'What Is Resilience?' in, Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, 56(5), 258-265, 2011, viewed on November 27, 2011 from Health Module. (Document ID: 2380034231).
2. Grafton, E., Gillespie, B., & Henderson, S. 'Resilience: The Power Within' in Oncology Nursing Forum, 37(6), 698-705, 2010, viewed on November 27, 2011 from ProQuest Health and Medical Complete. (Document ID: 2192251361).

