

Top tips for Developing Personal Resilience

How well each of us copes in the face of adversity depends on how resilient we are and how we manage uncertainty. While some people are naturally more resilient than others, the good news is that it is something that can be developed and improved.

- **Stay positive**

When things don't go according to plan, maintaining a positive mental attitude can make all the difference. Accepting that uncertainty and change are part of life, and focusing on what you can do about your situation, rather than what you can't, will help you to better cope.

- **Take control**

In testing times it can be easy to become overwhelmed by the different issues that you face. Try breaking complex issues down into smaller components and tackling these one at a time. Talking things through with a trusted colleague or friend can often help you get things straight in your own mind, and focus on the most important issues at hand.

- **Maintain perspective**

When working through a difficult issue or situation it is all too easy to get caught up in the detail. Developing a sense of perspective will help you to stay focused on the bigger picture. Remind yourself of what you are trying to achieve, that the challenges you are facing are only temporary and try to imagine how you will feel when you have worked things through.

- **Give yourself a break**

When something goes wrong it's important not to beat yourself up about it. While it's useful to reflect on what you could have done better, try to resist the temptation to dwell on it too long. It's how you learn from your own experience and apply that learning to a variety of contexts that really counts. Remember too that what you learn from coping with issues and challenges at home can often be applied to situations at work and vice versa.

- **Seek new challenges**

Coping with the unexpected can be unsettling, as it can take you out of your comfort zone. Putting yourself forward for new challenges, projects or tasks, however, can help develop your resilience over time. It can build confidence in your ability to handle uncertainty, solve problems and develop coping strategies for when the going gets tough.

- **Ask for help**

Being resilient doesn't have to mean struggling with problems on your own. In fact, the most resilient people are those who know who to ask for help and when. Building a network of trusted people whose opinions you value, and who can offer you all kinds of support, can be invaluable in helping you to become more resilient at work.

- **Help out others**

Strange though it may seem, offering to help colleagues, friends or others through difficult times can also help you build your own resilience levels. This is due in part to exposing you to a range of different problems and situations which you can reflect on in future. It can also encourage you to take a step back when facing problems of your own, by considering 'what would I advise my colleague/friend to do if they were in my situation?'

- **Be yourself**

An essential part of developing personal resilience is knowing your limitations as well as your strengths. It's not about trying to be superhuman. It's more about being self-aware and

understanding how you respond to different situations and why. That's not to say that you can't learn from others about resilience – indeed it can be extremely useful to observe and learn from those people around you who are particularly resilient – but a large part of developing your own resilience levels is finding out what works for you.

- **Maintain your energy levels**

While challenging circumstances may require you to work harder, you need to be able to recharge your batteries. This may mean trying to get more sleep or scheduling time for some exercise. When our energy reserves run low, we tend to think and work less effectively, and can get caught in a cycle of doing more but achieving less. Ignore the warning signs of fatigue and you will put yourself at risk of burn-out. Instead, consider working in short sharp bursts if circumstances allow, to optimise your energy levels.

- **Manage stress**

A certain degree of stress can be useful, helping push us to find a solution or to meet a tight deadline. Too much stress, however, can have the opposite effect. Being resilient means reflecting on past experience to identify your own particular pressure points, and finding ways to alleviate them. This might be as simple as taking time out with a walk round the block, or making time for activities you enjoy outside of work.

- **Assess your resilience levels**

If you have experienced major setbacks, you may feel you have a good sense of your own resilience levels. But for many people it can be hard for them to judge their own resilience. In either case, it is good to have something to benchmark yourself against. There are several good, robust resilience questionnaires out there to help you to do this. These include the iResilience report. Even simply discussing your resilience with a trusted colleague or friend can help to give you valuable insight into how well you bounce back from adversity.