

Resilience



"Things don't always necessarily happen for the best - but you can always make the best of things that happen."

There are very few of us who have escaped difficulties of one kind or another. Whether it is the illness of a loved one, losing our wallet missing our bus to work, misfortune has happened to humans since we first started walking. Some of us give in to our problems and some of "bounce back". What is it that makes the difference - RESILIENCE.

It is our level of RESILIENCE that determines whether we bounce back. We know resilience is important in our personal life, but research in 2010 by global consulting firm Accenture reports that more than two-thirds of global corporate leaders say that "resilience is "very important" or "extremely important" in today's workplace in determining who to retain."

When things go wrong - loss of health, job, relationships, savings, or even when we lose hope in a brighter future - it can be an opportunity to learn effective strategies for coping. Difficult times can break us, but they can also make us. Resilience is the key and is defined as the "positive behaviour we show when facing adversity that allows us to bounce back." Research shows us that focusing on strengths, optimism, gratitude, and a positive perspective can help build self-leadership, engagement, productivity and ultimately - resilience and happiness

Resilience to events has been likened to elasticity in metals. For example, cast iron is hard, brittle, and breaks easily (not resilient), whereas wrought iron is soft, malleable, and bends without breaking (resilient). How can you become soft metal instead of brittle metal?

Research in Positive psychology shows us that cultivating the qualities of optimism, zestfulness, an energetic approach to life, curiosity, openness to new experiences, and focusing on positive emotions can build our resilience. Professor Barbara Frederickson of University of North Carolina has received numerous honours for her research on positive emotions and human flourishing and her "broaden-and-build theory" helps us understand how to build a resilient mindset. She shows us how negative emotions narrow our thought-action repertoire e.g., attack when angry, escape when afraid. In contrast positive emotions (e.g., joy, contentment, interest) broaden our thought-action repertoire, expanding the range of behaviors that build our resilience.

So when you are feeling down because of the colleague's thoughtlessness or because your boss has just given you extra targets its how you think about what happens which is the key. Once you begin to think negative thoughts it begins a downward spiral that can negatively impact the rest of the day, and even impacts your cardio-vascular system. On the other hand positivity limits negative thoughts and begins the process of "broaden and build" which strengthens resilience.

Probably the most important area where resilience can help is the "hot" topic of Productivity. An enabling environment, a supportive leader, working with a skilled team are all important for building productivity, but maybe the key factor is a resilient mind-set.