

BUILDING YOUR EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE

Stress related absence has increased over the past year (CIPD 2010), suggesting we all need to look after ourselves and ensure we're 'Emotionally Resilient' - maintaining our personal well-being, task-focus and productivity during difficult times. Some characteristics of resilience are biologically based, enabling people to cope more effectively with the stresses life throws at us. Despite this, we can all improve our ability to perform under pressure.

There are 5 key elements of 'Emotional resilience' that you can use to fortify your inner strength... **Vision, Relationships, Problem Solving, Organisation and Self Confidence.**

Vision - Be clear about what you are aiming for personally and professionally. The clearer your goals then the easier it will be for you to keep them on track in the face of adversity. Goals help us to maintain our direction even when everything else around us is changing and unstable.

Action - Review what you want from your life/career and have a plan to achieve these goals. Ensure that you retain your focus on them, particularly when times are hard. This will help ensure that you do not become overwhelmed and that you continue to work towards what is important to you.

Relationships - Good relationships are essential to health and well-being and can mediate the impact of stress. We all need someone that we can talk to about the things that trouble us whether it is someone in the workplace or someone at home.

Action - Review your current network and identify which relationships are helpful and supportive and which are not. Do you have someone that you can talk to about any concerns that you may have? Is there someone in the workplace who could act as a Mentor for you? If there is no-one that you feel that you can share your thoughts and concerns with, then keep a daily journal/diary. Seeing our concerns written down can help us to put them into perspective and recognise any faulty logic.

Problem solving - When we are under stress, we can often react emotionally to problems and fail to adopt our usual evaluative approach. This

can lead to poorer decision making and a reduction in the quality of our performance.

Action - Ensure that you take the time to weigh up all the pros and cons when you are faced with a decision and avoid 'knee jerk' emotional reactions. Taking a logical, structured approach will help you solve even the most difficult of problems and will help to build your confidence.

Organisation - Needless to say, time management and being organised is very important in most professional roles. Being a good time manager also helps to keep our stress levels under control and avoids the fatigue that results when deadlines are left to the last minute and a gargantuan effort is required to meet them.

Action - Plan your time effectively and in advance. Look at your overall deadlines and what has to be achieved. Is it realistic? Make sure that you have a plan to make these things happen and that you have allocated sufficient time.

Self confidence - We all tend to engage in faulty logic to some extent and this can often become more extreme when we are under pressure. This can make us feel more vulnerable and lacking in confidence.

Action - Think about how you respond to negative situations. Do you respond in a logical manner? Do you blame yourself when things go wrong or do you blame everyone else? When things do not go to plan, try not to look for someone

to blame, instead, take control and focus on your specific behaviours. Think about any ways in which your behaviour contributed to things not going well and think about what you might do differently in the future. Write yourself a few positive affirming statements and repeat them to yourself throughout the day e.g. "I am confident and professional". "I am good at what I do". "I can solve any problem that arises". Over time you will find that these simple statements, repeated often, will boost your confidence.

Coping Mechanisms - There are some basic coping mechanisms that you can use to ensure that you are in the best shape to cope with the stresses and strains of daily life.

Action - Identify the specific factors that threaten your personal wellbeing and emotional resilience. Listen to your body and learn to recognise when your stress levels are rising, and take action to manage your stress. Try to ensure that you get a reasonable amount of sleep. Eat healthily and drink (alcohol) moderately. Try to take regular exercise. Practice a relaxation technique, such as deep breathing.

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