

Resilience – what does it mean to you?



Resilience is a word that comes up in the corporate world now more than ever. So, what does it really mean? Some people love the metaphor 'Weebles wobble but they don't fall down!' This is a great way of reminding yourself that resilience is all about bouncing back, having a wobble maybe, but never falling down. I was discussing resilience with a number of people at work this week and that inspired me to pen down some thoughts and tips that have worked for me and helped me bounce back after wobbles.

Strong foundations: What I mean by this is to make sure you're getting the right food, exercise and sleep always to make sure that you're building a strong foundation for yourself. Our body and mind are made up of what we put inside our mouths! So, it is worth asking yourself, are you putting the right things in? A few years ago, I tried some experiments wherein I ate what we class as 'comfort foods' (i.e., chips, pastries, naughty stuff) and noted down how I felt at the end of the weeks. Then I swapped and did a week or so of healthy diet. The difference was very noticeable. I felt much better and coped better with the vagaries of life when I ate healthy. Ditto for sleep and exercise. My conclusion for myself - you must find a way of creating routines and a support system where you always have healthy food at hand, a regular exercise regime and prioritise sleep to look after yourself and build a strong foundation. This isn't something you do only when feeling a bit down - it's something you always do and that will help you bounce back quicker. Yes, the odd occasion of having a treat or staying awake late is fine - but it's just that, the odd occasion.

Time to think: We live in a busy world! There is information overload everywhere you see. So, how do you make the time to think if you're busy filling every spare moment with news, games, TV, emails and other 'stuff'. Using metaphors again, do you ever wonder why a bottle of bubbly has a bit of free space inside? If we don't give ourselves space and keep ourselves constantly busy (whether it's at



work or outside), we don't have the space for our thoughts to bubble up and down. We will then just overflow or explode - neither is pretty. Keeping a little 'me-time' in a week, where you can be yourself without any distractions (i.e., no social media, no electronics) is critical. Some people meditate and this is fantastic. But even if you find meditation difficult, just clear space for yourself - take a walk-in nature and just be! Gives you the space for your thoughts to bubble up and down like fine champagne.

Breaking the vicious cycle: But what if one day you do feel overwhelmed, stressed out, unable to cope? If you do recognise it, great, that's the first step. Then acknowledge it. Then find a way of breaking that cycle. How? By removing yourself physically and mentally away from the place it's happening. For me, I need to commune with nature - so clear your diary (even if it is only for 1 hour) and go out. Just be. And if that doesn't help, you may want to take a slightly longer break. Remember that coming back stressed out into a work environment, at breakpoint, doesn't do anyone any favours. I've tried - and remember the results with regret. Ideally, find a way of recognising it (there are always tell-tale signs) when it starts - then a small break will help you re-centre and get back to your best self (especially if you've been already building strong foundations).

Oh, and check - do you have sufficient breaks regularly? And one of my ex-bosses always told me to build in enough holidays and plans that you can look forward to in your life. All work and no play and all that!

A higher purpose: Finally, having a higher purpose for your life and yourself is a good way of making sure you can stay resilient. Having this purpose clearly articulated for yourself and even written down (in words or pictures) will help you re-centre yourself when it all gets too much. This purpose can be your guiding light when you feel overwhelmed - and helps you remind yourself that what's happening now is very insignificant in your grand purpose in life.

Just a few things that have worked for me. Some years ago, if you asked me what development did I need in my business life, I'd have said resilience. I have been working on it for years and I feel I have a formula now that works for me. I would love to hear about your formulae and tips on how you cope with the vagaries of life! A little stress is essential to have a fulfilling life. Stress should stimulate - and if it doesn't, then it's getting to burn out and we need to step out to recalibrate!