11 Tips to Build Emotional Resilience

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There is no playbook for preserving emotional health during a pandemic, and people all around the world are struggling. Every leader has faced moments of crisis both large and small. Meanwhile, the end of the global lockdown feels a long way off. As disruption to our daily routines continues, workers and leaders alike might experience shifting emotions, feelings of irritability and awareness of disconnection. Whether it is trying work remotely while kids are screaming in the next room or dealing with the loss of a job, everyone’s inner resources are being stretched.

Building emotional resilience helps leaders draw on their inner strengths to learn, rebound and develop new coping strategies. Emotional resilience can be cultivated, but it demands time and commitment. By taking steps each day to build up emotionally resilient muscles, you can restore equilibrium, make deposits in your resilience bank account, and become a better leader through this crisis and into the future.

1. Put your oxygen mask on first

When under prolonged stress and fatigue, judgment, strategic thinking and rationality can deteriorate and cloud decisions. People can have trouble concentrating, and they can feel unfocused or adrift when confronted with multiple cycles of updates and uncertainty. Fatigue can have a real impact, so

leaders must take care of themselves first. As we are reminded on every airline flight, in order to be able to care for others, you must first care for yourself.

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2. Own your negative thoughts

Anxious thoughts and feelings are common during a crisis. Rather than pushing them away or escaping them, accept them. Avoiding negative emotions only makes them stronger and longer lasting. If you want to take power away from a negative thought, practice mindfulness. Notice the negative emotions and sensations as they come up, observe them with curiosity, name them without judgment and then let them go.

3. Share personal impact stories

Though leaders usually have to contain their emotions to lead organizations through a crisis, the suppression of feelings can impact effectiveness. Employees who are struggling with fear and uncertainty might speculate as to whether their leaders are experiencing the same challenges. One way to show empathy toward employees is to share your emotions and personal impact stories.

In a video message to Nestle employees, CEO Mark Schneider acknowledged the impact on him and his family and explained how the company was doing its best to navigate uncharted waters. Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella has spoken about his personal anxieties surrounding his 23-year-old son, Zain, who is a legally blind quadriplegic with cerebral palsy. He has said that one of the best ways he has found to deal with his anxiety is to focus on what he can do each day to make a small difference.

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4. Lead your wellness

Taking a whole-person approach to self-care when it comes to your body, mind and spirit can minimize your susceptibility to illness and strengthen your resilience. Stick to the basics, like sleep and exercise. Consistently go to bed at the same time every night, and remove technology from your bedroom. Additionally, stop scrolling social media for at least an hour before you go to sleep to improve your sleep quality. Regular exercise increases resilience capacity, and laughter has been shown to have psychological benefits.

5. Rebalance quickly

Practicing mindfulness regularly can assist you in finding critical levels of inner calm and strength to confront external challenges. The more you practice, the more you allow yourself to stay in the moment, building your emotional resilience. Plenty of apps offer simple but powerful mind-training exercises that can increase your ability to focus and be present.

6. Reflect often

Harvard Business Review recommends self-reflection as a crucial strategy to building emotional resilience. Reflection can be a circuit breaker to frustration, disappointment and fear. When leaders are in crisis, they can make poor decisions and overreact. By stepping into a self-reflective moment, clearer answers can better emerge.

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7. Embrace optimism

Optimism is linked to resilience. Adopting a positive outlook while wrestling with your inner pessimist can tangible benefits, including better performance at work, better health and improved quality of life. Optimism isn’t an all-encompassing solution, but it can prompt you to lead with empathy and ask, “How can l help this person to have a better day?” Imagine the richness of opportunities and sense of hope you can bring to the workplace every day with that outlook.

8. Lean on your support system

Prioritizing relationships and connecting with people who are empathetic and understanding remind you that you are not alone. Personal contact is valuable and precious, but it’s not as readily possible now. To build psychological resilience and strengthen your sense of belonging, set up regular communications and connections with peer groups.

9. Make a one-on-one investment

Building emotional capital is just as necessary as growing your bank account. Research has shown that individual coaching can be an effective way to access resiliency methods, improve productivity, strengthen engagement and build emotional resilience.

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