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## Leadership Essentials

# Resilience

Achieving leaders are resilient



## What is Resilience?

**Resilience means having the ability to bounce back from adversity and there is a lot of interest in the concept at the moment, not only within business but also within the public-sector environment as well. This is because mental resilience is thought to help people to thrive in our increasingly fast-paced, modern workplaces. Sally Percy (2019)**

### Individual Traits

A widely understood idea of resilience is that it is an enduring individual trait, i.e. some people are born resilient, whilst others are not. Psychologists suggest that resilient individuals can bounce back from hardships by 'repairing' themselves because they have innate traits that enable them to do so. Exploring this further, some developmental psychologists argue that resilient individuals are able to maintain a strong sense of self in spite of any adversity they may face. More recently, research has focused on trying to understand why two individuals with the same talent, intelligence and resources may respond differently to adverse events over time. This has led to the idea that some individuals possess a trait that has been called 'grit'.

### Grit

Grit is the perseverance and passion that motivates an individual to stay focused on achieving long term goals over a sustained period of time. Resilience requires optimism to continue after adverse events, but grit is the motivational drive to keep going with a difficult task over a sustained period of time. In this sense resilience and grit are connected, but are not the same. Resilient individuals, particularly those with 'grit' have also been found to have developed a positive mindset, where challenge is perceived as an opportunity to learn rather than an obstacle that must be overcome.

### A Positive Mindset

Positive mindsets are characterised by constructive thoughts and behaviours that can be seen through an individual's persistence to achieve a goal. Researchers suggest that there are four factors that characterise positive mindsets:

Beliefs about themselves which are positive and motivational	Goals that reflect deep passions within themselves	Social connectedness is a positive and affirming experience	Skills which enable them to stay motivated
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As a leader you may recognise these traits in yourself and members of your team. However, not all members of your team may have resilience, grit, or a positive mindset.

### Resilient Teams

A group of resilient workers may not necessarily create a resilient team because individual and team resilience are not the same. Resilience is recognisable in teams where there are high levels of team cohesion and creativity. A resilient team provides support to each other and there is trust between the members of the team. Resilient teams collectively respond well to adverse events, although the relationship between an adverse event and team resilience is complex. For example, an increase in job demands across the team may induce stress and hamper positive emotions, which can decrease team resilience. If the increase in the team's workload is short in duration however, this can lead to a sense of accomplishment, and produce a feeling of well being and resilience. It is therefore possible to develop a resilient team through your leadership interventions. This includes:

- Using language that encourages perseverance and praises effort
- Strengthening and growing positive mindsets amongst team and groups, focusing on the passions people have in the team to achieve their goals and recognising their perseverance

- Being flexible and creative, demonstrating how challenges that emerge are opportunities for learning
- Being purposeful with yourself and others, setting small goals to achieve larger goals to keep motivation high
- Reflecting on what you and others are achieving and recognising progress and achievements. Let these inform what you plan to happen next

## Crisis Management

Resilience amongst individuals and teams can really be tested where there is a crisis. A crisis is a situation where there is a sudden, significant or unplanned event that disrupts normal activities. Individuals with different levels of resilience may need to draw on the strength of the team to cope with adversity, change or challenging situations.

You can demonstrate your resilience at times of crisis by preparing yourself and others for rapid change by drawing on a range of strategies that help you and your team to respond urgently to change. This might include using the strengths of those team members with grit to support you to work with the rest of the team to see through any changes that are needed. Any key messages you communicate from the crisis, and actions that need to be taken, need to be conveyed to individuals and team in terms that are motivating and reflect a positive mindset. You may wish to provide extra support to individuals that you are aware could struggle with the crisis and you can tailor change messages that clearly state how the changes will meet their needs, as well as business goals. Make your analysis of the situation positive for team learning and identify further learning opportunities, to build individual and team resilience.

Compensatory factors such as 'grit' make crisis management with individuals with this trait easier to manage, as such individuals have the experience and tenacity to adapt well. Where you have less experienced individuals, they may struggle so a focus on adapting and learning, will increase their resilience for any future crisis. For less resilient inexperienced individuals there may be a greater need for protection. These needs can be identified through appraisal and performance management processes, generating training and development needs to enable the individual to respond positively to change, whether it is a crisis or not.

## Top tips for building resilience in self and others:

- Recognise that resilience, grit and positive mindsets can be developed
- Role model resilience, grit and a positive mindset through the work you do everyday, but also when there is a need to adapt to new circumstances quickly, and encourage others to do the same
- Keep the messages to your team positive, and reward determination and perseverance as well as the achievement of personal and business goals
- Consider the work everyone is engaged in as opportunities for learning and development, and encourage staff to take on new challenges
- Access supportive networks to get the support you need, and encourage your team to support each other, particularly if members of the team appear to be struggling
- Ensure that you and your team members are not succumbing to stress, which can undermine well-being. Allow yourself and team members time for recovery and opportunities to reflect when needed
- Stay open to feedback and encourage collective solutions to problems. This will support team cohesiveness, and resilience

**'If I only had one strength that I could choose, I would choose resilience. Resilience is the shock absorber for tough times, and there surely will be tough times occasionally. The only people who don't experience bumpy waters are people who are not doing anything.'**

Jill Griffin (2019)

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