

Resilience

Resilience is defined as the capacity to recover quickly from setbacks. In psychology, it psychological resilience is the ability to mentally or emotionally cope with a crisis or quickly return to pre-crisis status quickly. Specifically, a person is considered resilient when they are able to use processes and behaviors to protect from the negative effects of stress.

Now that you have a basic understanding of when resilience is, what does it look like? Resilience is not only being able to recover quickly from setbacks, but it is also seen in those people who remain calm during incredibly stressful events. Often, we can see this in first responders and others who are able to think incredibly clearly throughout an event where others may panic. Additionally, these are people who are able to move on from those events without long-term negative effects.

This does not mean that people will never experience stress or will not experience negative consequences from highly stressful situations. This means that these people are less likely to experience long-term negative consequences and are more likely to deal with the issue, then move on to whatever is next. So, what happens when that stressful situation is ongoing or persistent? There are many examples of these types of situations, it can be a chronic illness, or a divorce, or sometimes raising a teenager, or even a pandemic. In these situations, we see something called resilient agility emerge.

A person who is agile is able to move quickly and easily through challenges. They are able to think on their feet and understand situations and problems quickly. Resilience and agility are quite inter-related and can be seen in people who accept change and move quickly to make adjustments where needed. People who have resilient agility are able to act quickly and make adjustments while enduring a situation of persistent or chronic crisis events. They do it well and with apparent ease, as though it's just another day.

Essentially, these people are able to use effective coping strategies that have been proven to work throughout their lives and are able to cope with long-term stress in healthy ways. Within this, they establish and maintain routines and maintain stable family and social connections.

However, some people experience compromised, or impaired, resilience. This can be seen in people who dwell on problems, feel victimized, become overwhelmed easily, or even turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms to help them deal with problems. One well-known unhealthy coping strategy is using substances, such as alcohol or other illicit drugs, to cope with stress.

Compromised resilience can cause people to be unable to move forward through difficult situations, and have a difficult time recovering from setbacks. These people may complain to an excessive amount and they may be resistant to change. They can be detractors of change initiatives and may be the individuals who could be a derailer when starting a new initiative or process.

The good news is that there are ways to know about a person's resilience before they are put in a position where resilience matters. There are assessments and reports that are available and can identify if a person has the necessary qualities to be resilient, or if they are likely to have compromised resilience. Additionally, there are ways to strengthen resilience and improve a person's ability to be resilient when stressful events occur. One way is to develop a back-up or contingency plan. Having a Plan B can be essential to easing worry and fear about uncertain situations. Often, people who have resilient agility have a back-up plan in mind, just in case. This is like having an emergency kit in your car,

or shopping around for the best vendor for a product but keeping in contact with ones you don't select to stay abreast of their changes. It's having a generator in case the power goes out. Having a back-up plan helps alleviate stress during potentially difficult situations because there's something there that can be done to mitigate the problem.

Supporting the development of positive interpersonal relationships, especially in the workplace, can be an essential component of building resilience. Building positive relationships with others in the workplace increases trust and organizational commitment. This can also minimize potential isolation and counterproductive work behaviors. Ensuring that your employees are having an appropriate level of work/life balance and employer support in challenging times. This can help employees feel as though they are not overwhelmed in trying to manage work stress and personal stress (like homeschooling elementary age children) simultaneously. Finally, two of the easiest things employers can do is set clear expectations (e.g. removing any role confusion) and provide realistic deadlines for tasks.