

How to Build → Resilience

We now live in an ever-changing world. Change can manifest itself in many ways, both in our personal or professional lives. While most of the time we can deal with these changes on a day-to-day basis, sometimes they can be stressful or traumatic.

Criticism, disappointment at work, job loss, financial problems, illness and grief are unfortunately things many of us have had to endure in our lives. These events undermine our self-confidence, and can then lead to longer-term problems such as depression or physical health conditions.

Being resilient means having the ability to cope with those challenges. What's more, resilience can allow us to become stronger because of them and see opportunities that can arise from a traumatic event.

Many employers value having a resilient workforce too, as they're able to cope with pressure and are absent less frequently.



What is resilience?

Resilience can be defined as being able to 'bounce back' from adversity. A more formal definition is 'the successful adaptation to life tasks in the face of social disadvantage or highly adverse conditions' (Windle, 1999).

Levels of resilience can depend on both the person involved and their environment. For example, a person's resilience will be affected by elements of their personality, such as their sense of humour, level of optimism, perspective, and self-belief.

Resilience will also be dependent on the experiences someone has within their own environment, such as the amount of social support they receive or their workload.

How can we build resilience?

Resilient people commit to goals, focus on what they can control, don't blame themselves if things go wrong, show empathy towards others and think positively. They tend to see challenges rather than problems.

Although some people could be said to have been born with higher levels of resilience than others, it is possible to develop resilience through learning, practice and experience.

This is often known as brain plasticity. When you learn something new, the structure of your brain changes when a new pathway is formed based on what you have just learned or discovered. This is how London taxi drivers are able to learn 'the Knowledge' - an intimate acquaintance of the streets within a six-mile radius of Charing Cross.

1. Growth mindset



Embracing learning and seeing opportunities are signs of a growth mindset. People with a fixed mindset tend to avoid challenges, as they are scared of failure and of what others may think. As a result, they may plateau early even when they have a talent for something.

People with a growth mindset view failure as an opportunity to learn. Rather than seeing failure as a character flaw that cannot be changed (e.g., a lack of talent or intelligence), they'll look at how they can improve themselves in order to succeed next time.

2. Overcoming negativity



Optimistic people have a habit of interpreting setbacks as being only temporary and something that they have the power to change.

Any setback is seen as something to learn from as it is just another stepping stone on the way to success. An optimist will review the circumstances and take a balanced view, reducing the chance of mistakes being made again in the future.

Understandably, there are many situations that are difficult to feel optimistic about. However, in day-to-day life an optimistic worldview will make you far more resilient.

3. Boosting self-esteem



In order to demonstrate resilience, you need a reasonably high level of self-esteem. Without it, you will struggle to find the necessary confidence to bounce back from challenging situations. However, occasionally feeling good about yourself is not enough – you will need it permanently if your self-esteem is to contribute towards resilience.

Having high self-esteem allows you to feel content and “comfortable in your own skin”. It prevents you from tending to blame other people or events if something goes wrong. Instead, you will believe that you have the power to change things yourself.

4. Resilience at work



Developing a healthy environment at work will make it a happier place to be. Managers who are more understanding regarding issues such as stress and mental health should help create a more trusting atmosphere. Well-designed work is an important factor too, where employees can manage and vary their workload and have the opportunity to learn new skills.

Strong social networks and open communication will help employees face any workplace problems. Encouraging team social events will help build friendships, and having managers being open and honest in performance appraisals will build trust.

Holding regular performance appraisals will also let employees set career goals, which will give a sense of achievement when they've been met. Setting realistic and achievable goals builds a positive mindset, which in turn builds resilience.



What small changes do you think you make in order to become more resilient?
In the spaces below, write down what you could do regarding each area.

Area	Action
Growth mindset	
Overcoming negativity	
Boosting self-esteem	
Resilience at work	

We've now looked at some of the key traits that could lead to you becoming more resilient. On our Developing Resilience eLearning course, we teach the methods and techniques that will allow you gain them (and more) with practice.

For more information, please see www.bounce-back.com.