

Resiliency at work and home

How can we stay mentally healthy in the midst of our voyage through today's stressful world? It all begins with awareness. We need to stay alert to the signs and signals of 'stormy weather' as we navigate through the challenges of everyday life, and we need to notice when our usual resilience is compromised and our ability to steer a balanced course is threatened.

Resilience

Resilience is the ability to adapt to and bounce back from life's changes, adversities and setbacks. When we are resilient, we are able to harness our inner resources in order to keep going forward. Being resilient won't make our problems go away, but resilience can give us the ability to navigate through them, find the enjoyment in life and better cope with stress. If we lack resilience, we may stall or go backwards, dwell on our problems, feel victimized, become easily overwhelmed or turn to unhealthy coping habits, and we are more likely to suffer from mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety. So how can we become more resilient?

Useful Tips to Increase Personal Resilience

- Nurture and build support of the people most important in our lives – share with them and lean on each other for support in stormy times. Resilience isn't about toughing it out, being heroic or going it alone. In fact, being able to reach out to others for support is a key component of being resilient.
- Consult a health professional early on when experiencing the symptoms of depression, anxiety or burnout – early diagnosis and treatment can help us stay on course.
- Stay physically fit, eat a nutritious diet and set aside time for enjoyable activities.
- Maintain a healthy balance of personal, family and work priorities.
- Learn to be optimistic. Research shows that people who don't give up and are resilient have a habit of interpreting setbacks as temporary and changeable. This optimistic response can be practiced and improved over time.

Staying Resilient – At Work

Many organizations recognize the need to keep their employees resilient. The best aim to prevent the negative effects of stress by building resilience, providing information and resources, and intervening actively with distressed employees. **Trust**, both in relationships and in organizational structures, is the core variable for the effectiveness of these approaches; when trust is high, employees benefit. Consider the following examples of innovative approaches taken by leading edge employers:

- Personal and team resilience is a cornerstone of **GlaxoSmithKline's** wellness activities. Their goal is to ensure that people have the skills and capabilities to weather life's storms. The pharmaceutical leader's **Personal Resilience** program and more in-depth **Energy for Performance** program focus on helping people build skills to enhance their energy through mental focus, emotional connection, spiritual alignment and physical energy. The **Team Resilience** process begins with an assessment of individual work and personal pressures, as well as coping strategies. The team prioritizes the sources of pressure and develops an action plan to remediate them. As a result, this organization has observed a 60% reduction in work-related mental ill health globally and a 29% reduction in workdays lost.
- **Bell Canada** has taken a leadership role in advancing mental health in the workplace. They have a four-pillar approach aimed at reducing stigma for mental health disorders, helping community care and access efforts, adopting mental health best practices in the workplace, and supporting best-in-class research. All People Leaders at Bell participate in training to enhance resilience and support employees who are wrestling with mental health issues. Unprecedented in the business community, Bell has made this training mandatory for all of its leaders. Online technology also allows Bell to provide mental health training for all employees to help them be more aware, understanding and resilient.

Building Resiliency – At Home

What can we do to create and enhance resilience for our children and families as they mature? To be resilient, children need a strong, positive emotional attachment to a nurturing adult throughout their childhood. Parental figures can provide them with the attention, guidance and support they need in the following ways:

- Expose children to **a variety of learning** opportunities to help them develop awareness, imagination, know-how, initiative and decision-making skills. Praise children for their efforts and accomplishments.
- Families who **talk about how they feel** help young people learn to identify their own feelings and communicate them to others. Managing difficult emotions (such as anger or anxiety) builds resilience.
- Teach children to have **more positive thoughts about themselves**. This can help them to reduce stress, improve their performance (at school, in sports and music) and have fewer risks of mental health problems.
- **Accept and respect teens' increasing need for independence.**
- Teach children to **be flexible**, to make decisions, to solve problems, and to set appropriate goals and persevere to attain them. Teach by example by providing firm, clearly defined rules and the reasons for the rules, but being flexible when appropriate.
- **Keep your own spousal/partner relationship healthy.** A supportive, stable relationship, with an open display of love, warmth and good communication, fosters resilience in young people.