

Mental illness in the workplace: resilience

Have you ever noticed how some people adapt to challenging circumstances while others tend to fall apart? Those who have developed resilience bounce back from setbacks and are able to draw on inner strength to help them get through challenges and tragedies. Those who lack resilience often feel overwhelmed and dwell on the negative. They can also feel victimized and, in some extreme cases, turn to alcohol, drugs, overeating, or other unhealthy coping mechanisms.



According to the [Mayo Clinic](#), resilience is the ability to roll with the punches. It is not about making problems disappear; it is about seeing past the current challenge, handling stress, and finding enjoyment despite the circumstances. In addition, resiliency offers some protection against a variety of mental health disorders and can offset mental health risk factors. With a rapidly changing business environment, resilience becomes increasingly important in the workplace. A resilient workforce is one that is programmed for success, adapting to change, and facing challenges head-on.

The good news is that resilience can be learned and cultivated. Since everyone is different with their own attitudes, cultures, and beliefs, there's no "one size fits all" approach to learning how to become more resilient. However, according to the [American Psychological Association](#), several traits are common in resilient people. By developing these qualities, you can become more resilient.

Common traits of resiliency

- Confidence
- A positive self-image
- Strong emotional and impulse control
- Good communication and problem-solving skills
- A capacity to make realistic plans and follow them through

Barb Veder, Vice President of Clinical Services at LifeWorks·fgi, says, “While some skeptics question the merits of positive thinking, thinking that we all have our heads in the sand, approaching a challenging life situation with a positive attitude helps to build resilience and reduces stress. Going into a situation with optimism instead of expecting the worst will make life easier to handle, and free up your energy to work on possible solutions to whatever life throws at you.”

Experts identify three essential ingredients to resilience: challenge, commitment, and personal control. Resilient people see setbacks as challenges rather than problems; they learn from their failures, viewing them as opportunities rather than reflections of their self-worth. They are also committed to their lives, relationships, and beliefs. They focus on what they can control and where their contributions can make the biggest impact, so they feel empowered.

Tips to build personal resiliency

- Take care of your body by eating healthy foods and getting enough sleep and exercise.
- Take care of your mind by learning how to manage stress. Improving your mental well-being can enhance your ability to cope with challenges.
- Change how you think and talk. Catch yourself whenever you think a negative thought or utter a negative word and immediately rephrase it using positive language.
- Change your perspective. Try looking at things from a different angle – the problem may not be as bad as it looks at the moment.

- Choose your response. We all have a choice in how we respond to a problem. You can choose to panic or you can choose to remain calm as you search for a solution.
- Learn from your mistakes. What could you do differently next time? How will it make you better and stronger?
- Focus on becoming more flexible and willing to accept change. If this is hard for you, allow for the unexpected when making plans. By anticipating and scheduling for unexpected changes (even if you don't know what could possibly go wrong), you'll be less likely to be caught off guard when something happens.
- Improve relations with coworkers. Building strong connections with colleagues creates a support network and will make work more pleasant. Collectively, you'll be more resistant to stress during setbacks.

Becoming more resilient can change how you feel about yourself, your workplace, and the world at large. It's a skill that can be learned.