Professional and Personal Resilience

2018 ADMAN Annual Conference: Everyone Counts!
March 14, 2018

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Resilience: Definition

Ability to recoil or spring back into shape after bending, stretching, or being compressed.
Able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions.

Oxford English Dictionary

Resilience

Ability to rebound and adjust successfully to major life losses
Personality characteristic that moderates the negative effects of stress and promotes adaptation

Wagnild and Young, 1993
Resilience: Five Dimensions

- **Self-reliance** – a belief in one’s self and one’s capabilities
- **Perseverance** – the act of persistence despite adversity or discouragement
- **Equanimity** – a balanced perspective of one’s life and one’s experiences
- **Meaningfulness** – the realization that life has a purpose and the valuation of one’s contributions
- **Existential aloneness** – the realization that each person’s life path is unique; while some experiences are shared, others must be faced alone

The Resilience Scale

- Developed from qualitative study of older women successfully coping after a major loss
- Validated in a qualitative study of caregivers for spouses with Alzheimer’s Disease
- Validated in broader literature (philosophy, psychology)
- Verbatim statements were tested
- Psychometric testing in community sample

How Resilient are You?

- I usually manage one way or another
- I feel proud that I have accomplished things in life
- I usually take things in stride
- I am friends with myself
- I feel that I can handle many things at a time
- I am determined
- I can get through difficult times because I’ve experienced difficulty before
- I have self-discipline
- I keep interested in things
- I can usually find something to laugh about
- My belief in myself gets me through hard times
- In an emergency, I’m someone people can generally rely on
- My life has meaning
- When I’m in a difficult situation, I can usually find my way out of it
Think of examples in your life

- Think about an example of one of the items you agreed with strongly
- Turn to the person next to you and share your experience

The Resilience Scale goes international

- Spanish
- German
- Chinese
- Hebrew
- Russian
- Portuguese
- Finnish
- Thai
- Greek
- Dutch
- Swedish
- Japanese
- Italian
- Urdu
- Brazilian Portuguese
- Korean
- Creole Haitian
- Sinhala
- Persian

Populations

- Persons with illness – cancer, transplants, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, diabetes, mental health
- Family caregivers (cardiac, Alzheimer’s Disease, parents of disabled kids)
- Ethnic groups – African American, Hispanic, Russian
- Ages – youth, middle age, old age
- Occupations – health, military, students
- Circumstances – immigration, Holocaust, post-traumatic stress, inner city youth
Resilience

• Negatively associated with:
  • Depression, emotional exhaustion, fatigue, depersonalization, stress of conscience, physical complaints

• Positively associated with:
  • Morale, life satisfaction, accomplishment, social support, sense of coherence, self-esteem, stress management, health promotion, well-being

• Increased with:
  • Experiential outdoor education program

Importance of personal and professional resilience

• Many of us are mission driven
• We face challenges every day – small and large
• We are working on teams that share challenging experiences
• Our world is full of uncertainty and change

Managing Transitions (W. Bridges)

Transition is the psychological process people go through to come to terms with a new situation (internal, vs. change – external)

• Three phases:
  • Ending
  • Neutral zone
  • New beginning
What is the most significant change you have faced at work recently?

Think about that change:
• Ending – What have you and others lost?
• Neutral zone – What is uncertain/not settled about the change?
• New beginning – What are the new possibilities with the change?

Endings
• Identify who is losing what
• Recognize importance of the loss
• Expect signs of grieving
• Compensate for losses
• Communication
• Define what is over and what is not
• Mark the endings
• Treat the past with respect

Neutral Zone
• Normalize and redefine
• Create temporary systems
• Strengthen intragroup connections – conflict is normal
• Transition monitoring team
• Use phase to question status quo and nurture innovation – time of creative possibility
• Don’t push closure prematurely
New Beginnings
- Clarify and communicate the purpose
- Picture the outcome
- Contribute to the plan
- Make sure each person understands his or her part in the plan
- Reinforce the new beginning (quick success, symbolize new identity, celebrate success)

Managing Constant Change
- Recognize that change is the norm
- Clarify and remember your mission
- Focus on relationships and trust
- Forecast as much as possible
- Postpone extra changes
- Contingency planning
- Shed old baggage
- Understand the reasons behind change

Take Care of Yourself
- Figure out what is actually changing
- Decide what is over for you, distinguish from old wounds
- Identify continuities
- Recognize symptoms of neutral zone
- Take time out
- Look at yourself creatively
- Draw on your inner strength and resilience
Strategies for Advancing Resilience on your Team

- Self-reflection and conversation about your strengths
- Reflection on strategies you can take to cope with change
- Nurturing your personal and professional growth and health
- Expanding connections
- Promoting your successes to yourselves and beyond

Thank you!