

Building resilience in the modern workplace

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What is resilience?



Resilience is the **skill and capacity** to be robust under conditions of stress & enormous change

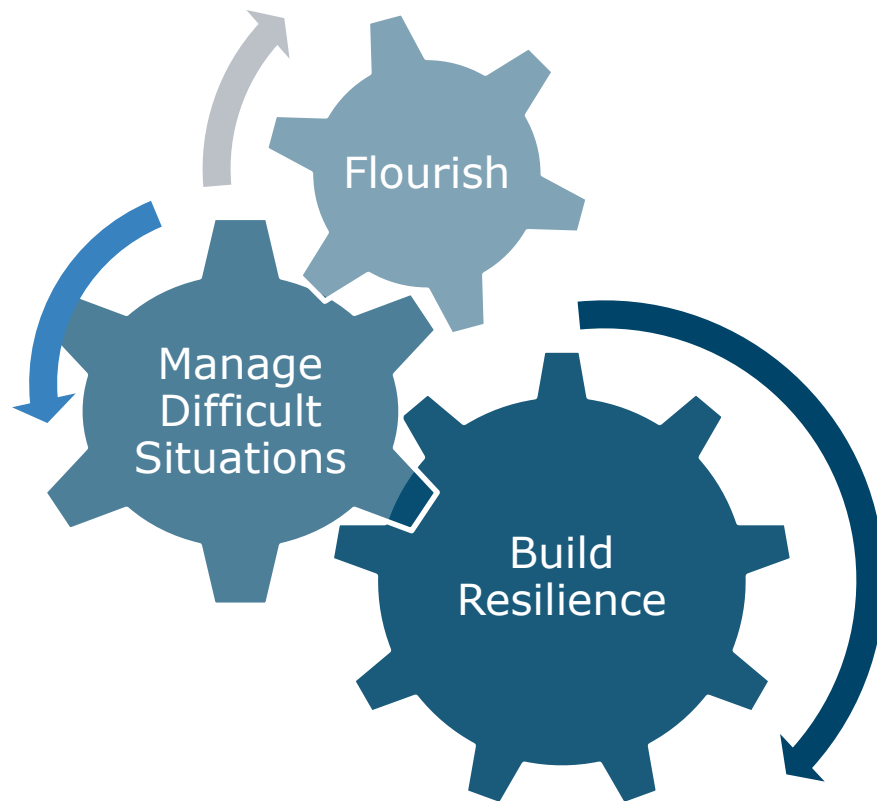
“A set of flexible, cognitive, behavioural and emotional responses to acute or chronic adversities”

“A process, not a personality trait”

“Individuals who are resilient show more emotional stability when faced with adversity, are more flexible to changing demands and are open to new experiences”

Neehan, M. (2009). Developing Resilience.
London: Routledge

Luthans, F., Vogelgesang, G.R. and Lester, P.B.
Developing the Psychological Capital of Resiliency Human
Resource Development Review; Mar 2006, 5, 1



Key characteristics of resilience



- **Self-efficacy**
- **Reaching out**
- **Growth mindset**
- **Flexibility**
- **Realistic optimism**
- **Empathy**
- **Curiosity**
- **Purpose**
- **Perspective**



Factors that affect individual resilience

- **Early experiences**
 - **Environmental factors**
 - **Health**
 - **Diet**
 - **Sleep**

 - **You**
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Workplace relevance

Primary

Secondary

Tertiary

Changes the design, organisation and management of work. Tackles sources of stress

Helping individuals learn to cope with stressors that occur at work

Help employees after problem has already occurred.

Deal with problems identified by large number of employees

Adaptability of individuals to their environment

When primary or tertiary interventions are not practicable

Risk assessment

Organisation and working are not going to change

Provide support for non-work related problems

- Redesign task or work environment
- Flexible working
- Encourage participative management
- Career development
- Cohesive teams

- **Building Resilience:**
- **Job related skills training**
- **Link between perceptions, emotions and behaviour**
- **Stress management**
- **Mindfulness and meditation practices**

- EAPs
- May include links to primary or secondary intervention
- **Health Promotion**

Organisational resilience

“the ability of an organization to **anticipate, prepare for, respond and adapt to** incremental change and sudden disruptions in order to survive and prosper.”

Resilience Indicators




Strategies to increase resilience: organisational



- Encourage good quality management and peer to peer relationships
- Provide opportunities for people to voice concerns or ideas – and then respond to them
- Manage change effectively
- Participation in and learning from training and development
- Pass on procedural knowledge*
- Promotion of and opportunities for workplace wellbeing

Strategies to increase resilience: individual

- **Self and social awareness**
 - **Ability to deal with pressure**
 - **Thoughts and attitudes**
 - **Focussing on strengths**
 - **Hope and optimism**

 - **Social Connections**
 - **Using mindfulness techniques**
 - **Healthy lifestyle behaviours**
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What pushes your buttons?

- Children leaving home/not leaving home
- **Chronic Worry**
- Financial concerns
- Lottery win
- Bereavement
- **Rigid thinking**
- Caring responsibilities (elderly parents/children)
- **Being overlooked by:** boss/spouse/children
- Success
- Not liking your job
- Conflict with manager/colleagues
- Managing other people's emotions
- Teenage children
- Physical environment
- Work overload/underload
- Difficult relationship with partner
- **Unrealistic expectations**
- Loneliness
- Being too busy
- **Perfectionism**
- Holidays
- Health concerns (you/family/friends)
- **Difficulty expressing feelings**
- Travel problems
- **Being criticised by:** boss/spouse/children
- **Failure**
- Change
- Giving presentations/pitches
- **Negative thinking**

Thoughts and attitudes

Attitude is at the heart of resilience

Number one obstacle to resilience is the way we think.

Emotions and behaviours are triggered not by the events themselves but how we interpret those events. We get stuck in trap of seeing event as the problem, rather than our attitude to event

A - activating event

B - belief or attitude

C - consequences



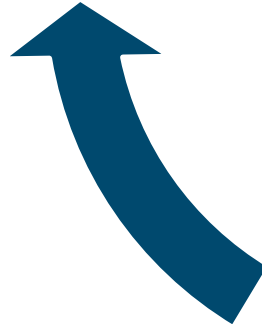
You were in line for promotion and the job was given to a younger/older colleague

Activating Event



'Its not fair, I never get a chance'
'I always fail at things'
'This opportunity meant everything to me'

Belief or Attitude



Consequences

Angry?
Fed up?
Disappointed?

Go off sick?
Disengaged?
Depressed?

Challenging your thoughts



- **Is my thought fact or opinion?**
- **Is the way I'm thinking related to the level of stress I feel at the moment?**
- **What would I say to a friend or colleague who expressed this thought?**
- **What is the evidence for my thought?**
- **How important will this be in six days/six weeks/ six months' time?**



Focussing on strengths

Positive Psychology is the scientific study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive. Believes that people want to lead meaningful lives and enhance their personal and professional lives.

Dr. Seligman theorizes that the **24 VIA character strengths** are The pathways to each of the 5 areas of well-being (PERMA). They underpin each element. Using these, leads to:

- More positive emotion;
- More engagement;
- Better relationships
- More meaning; and
- More accomplishments

<http://www.viacharacter.org/www/Character-Strengths#nav>

Hope and Optimism



- **Positive emotional content in early biographies, strongly correlated with longevity in later life**
- **The happiest nuns lived 10 years longer than the least happy nuns**
- **54% of the happy nuns reached 94 while only 15% of the least happy nuns reached that age**

Case examples

Organisation:

Manufacturing plant

Issue:

high levels of stress related absence

Worked with:

H&S, Unions, SMT and Line Managers

Intervention:

Stress management training for all managers

Focussed on:

Raising awareness of signs and symptoms and talking about it within teams

Ongoing:

Monthly health and wellbeing forums
Policy included external support

Outcome:

Issues recognised and dealt with more quickly; reduction in sickness absence



Case examples

Organisation:

Large public sector organisation

Issue:

Significant levels of change

Worked with:

Managers and HR

Intervention:

Individual psychometric assessments
and group training

Focussed on:

Identifying stressors and developing
protective mechanisms to build
resilience

Ongoing:

Reporting to senior staff; job design



Case examples

Organisation:

Hospital

Issue:

Special measures

Worked with:

Clinical staff and HR

Intervention:

Resilience/ positive psychology
training

Focussed on:

Identifying and building on
resilience;
health and relationships

Outcome:

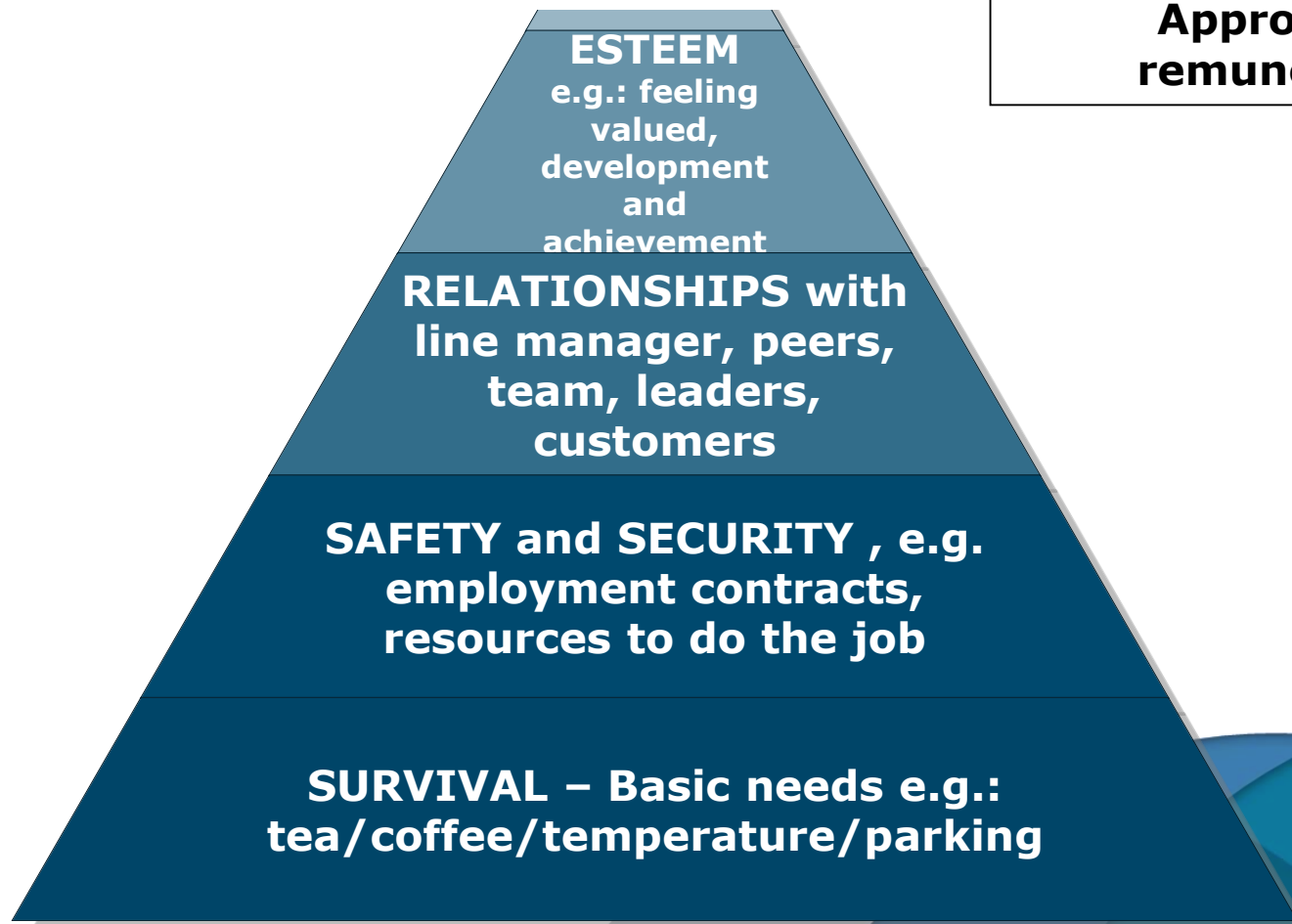
Delivered to other clinical teams

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Policies and Procedures




Appropriate remuneration



Back to reality... key questions

- **What's the problem**
 - **Type of intervention**
 - **Cost**
 - **Timeline**
 - **Key stakeholders**
 - **Senior management buy-in**
 - **Organisational culture**
 - **Barriers and enablers**
 - **Measuring outcomes**
 - **Marketing and Communication**
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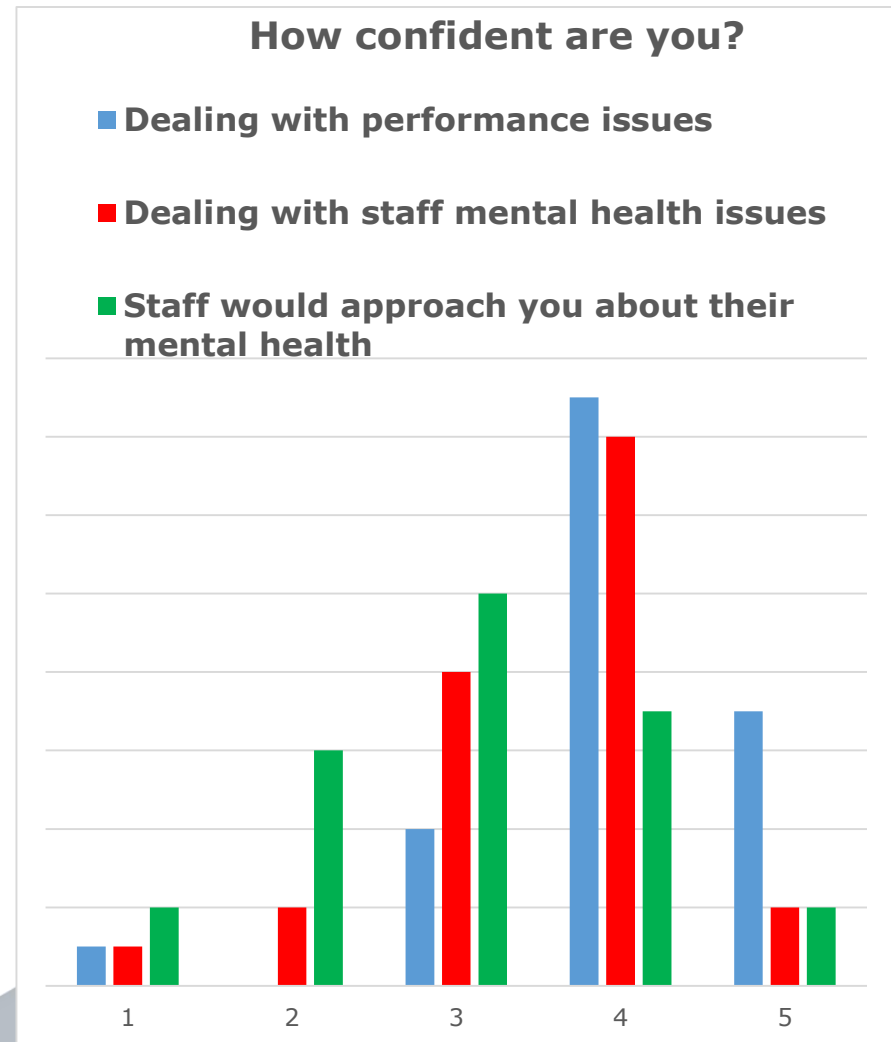
What gets measured....

- **Sickness absence levels**
 - **Employee engagement surveys**
 - **Customer feedback**
 - **Quit intentions**
 - **Levels of accidents and injuries**
 - **Management time dealing with capability issues**
 - **Numbers of disciplinaries and grievances**
 - **Outputs and levels of productivity**
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Survey example: disparity between knowledge and confidence

All respondents reported lower scores for confidence than knowledge

- **Sickness absence policy**
- **Return to work plans**
- **Reasonable adjustment agreements**
- **Occupational Health Service provision**
- **Employee Assistance Programme**



Positive strategies

- **Sharing the problem, expressing feelings**
- **Good relationships**
- **Seeking professional help**
- **Meaningful activities**
- **Problem-solving skills**
- **Taking breaks**
- **Exercise and activity**
- **Coping skills**
- **When at home, be at home**
- **Communication**
- **Mindfulness – being in the moment**
- **Time management**
- **Good physical health and self-care**
- **Healthy eating habits**
- **Feeling included and respected**
- **Medication**
- **Diary management**
- **Treating oneself**
- **Does it need to be done *right now?***
- **Building self esteem**
- **Slowing down...**

Healthy workplace indicators:



- **Confident line managers, trained in 'people' skills**
- **Employees feel valued and involved in the organisation**
- **Managers use appropriate interventions to tackle absence and help people to get back to work**
- **Managers promote an attendance culture**
- **Jobs are flexible and well-designed**
- **Managers know how to manage common health problems such as mental health and musculoskeletal disorders**



Further information

- Abigail Hirshman ahirshman@acas.org.uk

Resources

Good day at work

<http://www.robertsoncooper.com/gooddayatwork>

Try the i-resilience quiz

<http://greatergood.berkeley.edu>

Positive psychology information

<http://www.positivepsychology.org/>

<http://www.positivepsychology.org.uk/home.html>

Character strengths

<http://www.viacharacter.org/www/Character-Strengths>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OnoQ8F_CUfE&list=PLGtDgtrNcR8hoa5X2WE2egAoIKPUClySQ

