



Bouncebackability: The Importance of Being Resilient

Description

Being resilient means having the mental ability to recover quickly from misfortune. Speaking in 2003 about the need to be able to cope with defeat, Iain Dowie, the former footballer and manager from Ireland, coined the term "[bouncebackability](#)," which has a broader meaning than resilience. Now formally defined as "the capacity to recover quickly from a setback," it struck a chord well beyond football circles. A year later [The Scotsman](#) newspaper was describing Prime Minister hopeful Michael Howard's need to "show he has enough bouncebackability to get him into Number Ten."

Bouncebackability is now part of the everyday lexicon, and you can see why: It speaks to a need we all have to deal and manage disappointment, failure, and setback, and come back even stronger.

Definition/Meaning: What Is Resilience?

Resilience is the skill and the capacity to be robust under conditions of enormous stress and change. Since finding meaning in your environment is such an important aspect of resilience, it should come as no surprise that the most successful organizations and people possess strong value systems. Strong values infuse an environment with meaning because they offer ways to interpret and shape events.

How to Be Resilient

Resilience is a quality we all already have, because all of us experience setbacks in life. Those who are unable to persevere in the face of adversity internalize a sense of failure and disappointment, while those who are able to overcome their setbacks cultivate a confidence that comes from knowing that they can bounce back.

You can develop this ability to be resilient in the face of difficulty or set back. You start by understanding and managing your emotions, not suppressing them. Eliminating feelings of self-doubt will not help you become more resilient, for example. Self-doubt is natural and healthy, allowing you to examine and question your choices and decisions. It is okay sometimes to conclude that you made the wrong decision and need to think and act differently. The key is to put your doubts in perspective.

It's important to note that resilience also includes social support; it is not exclusively yours. Creating and developing your support network is a key step in becoming more resilient.

Why Is Resilience Important?

Resilience is what gives you the psychological strength to cope with stress and hardship. You gain a positive approach to work and outlook on life, which in turn enables better problem-solving and helps you stay motivated. In the workplace, for example, you feel empowered, capable of dealing with change, and less susceptible to burnout. Resilience also improves your overall health and well-being. This improvement can be reflected in your attitude at home and in your performance throughout the workplace. You may even gain a sense of fulfillment from working through obstacles and growing as a person, employee, or leader.

High-performing business leaders are also more likely to be resilient or cultivate resilience. They learn from perceived failure and mistakes and use them to propel themselves forward. If you are on a leadership track, resilience will serve you well.

Viktor Frankl on Resilience

Celebrated Austrian psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl is best-known for his 1946 psychological memoir, [Man's Search for Meaning](#), in which he meditated on what his gruesome experience at Auschwitz had taught him. He said he learned about what he identified as the primary purpose of life: the quest for meaning, which sustained those who survived.

Viktor Frankl's experience suggests that the most effective growth mindset might be a transformative one. Merely accepting adversity and plowing through it might not be sufficient; rather, a deeper transformation occurs when adverse events provide a deeper meaning and purpose to life. A resilient individual is someone who emerges from setbacks deeply changed for the better, especially when it comes to making decisions.

Decision-Making Process: Making Better Choices

Cognitive behavioral therapy has taught us that the meaning that people assign to events in their lives drives their reactions. In 2009, [Michael Neenan](#) wrote, "The key idea is that people do not respond to events in their lives but rather to their interpretations of events." How you interpret them means challenging your thoughts. Cognitive behavioral therapy offers a plethora of techniques that you can employ to begin to interrogate our thoughts. Here are a few.

Challenge How You Filter Events

You can ignore all of the positive and good things in life to focus solely on the negative that is taking your attention. In fact, that's what many people tend to do. Instead, run through recent events and try to be unbiased as you ask yourself if everything was as bad as you remember.

Could you be assigning a negative attitude because of what you perceive or how you feel about yourself? Putting a negative spin on something that is neither positive nor negative is a form of cognitive distortion. It is deciding, for example, that someone's question about whether you wrote a paper is tinged with criticism of the paper when, in actuality, the person asking just wants to know if you wrote it. Before you go on the defensive, think about who the person is and what they might want. They might want to say something good about the paper or ask a question about something in it. Don't challenge or interrogate the person asking, but instead tell them whether you wrote it and wait to see what the next question is.

Reject Polarized Thinking

This is "all-or-nothing thinking," with no room for nuance. Life isn't like that; there are always shades of grey. For example, if you have had a setback in one area, you might see yourself as a complete failure, rather simply recognizing that you have a developmental need in that area. To address polarized thinking, try to list in your mind all the things you've done in a specific period.

Were some successful? How many were failures or setbacks? Do the failures and setbacks really outnumber your successes, or are you just more prone to noticing the things that don't work? Try to accept that rarely is one human being such an abject failure that they have no hope or success story to tell. This will keep you from making self-defeating decisions that reinforce your negative generalization.

Beware of Overgeneralizing

Taking a single incident or moment in time and using this as your evidence for a broad negative conclusion is overgeneralizing. For example, you might have failed to get a promotion and felt you let yourself down at the interview, so you take this as evidence that you'll never get promoted or show up well in interviews. It's time to take steps to avoid coloring any decision you make with this negativity.

Instead, think about how far you've come in your career. Go over in your mind how the interview went. In most cases, promotions are not about an individual's interview performance but related to many other factors, including that there might have been a stronger candidate. If you feel that the interview did affect the promotion, take that as an opportunity to learn how to improve your skills in that area. Set an improvement goal and work toward it.

Being Overly Concerned About Fairness

Fairness is important to all of us, but we have to accept that sometimes things will not go our way, regardless of how fair it may seem to us. In these cases, try not to let unfairness color your overall outlook. Of course, if you have a chance to fix something unfair, you can think about taking action. Otherwise, try to catch your emotional response before it leads to obsessive thinking. Think rationally before you act, recognizing the difference between what you can and can't control.

Challenging Emotional Reasoning

You can fall into the trap of believing that if you feel a certain way, it must be true. For example, if you feel unattractive or uninteresting on a given day, you might decide that you are unattractive or

uninteresting all the time. Or you might take a big step in your life that is not right because you assume that you have nothing to offer, such as ending a relationship or quitting a job.

Although you cannot totally take emotions out of the question when reasoning, you can try to work out why you feel overcome with dread or low self-esteem. When you are feeling this way, it is not a good time to consider a life- or career-changing move. Try to get at the heart of what is making you feel low. Maybe all you need is a haircut, or you just need to take some time to work out what is going on and then share with a supportive friend.

Challenge Your Thinking

Taking on challenges to your thinking is a necessary step in learning how to interpret events more accurately and make better choices. This is how you become resilient. With your thoughts challenged effectively, you can then employ techniques such as reframing to cast a negative situation in a positive light. Keeping a journal of how you are managing your thoughts can be extremely helpful in turning these techniques into every day habits.

Given the events of 2020, the concept of “bouncebackability” and the need to be resilient have never been more important. [LINK TO MANAGER PROGRAM](#)

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