

“Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in the rising every time we fall.”

– Confucius

Resilient individuals perform better in the workplace.¹ Organisations are constantly changing, and employees constantly have to evaluate and adapt to the changes.

Also, there are many other pressures in the workplace, both self and organisationally imposed, that can result in an individual’s perceived sense of loss of control. Resilient individuals are able to maintain performance levels during times of change and adversity as they are able to view change, stress and pressure more positively.

A review of research on resilience reveals characteristics that are consistent for a resilient individual. Namely, they:

- have a flexible, optimistic attitude
- respond positively to ambiguity
- are proactive in nature, rather than reactive
- adopt a mind set that is open to change and exploration.

However, the personal characteristics that can make a good lawyer are virtually the opposite of resilient characteristics. For example, pessimism (as opposed to optimism) is seen as an advantage amongst lawyers, and the ability to anticipate problems and issues is a great attribute for a practising lawyer.² Another example of this misalignment is ambiguity; lawyers tend to dislike and respond negatively to ambiguity.³

Therefore, due to the opposing characteristics of a resilient individual and the character-

Building personal resilience



Last month’s article introduced the concept of resilience – being able to recover quickly when stretched beyond a limit – and how leaders could develop resilience in employees. This month, **Bree Bignell** explains how individuals can develop personal resilience.

istics that can make a good lawyer, lawyers may not naturally engage in resilient practices to assist them through times of stress, adversity or hardship.

Reports on resilience consistently support the fact that resilience can be learned and developed. Like many positive workplace behaviours, individuals are able to increase their resiliency. Individuals may choose to engage in the following 10 practices to assist in the development of resilience.

1. Make connections

Develop a broad network of personal and professional relationships, and be open to seeking assistance and guidance when required.

2. Adopt a positive disposition

Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable prob-

lems. Stressful and adverse events will occur and individuals are only able to control their reaction and response to the event. Avoid interpreting unwanted change negatively; instead view it as an opportunity.

3. Deal effectively with mistakes

View each mistake as a learning experience instead of interpreting the mistake as failure. Mistakes will occur and they are best dealt with early and efficiently.

4. Accept change is inevitable

Change is an integral part of business and those employees who are able to adapt to change will survive and thrive. Learn to embrace change and view it as an opportunity to innovate and be progressive.

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5. Develop goals

Both career and personal goals are important. They provide focus, and sustain motivation and passion. Achievement of goals reinforces positive self-belief while reflecting on past achievements will assist when feelings of self-doubt and negativity start to develop.

6. Be proactive

Act on adverse situations rather than detaching from the problem. Focus on developing solutions for problems rather than allowing them to become overwhelming.

7. Be an effective communicator

Undue stress and conflict can be avoided by effectively communicating with others. When communicating, ensure there is a purpose to communication and communicate in a way that ensures the listener understands. Additionally, listen effectively when others are communicating. Be aware of body language and regularly check that body language is aligned with communication.

8. Develop a positive view of self

Individuals must believe in their self-worth and



Take the Resilience Self-Test

Access the following quiz to determine your resilience level. The questions are designed to measure different attitudes, habits and traits associated with resilience. At the end of the quiz you are provided with a score and resources targeted specifically to help in the development of resilience.

http://stress.about.com/library/resilience/bl_resilience_quiz.htm

be confident in their abilities. They must focus on current success and continue to utilise these strengths to move forward.

9. Pay attention to self-identity

A job is just one facet of an individual's identity; a person is not their job. Individuals need to balance their self-identity by continuously attempting to separate who they are from what they do.

10. Maintain a healthy lifestyle

Exercise regularly and maintain a healthy diet. Take advantage of work-life balance practices and regularly plan and enjoy activities that don't involve work.

Change is inevitable and hardship is unavoidable. Life will continue to present challenges and to move forward, these challenges

will need to be overcome.

Through developing personal resilience these changes and hardships will not seem insurmountable.

By adopting the above practices, individuals can develop a foundation of emotional strength that enables the management of daily challenges. Engaging in sound resilience practices enables individuals to overcome potential adversity in a healthy and adaptive way and can help in the maintenance of performance. ■

Notes

- 1 Risher, H. & Stopper, W.G. (1999). 'Current practices'. *Human Resource Planning*, 22(2), 8-10.
- 2 Seligman, M.E.P. (2002). 'Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment'. New York: Free Press/Simon and Schuster.
- 3 Ibid.

Bree Bignell is the Queensland Law Society human resources consultant.