

How do you build Personal Resilience during challenging times?

Have you ever known someone who seems to be eternally happy no matter what the situation? You know the kind of person that, whether the global economy is in a downturn, the polar ice caps are melting, or they are facing a personal crisis, they remain positive, resourceful, and resilient?

My friend [Hugh Culver](#) is like this. It doesn't matter if he is responding to urgent client requests, dealing with a flooded basement, or finishing off an 18 hour work day, he's always positive.

Well if you've ever wondered, 'how can I be more like that'? Or "I wish {so and so} could just be more positive..." Here's the good news; *resilience can be learned*. As Russ Newman, Ph.D., J.D. of the American Psychological Association says:

"An important fact to remember is that resilience can be learned. Developing resilience is ...an ongoing process that requires time, effort, and a variety of strategies that can include making connections, remaining active...pursuing daily and long-term goals, and maintaining a healthy outlook..."¹

Here is the first of **4 easy techniques** to build your own personal resilience. I've synthesized these from the latest research, books, interviews, articles, and my own experience with resilience.

Part One - Building Personal Resilience during challenging times.

1/ Practice Your Values daily – when we take the time to engage in the things that are most important to us, whether it's a walk in nature, solving a complex problem, or spending time with family, we feel more alive. Scott Bristol, PhD, renowned author on Values says: "When we practice, actualize, or embody our priority values, we experience our lives as meaningful, significant, and important."²

In my experience, what often happens is, we get so busy doing 'work', attending lunch time meetings, staying late to meet deadlines, chauffeuring kids, and going from one commitment to the next, that we may lose sight of those things that are the most important to us.

For example; you might really value fitness or being in nature, yet you find yourself indoors day after day. You see someone heading off for lunch and you're thinking 'It must be nice' or perhaps you just feel that you have less energy than you used to. Here is what to do:

Step 1 - Get clear on your values – take time to reflect on what is most important to you. Ask yourself, what is important to me? What do I want more of in my life right now? What would make me happy?

Try this: *Think of a time, when you felt like you were on top of the world! It might have been celebrating the completion of a big project at work, high school graduation, relaxing on the beach, playing with your kids, or maybe completing that first 10K, or marathon.*

- ***Where were you? What were you doing? Who was there? What were you feeling?***

As you reflect on this memory, notice what **values** come up for you. Is it a sense of accomplishment? Community? Nature? Meaningful work? Family? Or perhaps it was helping those less fortunate?

Again, we often get caught up in the many commitments, obligations, and tasks in our daily lives, and lose sight of those things that we value most. Sometimes all we need is a reminder. **Take the time** to remind yourself of those things that you value most in your life. **Write them down.**

Step 2- Assess your values – What is one value you’re happy with in your life right now? It is working well and you’re grateful. Perhaps it’s meaningful work, being competent, or mentoring others. What is one value you want more of in your life? Is it more time with family, health, volunteerism? Take a moment now to reassess your values and how happy you are with them. Try this:

Pick one or two of the values most important to you right now. Now rate them, on a scale of 1-5, where **5** is outstanding, **3** is ok, and **1** means it’s miserable. Now ask yourself if you’re happy with that score. If not, ask ‘what would it take for me to score this a 5!?’ Write those ideas down.

For some people, these first two steps are all they need to start building those values back into their lives. For others it may not seem that easy, it seems more challenging than that. Here is what to do:

Step 3 - Look for opportunities – look for ways to practice your values – even at work. It may seem impossible at first, but be creative. For example, if it seems like you have endless meetings, schedule a ‘walking meeting’ outside. If that seems too risky, start with a co-worker you have a good relationship with. If it seems like everyone books meetings with you in Outlook during the lunch hour, choose the ‘decline’ option and suggest another time. Be proactive - book an appointment with *yourself* at noon and go for a run. If someone says ‘hey, I need to meet with you at 12:00’, now you can honestly say “I’m sorry, I’m already booked, how about another time?”. Of course there are challenges in your way. The point here is to look **for the ‘possibilities’**; what **can** I do?

***Try this** : Think of one thing you’re wanting more of in your life right now. (quiet time, family, health). Now, pull out a sheet of paper, right now, and brainstorm **10 ideas** on how you can practice that value.*

i.e.- health – I really want to eat more healthy foods and exercise more – but I work 10 hour days, constantly in meetings, and we often take clients out for lunch. So, focus on what you want:

...’ eat healthy, more exercise’ – ask yourself, ‘what can I do, to eat healthy and exercise more?’ ideas:

Drink a full glass of water first thing in the morning, get a classy stainless steel water bottle, fill it with fresh water, and carry it to meetings. Take the stairs instead of the elevator once a day. Promise a friend you’ll run 2 days a week with them. Order a salad at lunch (your clients will be quick to take your lead). Commute part way to work then walk the rest. Run/walk in the morning before work. Set a recurring outlook appointment 3 times a week at lunch and go for a walk - invite a friend, no... invite the boss! Look for **opportunities**.

Step 4 – Take Action - as Nike says – just do it. If you’re thinking, ‘yes, nice theory but I can’t leave work every day at 4 pm to be with my family’ – Great – leave 2 days a week at 4:30 then! If your days tend to get ‘packed’ throughout the day, then *start* the day with some family time. Have breakfast with your family, walk the kids to school, walk the dog together. In this example, you’re getting in your value, before your busy work day gets in the way. This is one trick I personally use for running. I run in the morning before work, so no matter how busy it gets later, I’ve already got my run in. And by the way, many fitness gurus espouse the fat burning benefits of exercise in the mornings. Start work too early? Ok, invite your family to meet you for lunch on Fridays. Or promise yourself ‘no emails’ on Saturday.

Take one action!

Step 5 - Involve others – We’ll often do more for others than we will for ourselves. Have you ever told someone you were going to do something, then later thought, ‘well now I have to do it?’, well use that same admirable sense of commitment to your advantage.

- Promise a friend you’ll meet them for a morning run or a noon hour walk
- Tell 5 friends about your goal to (walk, speak confidently, volunteer, *fill in the blank*)
- Ask others for help (most people *love* to help – you’ll be doing them a favour)
- Celebrate – even the small steps.

I have a friend who decided to quit smoking cigarettes after smoking 1 pack a day for years. That is 25 cigarettes a day. When I asked her how it was going, she said “not so good, I quit for 5 days but then I had one on Friday night...”. Didn’t smoke for 5 days? That’s **125 cigarettes she did not smoke!** She was successful **125 times!** Success is motivating! **So Celebrate your successes**, even if they seem small .

As Lance Armstrong, 7 time winner of the Tour de France says, ‘no one accomplishes anything all on their own.’ If you have a goal, involve others. Share your goals, ask for help, ask them to ‘keep you honest’, and by the way, you might inspire them to make a change.

As Marcel Proust once said:

“The real voyage of discovery lies not in seeking new landscapes, but in seeing with new eyes”.

There may be times when you’re feeling ‘there must be more to life than this’ or that life seems to be controlling you. But when we take the time to **get clear** on what we want, then look at things from a new perspective, we’ll start to see **opportunities** that we may have missed before. Then, **take one action** toward your goal, celebrate your initiative, and most of all stay with it, **you’re worth it.**

Want to learn more about building personal resilience in your organization? Or for yourself?

Give us a call at **604 324-5900**, visit us at www.lidera.ca , or email us at matt@lidera.ca

¹Russ Newman, Ph.D., J.D., American Psychological Association. *Bouncing back, building personal resilience during challenging times.*

²Scott Bristol, PH.D., www.ljmaps.com