



Why Resilience?

Building work life resiliency is critical. Resilience enhances job performance by supporting adaptability, problem solving, and perseverance, and it also supports our well-being by protecting us against burnout.

How Resilient Are You?

Your survey responses indicate you generally cope well with challenges but may struggle if faced with large obstacles or ongoing pressures or stress. You may need a bit more support in bouncing back from substantial challenges, although you show a willingness to learn and grow from those experiences. You demonstrate a degree of resiliency and have a great capability to grow in this area.

Strengthening Your Resiliency

Building resilience against challenges, setbacks, and rejection requires a shift in perspective, repeated practice, and patience. It's about acknowledging the sting of rejection, learning from it, and then moving forward. Keeping an open mind and having a commitment to personal growth will support your success.

There are three key strategies to increase your ability to be resilient:

- 1. Embrace Growth Mindset:** Adopt a growth mindset where failures and rejections are seen as opportunities for learning and improvement. After a setback, ask yourself "What can I learn from this?" and "How can I improve?"
- 2. Reframe Rejection and Failure:** A "no" isn't necessarily a reflection of personal worth, but rather a result of various external factors. For instance, in the case of a rejected sales pitch, it could be due to the client's budget restrictions, the timing, or a mismatch with their needs. Regard a rejection as a stepping stone, not as a stumbling block. Similarly, failure doesn't equate to being incapable or inadequate. Everyone experiences failures. Like rejections, they are stepping stones to success, showing us what doesn't work and guiding us to new approaches.
- 3. Seek and Process Feedback:** It's perfectly natural to feel some level of stress or discomfort when facing feedback, especially if it's related to a rejection or failure. However, when approached in a constructive way, seeking and processing feedback can improve your performance, build resiliency, and reduce the stress associated with a rejection, setback, or failure.

Taking a Closer Look at Three Impactful Strategies

Embrace Growth Mindset

A growth mindset, as defined by psychologist Carol Dweck, is the belief that one's abilities and intelligence can be developed with effort, learning, and persistence. It contrasts with a fixed mindset, which sees abilities and intelligence as largely unchangeable. Embracing a growth mindset in the workplace can mean viewing challenges, mistakes, and rejections as opportunities to learn and grow rather than as dead ends. Here is an example:

Example: In a performance review, you receive feedback that your report writing needs improvement. A fixed mindset might interpret this as "I'm just not good at writing reports." A growth mindset would say, "I can improve my report writing. I'll seek resources, maybe an online course or a book, and invest time in practicing and honing this skill."

Embracing a growth mindset will shift you away from seeing challenges and setbacks as personal failures or insurmountable obstacles, and towards viewing them as opportunities for learning, growth, and eventual success.

How to Cultivate a Growth Mindset:

- Step 1: Believe in the Potential for Growth:** Understand that abilities are not fixed, and that you can improve through effort and experience.
- Step 2: View Challenges as Opportunities:** Instead of seeing challenges as threats, view them as opportunities to grow and learn.
- Step 3: Celebrate Effort, Not Just Outcome:** Recognize the value of hard work, perseverance, and effort, not just the end result. Celebrate your progress and the steps you took to get there.
- Step 4: Learn from Criticism:** Use constructive criticism as a tool for growth. Instead of feeling defeated by feedback, ask yourself, "What can I learn from this?"
- Step 5: Persist in the Face of Setbacks:** Understand that setbacks and mistakes are part of the learning process, not indications of failure.

Approaching work challenges with these steps will enable you to shift your mindset and become more resilient. Remember, change doesn't happen overnight, so be patient with yourself during this process.

Reframe Rejection and Failure

Reframing is all about shifting your perspective and changing the narrative around a negative situation. It means seeing rejection not as a personal failure or defeat but as an opportunity for growth, a learning experience, or simply as part of the process.

Rather than interpreting rejection as personal criticism, look at it as a sign that there might be areas for improvement. For instance, if a client rejects your sales proposal, it doesn't mean that you are ineffective. Instead, it might indicate the need for more comprehensive research into the client's industry, a deeper understanding of their unique needs, or a more targeted presentation of your product or service tailored to their needs. Again, imagine you've proposed a software solution to a customer, and they decline the proposal. This doesn't mean your solution is poor, but perhaps it wasn't adequately aligned with their specific business goals, or that the benefits can be more clearly communicated.

Example: Let's say you proposed a new marketing strategy in a team meeting, but your idea was dismissed by the team leader. Instead of interpreting this as a personal affront or a comment on your competence, you can reframe it by thinking, "My idea wasn't aligned with the team's current focus, but this rejection has given me a better understanding of our strategic direction. I can use this insight to tailor future suggestions more effectively."

Always remember, a no or rejection today does not necessarily lock the door on tomorrow's possibilities. Think about it like trying a new recipe that doesn't quite hit the mark. That first "no" from your taste-testers can guide you in adjusting the ingredients or cooking process, potentially leading to an enthusiastic "yes" the next time around.

How to Reframe

Reframing is essentially changing the way you perceive and interpret a situation. When it comes to rejection, here's how to do it:

Step 1: Acknowledge Your Emotions: It's natural to feel disappointed or upset when you face rejection. Acknowledge these feelings without judgment. This reframing is not about denying or suppressing emotions, but rather acknowledging them and then shifting your focus to constructive action.

Step 2: Detach Self-Worth from Outcome: Understand that the rejection is not a reflection of your worth as an individual. It's about the specific situation or task at hand, not your overall value.

Step 3: Find the Learning Opportunity: Look for what you can learn. What feedback did you receive? How can you improve next time?

Example: A project you were leading didn't meet its objectives. Instead of focusing on the failure itself, concentrate on what led to it. Was there a flaw in the project plan? Did unforeseen circumstances arise? Were there gaps in communication? Identifying these elements allows you to improve your approach next time.

Step 4: Look for the Benefits: Even rejections and failures come with benefits! For rejections, consider if there might be other opportunities that arose as a result. For instance, you may have more time to devote to another project, or you might have discovered a new, more promising path. Similarly, perhaps a failure helped you discover a blind spot in your skills, which you can now work on, supporting multiple successes in the future.

Or, maybe it led to innovation or opened up a new direction you hadn't considered before. In fact, many successful products have come about when a different project "failed" but produced unexpected and useful results.

Seek and Process Feedback

It's completely natural to feel a bit defensive or even discouraged when facing criticism or rejection. However, feedback is invaluable for growth and strengthening your resiliency, therefore approach it with an open mind and a commitment to learning.

Feedback and Stress Reduction

Feedback can provide clarity that will help you understand what led to the outcome. It can help demystify the situation and provides concrete areas for improvement, which can alleviate the stress of not knowing or guessing what went wrong.

Additionally, feedback often includes suggestions for improvement, which gives you actionable steps to focus on. Having a clear path forward can reduce stress because you now know how to proceed. This can provide a sense of control over the situation.

Finally, feedback also allows you to learn from your mistakes and avoid them in the future. This foresight can decrease stress associated with the possibility of similar future outcomes.

Remember that everyone, even highly successful individuals, receive feedback to help them grow and improve.

Processing Feedback

Asking yourself these three questions can help guide your feedback processing:

1. How did I initially react to the feedback? Why do I think I reacted that way?

It's essential to acknowledge your feelings about the feedback. It's okay to feel disappointed or upset. But it's equally crucial to not let these feelings overwhelm you or prevent you from seeing the potential value in the feedback.

2. What are the key points in the feedback?

Review the feedback objectively. What were the main points made? Try to separate the feedback from the person giving it and focus on the content, not the delivery.

3. What actions can I take based on this feedback?

What can you learn from the feedback? What are the areas for improvement? Try to pinpoint specific actions you can take or changes you can make based on the feedback.

Implement these strategies in just four steps the next time you experience a setback:

- Step 1: Reflect on the Setback:** What was the setback, and how did you react to it?
- Step 2: Reframe:** List three alternative interpretations of the setback that are not personal failures. How do these alternative interpretations change your feelings about the situation?
- Step 3: Adopt a Growth Mindset:** Identify one or two skills or abilities that, if improved, could change the outcome of the situation. Consider opportunities to practice and improve on these skills.
- Step 4: Feedback Debrief:** Did you receive feedback related to this setback or rejection? Did you ask for feedback? If not, why not? What are the main points or takeaways from this feedback? Identify two actions you could take based on this feedback.

Practices that Support Your Resiliency

While growth mindset, reframing, and feedback are the three central tools to building resiliency, there are other practices to adopt that will support your successful use of those tools.

Practice Self-Compassion: Practicing self-compassion means treating yourself kindly when facing setbacks, just as you would a friend. It involves acknowledging your own suffering, faults, and mistakes without harsh judgment or self-criticism.

With self-compassion, reduce the negative self-talk that often accompanies stressful situations. Instead of magnifying your failures and amplifying stress, comfort yourself and promote a sense of calm and acceptance. Acknowledge the effort you put in and remind yourself that everyone has disappointing outcomes at times. Self-compassion will help you to bounce back from failure more quickly.

Team up with a Resilience Buddy: Pair up with a resilience buddy, someone who is also looking to improve their resilience. You can share experiences, offer advice, and provide support to each other.

Set and Pursue Small, Achievable Goals: Setting and achieving small goals can provide a sense of control and forward momentum, which can help shift focus away from negative thoughts and boost your confidence. When expectations are too high, you may be setting yourself up for stress and disappointment. This doesn't mean you shouldn't aim high, but it's essential to balance ambition with realism to avoid undue stress. Setting realistic, achievable goals is part of effectively managing your stress.

Try Role-Playing Scenarios and Mental Rehearsals (Visualization): Imagine or write down challenging workplace scenarios and practice responding to them. For instance, how would you respond if a project you've been working hard on receives negative feedback, or a proposal you submitted gets rejected? Practice responding in a resilient, constructive way, focusing on how you can learn and improve from the experience. Similarly, visualize bouncing back from a rejection. The mind has a powerful influence over our responses, and regularly visualizing a positive response can help when actual rejection occurs.

Cultivate Optimism: Optimism acts as a buffer against stress. An optimistic outlook enables you to see setbacks as temporary, isolated events rather than pervasive, enduring failures. Optimists view challenges as opportunities to learn and grow rather than threats. This positive perspective will help you remain calm and composed in stressful situations, reduce worry about future setbacks, and bounce back from adversity more quickly.

Gratitude Journaling and Positive Affirmations: Keep a “work wins” or gratitude journal, where you jot down small victories or things that you're grateful for each day at work. This can help you focus on the positives and realize that you are making progress and achieving, even when there are setbacks.

You may also want to try positive affirmations related to resilience, such as “I am capable of handling whatever comes my way”, “I learn and grow from every experience”, “Setbacks are a part of the journey towards success”, or “I learn and grow with every ‘no’ I hear.” Affirmations counter negative thoughts and help reframe perspectives on challenging or disappointing situations.

Feedback Reflection: Whenever you receive feedback, take time to reflect on it, looking for the learning opportunities within it. Practice responding to feedback with a focus on what you can learn and how to improve, rather than getting defensive or upset.

Seek Support: We are social beings, and having a support network to lean on can significantly reduce our stress levels. Sharing our concerns and challenges with others can provide emotional relief, validate our feelings, make our problems seem more manageable, and offer fresh perspectives or advice. Furthermore, knowing we are not alone in our struggles can give us a sense of belonging and comfort, reducing feelings of isolation and stress. Support may come from a mentor, coach, or trusted colleague. They can provide perspective, advice, and encouragement.

Dwelling on Negative Outcomes

Overcoming the tendency to dwell on the negative aspects of rejection and setbacks is a common challenge for many of us. The three strategies below can help you redirect any negative thought patterns and maintain a resilient mindset:

- 1. Remember to Reframe Negative Thoughts:** Catch yourself when you start ruminating on a rejection or setback. Ask yourself: Is there a more positive way to view this situation? Can you turn it into a learning experience or an opportunity for growth?

- 2. Limit the Time You Allow Yourself to Dwell:** Give yourself a set amount of time (e.g., 15 minutes) to think about the setback or rejection. Once that time is up, shift your focus to something else, like a task you enjoy or a problem you can solve.
- 3. Practice Mindfulness:** Mindfulness involves paying attention to the present moment without judgement. This can help you manage negative emotions and avoid getting caught up in self-critical thoughts. Mindfulness practices can help manage the emotional distress associated with disappointing outcomes. Simple breathing exercises or a few minutes of meditation can help to reduce stress and “regain your center”.

Watch Out for Overuse

Resilience is a positive quality that enables you to bounce back from adversity and to cope with and adapt to challenges and change. However, a high level of resilience doesn't make you immune to stress and burnout.

In fact, individuals who have a high degree of resilience like you might be at risk of overlooking their own stress levels because they're so used to coping with challenges. They may push themselves too hard, believing they can handle any amount of pressure. This can lead to an accumulation of stress over time, which might eventually result in burnout.

Another potential issue arises if someone's resilience leads them to accept and cope with unhealthy levels of stress or adverse work conditions, instead of advocating for necessary changes.

For these reasons, it's important for you to regularly check in with your mental and physical well-being, set boundaries, and practice self-care. Empower yourself to voice concerns and advocate for healthier work conditions when necessary. Stress management techniques, mindfulness practices, and seeking social support can all be important parts of maintaining well-being alongside resilience.



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