



RESILIENCE

Introduction

Today's workplace is fraught with immense challenges – organisational change and upheaval, increasing workloads, staff shortages and turnover, looming deadlines, long working hours, budget pressures, team rifts, demanding customers and the ever increasing use of technology. These daily challenges have been further impacted by the turbulence of recent times – the global financial crisis, as well as the recent spate of floods, bushfires and cyclones.

It's no wonder that managers, team leaders and supervisors are keen to build and maintain a resilient workforce that can bounce back in the face of change, stress and adversity. Failure to build or maintain a resilient workforce can contribute to low productivity, low morale, absenteeism, health issues, high turnover and lack of motivation and willingness to go the extra mile.

About resilience

Resilience is another term for “psychological flexibility”: the ability to maintain effective, goal-oriented behaviours in the presence of uncomfortable experiences like stress and intense and uncomfortable feelings. Resilience is not about eliminating or minimising stressors (although that can be an important part of managing chronic stress). We know that sometimes this is not possible. Unexpected difficulties, from loss and bereavement to work pressures, unemployment and illness, trigger feelings of shock, injustice and anger that individuals have no way to prepare themselves for. It's also the case that we may invite stress into our lives by actively pursuing challenging work. Resilience is about functioning despite this stress, overcoming difficulties and bouncing back from crisis.

Some people seem to be “built” more resilient than others. But overall, human beings are highly resilient: during our lifetimes most people will experience a crisis traumatic enough to trigger a stress-related disorder, yet only about 8 per cent will actually develop one. A 30-year study by Dr Emmy Werner from the University of California found that over one-third of “at risk” children growing up amongst poverty and violence overcame these circumstances to do well in their adult lives.

Resilience can be developed and enhanced by honing a set of behavioural skills including mindfulness, “unhooking” from unhelpful thoughts, connection with our values, “making room for” uncomfortable emotions, and refocusing on actions that are aligned with our valued goals. Resilience has also been linked with a sense of humor, creative, flexible thinking, and strong social supports – people around us who care but who will resist buying into our fears. Perspective-taking, accepting what is out of our control, and active self-care and self-reward can also help us to remain stronger under times of duress. Resilience-building courses can be a great way to develop this skill set, enhancing individuals' capacity to cope and maximizing organizational performance.

Drake WorkWise offers a range of services that can assist managers, team leaders; supervisors and employees build and maintain resilience:

- Free seminars

- Customised resilience maintenance and building workshops
- Employee Assistance Program

For further information about these services or to discuss your organisation's resilience strategies please contact Drake WorkWise on 1300 135 600 or visit www.drakeworkwise.com.au