HOW TO DESIGN A RESILIENCE STRATEGY

for you & your team

Basic tools for mapping out your unique road to resilience

Defining resilience

Resilience is the ability to learn, adapt, and grow in meaningful ways following life challenges.

3 key components of resilience:

Connection to meaning and purpose: you've internalized the long-term, deep motivation that keeps you going despite immense challenges and setbacks.

Strong personal practices: you've operationalized your sense of meaning and purpose in the form of routines that support your physical and emotional strength.

Social and relational support: you've built friendships and relationships based on mutual support in which you regularly give and receive.

As you can see, resilience does not happen overnight, and it is a process rather than a destination. Building resilience requires a commitment to continually grow in each of these components in the context of your own work and life.

Creating a personal resilience strategy is the first step to committing to long-term resilience. The following steps will help you design a strategy that works for you, but be sure to revisit and revise as life and work realities shift.

Designing your personal resilience strategy

Step 1: Assess where you are right now.

Review the definitions above and score yourself on each of these three dimensions, with 1 being poor or nonexistent, and 5 being excellent. How are you doing right now?

Connection to meaning and purpose:

[poor] 1   2   3   4   5 [excellent]

Why did you give yourself this score?

Strong personal practices:

[poor] 1   2   3   4   5 [excellent]

Why did you give yourself this score?

Social and relational support:

[poor] 1   2   3   4   5 [excellent]

Why did you give yourself this score?

Designing your personal resilience strategy

Step 2: Identify where you most need to improve.

In the scoring process above, you may have identified areas where you'd like to continue to improve. We recommend focusing on just one or two areas at a time. Reflect on the areas where improvement would be the most meaningful to you right now. Write it down or discuss with a friend.

🔍 **The area where I'd like to focus is...**

📊 **I'd like to improve in this area because...**

Designing your personal resilience strategy

Step 3: Visualize the behavior change.

Without identifying actual behavior change, the notion of resilience can seem abstract and intangible. In this step, imagine and identify how your behavior will change as you build resilience in the area you chose in Step 2. Pretend that someone installed a video camera in your home and office. What would the camera capture?

Write or draw some of these behaviors below. Take this opportunity to design your ideal routines and rhythms. Think expansively— focus on what might be possible and what brings you joy.

The following questions may help prompt you:
- What daily routines do you have?
- Where are you seeking inspiration, restoration, or care for your soul?
- Who are you communicating with regularly?
- How much time do you spend working?
- When are you alone? With friends or loved ones?
- What are your facial expressions?
- What are some words you say to people daily? To yourself daily?
- How do you process and reflect on your day?
- How do you retreat and relax?

Designing your personal resilience strategy

Step 4: Commit to specific adjustments.

In the visualization above, you explored specific behaviors and activities that contribute to your unique sense of flourishing. These are some of the behaviors, when practiced regularly, that will move the needle in your resilience.

Now, select the ones that are most exciting to you and fill in the following chart. Remember, identify only a few at a time so that you can really focus and avoid overwhelm.

Daily practices I want to implement: What time:

Weekly practices I want to implement: Which day:

Monthly practices I want to implement: Which week:

Bonus: If you use a digital calendar or planner, schedule these commitments right now! Yes, right now. Don't wait until later.

Designing your personal resilience strategy

Step 5: Find and leverage accountability.

In addition to scheduling your resilience-building practices, you may want to share your commitments with a friend or colleague. Invite this person to keep you accountable and identify how they will do so. Perhaps they'll text you once a week? Or do some of these activities with you?

Remember that you can also leverage the power of rewards to keep yourself motivated. Make sure that the rewards are small but meaningful, and contribute to your long-term growth and development.

👤 My accountability partner is:

💬 My partner will keep me accountable by:

📷 I will show my accountability partner that I've followed my commitments by:

🎁 The reward I will experience in being consistent with my commitments is:

Building team resilience

The success of nearly everything we do relies, at least in part, on the people we work with. So, can we take these personal resilience strategies and apply them directly to our teams? The answer is yes and no.

When it comes to teams facing adversity, one of the obvious contributors to resilience is the individual resilience of team members. We recommend that you begin with the personal resilience of each team member so that they can continue to learn and grow through the challenges you face together. Specifically, what can you do, as a leader, manager, or fellow team member, to help individual team members create and follow their own personal resilience strategies?

At the same time, you can't stop at individual personal resilience. Team resilience is also built through the culture and practices you foster together around your mission and work.

Similar to personal resilience, team resilience requires consistent routines and disciplines that adapt to your ever-changing reality.

Designing your team resilience strategy

Step 1: Assess where you are right now.

Think about the last time your team faced significant challenges— you may be in the midst of one right now. **How would you describe your team's response to challenges based on the dimensions below?** Score your team on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being poor or nonexistent, and 5 being excellent. Invite your team to do the same. It is imperative that you gather their perspectives rather than only relying on your own.

Team resilience self-assessment

Our team trusted each other to do our individual jobs well.

[poor] 1   2   3   4   5 [excellent]

Our team offered a safe space to share our thoughts and opinions openly.

[poor] 1   2   3   4   5 [excellent]

Our team maintained a posture of learning, especially after mistakes or failures.

[poor] 1   2   3   4   5 [excellent]

Our team valued personal wellness and resilience, even during a challenging period.

[poor] 1   2   3   4   5 [excellent]

Our team collaborated effectively on solving problems together.

[poor] 1   2   3   4   5 [excellent]

Our team came up with creative ideas to address the problem.

[poor] 1   2   3   4   5 [excellent]

Our team stayed motivated by our mission despite the challenges we faced.

[poor] 1   2   3   4   5 [excellent]

Our team agreed on the processes in which we collaborated.

[poor] 1   2   3   4   5 [excellent]

Our team was good at listening to each other.

[poor] 1   2   3   4   5 [excellent]

Our team handled disagreements well.

[poor] 1   2   3   4   5 [excellent]

Our team recognized and accepted our reality, even when it was difficult.

[poor] 1   2   3   4   5 [excellent]

Designing your team resilience strategy

Step 2: Identify the most critical issues together.

Once you have collected these scores and analyzed them, hold an open conversation about your results. You can use the questions below as a guide for this conversation. Your goal is to identify which areas need intentional focus in order to develop long-term resilience.

Remember, this is NOT a scorecard on your own performance or leadership, or that of anyone else. Team culture and practices are the result of everyone's daily choices and interactions. What you need to determine together is how you will move forward in a way that honors everyone's perspectives and needs.

Questions for your discussion:
- We scored the team highly in these areas. Why do you think we did well here?
- We scored the team poorly in these areas. Why do you think we did poorly here?
- Have you noticed any patterns that are hurting our resilience? In what ways have these patterns continued to occur?
- How might we use new processes, routines, and commitments to change our most damaging patterns?
- Which structures seem to perpetuate our negative patterns and can we reform those structures?
- How can this team support your personal resilience?
- Are there past conflicts that have gone unresolved? How might we address them soon?

Designing your team resilience strategy

Step 3: Reflect and select a new strategy to pilot and test.

Like personal resilience, it's important to strike a balance between implementing resilience-building strategies and overwhelming yourself with new obligations. If you are the team leader, take some time to reflect on what you learned during your team meeting. What seems to be the most critical challenge to your team's resilience?

Next, select a resilience strategy to pilot. The more collaborative you are in developing this strategy, the better. This will typically be in the form of a new process or practice that you will implement for a defined period of time.

When proposing it to your team, draw a direct connection between this new strategy and the pain points you identified together, and invite feedback. How will this practice help you move forward?

Our new resilience process or practice is:

The goal of this new process or practice is:

We will implement this for the following amount of time:

We will know that it is working if:

Our next conversation to evaluate our progress will be scheduled on:

Designing your team resilience strategy

Step 4: Continue the dialogue and repeat the process.

New resilience practices will generate slow changes in the way your team functions together. As you implement your strategy, continue to check in with the team to see if they believe it is addressing the critical challenges you identified together. We recommend giving a new strategy 12 weeks before evaluating and drawing conclusions.

You can always adjust by soliciting team feedback. When enough time has elapsed, you can invite team members retake the resilience self-assessment in Step 1 to see if the team has made progress.

Over time, you may want to repeat this process to continue developing tailored, responsive processes and practices that build resilience for your team.

Specific times when you should definitely check in on team resilience include the following:
- Taking on new clients and projects
- Team members entering or exiting
- New functions or programs within your team
- Major events that can affect your team
- Major logistical changes and challenges

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