



Factsheet 25

Updated on 04 December 2020

Resilience

This factsheet has been designed for use by healthcare professionals only.

Introduction

COVID – 19 has presented many challenges from affecting the mental and physical health of individuals, through to the effects on the health and economy of the country.

For many healthcare professionals, life on the frontline has been difficult, from managing trauma to not seeing their loved ones due to the fear of transmitting the virus. The following factsheet looks at what resilience is and techniques that can be used to “bounce back”.

What is resilience?

“Resilience is that ineffable quality that allows some people to be knocked down by life and come back stronger than ever. Rather than letting failure overcome them and drain their resolve, they find a way to rise from the ashes.”¹

Jane McGonigal further describes four types of resilience:

- PHYSICAL resilience: exercise, good nutrition, adequate sleep etc
- INTELLECTUAL resilience: doing puzzles, trying new hobbies, staying engaged in work and learning
- EMOTIONAL resilience: having self-compassion, being aware of our own needs, setting boundaries etc
- SOCIAL resilience: family support, social networks, community connections
- SPIRITUAL resilience can be added to this list: finding meaning, comfort and care in faith or religion.²

Why is resilience important?

Being able to cope with stress in a positive manner has many health benefits such as lower rates of depression and having a greater satisfaction with life. On the other hand, having a lack of resilience means that you may not be able to cope with stress, which can lead to harmful health consequences such as a weakened immune system, high levels of anxiety and depression, insomnia as well as effects upon the digestion and cardiac system.³

Particularly in today's climate, where we face challenges and constant change, it is important to have strategies available to help stay positive and manage your feelings. So, what are the ways that we can use to build resilience? Let's look at these in detail.

Ways to build resilience

- Make connections: build strong positive relationships, helping others can also help your own resilience
- Be proactive: don't ignore problems, take action on difficulties and take decisive steps
- Move towards your goals: develop and set manageable goals
- Learn from past experiences: how have you coped with similar issues in the past, is there anything you can use to help now?
- Take care of yourself: be compassionate to yourself, check-in – what do I need now?
- Practice self-care

As healthcare professionals progress through these difficult periods it is really important to establish a work plan which aims to prioritise wellbeing and reduce stress.⁴

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Developing a Health & Wellbeing at Work Plan

So, what is meant by a work plan? A work plan is a framework to develop tools and strategies to develop wellbeing and reduce stress. The plan:

- Can be used to counteract stress and make work life more enjoyable and productive
- Aims to encourage everybody to look after their physical and emotional wellbeing

A plan could be something as simple as the table below:

Plan for managing things that get to me at work

Things that make me feel angry, hurt, upset, discouraged, anxious, stressed out at work	What I will do to stop it getting to me too much when these things happen	What my manager can do to help

Within the plan it is important to capture:

- The things that are important to me in my life outside work (and when I will do them)
- The things I need to do every day or week to keep myself on an even keel
- The things that my manager can do to help me stay on an even keel at work

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My Work Health and Wellbeing first aid kit

It is also important to have a plan of what you are going to do when things are not going perfectly. Within this plan, consider:

- Things I can do to get myself back on an even keel if I feel upset, discouraged, hopeless, angry, worried or stressed out at work
- Things I can do after work so that I don't take the troubles of the day home with me⁴

For further information please see the following resources:

- Mind: Mental health in primary care <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTVGABoHALI>
- What does resilience mean to you? 5 minute international video
- <https://resilienceresearch.org/videos/>
- <https://resilienceresearch.org>
- <http://www.centreforresilience.co.uk>
- <http://www.actionforhappiness.org>
- <https://www.wheelofwellbeing.org>

References:

1. <https://positivepsychology.com/what-is-resilience/>
2. Jane McGonigal (2012) Available at: https://www.ted.com/talks/jane_mcgonigal_the_game_that_can_give_you_10_extra_years_of_life/transcript?language=en
3. Harvard Medical School (2017) Available at: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/ramp-up-your-resilience>
4. Krishna Sarda, Sanaa Raihani and Catherine Broadway (2020) Grenfell and Health and wellbeing service
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