

How to be resilient at work

Stress, change and increasing demands are part of our modern working lives. But how you deal with them makes all the difference. We've all had days when things at work didn't go well. Some people, however, seem to adapt, bounce back and learn from their mistakes and the setbacks they encounter, whereas others tend to struggle with even the smallest amount of adversity. If you're one of those who copes well under pressure, you could be described as resilient.



If you're resilient, you don't dwell on things when they don't go your way. You learn from your mistakes rather than letting them get you down. You move forward rather than backwards, whatever comes your way. Indeed, you see pressure as something that can be positive and motivating instead of something to dread or avoid.

Not being resilient, on the other hand, means you don't often deal with pressure and the complexity of life very well. You may even experience stress-related ill health as a result. Well the good news is that resilience isn't something you have to be born with. You can develop resilience at work and in all other areas of your life – and it's not as difficult as it sounds.

Did you know? In 2017 there were 15.4 million working days lost due to work-related stress, depression or anxiety (*Source: Labour Force Survey*)

Look after your wellbeing

The first step towards building your work resilience is to look after your wellbeing, which means having as healthy a lifestyle as possible.

Stay active If you have a demanding job or you work unsociable hours, it's not always easy to find the time – or the energy – for exercise. But staying physically active is important for your physical and mental wellbeing. Best of all, you don't have to train like a marathon runner to reap the benefits.

In this country, experts recommend we should try to be active daily and do at least 150 minutes of moderate-aerobic activity such as cycling or brisk walking every week to stay healthy. That's the equivalent of a 30-minute bout of activity on five days of the week. But if you find it hard to set aside 30 minutes all at the same time, you could simply do three 10-minute exercise bursts during your day.

One way to make a dent in your activity target is to try to make sure you take all your breaks at work – including lunch breaks – and to do something active in each break, even if you just walk about and stretch your legs for a few minutes. Meanwhile if you live reasonably near your work place, try leaving home a little bit earlier so that you can walk rather than drive or use public transport. You don't have to join a gym. And just making some time for a little physical activity every day will help you feel healthier and more positive.

Eat healthily Filling up on unhealthy snacks or endless cups of coffee when you're under stress at work may make you feel better initially, but it will almost certainly make you feel worse in the long run. Eating as healthily as possible, on the other hand, can help you be more resilient because you'll have more energy and a more balanced mood.

Discover everything you need to know about having a balanced diet in our [guide to healthy eating](#). In the meantime here are few quick guidelines: make sure you have at least five portions of fruit and veg every day; drink plenty of water; try limiting your caffeine intake; and to stick to the current recommended alcohol intake guidelines (14 units of alcohol a week).

Avoid skimping on sleep Not getting the amount of sleep your mind and body need isn't going to help you cope well under pressure. Having a good night's sleep doesn't just make you feel rested and refreshed, it can also boost your energy, your mood and help you concentrate and focus better. If you're not sleeping as well as you should, try reading our helpsheet [How to sleep well: A guide for adults](#).

Build good work relationships

Social interaction and support is important for good mental health, and this applies not just outside work but at work too. Good relationships at the office can make you more resilient to stress and anxiety, not just because you'll be happier in your job but also because you'll have a strong support network for the times when you may need it.

There are several things you need to have good, healthy working relationships, including:

- Respect (when you respect your work colleagues, they'll respect you too)
- Trust (being open and honest with the people you work with can boost trust, which can help you work and get on together more effectively)
- An open mind (try to welcome opinions that are different from yours)
- Good communication (honesty and openness are essential for effective communication)
- Appreciation (if a work colleague helps you or does something well, show how much you appreciate it)
- Good listening skills (try to listen more than you talk)

Be more mindful

Some experts believe mindfulness, a popular wellbeing technique, may help boost job performance, problem solving and mental flexibility, as well as reduce stress.

There are lots of ways you can be more mindful – at work, for instance, try to avoid multitasking (trying to do more than one thing at the same time or constantly switching from one task to another). Multitasking may make you feel as if you're achieving more, but in reality you're probably getting a lot less done than you think. So whenever possible, concentrate on one thing at a time, only moving on to the next thing when you've completed the task you're currently working on.

Find out more about mindfulness in general by reading our factsheet [How to practice mindfulness](#).
[\[add link to factsheet\]](#)

Develop a resilient attitude

If you want to keep your cool when things get tough at work, it's essential to develop the right way of thinking to help you cope with anything and everything that's thrown at you. Here are some tips to help you develop a resilient mental attitude:

- Don't shy away from stress. After all, there's no getting away from it these days, especially at work. Instead of letting things get to you, make a conscious decision to take them in your stride. This may take practice, but it's certainly not impossible.
- If you have a tendency to doubt yourself or think negatively, try practising thinking positively instead, especially when something goes wrong or when you come up against a setback or criticism. It's easy to blame yourself when things don't go your way, but try to break your habit of thinking about yourself negatively. Instead, try to see the good in any situation by practising thinking positively – but try to remember to be realistic at the same time.
- Try to see life as a learning process. When a difficult challenge comes your way, treat it as an opportunity to learn something new rather than seeing it as something that's going to set you up for failure. Think of it this way: there may not be much or anything you can do about the difficulties you have to face, but you can choose to respond to them in a positive rather than negative way.
- Boost your self-belief. All resilient people believe in themselves, which helps them to cope with stress and setbacks. Keep telling yourself you're good at your job, especially whenever your confidence takes a knock. Focus on your successes – try to think of at least one thing that you did well at the end of every working day, and give yourself a big pat on the back.
- Learn how to be more flexible. Change is inevitable, not just at work but in life generally. So try not to react badly if something you've been planning at work is dropped or reworked. Instead, try to remember that change is something to be embraced rather than resisted.
- Try to keep things in perspective. Instead of dwelling on every mistake or negative experience, ask yourself how important these things will be in a week, a month or year's time.

Keep practising

Developing resilience is achievable, but it won't happen overnight. Most of us have to work at it throughout our lives, especially at work. But while it may sometimes seem like an effort, the rewards are worth it. So keep working at it, and with every day you'll become better at it.

And if you do have one of those days when you react to an obstacle or setback in a non-resilient way, just be kind to yourself. You're only human, after all. Think about what you have achieved and you'll realise you've probably developed more resilience than you think.

Useful links

If you are experiencing any of the issues covered in this guide, in the first instance call our free helpline on 0808 801 0550. Our Advisors will listen without judging and will work with you as best they can to achieve a positive outcome. If you prefer you can email: support@ltcharity.org.uk; visit our website: www.licensedtradecharity.org.uk;. It's full of useful information about the kind of issues we know people who work in the licensed trade face.

Other sources of information:

Mind

www.mind.org.uk

One of the UK's leading mental health charities, Mind also has a page on its website about [how to be more resilient](#).

Fit for Work

fitforwork.org

A government-funded initiative, Fit for Work helps support people in work with health conditions. Its website has an article called [Building workplace resilience](#).

Mental Health UK

www.mentalhealth-uk.org

Mental Health UK is an amalgamation of four UK mental health charities. One of the booklets on its website is entitled [Managing stress and building resilience in the workplace](#).

NOTE: This guide is not exhaustive. It has been produced by the Licensed Trade Charity to provide you with an overview of the issue in question. If you're experiencing problems with this issue, our Advisors are available to you.