



# Supervisor NEWSLETTER

Employee Assistance Program  
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## Strengthen Your Resilience: Bend So You Won't Break

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**The news in this last year has been surreal and tragic. Coastlines pummeled by hurricanes, homes swallowed by lava in Hawaii, and acres of fires actually leveled the town of Paradise, CA, not to mention record low temperatures and snow in much of the country.**

**W**hile these disasters and many personal tragedies are out of our control, leaving us feeling scared and helpless, there is hope. We can weather and even grow through them by consciously strengthening our resilience. As humans, we all have seeds of resilience within us as part of our survival instinct. Activating these seeds takes an awareness of thoughts that either strengthen or diminish them, and practicing the behaviors that are proven to build resiliency. Like other abilities, resilience becomes stronger the more it's practiced.

Supervisors, who are expected to lead teams through change and hardships while bearing the weight of their own worries, can make their loads lighter by working on their own resilience muscles.

The Mayo Clinic, the U.S. Military, and many other organizations have recognized the power of resiliency and have developed programs to teach it. From their work, the Mayo Clinic reports that resilience can help protect us from depression and anxiety, and also mitigates the effects of trauma and improves the ability to cope. Multiple research studies in resiliency have uncovered these particular attitudes and habits as powerful predictors in rebounding from adversity:

**self-awareness, self-care, connection, optimism, and goal-setting.**

As Carl Jung said, "Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate." How we think is such an important piece of resilience that we'll start with it first.

### Self-Awareness

**Take your mental temperature.** Check in with yourself to get a sense of your current resilience. How able would you be to cope with an unexpected hardship or loss? Are you happy? Feeling healthy? Or, do you need support with a situation that is currently impacting you? Knowing your baseline can help you learn what you need to start getting stronger. Your EAP can assist with 24/7 telephonic support, and referrals to counseling, and legal and financial consultations, and other resources.

**Keep things in perspective.** Avoid catastrophic thinking—resist thinking that a problem is insurmountable. Often, you can't change events but you can change the way you interpret them. Tell is like it is, not how you fear it will be. Identify what is controllable and focus your attention and energy on that. Remind yourself of times when you've handled a hardship. Lean on the evidence that you've done it before, and the confidence that can do it again, getting help if you need it.

**Practice eavesdropping on your inner voice.** Does it support you or add to your worry, and feelings of being overwhelmed? Are you telling yourself, "You can get through this. You've handled other challenges and are capable of getting through this one." Or... does your inner voice criticize and undermine you? Noticing if your thinking has taken a negative direction can empower you to re-channel it into a more positive and hopeful direction. It's helpful to remember that what you focus on gets stronger.

### Take care of yourself

It may sound like pop-psychology or seem selfish, but **self-care** is absolutely essential in resilience. Eat a healthy diet, exercise your body, get plenty of sleep, see your doctor for regular check-ups, and do things you enjoy in life. Find a practice that helps you feel calmer, like yoga, meditation, deep breathing, exercise, or prayer.

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The EAP website [www.firstchoiceEAP.com](http://www.firstchoiceEAP.com) can help with many resources for reducing stress. When you feel good physically, you will feel more confident and able to handle the obstacles that can appear in your path. You'll also have the benefit of improving your quality of life with good health so you can enjoy it.

### Connect with others

The Mayo Clinic finds **connection** to be a "key component of being resilient." Connection with others can help us see new perspectives and possibilities, and give us the experience of giving and receiving empathy. Strong bonds can help us feel that we're not alone in the hard times, and make it easier to ask for help when we need it. Conversely, withdrawing from others can deepen our sense of worry and trap us in negative thinking. For people struggling with depression, isolation is common and can reinforce feelings of hopelessness and despair. If this is true for you, don't go it alone. Call your EAP for support and reach out to the people close to you in your life. Make a point to spend time regularly with family and friends, and people in your spiritual and other communities.

### Embrace optimism

Maintain courageous hope even if you don't have the answers yet. Identify at least one good thing in your life and allow yourself to feel gratitude for it. **Optimism** is contagious, so surround yourself with positive people. Smiling also has surprisingly powerful effects. Multiple studies found that smiling (even if it's faked) can decrease the physiological aspects of stress, such as heart rate. Smile and find things to laugh about as often as you can. As the Dalai Lama says, "Choose to be optimistic, it feels better."

### Set goals

Consciously do something each day that is meaningful to you. Expand this into the future and **set a goal** for yourself that you'll look forward to achieving and that will add to your sense of life purpose. It's fine to start with small goals. As you accomplish them, you'll likely feel more optimistic and inspired to reach for the bigger, more meaningful life goals.

Strengthening these facets of your life can deepen your resiliency reservoir and support you to manage workplace and life adversities with more confidence and less stress. For guidance on this path, check out the Resilience Journey on your EAP website [www.firstchoiceEAP.com](http://www.firstchoiceEAP.com) with articles, assessments, and an inspiring webinar. The EAP can also support your efforts with coaching and personal counseling. Call us at (800) 777-4114 to get started or for immediate telephonic support, 24/7.

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/resilience-training/in-depth/resilience/art-20046311>

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/248433.php>

[https://www.azquotes.com/author/8418-Dalai\\_Lama/tag/optimism](https://www.azquotes.com/author/8418-Dalai_Lama/tag/optimism)

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/44379-until-you-make-the-unconscious-conscious-it-will-direct-your>

Book: Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance by Angela Duckworth

