

## How managers can build resilient teams

By Andrea Bassett

Have you ever worked with someone who never gets sick, even when a nasty bug is going around? Or someone who is unflappable while surrounded by chaos? These people may have the ultimate workplace super-power: resilience. Fortunately, people and teams can cultivate this super-power and reap the rewards.

### What is resiliency?

The dictionary defines resilience as “the power or ability to return to the original form, position, etc., after being bent, compressed, or stretched” and the “ability to recover readily from illness, depression, adversity, or the like; buoyancy.”

Anyone who has a job, family or any sort of responsibilities has felt stretched, stressed and pulled in many directions—possibly as recently as today—which means that cultivating resiliency is essential for everyone.

As a manager, it’s your role to cultivate resilience in yourself and create a working environment that supports resiliency across your team. Keep reading for some practical tips on how to do this.

### How can someone become more resilient?

Becoming more resilient happens over time when we add self-care elements to our routines and remove activities, people and habits that do not support our own well-being. Resilience resides across four domains: mental, physical, emotional and spiritual. Ideally, we take care of all areas. Here we’ll cover four ways to build resilience but for a comprehensive guide, check out the resources section of this article.

### Four ways to build your own resilience:

1. **Cultivate meaningful and supportive relationships** – One of the most critical components of resiliency is having high-quality relationships,<sup>i</sup> ideally at home and work. A high-quality relationship is built on trust, effective communication, respect and joy.
2. **Shake it off** – Don’t take things personally because when other people try to get you down, that’s about them, not you. The resources section includes an article that covers *how* to not take things personally.
3. **Dance it out** – Think about what a short burst of physical activity actually does. It eats stress for breakfast. Instead of committing yourself to an overwhelming exercise program that involves spandex, incorporate small bursts of stress-busting movement into your day. Try a three-minute dance party, one-block sprint, five-minute yoga routine or one minute of jumping jacks or skipping rope.

4. **Connect to the big picture** – Take care of your spiritual needs by connecting (or re-connecting) to your “why” and moving yourself in that direction, one small step at a time.

### What makes a team resilient?

According to a Fast Company article,<sup>ii</sup> resilient teams typically have:

- A culture of psychological safety
- Clearly communicated goals
- Low turnover
- Calm leaders
- A commitment to addressing problems, reframing challenges and building the right skills.

You can't force your team members to become more resilient, but you can create a team culture where resilience can thrive.

### Four ways managers can facilitate team resiliency:

1. **Incorporate purposeful team building activities** – Use regularly-scheduled team meetings to solve a problem, address an issue or get to know each other better so teambuilding is business as usual rather than a quarterly event.
2. **Set expectations for and model respectful discussion and disagreement** – Teams become stressed and dysfunctional when people don't feel comfortable speaking up or don't know how to voice dissent respectfully.<sup>iii</sup> Show them how to do this and you'll have a harmonious team with above-average communication skills.
3. **Avoid mixed messages** – Be aware of misalignment you inadvertently create. For example, if you tell your employees to leave work on time but you repeatedly assign an unrealistic workload, your team won't be able to trust you for long. As we learned earlier, strong relationships are critical for resiliency so be aware of any anti-relationship-building messages you give off, even unintentionally.
4. **Address issues as they arise** – When you notice someone on your team is struggling, say something. If you're not sure how to start a conversation with someone you're concerned about, read our article on spotting the signs of stress, burnout and flagging mental health that includes conversation starters.

As a manager, you could easily get overwhelmed by your managerial duties, especially when the success of your team relies so much on the well-being of other people. You can't do it all, but you can do the few things that give you maximum results. Cultivating the super-power of resiliency for yourself and your team is one of those things!

### Resources for managers

#### Building Stronger Teams

This [Great West Life resource](#) is an 88-page e-book full of practical tips for managers and team leaders who want to develop resilience personally and for their teams. It includes comprehensive instructions for many team building activities designed to fit into regularly scheduled team meetings.

## How to Stop Taking Things Personally

Stop taking things personally is excellent advice but wouldn't it be great to know *how* to do this? Have a look at this [Psychology Today article](#) for some practical tips for keeping other people's baggage away from you.

### About the author



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This article was commissioned for People Corporation's mental health microsite:  
<https://pcpeoplecare.com/>

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/pressure-proof/201410/seven-things-resilient-employees-do-differently>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.fastcompany.com/3060447/7-habits-of-resilient-teams>

<sup>iii</sup> [https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/pdf/Building\\_Stronger\\_Teams\\_Oct\\_2016\\_EN.pdf](https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/pdf/Building_Stronger_Teams_Oct_2016_EN.pdf)