

Boosting Your Resilience and Adaptability

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Sarah Lewis explains how to boost your resilience and adaptability in difficult times

Resilience requires having the resources to cope with unexpected, difficult or adverse situations. Having resources, being aware of them, and being able to deploy them, feed our resilience, and our ability to bounce back from adversity.

Being adaptable means being able to quickly and appropriately change our behaviour when circumstances change. For example, we are having to find different ways to manage work, often alongside home schooling children.

How can we discover our resourcefulness and boost our resilience and adaptability?

Broadly speaking, we have personal resources and social resources to call on.

Personal resources

1. Our Strengths

It's important to know our own strengths as using them boosts our confidence and gives us energy, allowing us to recover more quickly from setbacks. We are likely to solve a problem better if the solution uses our strengths. To learn more about your unique strengths you can take the [VIA free strengths test](#) or buy packs of strength cards to help self-identify your personal strengths. With the knowledge you gain you can then get some feedback from others on how they see your strengths, and when they've seen you use them in a difficult situation.

2. Our previous experiences

When we are stressed or anxious it can be helpful to remember other times when we coped, when we got through a tricky situation or when we turned a situation around. Being in the grip of the present can prevent us



from accessing resources from the past: our knowledge, our skills, our experience.

We can discover these hidden resources by remembering our best experiences, when we weren't just coping but really flourishing and excelling. Appreciative Inquiry is a change process built on the understanding that resources from the past can help us in the present and in the future. There are some excellent books about how to apply this in your professional and your personal life.

3. Boosting our resilience by building our HERO abilities

Our HERO abilities are made up of our states of hopefulness, optimism, resilience and confidence. Add the four together and the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. In other words, although resilience is part of our HERO abilities, it is also boosted if we can boost our sense of hope, optimism and confidence.

Social resources

Our social networks extend our resourcefulness. Think of it as 'I know a (wo)man who can'. Our network contains people who find easy what we find hard. They can be a source of inspiration, uplift, practical advice, useful contacts and many other resources that help us cope. Exchange your strengths across your network.

Organisational social capital

An organisation's social capital describes how easily information flows and how much trust there is. As more people return to work, key questions will be: Do staff believe the business is telling them what they need to know? Do they trust the plans to keep them safe?

Quick tips for boosting your resilience and adaptability in the new normal

1. Follow safety instructions

More importantly, understand the principles and apply them in different situations so you can be active in keeping yourself safe.

2. Manage your energy and look after yourself

Adapting our behaviour means we can't run on habitual lines, so it takes more energy even if you seem to be achieving less. Go easy on yourself!

3. Re-prioritise, and then do it again when things change again

Take time to think about what the highest priorities are in this situation, within these constraints, with these resources.

4. Create and recreate structure for yourself

Structure helps because it reduces decision-making, which is taxing. Keep evolving new structures to your day or your life as things change.

5. Redefine your goals so you can succeed in the new situation

This is very important.

about the author



Sarah Lewis, C.Psychol. is the principal psychologist at Appreciating Change, a strengths-based psychological consultancy that is committed to applying well-researched positive psychology ideas and interventions to workplace challenges and opportunities at an individual, team or whole organization level. Sarah is an associated fellow of the British Psychological Society, a principal member of the Association of Business Psychologists, and a member of the International Positive Psychology Association. She also collects great positive psychology resources to support consultants, trainers and coaches in their work which are sold through the Positive Psychology online shop. <https://www.thepositivepsychologyshop.com/>

