Building Personal Resilience at Work

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Resilience is needed by staff in organizations to cope with daily stress as well as to adapt to large-scale organizational change. The paper summarizes the importance and benefits of resilience at work. The process of experiencing adversity with and without sufficient resilience and the relationship between resilience and change readiness are outlined. A study was undertaken to develop an understanding of personal resilience that could be used to develop training to enhance resilience of staff at work. The study and the outcomes of a model, constructs and elements of resilience are presented. Training, based on these concepts, was conducted and delegates reported statistically significant change over time.

Defining Personal Resilience

The concept of being stretched and challenged, while being able to bounce back is intriguing. It is attractive to individuals who would like to cope with life's daily problems and the bigger knocks that we all inevitably have to endure, as well as to employers who would like their workforce to be able to adapt and cope with organizational changes and difficulties. Resilience is the term commonly used for this desirable trait, although there is no common understanding as to its nature or process.

Luthans and Youssef (2004) state that there is a general misconception that resilience is an extraordinary gift, a magical, mystical, rare capacity, a trait that results only from genetic variables. Masten (2001), though, describes resilience as a common adaptive human process, rather than a magical process applicable to a select few. Tugade

and Fredrickson (2004) similarly describe the process of resilience as being characterized by the ability to bounce back from negative emotional experiences, and by flexible adaption to the changing demands of stressful experiences. This understanding seems to be closely related to the concept of hardiness, described by the researcher Kobasa (1979). Resilience also enables us to 'bounce back' after experiencing stressful life events such as significant change, stress, adversity and hardship (Maddi and Khoshaba, 2005). Most importantly, it incorporates the concept of emerging from the adversity stronger and more resourceful (Richardson, 2002).

We therefore see resilience as that developed characteristic for dealing with negative and positive changes in life, accessible to all people on a daily basis, which distinguishes survivors/adaptors (employing successful, regular adaptation, and drawing

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from internal and external sources of strength usually associated with the psychological concept of having a bi-local locus of control) from those who give in to life's struggles (often resulting in pathological and, normally negative, life-adjusting effects)—both approaches have consequences for the individual.

The focus of research on resilience has been described by Richardson (2002) as having three stages. The first is the identification of traits of resilience, the second is the processes of development and operation of resilience, and the third is the concept of resilience incorporating the life force to heal, recover and even emerge strengthened. He has identified an increasing interest in the concept of resilience in the fields of mental health, illness, schooling, social welfare and business. Interest in the concept of resilience has also extended to general society and is demonstrated by the number of popular self-help books in this area aimed mostly at individuals, but also families, schools and work (Reivich and Shatte, 2002; Brooks and Goldstein, 2004; Maddi and Khoshaba, 2005; and Siebert, 2005).

In an organizational context, resilience has been described as having the capacity to bounce back from both overwhelming positive and negative adversity/changes, such as increased responsibility (Luthans and Youssef, 2004). We define resilience, in an organizational setting, as the ability to remain task-focused, productive and connected to the organizational mission, whilst experiencing tough times. This requires employees, at all levels, to have the necessary inner strength and resourcefulness to enable them to cope with the impact of commonly-experienced organizational large-scale change, such as new priorities, new leadership, new organizational strategies, major change initiatives, new technologies, mergers and downsizing.

The Importance of Resilience in Times of Change

It has become a truism that organizations are facing increasingly complex problems and changes, and that the pace of change is accelerating. Hamel and Välikangas (2003) observed that the world is becoming turbulent faster than organizations are becoming resilient, the result of which is the proliferation of performance slumps, erratic corporate earnings and the fact that big companies are failing more frequently. Aside from financial squeezes, organizations struggle to implement changes through projects, programs and people. The Standish Group International (2003), which publishes the biannual CHAOS Chronicles, reported that despite some major improvements, only 34% of all projects are reported to be successful, 15% fail and 51% are 'challenged'. This difficulty with implementing change is reflected by KPMG in their 2005 IT Survey which stated that projects are not delivering on their promises. They claimed that between 2004-05, 49% of participants experienced at least one project failure, while in this same period, only 2% of organizations achieved targeted benefits all the time. According to KPMG (2005), 86% of organizations lost up to 25% of target benefits across their entire project portfolio.

People involved in large-scale organizational change often experience it as a disruption of their status quo, uncomfortable and even threatening, with individuals sometimes labeled as 'resistant to change'. One of the authors has argued elsewhere (Warner, 2007) that to enhance the success of organizational change initiatives, targeted people-change support initiatives can be introduced to engage them emotionally, align them intellectually and reinforce new behaviors and processes to roll out the change.

Engaging emotionally involves creating a sense of urgency for the change in the organization
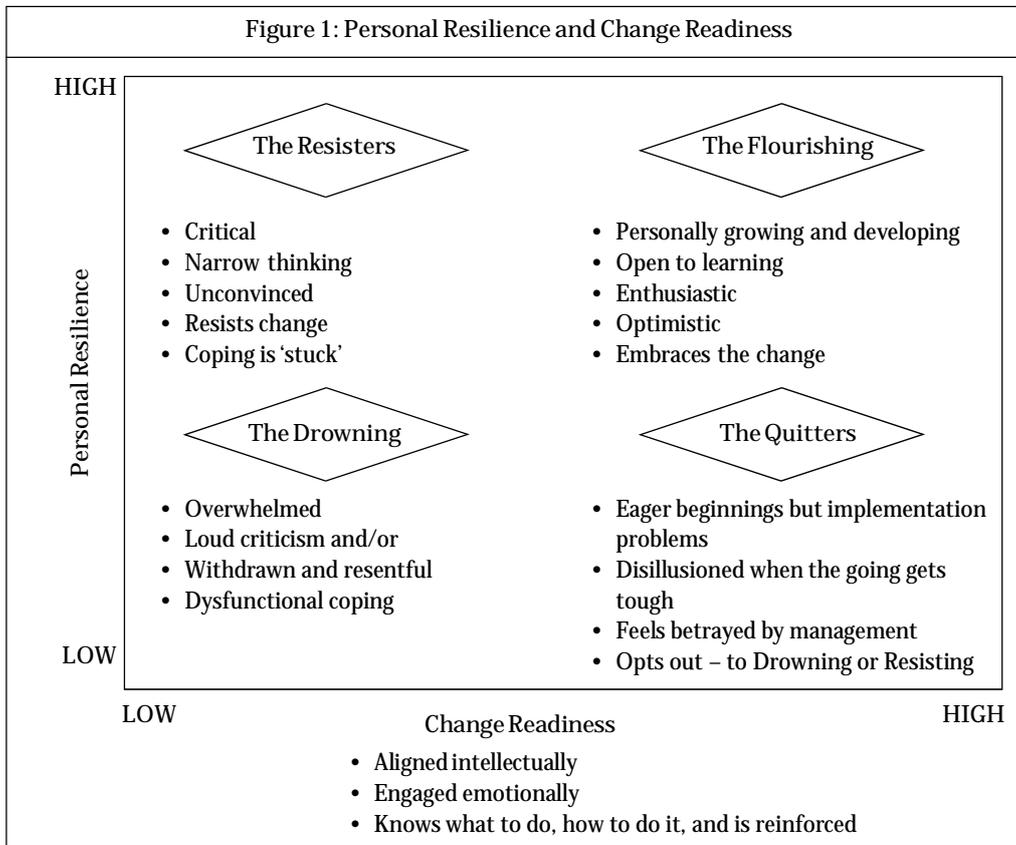
and creating the need amongst the change recipients to engage with the change, understand its personal impact, and answer the "What's in it for me?" or WIIFM question. To be effective, it deals with the recipients' past experiences of organizational change, brings to light and honestly addresses fears they may have about the implications of the change.

Aligning intellectually involves ensuring that the rationale and business case for the change is clearly understood. This is best achieved by communicating the changed state and roll-out plan in a way that is compelling from the change recipients' point of view, rather than the more typical communication (which is compelling from a bottom-line perspective). In addition, the leadership should be visible in driving and supporting the change to build common belief and commitment, and ensure that everyone is 'on the same page'. Reinforcing the new behaviors, necessitated by the change of the change recipients, is necessary in order to ensure its sustainability. This involves training the change recipients to ensure that they are able to implement the new, or changed, processes and procedures, provide recognition at incremental milestones on the road to success, and introduce new measures to track and monitor the ongoing success of the initiative. These actions will help ensure the success of the roll-out of the change, by embedding the new ways of doing business.

Thus, organizations can significantly enhance the chances of success of a change initiative by ensuring that real hearts-and-minds change is created through emotional engagement, intellectual alignment, coaxing the will of individuals through ensuring that the required new behaviors are trained, reinforced and cemented as processes that are part of the organizational culture.

Even when this type of comprehensive change management strategy is employed, the success of change is influenced by the resilience of individuals to cope with the stress entailed in being at the receiving end of the change. Moderate stress creates energy and excitement; too much stress is disabling and the precipitating event or events will be perceived as an adversity. The different experiences of, and reaction to, organizational change, based on the interaction between change readiness and personal resilience, are shown in Figure 1 (Warner, 2007). The model seeks to illustrate, in an idealized and simplified format, the range of reactions to large-scale change. The model infers that when there is a comprehensive change management process, coupled with high personal resilience, it is more likely that the change will be successful. In addition, it seeks to illustrate that change in itself is not intrinsically bad, but has the potential to facilitate learning, personal growth and development, optimism and enthusiasm.

Given the difficulties in implementing organizational change, and linking the role of personal resilience, it is not surprising that interest in understanding the resilience of employees at all levels, and in particular if and how it can be enhanced, has been increasing. Research on resilience in the workplace has shown its benefit: resilient people are less likely to become mentally or physically ill during adversity (Siebert, 2005); experience overall more hope, optimism and positivity, and so are better able to cope with job demands (Fredrickson, 2001); are better able to get through tough times, such as job loss and economic hardship (Brooks and Goldstein, 2004); and, are better able to learn new skills and knowledge when their existing set becomes outdated (Gorelick et al., 2004). Additionally, when competing for a job or promotion, the more resilient person has a better chance of succeeding

Figure 1: Personal Resilience and Change Readiness

HIGH

Personal Resilience

The Resisters

- Critical
- Narrow thinking
- Unconvinced
- Resists change
- Coping is 'stuck'

The Flourishing

- Personally growing and developing
- Open to learning
- Enthusiastic
- Optimistic
- Embraces the change

The Drowning

- Overwhelmed
- Loud criticism and/or
- Withdrawn and resentful
- Dysfunctional coping

The Quitters

- Eager beginnings but implementation problems
- Disillusioned when the going gets tough
- Feels betrayed by management
- Opts out – to Drowning or Resisting

LOW

LOW   **Change Readiness**   HIGH

- Aligned intellectually
- Engaged emotionally
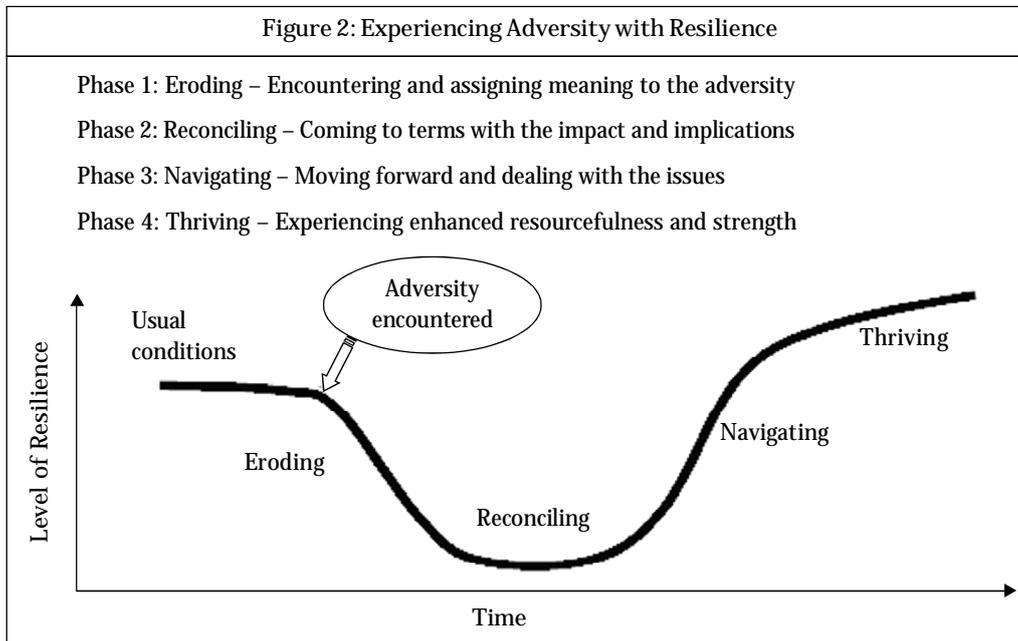- Knows what to do, how to do it, and is reinforced

(Siebert, 2005). Resilient people are also best able to turn adversity into a growth experience, and to leverage it into new experiences and ways of working and living (Maddi and Khoshaba, 2005). The resilience of people in their workplace enables staff to make the transition as depicted in Table 1 (adapted from Meichenbaum, 2005; and Siebert, 2005):

The process of how adversity is experienced with resilience is illustrated in a series of phases in Figure 2, based on the work by Meichenbaum (2005) and Patterson and Kelleher (2005). The

Table 1: Benefits of Applying Resilience at Work	
From	To
Directionless	Goal-oriented
Emotional impulsiveness	Emotional control
Little self-insight	Self-knowledge and insight
Stuck	Solution-focused
Blaming others	Accepting responsibility
Isolated	Connecting with others
Unthinking reacting	Purposeful

Figure 2: Experiencing Adversity with Resilience

Phase 1: Eroding – Encountering and assigning meaning to the adversity

Phase 2: Reconciling – Coming to terms with the impact and implications

Phase 3: Navigating – Moving forward and dealing with the issues

Phase 4: Thriving – Experiencing enhanced resourcefulness and strength

progression shows four phases after the experience of adversity, with the final phase incorporating living with enhanced resourcefulness and strength. Although the progression is shown as linear for the sake of clarity, in reality people spiral back and forth through the stages over the passage of time.

The role of emotions in resilience can be explained using Fredrickson's (2001) elegant broaden-and-build model which details how negative and positive emotions produce different psychological and mental responses which, in turn, have very different impacts on the way a person deals with stress. Positive emotions have an enabling effect by broadening the thought-action repertoires and building personal resources, which can be called upon in times of adversity (Fredrickson, 2001). Positive emotions have also been found to trigger enhanced emotional wellbeing (Fredrickson and Joiner, 2002), undo the physiological effects of the negative emotions (Fredrickson et al., 2003) and assist in the quicker recovery from negative experiences (Tugade and Fredrickson, 2004).

Whilst adversity is not usually something that is sought out or desired by individuals, it does have a potentially beneficial effect. Personal growth and development requires one's status quo to be disrupted, new personal capabilities and competencies to be developed, and causes one's mental models to be challenged—adversity achieves this, and initiates a change process. After a life-disrupting change, one cannot go back to how things were —one will become more agile or rigid, stronger or weaker, comfortable in uncertainty and ambiguity or constantly pushing for long-term clarity/predictability, better or bitter. In this context, resilience can be viewed as the life force to overcome adversity, heal and strive towards self-actualization and flourishing (Reivich and Shatte, 2002).

Experiencing adversity with limited resilience, on the other hand, produces a different process. Powerful negative emotions produce a physiological 'fight-or-flight' response which, in early human evolution, served a very important and necessary survival function. These
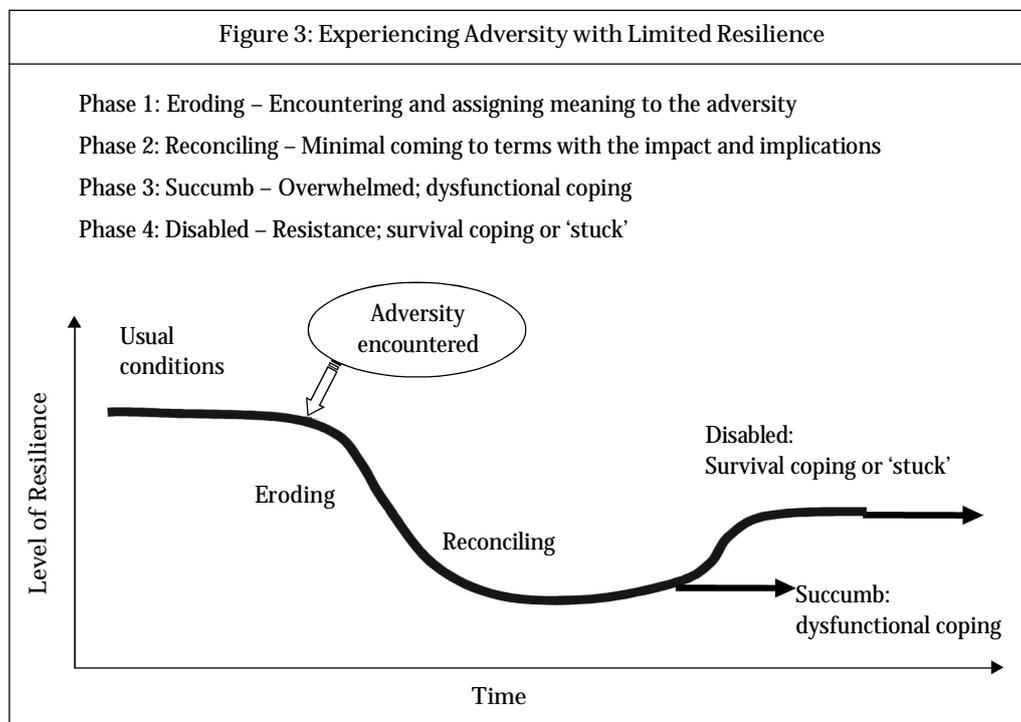
physiological changes narrow the focus of the mind, enabling a quick (often reactive) mental response. In modern society, however, these responses to stressful events are less useful, particularly given the pervasive nature of the associated physiological changes (Fredrickson, 2001).

The problems when experiencing adversity, with limited resilience, may begin with coming to terms with the experience of the adversity, including assigning 'meaning' to the experience. This, in turn, may bedevil the reconciling stage of coming to terms with the impact and the implications of the adversity. Downward negative emotional spirals lead to feeling overwhelmed with associated dysfunctional coping. With time, further recovery, at best, may only lead to a feeling of being 'stuck' with a sense of only minimal coping. Overall, such an individual will battle to recover to the same level of wellbeing as before the adversity. This process is shown in Figure 3,

which has been adapted from the work by Meichenbaum (2005) and Patterson and Kelleher (2005), although the sequence probably more resembles a series of forward and backward spirals over time than a straight line.

A Study to Develop a Model of Personal Resilience at Work

It was postulated that preparing staff to cope with large-scale organizational change, or to deal with adversity such as retrenchments arising from downsizing and mergers by assisting them to develop their personal resilience, would result in greater receptivity to the change and better coping which, in turn, would enhance the chances of success of the initiative. A study of resilience was recently undertaken in South Africa with the aim of examining how people in organizations cope with adversity and significant stress, with the ultimate objective of determining a design and methods for enhancing personal resilience.

Figure 3: Experiencing Adversity with Limited Resilience

Phase 1: Eroding – Encountering and assigning meaning to the adversity

Phase 2: Reconciling – Minimal coming to terms with the impact and implications

Phase 3: Succumb – Overwhelmed; dysfunctional coping

Phase 4: Disabled – Resistance; survival coping or 'stuck'

The preponderance of resilience-related published research concerns youth at risk, trauma and posttraumatic stress, coping in minority groups, depression, and coping with the aftermath of natural and human-made disasters. In addition to not being directly relevant to the resilience application sought, the literature surveyed had a preponderantly pathogenic-, rather than a fortigenic-, orientation (Strumpfer, 2003). There is much less research dealing with people in an organizational context who have to cope with 'normal stresses of daily life' such as troubled relationships, financial concerns, serious illness and deaths, interspersed with unpredictable but inevitable stressful organizational large-scale changes, as well as personal organizational changes, e.g., changes in job function, reporting structures, role, responsibilities, job site location and competition due to new entrants/talent.

We therefore initiated a research to discover the ==processes and attributes people use to deal with, and get through, tough times==. Over a six-month period involving 76 people, we conducted critical incident interviews lasting from 2 to 3 hours, and focus group sessions lasting about one hour. The people in the study group were, with one exception, all employed and were drawn from seven organizations employing from 6 to 21,000 employees. ==A total of 822 critical incidents were obtained, which were categorized into three major areas (domains), seven categories (constructs) and then each category was further categorized into several subcategories (elements).==

In overview, the three domains are the *Core Domain*, the *Internal Domain* and the *External Domain*. The *Core Domain* consists of life purpose and meaning, as well as understanding and accepting one's self. The *Internal Domain* refers to the internal world of controlling and choosing thoughts, feelings and attitude. The *External Domain* involves taking action and giving and accepting support. Figure 4 shows the model of domains and constructs which was developed to illustrate the findings.

Core Domain

The *Core Domain* was identified as consisting of the constructs 'Grounding and Connecting' and

Figure 4: Personal Resilience Building Blocks Model
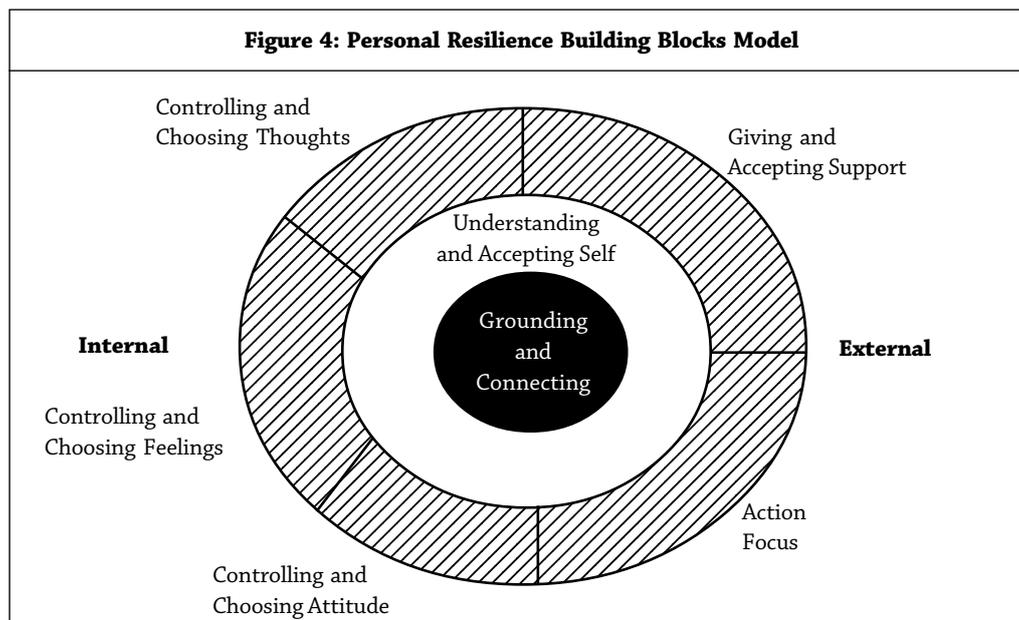
'Understanding and Accepting Self'. These constructs relate to the inner core of the individual.

Grounding and Connecting is defined as perceiving one's life as having purpose, meaning and direction. This construct encompasses the reason the individual has to persevere when times become really difficult; when there is a feeling of desperation and giving up seems the easiest way out. In such times, the groundedness/ connectedness the person has, or the range of potential responses such grounding/ connectedness creates, becomes the enduring reason to persist. Examples cited during the study fell into one or more of the categories of significant people, significant groups, causes, movements and faith. Significant people most often were loved ones who were dependent on, or had an important bond to the respondent, and to whom interviewees expressed a strong connection: to show their love, provide for them, live up to their expectations, set an example, or simply not to let them down. Significant causes and/or movements had deep meaning for the individual and included environmental conservation, rehabilitation (e.g., drugs and eating), serving my community, bringing justice to the world, and serving the common good. Significant faith-based beliefs spanned formal religion to informal spirituality and were reported as providing deep meaning for the individual.

In the face of adversity, the personal meaning assigned to living sustains and provides the motivation to persevere. This connection and personal belief system were sometimes expressed as the adversity having a higher purpose or meaning, even if it was not clear at the time. For example, on the death of a child in the family: "I don't know why this happened, but I do know that there is a reason for everything. So I have to accept it and carry on."

Incorporated in this construct is also the belief that by persevering through the adversity and tough times, the individual will emerge stronger, more resourceful and better for the experience. For example, "special children have special parents" was the mantra-type of explanation cited in one incident for coping with severe demands placed on a financially struggling family who were rearing children with learning difficulties.

An extension of this personal belief system that provides sustenance during adversity was the capability of individuals to develop related life goals. An entrepreneur, who was experiencing significant and prolonged financial business difficulties, repeatedly publicly committed himself to financing and building a temple for worship. He frequently reminded himself of this vision, and talked of his plans of how it would be established, built and what it would look like. This goal helped connect him to what he expressed as his purpose in life, and energized and focused his energies to persevere in what he described as his 'dark night'.

A further aspect of the construct was that of taking incremental steps and activities to achieve life goals. A visualization, planning, and acting cycle appeared to operate, although not necessarily in a formal or coherent manner, but rather driven by the need to make sense of, and get through, the present adversity and, in some cases, even disassociate from it.

The second construct of the Core Domain is that of Understanding and Accepting Self, which is defined as understanding and being realistically optimistic about personal strengths and vulnerabilities. Understanding one's own personal attributes was seen as important when attempting to overcome adversity, as unfounded or false hope about personal capabilities or limits/ vulnerabilities may provide momentary comfort,

but ultimately leads to disappointment and disillusionment.

An individual's realistic self-insight into his/her own strengths and vulnerabilities is the basis for understanding his/her capabilities and limits when dealing with adversity. Underpinning this self-knowledge was a realistically optimistic belief in their capabilities and limits to overcome obstacles and recover to the previous level of functioning before the adversity, or to achieve an even higher level of functioning. Having overcome previous adversities, particularly significant ones, can become a source of strength, optimism and positive feelings. An ultra-distance road runner stated that having trained for, and completed, 9 Comrades Marathons (79 km road race), had taught him to persevere and not give up when things got tough—and the race became a metaphor for his life which he cited as: "… when the going gets tough, the tough gets going."

Knowledge of personal vulnerabilities or weaknesses is also important, as accurate self-insight enables a realistic recovery strategy and expectations. This was pithily expressed by one manager who, after describing an acrimonious divorce and having to sell and split the proceeds of a struggling small business, stated: "I know who I am, what I can do and what I can't do. I have been through a lot of crap, and I have become an expert on myself."

Internal Domain

The second domain of personal resilience is that of the Internal Domain which consists of three constructs to do with 'Controlling and Choosing Thoughts, Feelings and Attitude'.

The first construct is Controlling and Choosing Thoughts, and is defined as controlling negative thinking and choosing positive thoughts. Many of the critical incidences reported in the study related to the thought processes during the experience of, and recovery from, the adversity. These incorporated being aware of their own internal world and taking time to become aware of the effect of their thoughts, particularly when strong, persistent and recurring negative thoughts were involved. It was commented that this was actually more difficult to achieve than it may seem. An example was given by a senior portfolio manager in a financial institution who was shocked by overhearing comments from a Senior Executive that he was negative and was unlikely to get any further in the organization. This came as a surprise and gave him pause to review his recent behavior. He realized that he had become increasingly stressed over the past months (even years) and this, in turn, had been reflected in him becoming negative and pessimistic. Ultimately, he had to admit that it even affected his thinking and decision making (his actual job).

Stopping persistent and negative thoughts when they occur was reported as very important in dealing with present adversity, or when recalling past adversity. One person described the experience of the process of the ruminating negative thought pattern to be: "… like in a washing machine … going round and round … then pausing …. and then going round and round again, on and on".

Stopping them was not enough—several practical coping mechanisms to control negative thinking and to redirect negative thinking to positive thinking were cited. A common method was to reframe the thinking, typically by assigning a different meaning to the adversity: "I believe this is sent to test me, and I will be strong to meet it" was the expression a young single mother used when she was struggling with family commitments and increasing financial pressures. Other methods were to engage in behaviors that

changed the thoughts, but were not necessarily sustainable or productive in the long term. Examples were to gorge on favorite food such as chocolate or ice cream, go shopping, go to movies, or to get drunk. More sustainable ways of dealing with negative thinking, concerned stopping negative thinking when it started by deliberately deciding not to allow their thoughts to go down that path, and to achieve this by thinking of something different, often further assisted by some engaging activity that involved physical actions, such as taking the family to the local library to choose books to borrow. Another technique, which also involved physical actions designed to trigger a different thinking pattern, was to do something which was described as 'happier', for example, whistling, singing cheerfully or listening to uplifting music.

Some interviewees controlled their negative thoughts by identifying and, then where possible, avoiding situations which trigger persistent negative thoughts. Examples cited were of events (e.g., stressful monthly family get-togethers), certain people (e.g., negative associates, clients or family members who were known to be particularly difficult or made a habit of viewing life through negative lenses) and physical conditions (e.g., tiredness).

Another practical coping mechanism to control negative thinking was to limit the amount of time spent watching TV news and reading newspapers, as overwhelmingly negative news would negatively affect their positive mental state. Also, challenging the negativism in others, particularly negative statements and opinions that were unfounded, biased, or open to interpretation, was used as a means of controlling negative thoughts. Lastly, setting a goal to actually think more positive than negative thoughts, in order to create more positivity or optimism in their lives, was also used.

Controlling and Choosing Feelings is the second construct in the Internal Domain, and concerns controlling emotional impulsivity and choosing a considered response. Incidents reported illustrated the importance of controlling strong emotional feelings which were typically exacerbated by anxiety felt during adversity.

The need to control strong feelings was cited in several incidents by a single parent mother, of a 14-year old son, living in a gang-infested part of the Cape Flats in Cape Town (lower socioeconomic suburb). She described him as having been 'an ideal child', doing well at school, having good friends, attending church with her and helping out in their small flat. Then, seemingly out of the blue, came the awful realization that his behavior had changed, he was missing school and mixing with a different group of friends, and she discovered he was taking tik (a highly addictive amphetamine drug). She described her initial emotions as a mixture of extreme rage, fear, depression, hurt, guilt and disappointment. Confronting the boy and getting him into rehabilitation required her to exercise great control over these powerful feelings, since she felt that the correct action was to only express feelings in ways that enabled her to meet her overarching goal of getting him free of the addiction. To deal with her feelings, and to not be overwhelmed by them, she used the services of her employer's Wellness Department counselors, and through their guidance was able to eventually choose and experience different feelings.

It was clear that being resilient did not mean that strong emotional feelings were not felt, but rather that when they were experienced, the focus was to control them and to express them in ways that did not detract from the person's overall goal.

It also meant that individuals had to choose to act anyway, despite the strong emotional feelings felt. Incidences were also cited in which feelings were needed to be controlled and expressed in ways that did not result in making others uncomfortable, to the extent that it exacerbated the situation by leading to further tensions and negative feelings.

In summary, this construct describes the process, when facing strong emotions, to rationally choose actions and behaviors to achieve goals and objectives, rather than succumbing to intense emotion and expressing this in ways which may detract from the overall goals and objectives.

The third construct in the Internal Domain is that of Controlling and Choosing Attitude. At face value, this construct may appear to be a grouping of the two previous constructs relating to thoughts and feelings. There were, however, sufficiently different incidents gathered to create a separate construct—which is defined as the process of actively choosing a positive outlook and taking steps to live it out.

Many of the incidents concerned the belief that individuals could, to a large extent, influence the direction of their lives rather than being at the mercy of the whims of fate, despite the trials and tribulations of the adversity. In psychology, such individuals are deemed to have internal loci of control (Rotter, 1966). In addition, there was a consistent theme concerning choosing to be proactive and resolve the problems faced, to persevere and not to give up.

At the heart of this construct is the strong belief that one can, to a large extent, influence the direction of one's life and that the problems inevitably encountered can be solved. Individuals chose to have their responses to certain stimuli be positive rather than negative. This construct echoes Frankl's (1982) thoughts and logotherapy concepts:

"... everything can be taken from a [human] but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way".

This attitude is exemplified by a person who was severely disabled by polio early in her married life and, after five operations involving transplants, managed to gain the use of some fingers in only one hand and walk with a marked limp. She was cared for by her husband, who modified the steering of a motor vehicle, and she was able to drive, do the usual chores of a mother in raising two children and undertake charitable work. Forty years later, and in her 80s, she had a bad fall closely followed by her husband suddenly dying in a motor accident. At the time of the interview, she was confined to a wheelchair with 24-hour care to assist with daily living tasks, but still remained as active as she had been for many years, undertaking various charity works and teaching and exhibiting creative knitting. She described herself as tough ("I am not a lovey-dovey person"), determined ("I don't give up easily... like learning to use the computer .... I try, try, try!") and positive ("I don't like pictures to be taken of me. I don't want to see myself as disabled, and for people to treat me that way. It's intimidating!").

A final element of this construct is creating and maintaining a positive attitude by engaging in enjoyable, relaxing and recharging activities (self-care). Taking steps to change the scenery, pace and people around one was cited as important to provide a counterbalance to the intense demands and narrow focus of dealing with the adversity. This was expressed variously as: "taking time out for myself", "finding the space to breathe", "experiencing the light side of myself", "giving myself a break", "having me-time", "stopping in order to let go", and "taking time to smell the roses".

Specific activities cited included chatting with loved ones or good friends, going for a walk, climbing a mountain, spending a day at a spa, going to the gym, going shopping with friends, watching a movie, eating a good meal on a wine estate, reading a novel, and partying. In each case, the desired outcome was disassociation from the stress of the adversity, recharging energy and returning with some degree of renewed vigor to deal with the stress and difficulties.

External World

The third domain is that of the External World, and is made up of two constructs which refer to dealing with the actual adversity and interactions with people in the environment. These are 'Action Focus' and 'Giving and Accepting Support'.

Action Focus is defined as being persistently action-directed using open and flexible approaches. Actions falling in this construct address both the causes and effects of the adversity. The incidents cited reflected a high degree of tenacity in seeking solutions and dealing with the issues, rather than accepting things as they were and opting out, giving up or ignoring the problem. Processes were described which reflected open-mindedness and flexible/adaptive approaches to problem-solving, which allowed a change of tactics (short-term) or even strategy (long-term) as was deemed necessary.

This creative and flexible thinking was often prompted by listening to people with different views and perspectives, and being willing/open to be changed by their experiences. Inevitably, this listening and consideration occurred when the person's emotions had been brought under control—this was described as important to ensure that emotionality (particularly defensive emotionality) did not get in the way of creative solutions, or effective decision making. Thoughtful risk-taking also came to light as a part of successful coping with adversity.

This was in marked contrast to incidents cited which were prompted by questions about poor application of resilience. These examples frequently reflected fixed mindsets, referring back to your previous experience, defensive listening, not listening (interpreting), judging the speaker/ other person (evaluation), tunnel vision, and using brute force to drive toward a resolution of the adversity. Many of these incidents involved great drive and energy, but they were associated with an almost despairing acknowledgment that it was often "action for the sake of action" rather than being open to, and pursuing, creative and insightful possibilities.

The operation of this construct is illustrated by the different courses of actions of two pharmacists who both separately owned, and managed, retail outlet pharmacies (drug stores) approximately three kilometers apart, and who both had to deal with the implications of the promulgation of radically changed legislation controlling the exit prices charged on prescription medication. The implication for them was that at the very least, they would experience dramatically reduced profits and, at worst, bankruptcy. The first pharmacist dealt with this adversity by advocating for changes in the legalization through the local chapter of the pharmaceutical association, and then later at national level, and was instrumental in getting court interdicts to stop and ultimately alter the legislation. While this was going on over many months, he changed his pharmacy's focus to become more retail-oriented in order to take advantage of the increasing local tourist trade. He now has the highest turnover of sunscreen protection sales in his geographical region, and makes more profit from the retail side of the business than from the sales of prescription medication in the past. The second pharmacist faced the identical adversity but reacted

differently. He tried to boost sales by getting more repeat business from his existing client base by means of mailed flyers, lowering the prices of some of his non-prescription lines, and introducing a motorcycle delivery to customers. However, he felt that these actions were not very creative and would not have the desired effect. Over time he became increasingly despondent as his fears were borne out, stopped introducing new ideas, and eventually sold the business to a national retail chain. He then took early retirement.

The second construct in the domain of the External World is Giving and Accepting Support. The definition of this construct incorporates the concept that resilience involves easily giving and accepting assistance and support.

In the study, there were many incidences cited of easily giving support and assistance, and it became clear that an important and effective way of boosting one's own resilience is to assist others in need—even while experiencing adversity oneself. On occasions, this also incorporated candidly sharing their own experiences and emotions as a means of showing their empathic identification and support with the other person.

From the respondent's point of view, incidents illustrated the need to be sensitive to the feelings, needs and motivations of others, and to respond actively and sensitively to their feelings by acknowledging and showing understanding. In this way, assistance and support were easily given. The effect on the person giving the assistance and support was reported to be enhancing their own confidence, generation of positive feelings from helping others, the development of gratitude, and disassociation from the experience of their own adversity.

Several incidents of less than effective resilience involved the reluctance to ask for assistance and support, described by one senior manager as: "… the cowboys-don't-cry attitude". This was particularly the case when it was felt that admitting to a problem and asking for (even accepting) assistance may be perceived as a weakness, further demonstration of not being up to the task or simply not coping. The more senior the person was in the organization, the greater the apparent difficulty in admitting to a problem and asking for help seemed.

Training Using the Resilience Model

The purpose of the study was to develop an understanding of resilience with the ultimate purpose of determining a model and methods of how it can be enhanced. Based on the model of resilience consisting of seven constructs, each with its own elements, a training framework was created and two training programs of three days duration were held for a total of 26 delegates. The training covered each of the domains identified by the research in a day, which enabled 4 to 5 hours to be devoted to each construct.

The aim of the training was for delegates to explore the way they individually dealt with adversity at the time, to affirm those methods which were effective, and to develop new strategies where their personal resilience could be improved. The learning design incorporated all four learning modes of: (1) going through an experience, (2) reflecting on it, (3) developing theories, models and concepts, and (4) finding practical ways of putting the learning into action (Honey and Mumford, 1992). This was done in a variety of individual, dyad and group exercises, interspersed with energizing and fun activities. At the end of the training in each construct, a personal 'Back to Work' action plan was completed to enhance and sustain personal change.

Review of the Study, Models and Training

It was postulated that preparing staff for any large-scale change, such as new ways of working or to deal with adversity in the form of mergers and retrenchments by assisting them to develop their personal resilience, will result in their being more receptive to the change and better able to cope with the inevitable disruptions and stress. The purpose of the study was to develop an understanding of personal resilience which could be used to develop training to enhance resilience at work. This was done and the training was conducted using the model, and constructs and elements were identified. Delegates' evaluations showed a marked increase in their self-ratings on both the constructs and the overall concept of resilience.

Delegates were asked to individually rate aspects of their own learning using a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (good). The delegates' average rating scores are shown in Table 2.

Delegates were also asked to assess their overall resilience before and after the program, independent of the previous ratings, using the same scale (Table 3).

Conclusion

The study, models and training have several areas for future growth and improvement:

1. The literature review was an overview of the research on adults to develop an understanding of resilience from a fortigenic point of view. A comprehensive literature review, including literature on resilience in children and adolescents, may furnish further insights.

2. To further assess the impact of the training of resilience, a longitudinal study would be beneficial as well as assessing the impact on work of the improved resilience. Business indicators such as reduced absenteeism, quicker project benefit realization, reduced resistance to change and transformation, reduction in

Table 2: Delegates Self-Rating on the Resilience Constructs Before and After the Training		
Construct or Key to Building Personal Resilience	Average Before the Program	Average After the Program
Grounding and connecting	2.5	4.5
Understanding and accepting self	2.6	3.9
Controlling and choosing thoughts	2.7	4.3
Controlling and choosing feelings	2.5	4.2
Controlling and choosing attitude	3.1	4.4
Action focus	2.5	4.2
Giving and accepting support	3.0	4.4

Table 3: Delegates Self-Rating on Their Overall Resilience Before and After the Training		
	Average Before the Program	Average After the Program
Overall rating of resilience	2.7	4.3

job turnover, and ultimately either increase in revenue or decrease in costs would be useful measures.

3. While the outcomes of the study met its aim, the constructs identified from the research are broadly defined, and further study needs to be undertaken to test and refine both the constructs and elements. Such study could also investigate the overlap with other related concepts such as hope, optimism and self-efficacy or self-worth.

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