



6 Personal productivity

Personal resilience

Resilience is an important personal attribute that can have a wide-ranging influence on your wellbeing and performance at work.

What is resilience?

Resilience has been described as the “ability to succeed, to live, and to develop in a positive way . . . despite the stress or adversity that would normally involve the real possibility of a negative outcome”. It is the ability to maintain personal wellbeing in the face of challenge.

Resilient individuals can be recognised by their confidence (self efficacy), coordination (planning), control, composure (low anxiety), commitment (persistence), and ability to make adversity meaningful. A high level of resilience can be recognised in the following characteristics:

- Ability to engage with and utilise others for own support and development
- Manages negative emotions
- Asserts influence but accepts external controls
- Learns from past experience
- Seeks and uses supportive environmental factors
- Practises the use of protective factors

From a personal perspective, resilience can have an impact on your emotional and psychological wellbeing, as well as your work and home life. It helps to reduce burnout, increase empathy and compassion, reconnect with the joy and purpose of practice, and improve your physical and mental health.

For the practice, staff resilience is important for the quality and sustainability of services. Where resilience is poor, it is more likely that problems will develop with sickness absence, slowing of work and less effective communication with patients and the team. Avoiding burnout is also key to maintaining the quality and safety of care.

How resilient am I?

This quick test may help you in taking stock: resiliencyquiz.com. For more detail, here is another free online test: www.testyourrq.com. Search online to find many more examples of inventories and guides to assessing and improving your resilience.

Protective practices

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development has published a guide for employers (www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/guides/developing-resilience-evidence-guide.aspx) which recommends embedding the following within the organisation:

- alertness to risks
- create a realistic, compassionate and open team culture
- regular managed timeouts to discuss problems and work/life balance
- shared responsibility to act on stressors and risks
- acceptance of responsibility for acting on difficulties
- culture of support, safety and confidentiality
- external networks, partnerships and strategies
- mindfulness training
- team CPD
- ensuring staff are registered with a GP

Eight principles for being a resilient doctor

Consider these actions for individuals, adapted from Rowe, Leanne, Kidd, Michael, 2009. *Eight principles for being a resilient doctor*. Australian Medical Association.

staging.ama.com.au/system/files/resilient_doc_medicsa_nov_dec_09.pdf

- Make home a sanctuary
 - Sometimes, withdrawing is protective. But it is also important to connect and give into personal relationships
- Value strong relationships
 - We are more than technicians – take time each day to foster healthy relationships, with patients, colleagues and friends.
- Have an annual preventive health assessment
 - Make sure you are engaging in the same high quality preventive primary care that you would wish your own patients to receive.
- Control stress not people
 - Don't allow professional dedication to become an issue of control, creating tension and making it hard to let go. Practise delegating and sharing responsibilities.
 - Do develop your sensitivity to notice when stress is getting the better of you. Understand the impact of any traits which lead to control or drivenness. Challenge your negative thinking and beliefs which impact your ability to cope with a demanding job filled with uncertainty.
- Recognise conflict (and distress / upset) as an opportunity
 - A certain degree of conflict at work is inevitable. Develop your skills in treating challenging situations or disagreements as an opportunity to learn and potentially build a deeper relationship.
 - work out what's wrong and try to change it
- Manage bullying and violence assertively
 - As employers, employees and doctors, we will all encounter unacceptable behaviours periodically. We must become skilled in recognising and handling these situations.
- Get our medical organisations to work for us
 - Many practice managers and clinicians are members of one or more organisations that can act as a source of peer support or advice. Every GP practice in England is also a member of a CCG. Use these opportunities to raise issues that can be improved in the environment in which you work.
- Create a legacy
 - Most people entered their profession not primarily to be busy but to accomplish something. Remind yourself why you are here, and consider what legacy you wish to leave as a result of your work. How do the things you do contribute to that?

Caring for sick clinicians

As colleagues and employers, we have a responsibility to support clinicians who are struggling. It can be hard for healthcare professionals to acknowledge when they are unwell or burned out. Professor Amanda Howe has warned that 'doctors are adept at concealing or denying their difficulties, partly because of the fear of stigma and breaches in confidentiality. Behavioural changes, reduced reliability, lack of insight when problems are raised, and third parties starting to express concerns should act as early warning signs' (Howe, Amanda. *Doctors' health and wellbeing*. BMJ Careers. 2013. careers.bmj.com/careers/advice/view-article.html?id=20014522).

It is therefore particularly important for us to:

- accept that burnout and sickness will sometimes occur
- be vigilant and quick to respond to signs that colleagues are in trouble
- have strong policies of support
- ensure access to high quality support services
- take additional precautions regarding confidentiality

Link(s)

Improving physician resiliency. STEPSforward online learning module (American Medical Association)
www.stepsforward.org/modules/improving-physician-resilience

Rapid, free resilience inventories:

- 'How Resilient Are You?' from the Resiliency Center. resiliencyquiz.com
- 'Test Your RQ' from Nicholson McBride www.testyourrq.com

Developing resilience: an evidence-based guide for practitioners. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development 2011. www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/guides/developing-resilience-evidence-guide.aspx.

Update on NHS England's plans for improving GPs' access to mental health support. www.england.nhs.uk/2016/02/gp-mental-health-support-pin