Creating a Resilient Mindset

Resilience is an ability to adapt and bounce back when things don’t go as planned. It is a vital life skill in the current tumultuous and ever-changing world. When confronted by fear or failure, resilient people demonstrate an ability to face the situation with determination and confidence. Whether they have not been selected for a promotion or failed to secure a new contract, an individual with a resilient mindset doesn’t give up. They persevere in the face of adversity and demonstrate courage when it matters the most. This leads to both personal and professional success.

Why we perceive failure negatively

Whilst many attribute perfectionist traits, demanding work cultures and learned habits to our unhealthy relationship with failure, psychologists state that the most significant reason for our negative association with failure is the emotion of shame. This affects not only our perception of ourselves but fundamentally how others perceive us, which could lead to disconnection from others. As we are highly social creatures and instinctively need connection to belong and survive, this means that we often create a strong connection with failure and rejection.

A healthier way to perceive failure

The key is to focus on specific behaviours as opposed to perceiving the experience as a reflection of oneself, because you can easily change your behaviour, but it's much harder to change who you are.

Five ways to make failure your friend and turn it into an opportunity

1. Show gratitude.
2. Keep an open mind.
3. Use your strengths.
4. Express vulnerability.
5. Devise a plan.

Embrace vulnerability

- Accepting mistakes and embracing failure requires the courage to be our true selves and show vulnerability.
- Embracing vulnerability means we are more willing to take risks, seize opportunities and strive for our goals, as we have eliminated the fear that holds us back.
- Vulnerability can be perceived to be a weakness, but it is a great strength and allows us to ask for help without fear.

Tend and befriend

Psychologist McGonigal states that a tend and befriend approach creates physical resilience. We are social beings, and social connections are crucial to our survival. When we feel stressed, the brain kicks in with a message to tell us to seek out support from other people. In fact, this signal system urges us to seek social connections releasing oxytocin, which pushes us to be with other people.
Combat the illusion of perfection

The ability to be vulnerable and have the courage to be our true selves means we can say, ‘I am enough’ and stop worrying about what people will say. This means we can accept who we are, where we come from, what we believe, and the very imperfect nature of our lives. The reality is that striving for perfection holds us back and causes us to stagnate. We spend so much time doing, striving and achieving, in an endless quest to get it all ‘perfect’, and we end up missing out on what life is about: being in each moment and experiencing life where we are, as we are. The fear of failing, making mistakes, not meeting people’s expectations and being criticised keeps us from our best selves.

The power of your mindset

When faced with a challenge, your mindset can make all the difference to the outcome. Your mindset is related to your beliefs about your ability. It creates a mental world for you to live in.

- **Fixed mindset** – one who believes that ability cannot change
  - Personal traits are fixed – intelligence, talent and aptitude
  - Nothing can change these
  - Worry about their traits and how adequate they are
  - Have something to prove to yourself and others
  - Believe that having to put in effort means you are a failure
  - Afraid to fail and get things wrong
  - Create **performance** goals
  - Believe a person’s potential can be measured and seek **validation** from others
  - Receiving a low score means they are not intelligent
  - Success and failure can cause **anxiety**
  - Do not give importance to learning
  - Get depressed, become de-energised and lose self-esteem
  - Denigrate their intelligence
  - Under-represent past successes and over-represent failures
  - Explain the cause of events as something stable about them

- **Growth mindset** – one who believes ability can change and grow
  - Personal qualities can be developed through dedication and effort
  - Brains and talent seen as the starting point
  - Understand that accomplishment at anything requires years of passionate practise and learning
  - Embrace failure as the only way to learn
  - Create **learning** goals
  - Their goal is **mastery** and **competence**
  - Scores and marks reflect how people are doing **now** and do not measure a person’s potential
  - Creating goals for learning has shown to **increase performance** and enjoyment and decrease negative emotion
  - Pay attention to learning
  - Focus on what they are learning, rather than how they’re feeling
  - Try out new ways of doing things
  - Use self-motivating statements
  - When faced with tests, which are impossible to pass, they will factor in other reasons
Basic principles to remember

• Embrace the power of ‘YET’ – everyone has the skills and talents at everything, and I can develop and improve any of them. It's just that I have not done it yet.
• My work is to help me to develop, not simply to show what I can or can't do.
• I can improve – this work will help to push me and challenge me.
• I grow from feedback that focuses on the process and effort, not ability.
• I value support when I am disappointed by being shown opportunities for learning.
• I am happy to give feedback when I am not challenged.

Boost your curiosity
Curiosity helps fuel the ability to bounce back, to know yourself and the world around you and to thrive in the face adversity
• Eliminate boredom.
• Search for positive.
• Question everything.
• Do something different.
• Conquer fear.

Make the time to boost your energy
• The quality of your relationships with other people influences how emotionally resilient you can be in the face of an emotional or physical crisis.
• Be aware of what you are putting in your body and make sure you are committed to a nutritious diet.
• Physical activity releases endorphins, boosts mood and helps to use the stress hormones in a healthy way.
• Take the time to relax and breathe and take time out from your busy schedule.