

Rewards of Resilience

By Patricia Morgan

During the boom we scrambled and harried ourselves through deadlines and endless demands for more—more of anything that was shiny, comforting or electronic. Now on top of the deadlines, we worry about salary freezes and layoffs. Challenges don't go away; they only vary with different economic times.

Many of us think that if we didn't have hardship, we would be truly happy. Not so. Our lives are meant to be rewarding, happy, meaningful *and* challenging. Work often provides the arena to face adversity. Home sometimes brings different kinds of concerns.

Some of my most challenging moments came after my husband and I adopted a daughter with undiagnosed Partial Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. For me, juggling home, personal and workplace demands became common place. Often the balls hit the floor with physical and mental issues. The distress necessitated visits to the hospital for irritable bowel syndrome attacks, a cardiac arrhythmia attack and an overnight in the psychiatric ward.

Those chronic mental, emotional and physical woes were before I boosted and boosted some more my own resolve and confidence—proving to myself over and over again that I was stronger than I thought. I acquired a degree in psychology, then a master's degree in clinical psychology and hours, weeks and months of personal development and training.

Eventually I became fascinated with this **ability to recover or to stay steady** when the going gets tough. As a professional speaker, I had the opportunity to ask audience members three questions which were given to me by mentor, Dr. Al Siebert, author of **The Resiliency Advantage**.

- What is the worst work related experience you've endured?
- How did you cope?
- Looking back, what did you learn?

Three hundred and seventy-six women in my audiences took the time to respond to those questions and then I interviewed 27 women in North America who were identified as resilient women. Their stories are inspiring and enlightening.

One of those stories features Donna Kennedy-Glans who dealt with a moral dilemma. In the 1990s she was involved in international investments, one of them in Nigeria. Aware that Nigeria was at the bottom of Transparency International's index, Donna was unsure she wanted to participate. However after much discussion she and her company became part of the Nigeria



solution, not the problem. Interestingly enough Donna became an expert in integrity and co-authored *Corporate Integrity: a Toolkit for Managing beyond Compliance*.

After hearing stories such as Donna's, collating audience responses and reviewing the literature on resilience I authored my most recent book, ***From Woe to WOW: How Resilient Women Succeed at Work***. There is no doubt those who strengthen their resilience:

- are stress-hardy--healthier physically, emotionally, mentally and socially
- feel more content in relationships
- are more successful at home and work

From a Human Resources perspective, employee resilience positively affects the organization as a whole. The parts do make up the whole. When an organization invests in boosting employee resilience, workplace vitality, productivity and satisfaction improve.

Fortune Magazine's "100 Best Companies to Work For" are all organizations that provide workplace environments where strengthening resilience can be seen in action. Here are five criteria from the more than 21 that Fortune uses to describe "best companies" which also describe the conditions which improve resilience:

- Open, clear and consistent communication
- Opportunities for meaningful participation
- Opportunities to connect with others
- Appreciation is expressed
- Leadership that provides healthy role models

Not one of us is resilient all the time to all the same difficulties. Some employees may struggle with small workplace mistakes while others breeze through them. Some employees may struggle to speak up on their own behalf while others easily promote themselves. The literature on resilience speaks of the human ability to toughen up, to accept situations as they are or to explore choices and to take action while primarily maintaining a positive expectation. These resilient basics can be learned. Here is a sampling for you and those you support:

One: Protect Your Self

1. Establish clear boundaries
2. Align with integrity
3. Choose *your* best life rhythm

Two: Practice Self Care

1. Think optimistically
2. Attend to your body
3. Lighten up!



Three: Effectively Think and Communicate

1. Be a dear with two ears: listen
2. Speak up
3. Ease conflict

Four: Take Action

1. Champion change
2. Acknowledge and demonstrate your strengths
3. Demonstrate courage

Five: Develop a Strong Support System

1. Give and receive acknowledgement
2. Get a little help from your friends
3. Nurture a supportive love relationship

Some say, "Resilience is one percent heredity and 99 percent persistence." You can persistently use resilience-strengthening strategies to help you and your company achieve success.

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