

Resiliency in Preventing and Adapting to COVID-19—Emotional Calmness©

During the present COVID-19 crisis in the U.S. and globally, we all need some means of maximizing our resiliency in terms of prevention and adaptation. Just as a reminder, I define resiliency as the ability to recover quickly and positively from an adversity. It's probably fair to say that no one is exempt from the impact of the present crisis; either as a causality, in a support role, or in terms of employment. The first and probably the most challenging of the six major resiliency skills is **Emotional Calmness**. That is, a calm *state of mind* in response to the experience of an unexpected adversity. Although our initial reaction may be upsetting, the objective is to regain our composure to constructively manage our emotional state. For many of us, this step may require a time frame to accept the reality we may be facing.

Acquiring Emotional Calmness requires *patience*, initially with ourselves, a clear *understanding* of the situation, and *acceptance* of its reality. Acquiring this competency begins with understanding the relationship between a *feeling* and an *emotion*. A feeling is a natural response of the body to a physical or a non-physical experience. Non-physical experiences include bad news, an illness, workplace conflict, temporary or permanent loss of a job, and long-term uncertainty about one's future. Examples of accompanying feelings include a headache, stomach discomfort, anxiety, pain, increased heartbeat, lightheadedness, and fear. Such feelings can be temporarily reduced or even eliminated through the acceptance of change, personal growth, or medication in terms of pain.

Examples of an emotion, as an *instinctual state of mind*, are anger, contentment, depression, betrayal, happiness, joy, satisfaction, wellness, neutrality, sadness, denial, and confidence. These states can be managed by an individual; particularly, where they may lead to productive or counterproductive behaviors. **Mindfulness** deals with *self-understanding* as a basis for understanding the feelings and emotions of others; particularly, in a care giver or support role. The present interruption in our normal routines provides an opportunity to devote time to reading and conversations with colleagues and friends regarding the relationship of Mindfulness and Emotional Intelligence to personal resiliency.

Resiliency #1: Emotional Calmness

Emotional Intelligence

The process of learning to manage our emotions in order to positively influence the behaviors of others is called **Emotional Intelligence**. To manage our emotions means to be open to personal discovery, growth, and change. In other words, a conversation with a coach or a friend is often helpful in order to understand the true *source* of a counterproductive emotion.

In a recent conversation I had with a close friend, he expressed his displeasure that the economy had to close down because of the COVID “situation.” I asked him why did he *feel* that way. This question triggered an emotional response which eventually evolved into anger. In spite of his reaction we continued our conversation until he spontaneously said, “Things are just moving too fast. I can’t keep up with all the new technology and I’m too young to retire.” I immediately thought of a conversation I had with a coach who said to me, *underneath anger is fear*; which he accepted. We got to that underlying emotion because of his willingness to continue engaging the conversation and the fact that I mostly asked questions. He concluded his fear was that the present closure and resumption of work would only speed up the rate of change and technology integration. However, the most important realization I had was that he voiced almost everything I was feeling and thinking!

Therefore, the process of becoming more resilient when faced with adversity requires self-understanding and a continuing desire to learn more about ourselves through personal growth. Then realizing the true power we have to overcome almost any adversity!

References

Two “quick reads” I highly recommend are:

Emotional Intelligence—A Practical Guide, Dr. David Walton, MJF Books, New York.

Mindfulness—A Practical Guide, Tessa Watt, MJF Books, New York.

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