Mu.SA
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W24.1.1. WHAT IS RESILIENCE: AN INTRODUCTION

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Abstract:	This unit introduces learners to what resilience is, why this skill is so valorized, and how it is used nowadays for professional development.
Keywords:	resilience, 21st century competencies, museums

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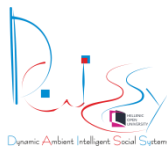DAISSY research group, Hellenic Open University (http://daissy.eap.gr)

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Aim and objectives

The aim is to introduce what resilience is, why this skill is so valorized, and how it is used s for professional development nowadays.

Learning outcomes

After studying this resource, you will be able possible to identify the principles of resilience and acquire some strategies that can stimulate it.

Keywords

Resilience, 21st century competencies, museums.

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1. Introduction

How can we define **resilience**? First, some dictionaries can help us trying to understand what it is.

For the Oxford Learner's dictionary, it is "the ability of people or things to feel better quickly after something unpleasant, such as shock, injury, etc. happened?; the ability of a substance to return to its original shape after it has been bent, stretched, or pressed" [1].-

For the Collins Dictionary, resilience is the "state or quality of being resilient; the ability of an ecosystem to return to its original state after being disturbed; the amount of potential energy stored in an elastic material when deformed"[2] . Even if the concept is used in science, technology and engineering domains, it is also used by social sciences, especially psychology and when studying organizational structures.

The term "resilience" has different nuances depending upon the lexical field of its particular disciplinary use, and has been the object of numerous publications (see Figure 1); agrees on the fact that the concept is multidisciplinary and that it has greatly spread outside of its original disciplinary fields[3].

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[1] https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/american_english/resilience

[2] https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/resilience

[3] Reghezza-Zitt, Magali**,** Rufat, Samuel**,** Djament-Tran, Géraldine**,** Le Blanc, Antoine and Lhomme, Serge**,** « What Resilience Is Not: Uses and Abuses », *Cybergeo: European Journal of Geography* [En ligne], Environnement, Nature, Paysage, document 621. https://journals.openedition.org/cybergeo/25554?lang=fr%26em_x=22%26#quotation

Figure 1. Multidisciplinary aspect of Resilience (adapted from https://journals.openedition.org/cybergeo/docannexe/image/25554/img-1.png)

As you will understand, **resilience is much more of a process than a competence.**

In this unit, we will concentrate on two of the most important types: psychological resilience and organizational resilience. We will try to explain what it is and how to improve it at work.

2. Psychological Resilience

This chapter explains what psychological resilience is and some strategies to improve it.

2.1 What Psychological Resilience is

In psychological literature, resilience is a largely malleable phenomenon. Psychological resilience is considered as the process of adapting in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress — in the workplace or in the personal sphere. As much as resilience involves "bouncing back" from these difficult experiences, it can also involve profound personal growth.

Being resilient doesn't mean that a person won't experience difficulty or distress. People who have suffered major adversity or trauma in their lives commonly experience emotional pain and stress. In fact, the road to resilience is likely to involve considerable emotional distress.

Psychology studies resilience considering different stages of life cycle, as childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and in the context of elderly population, being aware of different circumstances as disasters, wars and terrorism and their effects and responses, and also considering to analysis the family resilience and community resilience

There are different schools of thoughts that define "Resilience", but the tilt is towards positive focus on competence and adaptive behavior.

While defining resilience, it is also essential to distinguish it from factors that modulate it and related concepts such as invulnerability, stress resistance, adaptive behaviors, and mental toughness. However, some experts have clearly distinguished three main aspects where we, as human beings, have the capacity to adapt to different experiences; They focus on the fact that resilience is a process of looking to the reality with their constraints, changes and opportunities that results in the identification, fortification, and

enrichment of the Inner self qualities. It is necessary that the individual expose them self to stress and adversity, and it is just there they can realise how they change through the adaptation even if they suffer attacks during the process. Resilience is about

- The ability to achieve positive results in high risk situations

- The ability to function competently in situations of acute or chronic stress

- The ability to recover from trauma.

Several risks and protection factors pay key role in modulating resilience. It is important to understand resilience as a process rather than a particular character trait[4].

2.1.1. Tips to improve your psychological resilience

While certain factors might make some individuals more resilient than others, resilience isn't necessarily a personality trait that only some people possess. On the contrary, resilience involves behaviours, thoughts and actions that anyone can learn and develop. The ability to learn resilience is one reason research has shown that resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary. One example is the response of many Americans to the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and individuals' efforts to rebuild their lives after tragedy[5].

For the American Psychological Association, some tips to improve psychological resilience at a personal level, however, try to think how you can apply them in your work setting:

a) Build your connections:

- **Prioritize relationships**. Connecting with empathetic and understanding people can remind you that you're not alone in

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the midst of difficulties. Focus on finding trustworthy and compassionate individuals who validate your feelings, which will support the skill of resilience.

b) **Join a group**. Along with one-on-one relationships, some people find that being active in civic groups, faith-based communities, or other local organizations provides social support and can help you reclaim hope.

c) **Foster wellness:**

- **Take care of your body**. Self-care may be a popular buzzword, but it's also a legitimate practice for mental health and building resilience. That's because stress is just as much physical as it is emotional. Promoting positive lifestyle factors like proper nutrition, ample sleep, hydration and regular exercise can strengthen your body to adapt to stress and reduce the toll of emotions like anxiety or depression.

- **Practice mindfulness**. Mindful journaling, yoga, and other spiritual practices like prayer or meditation can also help people build connections and restore hope, which can prime them to deal with situations that require resilience. When you journal, meditate, or pray, ruminate on positive aspects of your life and recall the things you're grateful for, even during personal trials.

d) **Find purpose:**

- **Help others**. Whether you volunteer with a local homeless shelter or simply support a friend in their own time of need, you can garner a sense of purpose, foster self-worth, connect with other people and tangibly help others, all of which can empower you to grow in resilience.

- **Be proactive**. It's helpful to acknowledge and accept your emotions during hard times, but it's also important to help you foster self-discovery by asking yourself, "What can I do about a problem in my life?" If the problems seem too big to tackle, break them down into manageable pieces. For example, if you got laid off at work, you may not be able to convince your boss it was a mistake to let you go. But you can spend an hour each day developing your top strengths or working on your resume.

- **Move toward your goals**. Develop some realistic goals and do something regularly — even if it seems like a small

accomplishment — that enables you to move toward the things you want to accomplish.

- **Embrace healthy thoughts.** Keep things in perspective. How you think can play a significant part in how you feel — and how resilient you are when faced with obstacles. Try to identify areas of irrational thinking, such as a tendency to catastrophize difficulties or assume the world is out to get you and adopt a more balanced and realistic thinking pattern.
- **Accept change**. Accept that change is a part of life. Certain goals or ideals may no longer be attainable as a result of adverse situations in your life.
- **Maintain a hopeful outlook**. It's hard to be positive when life isn't going your way. An optimistic outlook empowers you to expect that good things will happen to you. Try visualizing what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear.
- **Learn from your past**. By looking back at who or what was helpful in previous times of distress, you may discover how you can respond effectively to new difficult situations.

e) Seeking help:

Getting help when you need it is crucial in building your resilience. For many people, using their own resources and the kinds of strategies listed above may be enough for building their resilience.

The important thing is to remember you're not alone on the journey. While you may not be able to control all of your circumstances, you can grow by focusing on the aspects of life's challenges you can manage with the support of loved ones and trusted professionals.

Resilience is not a trampoline, where you're down one moment and up the next. It's more like climbing a mountain without a trail map. The environment we live and work in is constantly changing, so resilience is an ongoing process of learning and improvement. It's important to make being resilient part of your business-as-usual, not something extra you tack on. It takes time, strength, and help from

people around you, and you'll experience setbacks along the way. But eventually you reach the top and look back at how far you've come.

Resilience is much more than being invulnerable before off stressing events or having the capital city capacity of recover after adversities. It is a dynamic process that every individual must have in front of adversity. Resilience is a dynamic process, and it can be hard to measure because you can see it in some development moments but not in others. Resilience is important because it gives people the strength needed to process and overcome hardship. That lacking resilience get easily overwhelmed and may turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms. Resilient people tap into their strengths and support systems to overcome challenges and work through problems.

Probably you'll find useful get your Resilience score with this Everyday health assessment:

https://www.everydayhealth.com/wellness/resilience/get-your-resilience-score

3. Organizational Resilience

Turning to organizational resilience, it is a capability that enables organizations to either endure environmental changes without having to permanently adapt, or the organization is forced to adapt a new way of working that better suits the new environmental condition. Organizational resilience is both planning to manage to unexpected as well as adapting and reacting to changing circumstances.

3.1 Organizational resilience explained

Resilience was taken **to mean a system's ability to continue to perform and meet its objectives in the face of challenges**. There is a general consensus around the notion that organizational resilience is achieved **by a combination of absorbing the**

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challenges faced and changing by adapting and transforming so as to continue to thrive in the face of challenges.

A resilient organization has the following characteristics:

- **leadership and culture:** strong, aware and empathetic leadership combined with staff that are empowered, trust each other and well looked after

- **networks:** effective external partnerships, well managed internal resources, and the ability to leverage knowledge across the organization

- **change readiness**: a unity of purpose and a proactive posture combined with the regular testing of plans to counter vulnerabilities[6].

3.2 Factors that improve your organizational resilience

a) **Material Resources:** The availability of resources is considered a key enabler of organizational resilience. When material resources are used strategically, organizations can overcome disruption. Financial resources are also considered necessary to mobilize other needed resources during crisis.

b) **Preparedness and Planning:** Resilience to acute shocks, rather than everyday challenges, is enhanced by adequate planning. One of the strategies used by organizations to prepare for crises or disasters is by going through scenario exercises (pseudo-crisis situations).

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[6] https://www.resorgs.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Resilient_Organisations_Resilience_Within_online_version.pdf

c) **Information Management:** Organizational resilience is widely identified as being dependent on how information is managed and used. Information is seen as a key ingredient to how timely and adequately organizations adapted to challenges. Knowledge management involves ensuring that strategies, organizational goals and achievements are effectively communicated across the organization. Further, organizations should proactively monitor what is happening in their environment. This could be achieved by activities such as evaluation of competitors, market research, and political and regulatory awareness. A key utility of effective information management and use was in enhancing the situation awareness of organizations. Situation awareness refers to an organization's perception and understanding of its environment. Situation awareness is characterized by an increased understanding of the factors that trigger crisis, minimum operating requirements, availability of internal and external resources. Organizations can identify the early warning signals that precede a crisis by monitoring internal and external environments.

d) **Collateral Pathways and Redundancy:** Ensuring that organizations have multiple, alternative courses of action also bestows resilience; collateral pathways refer to the availability of alternative routes to achieve a desired goal. Collateral pathways enhance resilience by providing for alternative courses of action; when a system experiences disruption or challenges on one pathway, an alternative pathway is utilized to achieve the same goal. This characteristic draws from the feature of systems as complex adaptive systems. Related to the notion of collateral pathways is redundancy. Redundancy is the inclusion of extra components or resources that are not strictly necessary to functioning, in case of failure in other components or resources.

e) **Governance Process:** Governance practices are also shown to influence the resilience of organizations to both acute and everyday challenges. Governance is used here to mean the

rules and processes that guide operations and affairs of organizations. A number of governance practices are identified as critical for organizational resilience.

- The first is decentralization; resilient organizations adopted a form of governance characterized by distributed control, rather than top down hierarchy, under central control. This allowed systems to be more responsive to changes in the environment by empowering local actors and provided the necessary flexibility that facilitated timely responses to everyday challenges and in times of crisis.

- Another two governance practices that distinguished resilient from non-resilient organizations are non-linear planning (evolving, open-ended, iterative, and characterized by feedback loops between stages, and learning by trial and error) and the degree of coordination between different functions and parts of the organization. integrating delivery systems enhances coordination, effectiveness and efficiency as well as eliminating constraints, managerial uncertainty and wastage of resources.

f) **Leadership Practices**
Leadership in resilient organizations are characterized by inclusive decision making. Leaders ensured that relevant stakeholders were included and contributed to decision making. This nurtured the resilience of organizations to both everyday challenges, and acute shocks by building trust, empowering, motivating and creating commitment among staff and other stakeholders. firms that had transparent and inclusive leaders were more resilient compared to those that had less transparent, non-inclusive leaders. A distinction was also made between leadership practices that were not aligned to the complex adaptive nature of systems, and those that were aligned. Rather than being controlling and directive, the leaders were mediators and facilitators of the actions of organization actors and influenced conditions to guide interactions.

g) **Organizational Culture** Two cultural practices are identified as key to organizational resilience. First is the organizations attitude towards every day and acute challenges. The ability of leaders and other staff to view challenges from an opportunistic perspective is important for resilience. Resilient organizations consider challenge as learning opportunities and used these experiences to develop capabilities that improve their resilience. Second, resilient organizations support creativity and innovation. Staff in organizations with a poor creative climate were guarded and closed, and reluctant to offer innovative and creative ideas because they would be disregarded. A creative climate is thought to be imperative for providing a conducive environment for organizational adaptation and transformation in the face of challenges. Resilient organizations nurtured creativity by providing time and resources for experimentation, rewarded innovation, tolerance for failure, and an atmosphere in which employees felt safe to share new ideas.

h) **Human Capital:** All recognize the important role that human resources play in the resilience of organizations to everyday challenges and acute shocks. Having an adequate number of human resources and the requisite skills was highlighted as a critical contributor to resilience. However, beyond numbers and skills, ensuring that staff are adequately motivated and fully committed to organizational goals was highlighted as more important. One way of ensuring that staff are motivated and committed is prioritizing staff wellbeing

i) **Social Networks and Collaboration:** How well organizations establish and leverage their networks determines the extent to which they are resilient to everyday challenges and acute shocks. Social networks offer avenues for increased mobilization and transfer of knowledge, dissemination of innovations, thus increasing the overall resilience of systems. Collaboration among organizations in a networked environment also expands resources that can be drawn on, ability to learn, and its capacity to respond.

Empirical literature recognizes that resilience is both a function of planning for and preparing for future crisis (planned resilience) and adapting to change and disruptions (adaptive resilience). It is however recognized that planning **alone is not enough**, and that organizations must focus on developing a capacity to adapt to changing environments. While planning might help mitigate the effect of acute shocks to the health system, whether or not the health system is able to maintain core functions of delivering quality healthcare services in an efficient and equitable way also depends on how well it adjusts to the post crisis phase. Investing in structures and processes that promote the adaptive capacity of health systems is therefore important. Further, resilience to everyday challenges cannot be achieved by risk management and organizational continuity plans because such plans are often aimed at **isolated events that are transient and have clear boundaries. Everyday challenges are unpredictable, multiple, and have fuzzy boundaries in the sense that they are interconnected in complex ways.** To overcome these challenges, health systems will need to adapt in creative and innovative ways and transform to new and improved forms of operations[7].

4. Synopsis

In this unit, resilience was explained resilience in general terms, and then specifically identified it on psychological and organizational sciences. Resilience is a process more than a competence, and you have some tips that will help you to improve your resilience, both in personal terms and at work.

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