



# The Well-Practiced Manager

Professional Development  
Resource for  
Boston College Managers  
and Supervisors

Fall 2017

## From the Director:

### Dear Manager,

Welcome to another academic year. We are looking forward to a great semester.

Inevitably, we will find ourselves stressed when there's too much to do and not enough time or hands available. While there has been a great deal of attention on the negative effects of stress, there is a growing focus on the potential benefits and how we can better respond.

We are exploring that concept in this newsletter on resilience as well in **professional development workshops**. Resilient people have a greater ability to focus, process information, solve problems, and be creative. Fortunately, resilience is something that can be developed and honed. In this newsletter, we're taking a closer look at that process.

For more information, **join us for** "Exploring the Concept of Grit and What it Can Mean for You," on October 5th and "The Resilience Advantage" on November 15th.

Wishing you all the best for a great year,

*Bernie O'Kane*

**Bernie O'Kane**  
Director, Office of  
Employee Development

## Build up Resilience to Deal with Stress and Improve Decision Making

Peter is exhausted from staying up late with a sick child but has to finish major presentation for a meeting that will start soon. Outside, the lawn crew moves closer with a noisy mower challenging his concentration. Suddenly, the computer glitches, wiping out his last three hours of work.

### How Peter responds will depend on the level of his resilience.

Resilience is defined as the capacity to prepare for, recover from and adapt in the face of stress, challenge and adversity. Those with a high level of resilience cope better with setbacks, road blocks and daily aggravations. They are more likely to effectively solve problems, develop creative solutions and complete projects successfully. Those with less resilience are more likely to be overwhelmed by the situation and experience negative emotions including anger, frustration, and depression.



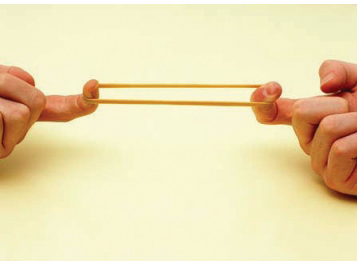
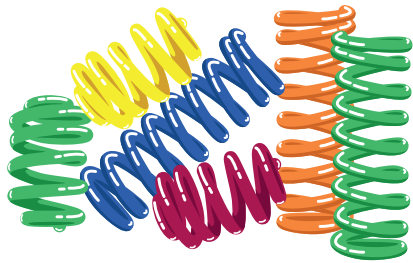
Unlike some traits, an individual's resilience is not a set factor. Rather, it's affected by their experience over time as well as the immediate circumstances. A lack of sleep, for instance, or the distraction of noise can make it more difficult to manage stressors such as a computer failure. It's somewhat like a battery that can be drained by the energy it takes to get through a day.



But like a battery, resilience can be restored and even built up through conscious effort, said Patricia Touzin, director of the Faculty Assistance Program, who will be presenting the Resilience Advantage. The program was developed by the HeartMath Institute based on resilience research.



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“People can increase their level of resilience,” Touzin said. “If we understand what is affecting our resilience and how we respond in stressful situations, then we can take charge of that response and over time increase our ability to deal with these difficult situations.”

### Learning to Adapt and Rebound

There are two parts to increasing the capacity for resilience. The first is generally building the ability to handle stressful situations and the second is developing strategies to cope in the moment. One is increasing the strength of the battery and the other is preventing it from depleting too quickly.

“We know we are going to have stressful events in our lives, so we need to consider what are those small ongoing stressors that can sap our capacity,” Touzin said. “You want to identify and eliminate or reduce those.”

Even small things like an uncomfortable chair or too many interruptions can add up over time and drain the battery.

During a stressful event, it helps to recognize what is happening physically and to consciously evaluate options. Assume objectivity, as if it were someone else’s problem. What advice would you give that person?



### Some Exercises to Increase Resilience:

#### Shift your view

When something happens, there is a tendency to predict and focus on the worst case scenario. Instead, consider that there could be positive outcomes, which gives you room to explore other options.

#### Change your self-talk

When things go well, rather than chalking it up to luck, acknowledge that you’ve done well. And when something bad happens, don’t take the entire blame. Acknowledge your part, but recognize what was out of your control.

#### Turn failure into a strength

Instead of seeing failure as the end, consider it to be a part of the process. Analyze what went wrong and figure out how you can improve.

#### Restore your energy

Do things that you enjoy. Be physically active. Focus on feeling grateful.

## The Four Domains of Resilience:

There are four interrelated domains of resiliency, the physical, spiritual, emotional and mental. Individuals typically have more resiliency in one than another. Incorporate activities that will help build on your strength.



### Mental

Attention span  
Ability to focus  
Incorporate multiple points of view

### Emotional

Positive Outlook  
Self-regulation



### Spiritual

Commitment to values  
Tolerance of others’ values and behaviors



### Physical

Endurance  
Strength



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