

Case Study 1. Senior Leadership Resilience Training

Case description

A major health care provider in Melbourne providing services to a significant population was experiencing a challenging situation that needed external professional support and assistance to provide crisis intervention.

Reason for The Bernard Group being engaged

The CEO requested the assistance of The Bernard Group (TBG) and Professor Michael Bernard to help support a senior executive-level, leadership team to deal with issues surrounding a very intense conflict between staff, senior medical leadership and the union. As a result, according to the CEO, the “crisis” was having a detrimental effect on the health and performance of members of the hospital’s senior leadership team.

As a result of events outside of their control, each member of the leadership team experienced a loss of their natural resilience including the ability to self-manage their emotions.

Recommended HPMW solution and goal

Through consultation with the CEO, it was agreed that Michael Bernard would offer the *High Performance Mindset at Work - Resilience Program for Leaders*. Additionally, Michael Bernard offered consultation to the CEO on ways to support senior leaders and to reduce some of the ongoing stress associated with the events that were transpiring.

Who participated?

Six senior leaders, who were highly talented and positive people, were facing ongoing, unexpected and unfair events largely not of their doing. Their professional reputations were under attack.

The goal

A major goal, then, of the crisis intervention was to re-build resilience.

Why Senior Leaders need 110%+ of resilience

When people experience unexpected, intense and ongoing, highly stressful events (exposure to violence, criticism, rejection, hostility, failure) that they have little control over, two impacts are often observed: 1. They become less able to manage their emotions in all areas of their lives, and 2. They become more vigilant in identifying events as problematic, threatening or challenging.

The result can be prolonged and repetitive periods of intense, painful emotional stress and behavioural impairments both at work and home.

Converting the negative to a positive

The good news is that people can learn to minimise the impact of unexpected, tsunami-like events and the emotional wounding experienced, through re-learning and strengthening of their resilience.

The High Performance Mindset at Work - Resilience Program for Leaders

The intensive training conducted over four sessions had the following 2 foci:

1. Management of negative emotions

A primary tool learnt by the senior leaders, was the use of the ABC model of emotional regulation.

Participants reviewed the following points and practiced the following skills:

- What determines the intensity and type of everyone's emotional response is thinking (ABC model).

A = adverse event	à	B = beliefs rational vs. irrational	à	C = consequence emotional behavioural
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- When irrational thinking predominates, your emotional temperature goes from moderate to high; whereas when your rational thinking dominates, the intensity of negative emotions is only moderate.

Irrational thinking: not sensible/illogical, not true (no evidence), not helpful

Rational thinking: sensible/logical, true and helpful

2. Strengthening positivity

The importance of moving attentional focus away from what is not right or negative, to the positive aspects of one's job (and home life) was addressed. Everyone can make this choice.

Tactics for switching attentional focus from negative to positive included:

1. Keep giving of yourself to others
2. Notice what's going right at work as a result of new model of care and your leadership and acknowledge your effort
3. Conduct a daily self-reflective review of things that occurred during the day that brought you pleasure and satisfaction – try to incorporate these into your daily work day
4. Incorporate gratitude practices in your life

Outcomes and benefits of HPMW Resilience Training

Within an eight-week period, normal resilience levels of the participants were restored. Levels of job satisfaction returned. Emotional stress significantly decreased. And no longer were participants bringing home unwanted stress and fatigue, which was having a detrimental on family life.

Participants gained awareness and practice in cognitively restructuring irrational to rational beliefs. They also (re)-learned self-management, coping skills including: talking to a trusted friend, using relaxation (deep breathing, muscle), recreating – finding something fun to do, exercising, using humour, timing oneself out and using assertive behaviour - respectfully requesting a change in another's behaviour.

Recommendation

It is strongly recommended that all executive-level leaders have an opportunity to strengthen their resilience resources in order to cope with the unrelenting demands, pressures and unexpected demands, challenges, changes and attacks both professional and personal they can encounter.