



Here's my short-list of ways to raise my resilience and cope with stress, which I've learned over the years work well to help me flourish in my work (and personal life) – and these same strategies work well for many others who work in the field of Education too:

### 1. RELATIONSHIPS, RELATIONSHIPS, RELATIONSHIPS

Investing in people you work with is essential. It's important to seek help when needed – choosing the right person to ask. It is important to be able to solve conflict productively – together, as a team. Empathy matters a lot – so tune into what people are feeling and how they are seeing and experiencing situations, from their

point of view, through their life-lens. For me, I find my relationships prosper when I notice and acknowledge the positives in another (e.g. "I like the way you really listen.").

### 2. BE PROUD OF WHO YOU ARE

... and what you have accomplished. Take stock of those aspects of your intelligence, professional skills, personality, family, culture, a religion that you are proud of and hold in high regard. Make sure these personal 'strengths' are on your radar screen at all times. Doing this helps to combat negative thinking about yourself when having a bad day or when stuck in a stressful situation. For me, I remind myself of my great wife and kids, my sense of humour that helps me connect with others, my hard work and dedication.

### 3. SELF-ACCEPTANCE

Don't take things personally. Avoid self-deprecation. You have a choice in how you think about your value and worth as a person when bad things happen. Mistakes are normal. An adverse event does not mean you need to think negatively about yourself. Also, be realistic in what you expect of yourself – no law of the universe says you must be perfect. It is important to distinguish between being a failure and failing at a task. YOU are not your behaviour. Also, it's good to remember that while it is preferable to have earned people's approval, you don't actually need anyone's approval – and you can certainly survive without it.

## 11 Ways to Begin the Term with Resilience

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We know that our resilience is sometimes not strong enough to allow us to stay calm and deal with all the problems that life throws our way. Resilience is not a fixed commodity; it waxes and wanes for different reasons.

Nonetheless, a strong level of resilience does protect us in times of stress – and the good news is – resilience can be developed.

When you are faced with adversity in the classroom due to rowdy students, difficult parents, time/workload pressures, relationship issues with colleagues, critical performance evaluations, unrealistic expectations and demanding changes, resilience can help you manage your stress, problem solve better, and behave in 'smart', positive, productive ways.

#### **4. PRACTICE NOT BLOWING BAD STUFF OUT OF PROPORTION**

Everyone tends to 'catastrophise' when negative things happen. When we do, our stress level skyrockets. In these situations, it is helpful to visualise a scale of catastrophes. At the top of the scale are those catastrophic events that are really horrible, terrible and awful (war, natural disaster, death of loved one); below these are very bad events (your house burns down, you lose job); moving further down the scale are events that are merely 'bad' (criticism, unsettled class, computer crashes); finally, at the bottom of the scale are slightly unfortunate events that are just a 'bit bad' (you spill coffee on shirt, you are running late for an appointment). When faced with difficult, challenging events, ask yourself, "How bad is it really?".

#### **5. KEEP A CHECK ON YOUR EMOTIONAL LEVELS**

A key to resilience is simply being aware of your feelings when faced with a stressful event. Our emotions can be graded on a scale of intensity – an 'Emotional Thermometer'- from low to high intensity emotional reactions. When a negative event occurs, I strive to keep my emotions in the middle range of intensity, knowing that my thinking and behaviour significantly suffers when I experience a high level of intense emotions, such as feeling very anxious, down or angry.

#### **6. TIME MANAGEMENT**

This element of resilience involves setting priorities, such as scheduling events on a daily or weekly timetable. Work-life balance is enhanced by shutting off from work when we arrive at home (at least for a while) by 'letting go' of any work issues, tasks or thoughts. Politely saying "no" to requests for extra help and assistance with work tasks, if these prevent you from 'letting go' and sticking to your schedule is beneficial.

#### **7. BE MINDFUL**

Mindfulness is a way of paying attention to what is happening in the moment. By being in charge of what you pay attention to – and when – you change your reality. So, I concentrate on what is happening around me, including careful appreciation of what someone is saying. I notice my breathing and use it to relax and take my attention away from thoughts that disturb or distract me.

#### **8. BE OPTIMISTIC**

Optimism is a success magnet. If you stay positive, good things and good people are drawn to you. Everyone has a choice as to whether they interpret adverse events optimistically or pessimistically. When you find yourself using negative self-talk, argue back with optimistic self-talk. A growth mindset contributes to optimism and confidence. When facing problems and difficulties that aren't resolving, it's helpful to encourage your optimism with, "I just can't do this – YET."

#### **9. GOT GRIT?**

In education, we all have it; that long-standing passion for helping young people flourish and be the best they can be. Sometimes called our 'moral purpose,' we need to remind ourselves of our mission and be aware of its importance. Then, when faced with the muddles and puddles of school and life, we find greater strength, endurance and frustration tolerance to persevere and pull through.

#### **10. EXERCISE**

If you are doing some, you will know how important it is. If you are not, start small. If you think you don't have enough time to exercise with all your responsibilities, make exercise one of your top priorities. Exercise is incredible for stress relief. Schedule time before or after school -and just do it!

#### **11. BE GREAT AT PROBLEM SOLVING**

Problem-solving is an essential part of being resilient. I know when faced with challenges and difficulties, including negative people, not only do I need to stay calm, cool and collected, I also benefit from spending time reflecting on how best to solve the presenting problem. The steps I take are:

1. Clearly define what the problem is,
2. Confidently consider different ways to solve the problem selecting the one with the most positive, probable consequences and the least negative outcomes,
3. When necessary, I search to secure help from others, including my team.
4. I persist in seeing if my chosen solution works, and
5. If it doesn't, and the problem still exists, I try the next best approach until I find one that works.

Finally, I try as much as I can to live by the Serenity Prayer: Grant me the serenity to accept those things I cannot change, the courage to change those that I can and the wisdom to know the difference.