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Fall back, *spring forward*

What is resiliency? Here's an explanation of what it is—and how building it can help your emotional well-being amid the uncertainties of today.

By Susan Birkholtz

The Chinese philosopher Confucius said, “Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.”

A lot's been falling lately—home prices, retirement savings balances, the stock market, consumer confidence, and increasingly, people's spirits. These stresses, plus the worries and strains of daily life, can wreak havoc on your emotional and physical well-being. And working at a high-tech company like Boeing, where fast-paced change is inherent, doesn't make coping any easier.

“When you put the demands of program schedules, management changes and budget-cutting against the backdrop of what's happening in the rest of the world, you begin to see what employees are dealing with,” said David Root, a certified Employee Assistance Program counselor who supports the El Segundo and Sylmar sites in California through ValueOptions, Boeing's EAP provider.

Although you may not be able to avoid what's going on at work or in the world around you, experts agree that how resilient you are is key to determining how well you perform and grow at home and at work.

So what is resiliency? Al Siebert, author of “The Resiliency Advantage,” describes resilient people as those who can overcome adversity, bounce back from setbacks, and thrive under extreme, ongoing pressure without acting in dysfunctional or harmful ways. What's more, Siebert said, the most resilient people recover from traumatic experiences stronger, better and wiser.

Considering that research says most people spend about 75 percent of their waking hours involved in some work-related

activity, being resilient at the workplace is extremely important. In fact, resiliency researchers Salvatore Maddi and Deborah Khoshaba, authors of “Resilience at Work: How to Succeed No Matter What Life Throws at You,” contend that resilience amid stressful situations and rapid changes determines your ultimate success in the workplace—even more so than experience or job training.

CULTIVATING ‘HARDINESS’

So what can you do to become more resilient? According to Maddi and Khoshaba, the key to building resilience is to increase your “hardiness,” a pattern of attitudes and skills that preserves your performance and health by helping you think and act constructively during stressful circumstances.

Maddi and Khoshaba organize this pattern of attitudes and skills into what they call the 3Cs:

- **Commitment.** You generally move toward life, rather than away from it. You view your work as important and worthwhile enough to warrant your full attention and effort, and you stay involved in people and events around you, even when the going gets tough.
- **Control.** You believe and act as if you can influence the events that take place around you. Instead of feeling powerless, you actively seek solutions to workday problems. You also can distinguish what in your environment is open to change—and what is outside your control, and thus must be accepted.

- **Challenge.** You meet unexpected or unwanted change head on and find ways to leverage it to your advantage, rather than seeing it as a negative that you must avoid. You try and understand and learn from stressful situations and turn them into opportunities for personal growth.

TRANSFORMATIONAL COPING

According to Root, developing these attitudes will increase your ability to deal with change effectively through what authors Maddi and Khoshaba call “transformational coping.” This behavior means that “when presented with a stressful event, you do not react to it immediately as a threat, but rather take a mental step back to put the event into the context of your ongoing life plan, and try to understand how it fits in,” Root said. “Once you understand the situation, you can then decide on the best course of action to resolve the situation that will be the most favorable to your overall well-being. Choosing to act decisively changes the

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dynamics of the stressful event or experience.”

According to Julie Haiwick from the Enterprise BoeingWellness program, maintaining a strong physical foundation is necessary to building emotional hardiness.

“When you don’t feel well on a consistent basis, it’s more difficult to be optimistic about your life,” said Haiwick. “During stressful times, making sure you are eating healthy foods, exercising and getting enough rest become even more important. Taking care of your health also includes getting the appropriate wellness screenings for your age group and making sure your numbers—your weight, blood pressure, glucose levels, etc.—are in the normal range. Being able to handle the tough times will be that much easier if you are feeling well physically.”

Root stressed that having a strong, supportive social network is very important to cultivating and maintaining emotional resilience. “Talking to people who have known you in better times can help you to see the big picture and encourage you to think more objectively with less emotion about a stressful situation and act in a way that is most beneficial for you,” he said.

For those whose social network may be lacking, or if problems seem insurmountable even after discussing them, professional help also is an option.

“I tell people to think of me as a coach rather than a therapist, because that’s really what I do,” said Root. “In sports, a coach’s job is to draw out and hone an athlete’s innate abilities. Most people have the ability to overcome their own challenges. It’s just a matter of having someone to help you sort them out and gain valuable perspective so you can face them with confidence.” ■

Well Being tools to help you cope

Boeing provides several programs and resources to help employees deal with stress and build resiliency.

- **Employee Assistance Program:** Employees and eligible family members have access to an experienced counseling professional for up to six free counseling sessions for help with personal problems. In the United States, call 1-888-719-5788. Outside the United States, call Canada collect at +1-905-270-7658.
- **EAP articles online:** Employees can access a number of helpful articles on a wide range of topics, including coping with a job loss and avoiding work burn-out. Visit the EAP Web site on the Boeing intranet at <http://eap.web.boeing.com>.
- **Legal and financial counseling:** U.S. employees have access to legal and financial solutions through the company’s EAP vendor, ValueOptions, which provides access to a network of lawyers, certified public accountants, certified financial planners and budget specialists. For a consultation referral, call 1-866-719-5788 and choose Option 3. Normal business hours are 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pacific Time. For emergency legal referrals, access is available 24 hours a day, seven days per week.
- **Family Care Resources:** Boeing Family Care Resources experts help you find solutions for a broad range of issues in your own community—everything from finding assisted living options for your parents to preschool daycare and summer children’s programs. Online articles about a variety of subjects also are available. Reach Family Care Resources by calling 1-800-985-6895 (U.S.-based employees only) or visiting www.liveandworkwell-boeing.com.
- **Other resources:** For a one-stop resource on Boeing stress management opportunities, visit www.boeing.com/stressmanagement. And for tips on “How to survive the stress of the 21st century,” view a recent Boeing Education Network online workshop available on demand on the Boeing intranet at <http://leadcoursesearch.web.boeing.com>.

Boeing’s Well Being initiative is designed to make it easier for employees to understand and access the wide range of valuable benefits, programs and tools the company offers in the areas of health (physical and emotional) and retirement planning. The effort is integral to Boeing’s success: Research shows that a healthy and financially fit work force—one able to perform at its best—is good for employees and good for business.