

## Building Personal Resilience in Twelve Steps

### Step 10: Collaboration and Cooperation



“One step each week. You will be amazed at the difference it will make”

Why is it, I wonder, that we often find it difficult asking for help and actually see it as a weakness? Some of us feel there is a particular virtue in facing things alone. Try not to bother others. Learn to cope alone. Perhaps these are notions baked into our thinking from an early age, standing on our own two feet, praised for being independent, disapproving looks if we appear too needy or “clingy”.

But resilience is far removed from this tough go-it-alone mind-set. Collaboration and co-operation are key to building our personal resilience where we can feel both supported as well as offering support to others. Seeking and giving feedback, being prepared to learn from others, sharing knowledge and ideas and listening frequently and generously are all important ways of cooperating and working together.

We recognised early in this series of resilience articles that we needed to identify one or two people to whom we could turn if we ever felt the need for support, advice, or even just for someone in whom we could share our feelings. But in the modern world of work there are two very clear areas in which to develop personal work resilience we need others:

- Collaboration and cooperation are central to resilience. Those people who cannot collaborate, cannot share ideas, triumphs and failures limit the contribution they can make solely to their individual limits. They become a workplace vulnerability because if they fail, the whole thing

fails and if they succeed then because they have not worked with anyone else repeating that success can only be through that one person. Collaboration is essential for creativity, certainly, but also for diversity of thought and action --- ways to come up with solutions based on a variety of inputs from a range of people working through to a final outcome. Collaboration recognises that often we do our best work together.

- Business and social networks are essential. In the modern world of work where we take digital connectedness for granted and we may seemingly have so many connections. Apparently, these are often described as “friends” and we have a tendency to “collect” them with more and more such contacts on several virtual platforms. Staying in touch with formal and informal networks for professional and emotional support is helpful in many ways, including maintaining our knowledge and skills.

But we seldom cultivate those networks very well. We are poor at keeping in touch, perhaps simply because we have too many of them. Hence when we could benefit from their support, or when they might need us, we are way out of touch and find it so much more difficult to renew or optimise the connection.

This week we shall try to refresh these two aspects for developing our resilience with two specific exercises.

**Draw two overlapping circles of collaboration.** These may be exclusively from the workplace or you may like to widen this to include family and friends. In the overlapping area of the two circles put the names of those people who both seek you out and who you in turn seek out to collaborate or share ideas. This is where collaboration is reciprocal. In the left-hand circle, away from the overlapping part, put the names of those with whom you share but who for some reason do not share with you. Similarly, in the right-hand circle, away from the overlapping part, put the names of those who share with you but with whom you do not share your own needs, for whatever reason.

Now look at your circles. Hopefully there are many people in the overlapping space. Try to develop these even further if you can and draw more people into this area if the number seems small. *Your overlapping circle of collaboration is a great way to remind yourself of the strength of your network.*

**Cull and cultivate your network.** The first task is to cull some of your network if you have too many contacts on too many platforms/apps. Quality rather than quantity is what matters in a strong and organic network. So those contacts you have with whom you never or very seldom make connection may need to

be removed, politely of course, simply because they do not appear to have need for you, and you have little need of them.

With your remaining contacts you are clear that they are useful to you in some way and it is likely that you are useful to them. Cultivate them, nurture the connection, take an interest in what they are doing and share your own plans and activities. Now that the number is reduced, maybe considerably, your goal this week is to reconnect with each of them again and resolve to keep in closer contact both virtually and when feasible and appropriate face to face.

Think of this as a stock-take or spring-clean on the one hand and an opportunity to build your resilience by collaborating and cooperating, offering each other support to mutual benefit. Everybody has contacts and networks of people they can reach out to and it means we don't have to go it alone, if we choose not to.

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The Wellbeing Team