

Building emotional resilience makes better leaders

Building emotional resilience is an ongoing process that empowers business owners and leaders to respond more effectively to challenges, fostering a healthier and more productive work environment.

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"FACING CHALLENGES AND TRAVELLING ROUGH ROADS DOES NOT INDICATE FAILURE."

LEADERS OFTEN FACE the challenge of maintaining composure in the face of adversity. Navigating the complexities of leadership amid global political instability and constant change can be overwhelming.

However, acknowledging that we can influence our responses to these challenges is crucial. Building emotional resilience daily becomes paramount, as it enables leaders to better cope with difficult situations by strengthening their emotional fortitude.

Over the past 15 years, I have developed a simple yet effective language, Emotional Resilience (ER), designed to increase emotional intelligence and build resilience through consistent use. The driving metaphor employed by ER simplifies the intricate world of emotions, providing an innovative way to integrate emotional vocabulary into daily life, enhance understanding, and establish new neural pathways.

Allow me to guide you through the initial steps of ER, a process vital for building emotional resilience and effectively managing significant challenges. Though the changes may seem simplistic, they are instrumental in establishing a lasting transformation.

1. Change your language

The first step involves a shift in language, replacing the dichotomy of "good" and "bad" with the more nuanced "rough" and "smooth."

Emotions, likened to roads, can be rough or smooth. Rough emotions are often perceived as negative, prompting attempts to

move individuals from "bad" roads to "good" ones.

It is essential to understand that rough and smooth roads serve a purpose; rough roads build resilience and skills, while smooth roads maintain emotional health. Leaders no longer need to ensure that they and their team are always on a smooth road; instead, it's important to maintain, without judgement, a balance between the two.

2. Control your steering wheel

Recognise that you alone have control of your emotional steering wheel. Many leaders unknowingly allow others to influence or take control, or attempt to take charge, of their team's steering wheel, leading to chaos and a sense of overwhelm.

Blaming others or external factors for our emotional reactions reduces our sense of personal control. Taking responsibility for steering allows leaders to regain control, avoid emotional chaos, and enable productive responses.

Understanding that emotional resilience cannot be built when out of control on either road is crucial. Out-of-control scenarios activate the amygdala, our brain's fight, flight or freeze mode, disabling the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for thinking and creativity.

It is only possible to discuss a situation once the involved parties have regained control and can access the thinking part of their brain.

When someone feels out of control, they may risk causing harm to themselves, others or something else. Therefore, regaining control is essential for having productive discussions and maintaining emotional well-being.

3. Lead by example

When someone enters your office emotionally charged, try to refrain from judgment or joining them on the rough road. Maintaining control of your emotional steering wheel avoids exacerbating the situation.

Instead, offer support, removing the stigma of being on a rough road. For example, say, "Looks like you're having a rough day. Would you like to grab a cup of coffee, and then we can sit and discuss it?"

This allows for open communication about emotional experiences, lightening the conversation with humour when necessary.

Encourage sharing within the team by normalising vulnerability. Leaders can admit to having a rough day or being momentarily out of control, fostering a culture of openness and understanding.

It's important to accept that losing control is part of being human. Learning to regain control is an essential aspect of personal growth. Avoiding the blame game and taking control of one's emotional steering wheel prevents perpetual victimhood.

Developing emotional resilience helps shift your focus from dwelling on challenges to controlling your responses.

Start creating new neural pathways by incorporating language changes into daily use. Without judgment, learn to recognise the emotional road that you and those around you are on, as well as determine who is in or out of control.

It is important to understand that navigating rough roads is essential for improving emotional skills and building resilience. Remember, facing challenges and travelling rough roads does not indicate failure, as every emotional journey serves a purpose.

When you remove blame and assume personal responsibility for your emotional steering wheel, you enhance your mental and emotional health and ultimately, your relationships.

Building emotional resilience is an ongoing process that empowers leaders to respond effectively to challenges, fostering a healthier and more productive work environment for all. ■



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