



RESET AND RECOVERY: Bounce Forward to Resilience

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The current reality of a global pandemic, physical distancing and remote working are creating significant challenges for teams. Now more than ever, resilience is a required skill to help employees succeed and grow, build healthy workplaces, deal with virtual burnout and Zoom fatigue, and work in quickly changing workplaces.

Virtual connecting is an important—and, for many, necessary—way to strengthen team cohesion, ensure clear and transparent communication, and keep projects progressing. It is also how employees connect with external stakeholders and clients, and collaborate on projects as a group. However, while technology helps us be connected anytime and from anywhere, virtual connecting also has some negative side effects—one of which is the impact on your resilience.

Let's explore the reasons why all this excessive screen time may cause fatigue, and some solutions to reduce virtual burnout and boost resilience.

The Problem with Screens

1 Many people face a steep learning curve with virtual platforms and are not accustomed to connecting on screen. Knowing how to act and where to look in virtual meetings, and feeling pressured to be perfect while managing the distractions that happen on virtual platforms can be very stressful for some people,

especially those who are new to it. A number of the organizations I work with reported that their staff are often very uncomfortable with the virtual platform that is part of their new service delivery, and others have reported increased conflict and decreased communication effectiveness.

2 Many people do not factor in the transition time between virtual meetings like they do with in-person meetings. Scheduling back-to-back meetings on virtual platforms results in extended periods of sitting and no breaks to recover. This can increase stress and leave you feeling exhausted (with a lot to catch up on at the end of the day).

3 You may be far more sedentary and tense than you are accustomed to. When your body feels physically stressed and tense, you tend to feel emotionally stressed and tense as well.

4 Some people report headaches from the constant noise and use of ear buds.

5 Not only are there more work virtual connections, but there may also be numerous online community gatherings, family get-togethers and training programs, which may result in you being busier (at the computer) than before.

6 A lot of people find themselves having to make big adjustments in order to work from home. In many cases, these people also have childcare or eldercare responsibilities and are struggling without the boundaries they had when they physically went to work.

How Do You Cope?

What's the solution? Resilience.

Resilience will benefit you, your team and pretty much anyone in your life. Simply put, it is the ability to cope with and "bounce forward" after change, challenge, crisis and adversity. It relies on a set of essential skills that include problem solving, strong emotional health, self-awareness, the ability to ask for help and the ability to set boundaries.

Resilient employees and teams foster resilient workplaces. They will be the ones who cope more effectively with returning to work and whatever the new future holds.

You can think of resilience like a muscle that needs to be exercised or a bank account that needs continual deposits. Daily activities and actions that promote resilience will help ensure that your resilience account is full when you need to make withdrawals. Here are some ideas you can implement today:

1 Take time to **unplug** and be **device free**.

2 Check your emails at scheduled times throughout the day and avoid checking email before bed. A **good night's sleep** and rest is essential for resilience.

3 Allow **transition time between online meetings**. Also create transitions between home and work. This may be a daily routine or activity that separates home from work, such as closing the door to your working space to symbolize that work is done for the day.

4 **Resolve issues and conflicts** early on—they will not improve with time. Conflict typically surfaces or intensifies during times of change, adversity and crisis. Not surprisingly, conflict among teams has increased during these past few months.

5 Become skilled at **setting boundaries**, which sometimes means you have to say no.

6 Ensure you are **stretching and creating more movement** in your day if you are sitting more than usual.

7 Inject some **"real world" balancing moments**. Get fresh air and sunlight, and drink lots of water. If you are using your voice more because of increased meetings, schedule quiet rest breaks.

8 **Be kind to yourself**. Don't expect perfection. You may not be able to work at your usual capacity. Be kind and forgive yourself.

9 Pay attention to the **language you use**. Instead of saying, "I am stuck here working from home," try, "Working from home gives me time to spend with family and create new routines." Instead of saying, "I've had it with this being plugged in all the time," try, "I am taking a break from technology." Resilience begins with your mindset. What you think shapes what you say, how you show up and how you cope. Use language that is affirmative and boosts your resilience instead of knocking it down.

Resilience building also includes ensuring organizational processes and policies support workplace resilience. One of the concerns I hear when I am working with organizations that are trying to build resilience is that little frustrations turn into bigger team and workplace issues quickly. Think of having a little pebble in your shoe when you are walking. If you do not stop and remove the pebble, it doesn't take long for it to feel like a boulder and likely be all that you can focus on. The same holds true for workplace irritations. Resolving these issues will save you from dealing with bigger issues down the road.

A final tip on building resilient teams is to tell people what is not changing. In times of uncertainty, it is common to focus on only what will be *different* and what you *can't* do anymore. Instead, talk about what is *not* changing. This will help build stability, reduce ambiguity and apprehension, and keep your people grounded.

Remember, every little step you take every single day to foster resilience at home and at work is like putting a deposit in your bank account. ■

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