



Everyday Resiliency with Dr. Robyne Hanley-Dafoe

We can do hard things — this was the inspirational reminder that resiliency expert [Dr. Robyne Hanley-Dafoe](#) left with us, and more than 700 of our clients, in the debut virtual presentation of our new Virtual Speaker Series.

The Five Core Traits of Resiliency

Resiliency lives within us all. The only difference between those who can keep getting up after adversity and those who struggle with it, is knowing how to draw on this resource in times of need. This can be taught, Robyne said.

It starts with understanding the five core traits of resiliency and how to use them to build a pool of strength that we can draw on in times of need.

1) Belonging

This is the source of our deepest sense of community and purpose. It's knowing who's in our corner and why we need them. Take time to discover, appreciate, and cultivate relationships with those in our lives who are truly there for us, and who we can be there for as well.

2) Perspective

This is our capacity to practise flexible thinking, to adapt. It starts with changing our mindsets and the language we use to describe our situation. For example, Robyne said, instead of saying “we're stuck at home”, refocus that sentiment by saying, “We're at home to stay safe and contribute to the solution.” Reframing how we view situations can change our perspective of it.

3) Acceptance

This can be a tough one for us, Robyne said. It's hard to accept what we don't agree with, and a lot of us have experienced loss right now and are grieving the loss of those things. That's okay, she said. When we experience hardship, we tend to ask a lot of “why” questions — why is this happening? But, there is no answer. Acceptance begins by focusing less on the “why” and more on what we can control. This is what allows us to move forward.

4) Hope

Lean into hope and choose to be hope-filled. If we look back at our individual lives, we have a 100% survival rate, Robyne said. We have proven time and again that we can do hard things, and that hard times do pass.

In this difficult time, the best way Robyne stays hope-filled is by reminding herself that she can be a role model for her family, her loved ones, and her community. She chooses this path so she can look back at this situation and be proud of what she did and who she was.

5) Humour

Humour has a crucial role in building our capacity of resiliency, Robyne said. The act of laughing actually releases a natural tranquilizer. It's in these micro moments that we let our body know, we are going to be okay.

When we experience adversity, Robyne said, there's a natural action sequence we all experience — Decline, adapt, reclaim, and rise. For those of us who may feel we are declining in our resiliency, it's natural and with time, plus remembering and drawing on these five traits, we will rise again.

COMBATTING BARRIERS TO EVERYDAY RESILIENCY

Stress has a bad reputation with us, Robyne said. Some forms of stress though are actually good for us, but there is a fine line between good stress and bad stress. Unfortunately, we often fall on the bad side of it.

If we don't have stress and adrenaline coursing through our bodies, our performance suffers. The responsibility that stress often brings actually energizes us, and creates those moments when we experience optimal performance.

However, when we have too much stress, we find ourselves in a state of distress. This is our burnout periods, where we are exhausted, unmotivated, and find it difficult to get even the smallest of things accomplished.

Distress may be where a lot of us are living right now. Robyne shared three strategies to naturally help our bodies move from a state of distress back to productive stress, and they are pretty simple.

1. **Move.** Most of us probably already know this, but exercise is a key stress relief. Too often in states of distress though, Robyne said, we're too exhausted to even consider it an option — the act of moving from our bed to our home office to our couch is exhausting enough. That's okay. Do what movement you can, and don't add further stress by beating yourself up about it.
2. **The act of crying.** This is the full body cry, Robyne said, where your face gets all blotchy and we sob. Crying helps flush distress out of our system.
3. **Eating carbohydrates.** People may joke about gaining quarantine weight but this is actually a real thing, Robyne said. Craving and indulging in carbs is a natural stress behaviour, not a misbehaviour.

Micro-Habits to Help Us Thrive in Uncertain Times

Specific to our current situation, Robyne shared a series of micro-habits we can start implementing today to help us stay productive and healthy during this unprecedented time of stress and anxiety. Here are some of our biggest takeaways.

WORK AND PRODUCTIVITY

What's important to remember in all of this, Robyne said, is that we aren't just working from home — we are at home trying to work while also managing and surviving through a global pandemic. Be kind to yourself. Your routine and productivity will not be the same as it was two months ago.

- **Expectation Management.** Setting high expectations and not meeting them is a one-way street to distress. Be mindful of your full situation, and that as our personal and work lives collide, we have to be more flexible with our expectations of ourselves. Create a to-do list but be mindful of your to-be list as well and be patient with yourself.
- **Flexible Schedule.** We may be used to a 9-5 lifestyle, but that lifestyle could now be shared with a lot of other people. Robyne has three kids at home, all doing schoolwork virtually that starts at 9 AM. She has learned that 9 AM is not an opportune time to have a conference call as her kids often need her help. She has had to adapt her working schedule to fit the needs of the household, and being flexible about it has helped her keep peace at home.
- **Map Out Your Day.** This ties-in to managing your expectations. If you know there are times of the day that you work better, block out those times as productive periods and focus on the top priorities. Outside of those periods, maybe focus on correspondence or tasks that require less focused attention.

WELLNESS

Wellness is not all or nothing, Robyne reminded us. Doing a little bit of something is better than nothing, especially in these challenging times when our regular routines are a thing of the past.

Robyne suggested some simple wellness techniques to help get us started:

- **Try to bookend your days with positive habits.** For example, when we first wake up, make the bed and drink a big glass of water. In our final hour before bed, set a bedtime routine that can help relax and alleviate anxiety from the day.
- **Incorporate stretch breaks.** Without a daily commute or office breaks, we are not moving nearly as much as we used to. Creating set stretch breaks can help us get into the habit of moving again.

- **Connect with nature.** Do this as safely as possible in today's situation, but try getting outside once in awhile, whether it's for a quick walk or just to get a breath of fresh air.

Take it day by day, week by week though, Robyne said. If we're looking to incorporate new habits, she recommended that we set a word of the day to guide us there. So, if you know you should be drinking more water, put that word on your fridge, hang it on your mirror, and repeat it to yourself throughout the day as a constant reminder. Next week, choose a new word.

There is a general four-step process to establish new habits – make it obvious, make it attractive, make it easy, and make it satisfying.

Find Your Guidepost

Robyne ended her presentation with an uplifting message. She shared her guidepost — the mantra that she uses, especially in hard times, to keep her on her path. She reminds herself, as she did for all of us, that she can do hard things.

Robyne recommends that we all find our guidepost, something that can help us stay true to our goals but flexible in how we get to them, and ensure that we continue being the best version of ourselves, the version that we want to be.

[Download Robyne's executive summary](#) of her presentation to learn more about everyday resiliency and how we can foster it in ourselves and others.

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