

A man in a red t-shirt and dark pants stands on a jagged rock peak, his arms outstretched in a gesture of triumph or achievement. The background features a vast, snow-covered mountain range under a clear blue sky. The overall scene conveys a sense of accomplishment and resilience.

A Deeper Understanding of  
**Resilience**

*Sustaining health,  
happiness and  
improving productivity*

# Resilience with JackHabbit

## ***MORE Resilient MORE often***

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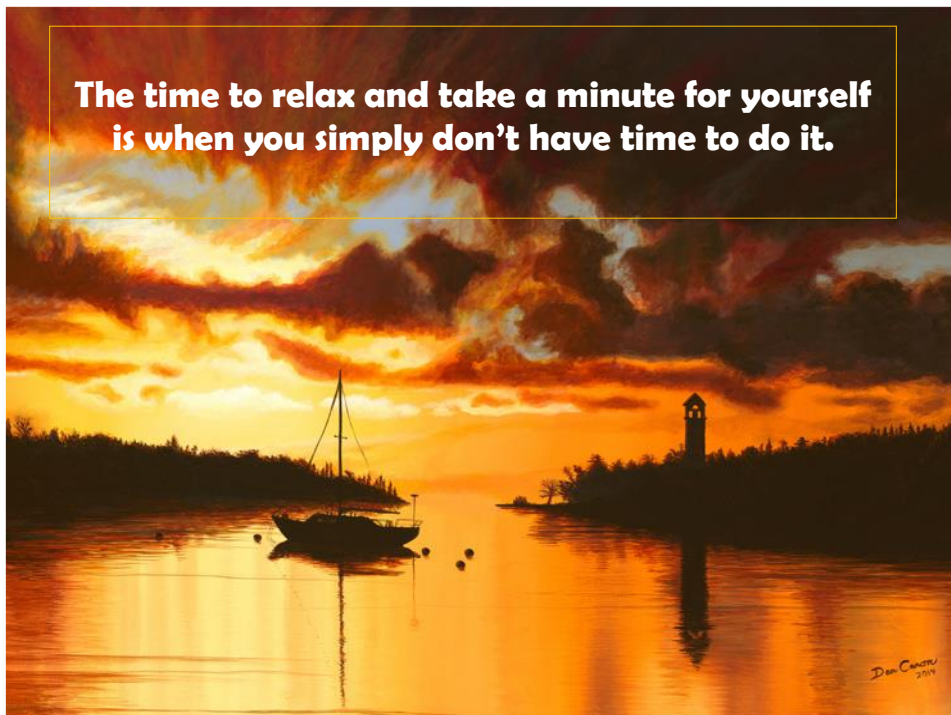
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"Resilience is one of our most important traits. It has an enormous impact on the success and failures of our patients after cardiac surgery, our residents who undergo stringent medical training and our colleagues who must treat challenging cases. Darren and the JackHabbit group have identified the importance and scope of resilience. Most of my patients would benefit from incorporating many aspects of Q-Life into their lives."

**Dr. Marc Pelletier**

Division of cardiac surgery at the Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School

"JackHabbit is on the leading edge with resilience. Resilience is where is at We can't control what happens in the lives of our employees, but we can ensure they have the skills to get through it."

**Janice MacInnis, Manager, Organizational Health**

"JackHabbits systematic and multidimensional approach to assessing, preparing, monitoring and developing resiliency in the individuals I work with, is a critical part of the journey for executive coaching or high-performance team development."

**Dr Colin Guthrie, Mental Performance Consulting Group**

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# Executive Summary

Resilience helps to boost a person’s confidence, increase their belief in themselves and unlock their full potential.

Building resilience requires an understanding of the core mental and physical factors that enable a person to flourish and achieve their life’s purpose. While some people seem to come by resilience naturally, the behaviours that contribute to it can also be learned. Resilience is not a special power held by some and can be learned by almost anyone. The process of developing resilience is dynamic and fluid. As people become more self-aware they are more likely to take a problem-solving approach to life rather than dwell on setbacks.<sup>1</sup>



*“More than fifty years of scientific research have powerfully demonstrated that resilience is the key to success at work and satisfaction in life. Where you fall on the resilience curve - your natural reserves of resilience - affects your performance in school and at work, your physical health, your mental health, and the quality of your relationships. It is the basic ingredient to happiness and success.”*

This is of utmost importance in the workplace, where setbacks are inevitable, and progress is expected despite these setbacks. Employees may not feel comfortable expressing their stress, thus internalizing it, which can have adverse health effects, impacting their well-being and slowing their productivity. Employers who are proactive in managing stress levels among their employees will reap the benefits within the workplace. Employees who take the time to learn and act on the *Foundational Skills* such as having written down their purpose, values and vision bring more energy into the jobs they do and pass on more to those they manage. Employees who learn to practice acceptance regularly see lower levels of stress and higher levels of well-being and bounce-back. We walk your team through everything they need to learn about these Foundational Skills and build habits around maintaining them.

Once your employees have learned these Foundational Skills, we teach them the *Daily Charges* that help to fill their battery before their day begins, and after it is complete. As employee’s master and incorporate more of the Daily Charges into their life, they experience that their energy is a renewable resource and they can impact its levels. These Daily Charges are skills they can plug into every day, or every few days, as necessary. Each one provides a different but important boost to their day. Employees will come to see which sockets they are already plugged in to, and which are open and ready to add to their Daily Charge.



Employees will see how a high-performance sport model can fit into their work environment. They will have time to work on each Foundational Skill and reflect on the Daily Charges that can most help them on their journey. We also provide employees with access to helpful information they can take home, and webinars for review of these topics at their convenience.

With our program your employees will become *more resilient, more often*. While we will all experience times of low resilience, it is important to know what needs to change, have the willingness to change, and lastly, the knowledge and skills to change.

# Introduction to Resilience

“They showed great resilience.”

If you pay attention you will hear resilience being used to describe a variety of individuals and situations. From documentaries to sport, politics to home life, academia to media, resilience shows up in all contexts. What does the word really mean? It can range from describing a family living in a war-torn country to those professional athletes reaching the podium. Here we explore the concept of resilience and bring together a plethora of research, concepts and ideas.

Although all of us must deal with challenges and transitions in life, some individuals are much more competent than others when the dust settles. Individuals who sustain normal development despite long-term stress, are frequently labelled *resilient*. The quality of resilience is attributed to individuals who, in the face of overwhelming adversity, can adapt and restore balance to their lives and avoid the potentially negative effects of stress.<sup>23</sup> This mimics the concept of resilience used in engineering, or as Stuart Pimm puts it in his book *The Balance of Nature*, resilience is the “measure of something’s ability to absorb changes and still exist” and the “speed with which a system returns to its original shape.”<sup>4</sup> It is only in the last 40 years that the term has been used to distinguish those individuals who grow after setbacks from those who fall into despair.

Resilience has become a daily conversation in workplaces around the globe. As the need for manual labor decreases many employers are hiring for the way a person’s mind works. Employers are looking for a creative and intelligent mind that will grow from the challenges that are inherent in their field. However, even the brightest minds will feel as though their battery is draining when placed in a consistently stressful work environment. Given that stress remains the number one cause of absence from work, and mental health conditions are the most widespread cause of long-term absence in the workplace, addressing this thoughtfully is now a critical priority for employers.<sup>5 6</sup> There is growing research to support companies addressing the level of stress in their organizations and how their employees deal with it. A recent study suggests that stressed workers are suffering in silence and employers aren't doing enough to reduce stress.<sup>7</sup> Studies also show that employees who feel that their employer demonstrates care and concern for their personal health and wellbeing are four times more likely to stay.<sup>8 9</sup> Business leaders who are good role models and understand that employee resilience is a competitive advantage will reap the rewards.

A meta-analysis of 14 studies showed that resilience training can indeed improve levels of resilience and have a positive impact on subjective well-being, self-confidence and performance in employees. Instituting a program of resilience into your place of work life is one of the first steps in addressing the feelings of being overwhelmed.<sup>10</sup>

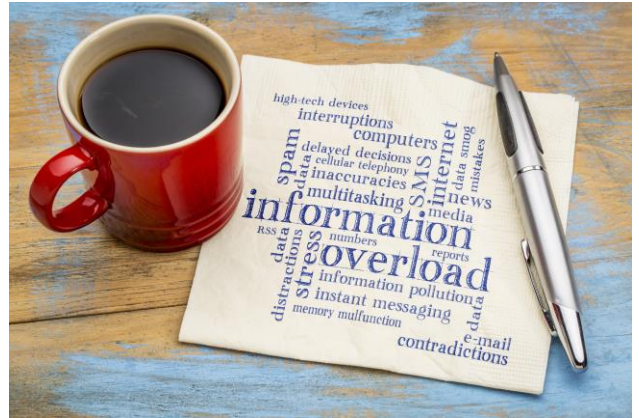
Here we provide deeper insight into resilience and how to sustain the charge needed to live a quality life at home and in the workplace.

# Resilience in the Workplace

## Stress in employees

The brain is a fascinating organ that we may never fully understand. While we do not need to become neuroscientists, having a deeper understanding of the brain and how it works can help us become more self-aware and understand stress better.

Brain scans from the Mayo Clinic serve as a good representation of the brain power a company can retrieve when they address the chronic stress of their employees. <sup>11</sup> These scans show the impact of stress on brain function. <sup>12</sup> One scan shows a brain functioning at a full charge and pulsing with activity while the other shows a brain beat up by stress with a spattering of lights. Employers and employees can get so much more out of their time and effort when not bogged down by undue stress.



The hippocampus (a seahorse shaped region deep in the brain's center) plays a role in learning, memory and in our resilience. <sup>13 14</sup> When stress is at an appropriate level our brain easily files memories from various experiences throughout



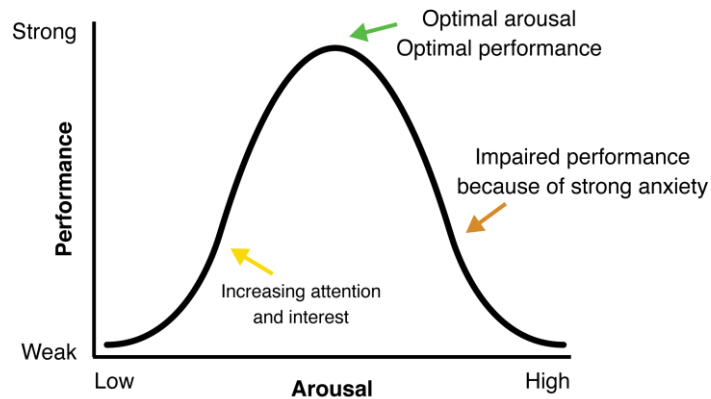
the day. The most important files are stored in a safe place for easy access and less important ones are discarded. The brain gives priority to the files with emotional notes and also puts them in an emergency folder for quick retrieval. The brain does this by communicating with stress hormones. These hormones are not all bad. Stress hormones are individually chosen, like a key fitting into a lock, to file away the right memories in the right area. The work by Dr. Benno Rozendaal shows the important role stress hormones play. <sup>15 16</sup> When



stress levels are too high and we dip into chronic stress, errors in our filing system can be made and our brain becomes far less efficient. <sup>17</sup> Long term stress is the real culprit and can cause damage and is related to a loss of resilience and impaired memory. <sup>18</sup>

## Stress and staff performance

Some stress can be good for us.<sup>19</sup> Stress has kept our early ancestors sharp so they could continue breathing and breeding. Most of us require challenging goals and at least some degree of pressure to bring out our best.<sup>20</sup> It is also normal for our stress levels to rise as we cope with situations that are meaningful to us, especially when we experience periods of uncertainty, setbacks, or long periods of pressure. A resilient person keeps their stress at a level that allows for optimal performance by using various *daily charges* (described ahead) to manage it.<sup>21</sup> Below is the classic Inverted U principle used to conceptualize this idea for both sport and business.



The Inverted U theory tells us that with too little stress we can experience decreased attention and interest. However, with too much stress we can experience physical and psychological symptoms leading to weakened performance. Recognizing the physical, mental and emotional signs of when someone is sliding into the high zone (shown above) is an important factor in building self-awareness. Dr. Judith Barwick, author of the book *Danger in the Comfort Zone*, used the Yerkes-Dodson law shown below to suggest, "Motivation is highest when the probability of success is 50 percent: We don't get involved if the task is too easy or too hard."<sup>21</sup> While most would agree that their jobs are not too easy for them, the Yerkes-Dodson law would suggest that those who feel their work is too hard may pull back and withdraw the effort required for success.

### The Yerkes - Dodson Law

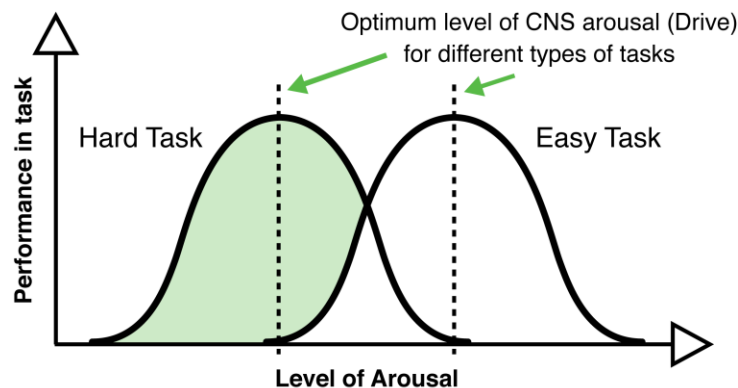


Figure - Yerkes-Dodson Law

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Luckily, damage created by exposure to high levels of stress hormones is reversible. Specific training can not only reverse damage but grow new connections within the brain that expands its capacity, making people smarter, increasing emotional intelligence and sparking creativity.<sup>22 23</sup> With a little bit of focused resilience training brain wave activity is increased and better organized, meaning higher mental activity and heightened awareness, similar to what we find in elite athletes and peak performers.<sup>24</sup>



## An Organization's Role

Lack of resilience is significantly related to hopelessness, loneliness, life-threatening behaviours and connectedness. Unfortunately, data from *Leadership IQ* tells us that 76% of employees don't have enough resilience and 78% of employers think stress is an issue among their employees.<sup>25</sup>

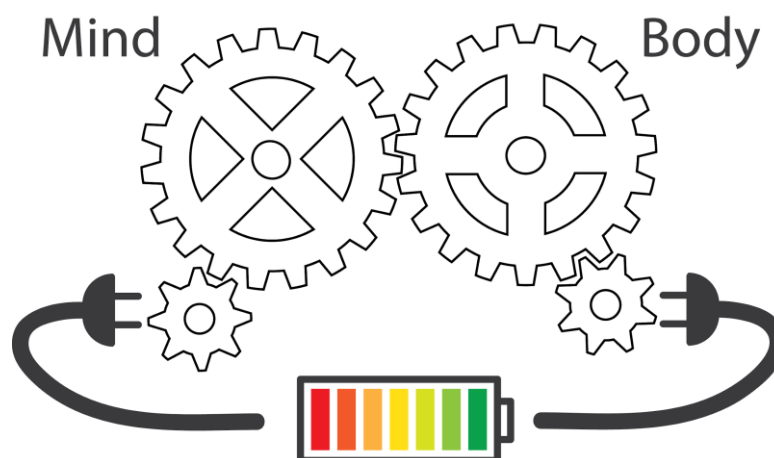
Many organizations are recognizing the need to address mental health to curb the stress felt by their employees.<sup>26</sup> For decades, there was concern over their workforce's physical health and now, the pendulum has swung to a focus on mental health. Some companies now employ full time psychologists to work with senior management teams and to develop programs for their employees.<sup>27</sup> In addition, human resource departments are being tasked with managing and mitigating the growing concern of a lack of mental health in the workplace.

This is not without cause. There continues to be a growing number of employees in the workplace at risk for mental or physical illness.<sup>28</sup> Some negative impacts of increased health issues are a loss of productivity, increase in employee benefit and health costs, and a premature loss of talent.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, the increase in unhealthy workers has resulted in an estimated 450 million additional missed work days compared to workers who are healthy, and an estimated \$153 billion in direct costs from missed work annually.<sup>30</sup> The cost of an unhealthy workforce also appears to have a larger impact on a relatively new phenomenon called *presenteeism*.<sup>31</sup> Presenteeism occurs when an employee is physically at work but is not fully productive due to physical and/or mental health conditions.<sup>32 33</sup>

Stewart and colleagues (2003) conducted a study within the United States and found the estimated cost of presenteeism was \$225.8 billion annually.<sup>34</sup> The financial burden on organizations due to growing health costs continues to be a major concern.<sup>35</sup> Chrysalis Performance Inc. research shows that stress in a business contributes to at least 60% of workplace accidents.<sup>36</sup> In the United States, the findings of a 2004 study conducted by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health found that the number of lost work days for workers challenged by anxiety, stress and neurotic disorders is four times greater (25 days) than the number of workdays lost for all other non-fatal injuries or illnesses (an average of six days).<sup>37</sup> The United Kingdom Mental Health Foundation asserts that, due to rising absenteeism and impaired productivity, mental health issues now cost British employers more than £26 billion per year.<sup>38</sup>

Our brain drives our body and our body drives our brain. It is a two-way communication system. The mental health experts say, "change your brain and change your life", while the physical health experts say "change your body and change your life". It is starting to feel like a power struggle. Physiologically, human beings have homeostatic mechanisms to foster resilience in the event of adversity such as stress.<sup>39</sup> Psychologically, human beings have the capacity to move on in a positive way from negative or stressful experiences.<sup>40</sup> So what approach is best for your people?

It is time for a paradigm shift. The solution is in the middle, at the crossroads of mental and physical health. Having and using skills in both domains can keep your personal battery strong in multiple ways. Psychologists and physiologists working together for a common outcome can lead to a healthier workforce and in the end, a healthier community.



## Foundational Skills:

Knowing your purpose, living out of your values, having a vision and being more accepting provides the *foundation* of your journey to increased resilience. As mentioned, the goal is to be *more resilient, more often*, and your employees will achieve this goal by taking time to reflect on these topics. When there is a clear, distant and important end goal, employees realize that the bumps in the road are simply a part of the journey. They are more likely to learn from their mistakes and generate creative solutions for how to avoid those same mistakes in the future. In short, they become better problem solvers when the problem to solve is important to them. When goals are not tied to an important, bigger picture, there is often confusion as to why employees should push themselves for merely the achievement of the goal. This often results in less effort overall, and less success. Employees taking the time to consider what is most important and write it down, gives them an important *why*. It renews their energy and builds their resilience for the journey ahead.



Purpose • Values • Vision • Acceptance

## Purpose

*“If you have felt hopeless, hold on! Wonderful changes are going to happen in your life as you begin to live it on purpose.”*

- Rick Warren <sup>41</sup>

### What?

Having structure, commitment and meaning in life will help make sure your employee's more resilient. This begins with having a clear purpose. Purpose is recognition of what is meaningful and what your employees are committed to improving in the world.

### Why?

Data from around the world supports that having a strong connection to one's sense of purpose is related to longevity, even beyond 100 years of age. <sup>42 43</sup> This may be linked to being able to better handle the ups and downs of life, <sup>44 45 46 47</sup> <sup>48</sup> enjoying better cardiovascular health, less worry, or experiencing greater happiness over time. <sup>49</sup>

### How?

Just as you have likely done for your business, unit, or maybe even for a project, you need to first give your people time to write a purpose statement without making corrections. <sup>50</sup> Don't over-analyze it. Let the ideas flow. Get it all on down and edit it later. As adjustments are made, ensure action statements are chosen as much as possible. When your people finally feel as though what is written is representative of what is desired, sign it and post it. Put it on the walls of the office, post sticky notes around in visible places to ensure that purpose is top of mind. Living a purpose driven life and business contributes greatly to resilience. Being able to make sense out of what is happening and to find meaning in it, is critical in managing the feelings that are bound to come up in difficult times. <sup>49 51</sup>

## Values

### What?

Once there is a sense of purpose, it is time to focus on values: those things that are most important in life. Everyone has differing values but knowing what a person values in life is an important part of sustaining resilience, as it helps with decision making in every area. Clarifying the most important values and ranking them will often feel like fog clearing, allowing the making of decisions with greater clarity.

### Why?

Knowing values will help in current and future relationships. Have you ever noticed you click with some people and yet struggle with others? This is likely because you sense that your values are aligned, or not, through your experiences with this person. Most relationships work best when those involved share a common purpose and values. Moving away from those who do not value the same things in life and being involved with people who do will increase resilience. Being clear on values also opens the door to your employees being more self-aware, able to understand others deeper and have compassion for others.

When values are not lived, it can be felt. This may not be recognized right away, but feelings of anxiety, depression or “just not feeling right” creep in. Does this mean that values need to be lived every moment of every day? No. We all have moments where we do things outside our values. These situations should be reflected on and used as lessons for the future.

### How?



Reflective journaling can increase employees' self-awareness and help shine a light on those things that are most important to them. Reflection and a plan for action allow them to move forward. Most employees do not feel that they have the time to sit down and reflect, let alone write in a journal. Our course sets aside the time for employees. We create the environment for them to pause and think more clearly about what is key in their lives. We promote that life is about learning and growing,<sup>52</sup> and those who approach life with a mindset focused on growth and learning are better able to weather transitional and stressful

times better<sup>53</sup>. They become *more resilient, more often*.

## Vision

### What?

A personal vision is a picture of where someone wants their life to be. It comes together much more easily once a purpose and values have been defined. A vision is a long-term picture of ideals coming to life. A vision should address total health. Mental, physical and life health. It can include specific things like walking every day or running a marathon, and more general statements such as entering or maintaining a loving relationship, living tobacco free, or handling stress well. A vision should include anything that will support the achievement of your purpose.

### Why?

It is helpful in developing a plan with smaller and shorter-term goals, which help us stay motivated on the path to total health.<sup>54</sup> Goals rarely fail because of an initial lack of commitment or enthusiasm. If they fail, it is often because there is no compelling purpose, values or personal vision beyond the initial goal, and no realistic plan set out to achieve it. With a personal vision, an outcome can be seen that is desired, and then make it happen through the goals set. A goal that is not tied to a vision will often lose importance at the first sight of an obstacle. A personal vision is the driver of intentional change in one's behaviour, emotions, perceptions, and attitudes.

Since a personal vision is an image of what kind of person someone wishes to be and what they hope to accomplish in life, it can have the opposite effects of fear or doubt. A clear vision serves two important purposes: First, it provides further clarity beyond simply knowing a purpose and values. This clarity allows not just achieving a lot, but achieving the most important things in life. Second, a clear vision is motivating in times of challenge, because the challenge and stress will have meaning and importance.

### How?

When establishing a vision or developing a personal vision statement, there are certain elements that should be included. A personal vision should paint a picture of what someone looks like and feels like in the future, how time is spent and who it is spent with. Setting the bar high and being bold is key. They should feel inspired and motivated to act after reading the vision. Letting supportive others know about a personal vision can help and of course, have fun with it.

55 56 57

**Purpose:** a statement of why you exist or your reason for being. It should energize you to focus on something greater than yourself.

**Values:** those things you consider to be most important in life. For example, some will value family, security and growth, while others might value passion, novelty and challenge.

**Vision:** a statement or collection of statements of what you would most like to become. It should be all-encompassing, enduring and like an ultimate stretch goal. Your vision is attained piece by piece over time, but will ultimately always reside in the future.



## Acceptance

### What?

Another way to build or maintain resilience is through acceptance. After defining a purpose, values and vision, there may come a moment where the feeling of being very far from each of these occurs based on your current circumstances. Acceptance involves taking a non-judgmental view of life.<sup>58</sup> Being accepting of mental and physical circumstances that differ from ideal may occur. This is an essential part of moving forward. Guilt over past events, anger, and physical pain can all wreak havoc on our overall health and resilience, and acceptance can help minimize their effects in our lives.

### Why?

Addressing how we interact with our thoughts can help build our resilience and lead to a more satisfying and meaningful life. Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT) is an intervention used in counseling, developed by Dr. Stephen Hayes and others.<sup>59</sup> The basis of this therapy is letting go of what is out of a person's control and committing to action that improves and enriches one's life.<sup>60</sup> What can be noticed when undertaking this unique therapy and the associated skill development, is that there are many parallels to what is expressed in this paper, including a focus on self-compassion, purpose and value-based living, mindfulness and more.<sup>59</sup>

### How?

We interact with our thoughts in almost every waking minute, and while it is tempting to feel that we *are* our thoughts, we need to recognize we are *not*. Our ability to realize our thoughts are just that: *thoughts*, demonstrates our separateness from them. When you start to realize this and use this as a skill it can be a profound moment. Don't own your thoughts or let them own you.

# Daily Charges



Once your employees have spent time defining their purpose, values and writing out their personal vision, they are set to begin taking the next steps. Any long journey requires direction and energy for completion. As mentioned, we liken the Foundational Skills to be providing the direction that is taken, and the Daily Charges as those things required to provide the energy for the journey ahead. Daily Charges consist of habits that will charge your employees' personal batteries before they leave home for the day and recharge them as they prepare for the next day. Each Daily Charge adds differing amounts to their battery, so while they don't need to be all incorporating their life at all times, the more they can, the more charged up they will be and feel.

## *Reflection Activity:*

*Think of a day that went exceptionally well for you, and as you read through the following sections, reflect on which of these charges were present. You will likely find that the more there were, the better the day was.*



## Physical Activity

### What, Why?

#### 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week **OR** 25-30 minutes per day

- Workers who take time out to be physically active on a regular basis are more productive and have more energy than their less active coworkers. Getting up and active when you feel like crashing in the middle of the day can make the second half of work more exciting and creative. <sup>61</sup>
- Research has shown a large decrease in physical activity rates across North America. <sup>62</sup> As highlighted earlier in the paper these rates coincided with large increases in chronic diseases.
- Numerous studies have shown that accumulating 150 minutes weekly impacts over 25 chronic conditions of health. <sup>63</sup>
- Some of the largest positive impacts have been found to decrease risk of diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disease, metabolic syndrome, colon and breast cancer, stroke, high blood pressure, osteoporosis and depression. <sup>64 65</sup>
- Physical activity increases concentrations of norepinephrine, a chemical that can help with the brain's response to stress. Physical activity also reduces levels of the body's stress hormones, such as cortisol. <sup>66</sup>
- A study of more than 2,600 men and women of varying age found that 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity a week, provided a 65 percent improvement in sleep quality. <sup>67</sup>
- Exercise can help prevent excess weight gain or help maintain weight loss. Some research shows that people who are physically active are also more likely to stay on a diet plan. <sup>68</sup>
- If you have arthritis, doing 130 to 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity, low-impact aerobic activity can not only improve your ability to manage pain but help with day activities.
- Physical activity can also alleviate symptoms of depression. <sup>69</sup> For this reason, doctors recommend that people suffering from depression or anxiety (or just feeling down) spend plenty of time moving. Physical activity stimulates the production of endorphins, which are chemicals in the brain that act as the body's natural painkillers and mood elevators. <sup>70</sup>

### How?

We help your employees with the steps necessary to add or increase the amount of regular physical activity in their lives.

- Get clearance. <http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/physical-activity-readiness-questionnaire.pdf>
- Seek professional advice. <http://www.csep.ca/home>
- Start small.
- Start slow.
- Do an activity inventory or jog your memory to a time you were active. What were you doing? Hiking, skating, running, walking, gardening, playing basketball or any of the other ways that one can move their body. Reflect on those activities that made (or make) you excited or when you think about them. These are the best activities to start with.
- Accumulate time spent moving throughout the week.
- Stay focused on what you value and the vision you wrote out.
- Do not get down on yourself if you miss or have a more sedentary day. We all do.



## Nutrition

### What, Why?

6 - 8 servings of fruits/vegetables AND 9 - 13 cups of clean water per day

#### *Nutrition*

- Today's culture is bombarded with processed and fast food. Research shows only 41% of Canadians ate 5 or more vegetables per day. <sup>71</sup> As a result, rates of diabetes, obesity and heart disease are higher now than ever before.
- Eating well can provide a boost one's energy and immune system. Fruits and vegetables contain high levels of vitamins and minerals all vital to maintaining health, and thus are consumption bring health benefits. <sup>72</sup>
- We chose this level to be green because research has shown that adults who eat 6-8 fruits and vegetables per day can decrease risk of cancer, CVD, diabetes, obesity, stroke, mood disorders. <sup>73</sup>

#### *Hydration*

- Hydration can play an integral role on mood and cognitive functions such as concentration, alertness and short term memory loss (Bar-Or et al., 1980). Recent studies have shown that individuals consuming water throughout the day have great visual attention and memory performance. <sup>74</sup>
- The minimum standard selected was based on the numerous studies that highlight consuming 9 cups (2.2 liters) for women and 13 cups (3 liters) for men as the optimal level needed to receive the greatest amount of health benefits. <sup>75</sup>

### How?

We help your employees with the steps necessary to shift the ways in which they approach nutrition and hydration.

- Seek professional advice. <https://www.dietitians.ca/>
- Start small.
- Start slow.
- Choose a wide variety of fruits and vegetables.
- Eat one fruit and vegetable with each meal. Make it your snack time.
- Keep a water bottle on your desk and/or in your car.
- Stay focused on what you value and the vision you wrote out.
- Do not get down on yourself if you "stray" from your ideal. We all do.

## Special Focus: The Gut

Taking a probiotic seems to have become a popular choice among health enthusiasts. Probiotics are live bacteria and yeasts that can help to improve the functioning of a person's digestive system. Bacteria are usually seen as a cause for disease and illness, but many are in fact helpful and necessary for our health.

There are many benefits to taking a probiotic. Research in mice has shown that positive changes in gut bacteria appears to decrease anxiety, and lower the levels of cortisol, a stress hormone. These findings have been replicated in humans as well. A study published in England recently found that taking a supplement with the "good" bacteria may alter the way people process emotional information and have an anti-anxiety effect.<sup>76 77</sup> A 2011 study from France also found that people who took probiotics for 30 days had reduced levels of psychological stress.<sup>78</sup> The exact reason why this is occurring is not yet known. Some suspect the nerves relaying messages between the gut and brain may be the reason.<sup>79</sup> While researchers cannot yet state the exact cause, there are many working on this issue in the research community.<sup>80</sup> We help your employees learn about how they can incorporate probiotic foods and supplements into their diet as another outlet they can plug in to as they look to charge their battery.





*“Each night I go to sleep I die, each morning I wake up I am reborn.”*

- Gandhi

### What, why?

#### Adults (18+): 7 - 10 hours of sleep per night

- Sleep is thought to be closely related to the regulation of physical and emotional wellbeing <sup>81</sup>. Unfortunately, in today’s age chronic sleep deprivation is a very common behaviour. Resulting in large increases in mood disorders, bodily discomfort, increase in inflammatory markers, and decreases in sociability and immune function. <sup>82 83 84</sup>.
- As a result, sleep disorders are common and treatable, but often remain undiagnosed and untreated. The most common sleep disorders are insomnia, obstructive sleep apnea, movement disorders in sleep and parasomnias. These disorders have also shown to have a direct effect on metabolic processes including energy balance, appetite and weight control (Haack et al., 2005; Dinges, 1997).
- Individuals that regularly get 7 - 8 hours of sleep per night have a decreased risk of diabetes, obesity, depression, anxiety, burnout, and mood disorders. <sup>85</sup> These individuals also experience increases in energy levels, attention span, focus, and mood state.
- People who get more than 6 hours of sleep on a weekday are more likely to be optimistic and/or satisfied with life, and those sleeping 7 - 8 hours have the highest rating of optimism and life satisfaction (National Sleep Foundation, 2002).
- Research has highlighted that 7 - 8 hours appears to be the optimal range for maximizing the benefits listed above, and limiting or negating the negative impacts (Samuels & Alexander, 2013; Haack et al., 2005; Dinges, 1997).
- Lack of sleep can also be a safety concern at work and in life. <sup>86</sup> A study found that one sleepless night contributed to a 20-32% increase in the number of errors made by surgeons, in addition, 60% of adult drivers say they have driven a vehicle while feeling drowsy in the past year, and more than one-third have fallen asleep at the wheel. <sup>87</sup>
- A recent study showed that people who got seven hours of sleep a night or less were almost three times as likely to get sick as people who get at least eight hours of sleep a night. <sup>88</sup>
- Researchers at Harvard University found that people seem to strengthen the emotional components of a memory during sleep, which may help spur the creative process. <sup>89</sup>
- In a 2010 study of women ages 50 to 79, more deaths occurred in women who got less than five hours of sleep compared to women who got more than six and a half hours of sleep per night. <sup>90</sup>
- A 2010 study found that C-reactive protein, which is associated with heart attack risk, was higher in people who got six or fewer hours of sleep a night. <sup>89</sup>

## How?

We help your employees with the steps necessary to build a better sleep routine.

- One - two hours of downtime before bed
- Low light exposure
- Relaxing activities
- Your bedroom should be a quiet zone like that area provided in most airplane lounges now
- Pitch dark! Light disturbs sleep quality
- Get a comfortable temperature
- Get a comfortable humidity
- Make sure your bed is comfortable
- Don't scrimp on the pillows
- Let the pet sleep on the floor or in her bed



## Mindfulness

### What, Why?

#### Adults (18+): 8-12 minutes a day

- Mindfulness can be defined as attention to and awareness of the present moment which does not seek to react to or classify experience.<sup>91</sup>
- Chambers et al. (2008) asked 20 novice meditators to participate in a 10-day intensive mindfulness meditation retreat. After the retreat, the meditation group had significantly higher self-reported mindfulness and a decreased negative affect compared with a control group.<sup>92</sup>
- In a 2015 Central Michigan University study, participants listened to either a mindfulness or a control audio. In this study, mindfulness meditation caused an increase in state mindfulness and a decrease in implicit race and age bias.<sup>93</sup>
- In 2010, Hoffman et al. conducted a meta-analysis of 39 studies that explored the use of mindfulness-based stress reduction and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. The researchers concluded that mindfulness-based therapy may be useful in altering affective and cognitive processes that underlie multiple clinical issues.<sup>94</sup>
- Mindfulness meditation practice was correlated directly with cognitive flexibility and attentional functioning.<sup>95</sup>
- In a study of people who had anywhere from one month to 29 years of mindfulness meditation practice, researchers found that mindfulness meditation practice helped people disengage from emotionally upsetting pictures and enabled them to focus better on a cognitive task as compared with people who saw the pictures but did not meditate.<sup>96</sup>
- Empirical evidence suggests that mindfulness protects against the emotionally stressful effects of relationship conflict<sup>97</sup>, is positively associated with the ability to express oneself in various social situations (Dekeyser et al., 2008) and predicts relationship satisfaction.<sup>98</sup>
- Nursing students reported better quality of life and a significant decrease in negative psychological symptoms following exposure to mindfulness-based stress reduction training.<sup>99</sup>

### How?

We help your employees with the steps necessary to learn and utilize mindfulness techniques in their day.

- As you begin to practise mindfulness, one thing you will notice immediately is that your mind will start to wonder. You may notice you are thinking of what you need to do in the evening, what you need to do next week or start to judge how you are doing with the practice itself. All of these are okay.
- Mindfulness is not meant to be a distraction technique. Using the techniques in this way is simply another avoidance tactic that leads right back to what you are trying to avoid. Don't try to escape your anxiety, or stress, or depression through mindfulness. If negative feelings come up, just notice them and let them move on as you
- The goal of mindfulness is to start simply with one to two events a day.
- Each event will take about 60 to 90 seconds depending on your pace and ability to relax and be in the moment.
- There is nothing for you to do but to follow a simple three step discipline. Like yoga and meditation, the master of all is practice.
- Each mindful event is but one event to help you move your mind to a calm place.



## Gratitude

### What, Why?

#### Adults (18+): 3 reflections per week

- Gratitude may be defined as “a sense of thankfulness and joy in response to receiving a gift, whether the gift be a tangible benefit from a specific other or a moment of peaceful bliss evoked by natural beauty.”<sup>100</sup>
- Grateful people are more likely to behave in a prosocial manner, even when others behave less kind, according to a 2012 study by the University of Kentucky.<sup>101</sup>
- Individuals who habitually acknowledge and express gratitude derive health benefits, sleep benefits and relationship benefits.<sup>102</sup>
- A 2014 study published in Emotion found that thanking a new acquaintance makes them more likely to seek an ongoing relationship.<sup>103</sup>
- A onetime act of thoughtful gratitude produced an immediate 10% increase in happiness and 35% reduction in depressive symptoms, but the effects disappeared within six months and three months, respectively. On the other hand, instructing participants to write down three things that went well and their causes every night for one week had a long-lasting impact.<sup>104</sup>
- People who maintained a gratitude journal reported being more content and optimistic in their life.<sup>105</sup>

### How?

We help your employees with the steps necessary to focus on those things and people they are most grateful for.

Emmons, a professor at the University of California suggests starting a gratitude journal, and shares these research-based tips for reaping the greatest psychological rewards from it:<sup>106 107</sup>

**Live it.** *You need to do more than just write, you need to live it. Going through the motions will not cut it. You need to want to be happier and be ready to change.*

**Get to the soul.** *Focus on aspects with deep meaning for you. Avoid just making a long list that you feel “looks good”.*

**People.** *Write about people you are grateful for in your life.*

**With or without you.** *Instead of just adding up what is good, put some time into what your life would be like without certain blessings.*

**Surprise.** *Emphasize the events that are a surprise, as they can really grow feelings of gratitude.*

**Keep it short.** *No need to write a novel. Once a week can maximize the benefits.*



## Journaling

### What, Why?

Adults (18+): 20 minutes 3-7 times a week

- Journaling creates a safe space for your thought. Your journal can be a place to decompress with no judgement. It can be like lying on the couch of a psychologist's office telling a non-judgmental person all your thoughts and feelings.
- Journaling keeps us in the moment. For some journaling, like mindfulness, puts us in the present. Journaling be an act of mindfulness. Spending more time in the present negates the feelings of anxiety and depression.
- Journaling will help provide a solid footing and allow you to work through problems that arise. It allows a look back to show your tenacity in handling many changes and difficulties in life. <sup>108</sup>
- A study of writing's physical effects appeared in the Journal of the American Medical Association (Vol. 281, No. 14). In the study, 107 asthma and rheumatoid arthritis patients wrote for 20 minutes on each of three consecutive days. those who wrote about stress improved more, and deteriorated less, than controls for both diseases.
- Health outcomes from journaling; Fewer stress-related visits to the doctor, Improved immune system functioning, reduced blood pressure, improved lung function, improved liver function, fewer days in hospital, improved mood. Social and behavioural outcomes; reduced absenteeism from work, quicker re-employment after job loss, improved working memory, improved sporting performance, higher students' grade point average. Altered social and linguistic behaviour. <sup>109</sup>
- A meta-analysis of 13 studies using expressive writing suggests that, for physically and psychologically healthy individuals, the effects produced by expressive writing are substantial and similar in magnitude to the effects of other psychological interventions, many of which are more involved, time-consuming and expensive. <sup>110</sup>

### How?

We help your employees with the tools and steps necessary to begin a regular journaling habit.

- Begin anywhere
- Forget spelling and punctuation.
- Write quickly
- Pick a theme for the day, week or month
- The most important rule of all is that there are no rules.
- Write by hand
- Always play soft music while writing
- Nominate a particular time of day
- Write about 'deepest thoughts and feelings'
- Do not to write at bedtime
- Wait at least one or two months after a traumatic event before trying this technique.





## Self-Compassion

### What, Why?

Adults (18+): 20 minutes 3-7 times a week

- Self-compassion is a skill that can be learned by anyone and is an adaptive way of relating to ourselves when considering when we start to focus on all the parts that are wrong with us. <sup>111</sup>
- Practicing self-compassion involves generating feelings of kindness and care toward ourselves and learning to be present during our struggles.
- Unlike self-esteem, the good feelings of self-compassion do not depend on being special and better than other people; instead, they come from caring about ourselves.
- Research suggests that self-compassion is strongly related to psychological well-being, including increased happiness, optimism, and connectedness, as well as decreased anxiety, depression, neurotic perfectionism, and rumination.<sup>111</sup>
- It has been proposed that there are three major components of self-compassion.<sup>112</sup> The first is self-kindness, which refers to the ability to treat oneself with care and understanding rather than harsh self-judgment. The second involves recognizing that mistakes are part of being human. The third component of self-compassion is mindfulness, which involves focusing on the present-moment rather than listening to the negative stories we tell ourselves about the past or future.
- A new study shows that training adults in something called a “loving-kindness” makes them significantly more caring toward others. <sup>113</sup> The authors suggest that it is not only possible to increase compassion and caring, but that we can do so with little training. The results showed that compassion training seemed to strengthen the brain’s ability to regulate emotions. This led to subjects being able to sense suffering without feeling overwhelmed by it.
- Self-compassion also offered stronger protection against social comparison, public self-consciousness, self-rumination, anger, and close-mindedness. <sup>114</sup>

### How?

We help your employees with the knowledge and reflection necessary to increase their self-compassion.

- Seek professional help
- Treat yourself as you would a small child
- Practice forgiveness: give yourself permission to make mistakes
- Practice a growth mindset: see setbacks as an opportunity to learn
- Pay particular attention to the words you use to speak to yourself. Would you say the same statements to someone you care about?
- Let go of external validation
- Memorize a set of compassionate phrases



## Self-Awareness

### What, Why?

#### Adults (18+): Daily

- Self-awareness is becoming aware of your emotions and what effect they have on you and the people around you.
- Self-awareness can be broadly defined as the extent to which people are consciously aware of their internal states and their interactions or relationships with others. <sup>115</sup>
- Struggling companies' employees were 79 percent more likely to have low overall self-awareness than those at firms with high rates of return. Stock performance was tracked over thirty months, from July 2010 through January 2013. During that period the companies with the greater percentage of self-aware employees consistently outperformed those with a lower percentage. <sup>116</sup>
- Developing self-awareness can contribute to your resilience. Through self-awareness, you can step back and recognize your emotional state. This can help develop clarity, realizing that what you are feeling are temporary and not letting this emotion guide how you react.

### How?

We help your employees with the steps necessary to become more self-aware. Self-awareness can be developed <sup>117</sup> by paying attention to:

- **Your senses.** For example, are your fists or jaw clenched? You might be feeling angry.
- **Your thoughts and beliefs.** What are the thoughts you have when you are angry? Learning and knowing what thoughts you often have in each emotional state can be an indicator to yourself of your feelings and how your thoughts are influencing your emotions.
- **Your actions.** What physical behaviour indicates that you are angry? Learn to know the common actions of each of your emotions to become more self-aware.
- **Your triggers.** Is there something that regularly makes you angry? Recognizing and generating a plan to avoid that situation (if possible) or combat negative emotions may be helpful.
- **Your motives.** Set standards for yourself in different social situations. For example, think of how you should act when you are angry at your boss. This can help you become self-aware and promote the kind of behaviours you want to have.



## Problem Solving

*“It’s not that I’m so smart, it’s just that I stay with problems longer”*

- *Albert Einstein*

### What, Why?

#### Adults (18+): Daily

- A problem (or problematic situation) is defined as any life situation or task (present or anticipated) that demands a response for adaptive functioning, but no effective response is immediately apparent or available to the person or people confronted with the situation because of the presence of one or more obstacles. <sup>118</sup>
- The most effective problem uses all three types of their intelligence powers to produce solutions: analytical, creative and practical. When a mistake happens, it should be looked upon as another problem to be solved and something to be learnt from, rather than feeling hopeless. <sup>119</sup>
- Erus and Cancel found that the problem-solving skills in marriage predicts marital satisfaction and self-efficacy beliefs. <sup>120</sup>

### How?

We help your employees with the insight necessary to change the way they frame and see their problems. They will learn about a mindset that they can acquire and improve with practice.

We break problem solving down into five steps:

- Identify the problem.
- Breaking the problem down into smaller, more manageable parts.
- Generating possible solutions which will involve thinking comprehensively through all the possible solutions and analyzing each one in turn (after generating a list of possible solutions).
- Evaluating the options to decide which of the approaches will be applied to the problem.
- Monitoring the result to ensure it has solved your problem. If not, start the process over.



## Optimism

### What, Why?

#### Adults (18+): Daily

- Practicing optimism doesn't mean avoiding problems or negative information. In fact, optimists are <sup>121</sup> more, not less, vigilant about risks and threats. Perhaps that is because they can deal with them and don't have to deny them. <sup>122</sup>
- Recent studies have found an inverse correlation between optimism and depressive symptoms. <sup>123</sup>
- Many studies have confirmed that optimists tend to use coping strategies that focalize on the problem more frequently compared to pessimists. When these strategies cannot be enacted, optimists resort to adaptive strategies that focalize on the emotions, for example, acceptance, humor and positive re-assessment of the situation <sup>124</sup>
- Schou et al. found that optimistic cancer patient women had excellent coping strategies characterized by acceptance of the situation, emphasis of the positive aspects and attempts to alleviate their condition with a sense of humor. In contrast, the pessimistic women reacted with loss of hope which significantly worsened their quality of life. <sup>125</sup>

### How?

We help your employees with the ability to frame life's events in a more positive way, thus enhancing their sense of optimism,

- Whenever a negative or neutral thought comes to mind, give it a positive spin or replace it with a more positive idea
- Try guiding yourself through successful completion of a past, present, or future task.
- Remind yourself of the times you have been successful or when good things did happen to you
- Give yourself permission to smile or laugh, especially during difficult times.
- Make sure those in your life are positive, supportive people you can depend on to give helpful advice and feedback
- Slow down and think options through
- Set realistic goals

# Make the Most of Your Daily Charges

Have you ever felt you are not getting anything done? Your employees may be feeling the same way, but not feel comfortable sharing this in the workplace. They may not have the confidence or skill set necessary to pause and set aside distracting things like unimportant phone calls and emails. While some of these are crucial to the work they do, knowing when to stop checking email and when to focus on an important project are key for increasing productivity and confidence in the workplace.

Similarly, your employees may feel their lives outside the workplace are sporadic and unpredictable, even if their work lives follow routine. Personal structure is an important attribute for employees to build and sustain their resilience.<sup>126</sup> Helping employees build effective and flexible routines into their lives ensure that the Daily Charges are accessible, since a battery being used will eventually drain itself.

One resource that may be insightful and helpful is Gary Keller's book *The One Thing*.<sup>126</sup> He encourages moving from a "to do" list to a success list. Focusing a majority of your time on that one thing that will bring you the most success that day (or afternoon, or hour).

Having your employees schedule and spend their time on activities or goals that support their values and written vision is important. If they do not plan their day in a way that moves them closer to the vision they set out for themselves, they can begin to question what they are doing and lose motivation. Their day should be structured to include one or more things that allow them to move closer to their ideal.

Revisiting their values and written vision, and then look at their schedule helps move them towards a flourishing life and you a flourishing company. Employees should also leave some free time for unexpected dilemmas. These happen, and they are to be expected. In the end, we promote working with focus and structure, while allowing for flexibility.

## Gathering Guidance and Support from Others



Many have watched awards shows and/or read authors' dedications at the beginning of their books. These people consistently acknowledge two groups of people: 1) their family and friends (for obvious reasons), and 2) the people who helped them and guided them along the way to their successes (their mentors).

Having a mentor is unequivocally beneficial across all age groups and settings, from elementary school children to CEO's. Most of the world's most successful people had mentors who helped them along the way. Oprah Winfrey, for example, once said that "A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself."

So, what is mentoring, and what's the point of having a mentor?

Mentoring is a process by which someone who is more knowledgeable or experienced provides guidance and support for someone who has limited experience or skills to help them grow and advance. Research suggests that individuals who are mentored are more satisfied with their careers, more likely to expect career success, and more satisfied with their jobs. In the workplace, a mentor could be a more-experienced peer/colleague, or a supervisor. Supervisory mentoring relationships are proven to be more effective in building resilience in the mentee than not having one.<sup>127</sup>

In organizations, mentors perform three main functions, which lead to benefits such as enhanced organizational citizenship behaviors, compensation, commitment, and job satisfaction (Allen et al., 2004):

1. Career - enhance mentee sense of competence, identity, and effectiveness in a professional role
2. Psychosocial - counseling the mentee about job anxieties and providing social support
3. Role-modeling - mentors' attitudes, values and behaviors are a template for the mentee

All three of these components positively influence the wellbeing of mentees and contribute to the development of resilience. Thus, mentoring can be thought of as a "resource reservoir", where mentors provide resources to their mentees. Based on conservation of resources (COR) theory,<sup>128</sup> individuals aim to conserve, acquire and maintain resources to achieve their goals. Stress occurs when individuals lose resources, or their resources (real or perceived) are threatened, so how can we avoid the actual or perceived depletion of our resources and accumulate more for the future? Having a supportive mentor is one of the ways mentees can gain resources that will help them thrive in stressful environments and stressful time periods because of the career, psychosocial, and role-modeling functions that mentors provide. Individuals who have mentors are more likely to "bounce back" in the face of adversity; they are significantly more resilient than their colleagues who do not have a mentor. We help your staff identify who they might work with as a mentor or mentee.

## Social Support Network

As we conclude, we focus on how others can help your employees live a purposeful life and build their resilience. Social networks are support that is available to an individual through social relationships with other individuals, groups, and the larger community. Having adequate social support is an essential aspect to build and maintain resilience.

It has been shown that lower levels of social support are correlated with higher rates of morbidity and mortality in individuals with medical illness.<sup>129</sup> In addition, it has been reported that low social support can be associated with onset and relapse of depression.

On the other hand, greater levels of social support have been shown to be a key factor in increasing the likelihood of recovery and minimizing functional impairment in people with depression. Furthermore, the connection between high level of social support and good mental and physical health has been observed in university students, workers, new mothers, widows, and parents of children with serious medical illnesses. In conclusion, having adequate social support is a key factor in health and well-being.<sup>130 131</sup>

We help your employees recognize current sources of social support and give them the tools to reach out to others for help in times of need.



## Putting it all together

As we have discussed, being *more resilient*, *more often* boosts a person's confidence, increases their belief in themselves and unlocks their full potential.



We help others understand and utilize the mental and physical skills that allow them to flourish and build their resilience. While many look around and see that resilience seems to come naturally to some, we stress that resilience is available to all through intentional learning and deliberate practice. The journey we take employees on during our course will show them that building and maintaining their resilience will be fluid and dynamic. Challenges will grow and shrink, and they can learn how to better manage these challenges at home and in the workplace.

Our *Foundational Skills* sessions, handouts and webinars give employees time to reflect on what is most important to them and their work. We help them to fully form the ideas that will complete their purpose and personal vision and get it all on paper. This tends to create a sense of excitement and accountability to pursuing what they want, which spills over into their place of work. Employees in turn bring more energy into the jobs they do and pass this energy on to those they manage. In addition, employees who practice acceptance experience lower levels of stress and higher levels of well-being and bounce-back. Your team will learn everything they need to know to build their Foundation.

The next steps for employees focus on the *Daily Charges* that help fill their battery before the day begins, and after it is complete. As more of the Daily Charges are incorporated into their lives, they will understand on a new level that their energy is renewable, and they can impact it. Naturally, the Daily Charges will be incorporated in varying levels every day. We simply highlight that these are like open sockets that your employees can plug into every day, or every few days, as necessary. Each one provides a different but important boost to their day.

Lastly, we will show employees how routine and support from others will be key in the maintenance of these newly acquired skills and habits. Beyond the completion of our program, your employees will have access to the course handouts and webinars for easy and convenient review.

Participation in this course provides them the time to work on each Foundational Skill and reflect on the Daily Charges that can most help them on their personal journey.

We look forward to working with you and your team.

- JackHabbit

## Contact

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The Q-Life (Quality of Work Life) draws on the expertise of psychologists, psychiatrists, resilience experts and sleep, exercise and nutrition specialists, as well as broader scientific evidence, to create a holistic approach to sustaining a quality work life.

The Q-Life experience stands alone in its commitment to improving the skills of employees to flourish and be more productive in and out of work through our evidence-based work.

Employee assistance programs (EAP) are reactive, generic and the Q-Life is proactive and targeted.





## ***Additional Readings***

Are you ready? Stop wishing it was Friday. Darren Steeves and Sue Stender.

<https://www.amazon.ca/Are-Ready-Stop-Wishing-Friday-ebook/dp/B06XDRTGC7>

Positive Intelligence. Shirzad Charmin.

[https://www.amazon.ca/Positive-Intelligence-Individuals-Achieve-Potential/dp/1608322785/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1514323188&sr=8-1&keywords=positive+intelligence](https://www.amazon.ca/Positive-Intelligence-Individuals-Achieve-Potential/dp/1608322785/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1514323188&sr=8-1&keywords=positive+intelligence)

Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life: The New Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Paperback – Nov 1, 2005.  
Stephen Hayes.

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