

WHO IS THE RESILIENT TALENT, AND HOW DO YOU DEVELOP IT?

As companies continue to downsize, and workers are forced to do more with less, it's no surprise many people are experiencing a high level of stress at work. Several recent studies by Envisia Learning suggest 40 percent to 65 percent of all executives and talent rate their jobs as being very or extremely stressful, with significant impact on work-life balance and overall health.

The most resilient talent, however, seems to confront the increasing demand for long hours and threats to family balance with both high performance and personal well-being.

So, why do some workers experience job burnout, depression and physical illness in the face of work and life stress while others remain physically and psychologically healthy? Our research has found three distinct coping patterns:

1. **Hot Reactors.** About one in five employees are hot reactors. They are most likely to experience physical illness, job burnout and distress during stressful and challenging periods. Behaviorally, they are prone to impatience, irritability, frustration with incompetence, mood swings and anger.

These employees chronically exhibit the classic fight-or-flight response almost to the point of exhaustion and burnout. Most are at high risk for long-term cardiovascular disorders, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol and heart disease.

2. **Sustainers.** Employees who experience cold symptoms right after completing a big project or

while on a much-deserved vacation experience a clinical let-down effect. Such individuals shift from a high state of activation to a lower state, rapidly making their immune system let down from its normal high-stress protective state, which makes them more vulnerable to sickness in the short term.

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3. **The Hardy.** The resilient and hardy workers are the ones who experience high levels of stress, work-life unbalance and critical demands but maintain a high level of physical health and psychological well-being. In our research, these individuals are less likely to report job burnout, absenteeism because of illness, anxiety, sleep problems and depression.

Resilient employees appear to maintain and practice specific lifestyle behaviors that become part of their daily routine, and they use coping habits that translate stress into positive challenges that energize, rather than compromise, the immune system and well-being.

The following activities can be practiced and employed daily to enhance resilience and happiness:

- Get adequate rest/sleep, as lack of it has been shown to influence fatigue and moods.
- Make time for physical activity, as those who frequently exercise report lower depression and more psychological well-being.
- Expressing one's emotions, particularly through writing, can have strong immune-protective effects.



About the author

Kenneth M. Nowack, Ph.D., is the president, co-founder and chief research officer of Envisia Learning. He can be reached at editor@TalentMgt.com.

- Have a social support system — engage with others and avoid those who are toxic in your life.
- Reflecting on your blessings each day is associated with increased well-being and happiness.
- Identify and leverage what you do well. Maximizing your signature strengths will allow you to be more engaged and satisfied.
- Monitor your self-talk and work to reign in those things you say that are irrational, absolute and/or self-critical.

Being resilient isn't something we're necessarily born with. Hardy workers appear to develop a commitment to a lifestyle that balances the demands at work and home while remaining energized, productive and healthy. **TM**