



THE STRENGTH TO GO ON

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Are you feeling pressures at work that are starting to affect you outside of work? Are you facing problems in your work that seem insurmountable? Perhaps you are fine but are observing a team member struggling and wondering how best to support them? If so, read on as I share tips to help you build resilience in yourself, or others.

As a keen sportswoman I have enjoyed the Olympics and Paralympics and as always am inspired by those who set themselves challenging goals and achieve them, such as Kadeena Cox. Kadeena won Gold for Team GB in both Athletics and Cycling in the Rio Paralympics and has a condition that means she couldn't plan ahead to Tokyo, as she didn't know how she would be, but that didn't stop her from moving forwards, training and competing again in Tokyo in both sports. As quoted in the Guardian after Rio, Kadeena explained that 'Initially it was a journey about one girl who wanted to go to the Paralympics but over the two years it has become something I was doing for everyone else. The reason I wanted to do it so badly was so I could stand here and show it can be done even if you have setbacks.'

Her words 'even if you have setbacks' are key. They remind me of the value of the obstacles, problems, and what may be perceived as bad luck that affect us all from time to time. Without them we would be less resilient. That being said, at the time, that may not feel like much help when you are struggling.

IMPROVING RESILIENCE TO OVERCOME SETBACKS

It is possible to improve our resilience so that we can move past set-backs... but what exactly is resilience? Resilience is one of those qualities that is hard to define. On a recent dog walk, I observed how the trees were starting to turn as we enter autumn. When a leaf still has life in it, it can be squeezed together in your hand and when released will unfold – perhaps not quite the same as it was before but still looking full of life. When a leaf has fallen and become dry and brittle, squeezing it together in your hand would result in destruction. So how can we be sure that we are more like the first leaf, able to recover from, and grow through setbacks, and, while possibly changed by them, not be destroyed by them?

Some of us are more naturally able to overcome setbacks through a genetic predisposition to resilience but that's not the only factor. Research by Carole Pemberton has shown that we can support ourselves to be more resilient through learning from difficulty, building protective capability and changing the conditions around us in key ways. In addition, a common factor in both top level athletes like Kadeena and in Corporate High Achievers is the ability to be deliberate about creating space to reflect on themselves in action during their tough times.

5 Tips to be more Resilient:

If you, (or someone you manage), need help to get through a tough time by improving your resilience what could you, (or they) do?

1. Build support, and offer it too – don't be too proud to ask for help. Determine your support network, as well as offering support to others, as this will give you a sense of value
2. Have a sense of purpose – if you have something meaningful that you are going after you are more likely to persevere. Kadeena has purpose not only through what she wanted to achieve for herself but by wanting to show others what was possible.
3. Be proactive – setbacks can be a time when we become stuck through fear of doing the wrong thing. Corporate high achievers were found to focus their efforts on things that they could control. Take a small step to move forward rather than waiting for something to change.
4. Don't just focus on work – corporate high achievers make a deliberate effort to have other things in their life than just work which helps maintain perspective. If you like sport, keep up your sporting hobbies for example – an article from the Guardian indicated that exercise has been shown to boost memory, improve concentration, enhance creativity and have a positive effect on mood
5. Build key capabilities – improving ability to manage emotions and building change elasticity (ability to adapt to changing circumstances) can both play a role in enabling greater resilience.

We may not be the next Olympian or Paralympian but with life and work being unpredictable it means we will all likely find ourselves faced with setbacks from time to time. Focusing on ways to improve our resilience is time well spent to give us resources when we need them and the strength to go on.

Contact us if you'd like to discuss resilience or your wider coaching and mentoring needs. Call **01869 338989** or email **graham.clark@theocm.co.uk**