



Enhance Your Resiliency and Well-being at Work



By Ken Warren
Expert on People Skills
Keynote Speaker and Workshop Presenter

Introduction

Even if you are happy at work, you will still experience challenges from time to time:

- ❖ Ongoing change
- ❖ High workloads with lots of pressure
- ❖ Frustrations with management or a difficult co-worker

A certain amount of stress is normal and can also be functional, prompting us into action.

But if pressures continue over time, the stress will certainly come out one way or another – reduced morale and performance, strained relationships, increased sick leave and staff turnover to name just a few.

Included in this e-book, you will find ideas to not only deal well with challenges when they occur, but also take care of your own well-being and that of your colleagues.

I hope you enjoy it.

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Ken Warren BA, M Soc Sc, CSP is an expert on People Management Skills and Human Behaviour. With his engaging, interactive and positive presentations, Ken has shown thousands how to improve team performance, provide great customer service, and enhance staff resiliency. Check out all his FREE resources at www.positivepeoplesolutions.com.au

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Enhance Your Resiliency at Work



Why is it that some people are overwhelmed by stress and others maintain their well-being despite the challenges? Why are some people so resistant to change while others take control of the process? Why is it that some people harbour grudges, where others will simply get over it, learn what they can, and get on with the future?

The answer is, of course, Resilience – our ability to bounce back and adjust to challenges that life sends our way. It is our self-righting mechanism, our ability to restore equilibrium, when it has been disrupted.

Resilience can be displayed in many different ways. In individuals it is often seen as optimism, resourcefulness, and determination. In teams it is seen when team members support each other at work and solve problems creatively. Because individuals and teams display resiliency in different ways, there are no universal rules for success.

We often think about risk factors such as poverty, ill-health, prolonged stress, and negative relationships as highly detrimental to an individual's well-being and ability to achieve. For many people, risk factors are certainly detrimental, affecting individuals through depression, anxiety, withdrawal, ill-health, or poor performance.

But others somehow use their challenges as a springboard for growth. This is resiliency - and it is more common than it is not. Although the majority of people go through major stressors and tough life experiences, the majority of us draw on our resiliency and go on to recover from adversity and continue to build satisfying and productive lives.

Resilience research certainly proves the lack of predictive power of risk factors - unless we create self-fulfilling labels based on them. For example, some people start to expect to be treated badly by their workplace and then find evidence to support this expectation.

A theme that comes up regularly in the research is that a resilient individual is one who works well, plays well, loves well, and expects well. The following are reminders on what you already do, or could do more of, to take advantage of these factors.

1. **Practise positive attitudes** - Our emotions tend to follow our thoughts and actions. Here the challenge is to find helpful ways of thinking which will help you to feel less stressed and better able to act helpfully. Examples of helpful attitudes include: 'I don't feel very good about this change, but how can we make the best out of it with the time we have?', 'If I don't do anything else

today, I am at least going to make someone laugh', 'I know I am eventually going to get through this', or 'What is something I am grateful for today?'

People in senior roles can help by modelling helpful attitudes to workplace challenges. For example, if people are complaining, move the focus to generating viable solutions.

You can also help those with positive attitudes to be heard more at team meetings. In relation to workplace change, remind people what is not changing and how they have successfully managed change in the past.

- 2. Build great relationships at work** - this is the number one factor that helps most people become more resilient at work. It is amazing how much stress people can tolerate when they have great relationships with their manager and co-workers. This is likely due to the fact that close relationships help people to recharge, as well as access support and ideas for addressing workplace challenges. People who have supportive relationships at work are also less likely to take sick leave.

Workplaces can encourage positive relationships at work by encouraging people to find time to simply talk to each other, promoting values of respect and working things out when difficulties occur. Workplaces can also encourage mentoring relationships, organise social activities, and arrange professional development promoting positive team relationships.

- 3. Take advantage of your personal strengths** -Such strengths might include your hope, determination, creativity, willingness to take action, or problem-solving abilities. Become more aware of strengths you possess. You can do so by asking those who know you what strengths they see in you. The more you are aware of your strengths, the more you can draw on these abilities. Ask yourself how you can use the strengths that you have to get through a tough situation.
- 4. Do more of the work you love to do** - this helps you to feel more satisfied in your work and less affected by those parts of your work you do not especially enjoy. Speak more to your manager and co-workers about those parts of your work you find especially satisfying.

You may be able to negotiate to do more of this type of work and less of the other. If you are in work that is not a good fit for your strengths and abilities, you may be able to take steps over time to find a role that is a better fit.

5. **Take action** - Resilient people in workplaces are prepared to act - They keep the focus on what they can do to address their concerns if possible, to deal well with their stress, or to get themselves into another team. They expect the best, but also accept what is out of their control.

Here two-way conversations are especially important where problems are dealt with sooner before they become major concerns. As people are offered both understanding and actions to address some of these concerns, the risk factor of prolonged stress become minimised.

6. **Laugh more at work.** Laughter is a great antidote to stress. Even in very stressful workplaces, there is often still something to laugh about. So consider where the humour is in the situation or at least come with the attitude that each day you will make someone laugh.

If you work in the human service industries, you will know that black politically incorrect humour is often used at your workplace's or customers' expense, this is commonplace and normal – you just need to watch who the audience is. Humour at your own expense is always the safest type.

7. **Take good care of your health.** There is no doubt that resilience is encouraged by sufficient sleep, and healthy and well-balanced diet, and regular cardio-vascular activity. We know that physical exercise is positively correlated with our brain health and our ability to respond well to challenges. Other research has found that people, who have 7 hours of sleep each day, were more resilient than people who have more or less sleep than 7 hours.

Some workplaces cater to the health needs of team members by providing showers, bicycle racks, or salary benefits associated with green transport to work – walking, cycling or using public transport.

It is important to note that both the risk factors and protective factors have a cumulative effect. The longer such stressors continue, for example, the greater the impact. The research shows that the presence of more than one risk factor significantly increases an individual's level of risk.

The good news is that the protective factors are also cumulative and have a more profound impact on individuals than the risk factors. They hold the key to reducing the risk and build rewarding and satisfying lives. The odds can be changed.

Are You Unhappy At Work?

Are you one of those people who jump out of bed each day and who enjoy their work so much they can't wait to get there? According to recent research, about 25% of us really love what we do for a living. Then there are the majority of people, about 56%, who describe themselves as somewhat happy with their work, but see room for improvement. Sadly, about 19% of people feel deeply unhappy with their work.



Interestingly, the number one thing that makes us unhappy at work is also the number one thing that makes us happy. Are you ready for it? It is the quality of our workplace relationships – how well we are getting along with our manager and co-workers, the level to which we feel valued by them, and how well our manager and workmates communicate with us.

Of course, there are other things that make us unhappy at work – a lack of meaningful recognition or reward, an ineffectual manager, changes that are poorly implemented, lack of opportunity to progress or learn new skills, ideas being ignored, the actual work not being enjoyable, and not feeling like what you do makes a difference. These results, of course, also give clues about what helps people to be happier at work. It is interesting to note that it was the minority of people, primarily those who are most unhappy at work, who say that a higher salary will help them to feel more satisfied.

I believe that becoming happier at work first involves developing the right attitude. An example of what I mean by this is the attitude that 'my happiness is up to me'. We can choose to be happy, or at least as happy as possible, even while in a workplace that is challenging. It is not the absence of stressors that will make us happy but more the attitude we have to them.

Along with having the right attitude we also need to be willing to take action. It could be to negotiate with your boss about changes that would make your work more satisfying. It could also be a willingness to address a relationship difficulty at work before it becomes a bigger issue. For some, the action they need to take is getting themselves into a better workplace.

Although this is easy to say, for some it is preferable to make their work as satisfying as possible despite the challenges. To do so, you first need to think about what would make you feel more satisfied at work and the steps you can take that are in your control. You may also need to take action to make your personal life more satisfying. The good news is that the more satisfying your free time is, the better you cope with challenges at work

Encourage Positivity at Work



Have you ever noticed that some people are able to maintain their positivity, even in stressful workplaces, whereas others do the opposite? Why is this?

Positive co-workers have the right attitude. They realise that although others can act in ways that help to make us stressed or happy, ultimately our happiness is determined by the choices we make.

Positive people don't expect perfection from themselves, their colleagues or their workplace. It is OK to have a bad day or two. A bad week, month or year is not so good. But they appreciate that their happiness is not determined by the absence of challenging circumstances at work.

If you wait until your workload is more reasonable, changes are better managed, and difficult co-workers to become easier before you allow yourself to be happy, you may well be waiting a long time.

Happy employees also take action. They appreciate it is up to them to know what helps them to feel more satisfied at work and to communicate this to their employer. Rather than settling for a miserable job, they do their best to influence change at work, to accept those things outside of their control, or get themselves into work they find more satisfying.

Positive people realise that their happiness at work affects their happiness at home. They also know that what they do in their free time also affects their happiness at work. They realise that it is their responsibility alone to make their home life more rewarding. A life spent focused primarily around your work will never make you happy.

Positive co-workers also give. They realise that one of the best ways to become happy at work is to make their co-workers happy. Although a higher salary or a promotion bring about temporary feelings of satisfaction, ultimately these things will never make you happy. Lasting satisfaction comes from helping people to feel happier.

The good news is that although negativity is contagious, so is happiness. It is also easier to stay positive when you have positive people around you. Although it would be nice if our co-workers and employer also gave to us, someone has to set the example. It may as well be you.

Are You Addicted To Your Work?

Gordon was a self-confessed workaholic. He spent long hours at work in his own business, often working 60 hours per week or more. Even on his weekends and holidays he would still spend large amounts of time stressing about his business, checking his emails, or working on a business project at home.

We can all do this at times, but Gordon had been doing so for a long period and his health and relationship were now starting to suffer. He worried that if he worked less, his business was bound to suffer. When he did allow himself to relax, he did so in a high-cost way, drinking heavily, causing more stress to his relationship.



Why do people work themselves to death? Clive Hamilton, in his paper on Deferred Happiness Syndrome, says that people do so due to growing aspirations for more expensive lifestyles. The desire to stay in this race or provide well for family members lead many to work longer and harder often at the sacrifice of other aspects of their well-being.

Some people also feel the need to work hard to provide for their retirement. This is especially the case for men in their forties or fifties. Others are simply stuck in a rut, living their life on a treadmill finding it hard to change despite being aware it is not bringing them happiness. Many parents are wracked by guilt in not spending more time with their children.

You don't have to wait until you have a relationship or health crisis before you do something different, though many have to hit the proverbial brick wall before they see the need for change. Often the place to start is changing the way you are thinking. You first need to see the need for change and stop thinking that you don't have time to do anything else or that change is not possible. Along with changing your thinking, you also need to change what you are doing.

It is often easier to stop a particular pattern of behaviour if you have something else to do in its place. Discovering or rediscovering a passion can be a much healthier 'addiction', provided it helps you to achieve a greater sense of well-being and produces greater balance in your life. You may have to do some trial and error attempts at first until you discover what a passion of yours.

Of course, you don't want to make the mistake of Gordon who swung from one extreme of self-sacrificing his needs to the other where they were indulged at a high cost to his family. Start today by asking yourself if what you are doing and thinking is helping you to live your life in balance.

Thinking That Keeps You in Work-mode



Have you ever found yourself focusing too much on your work in your free time? Of course, most of us have made this mistake – giving so much energy to our work that it comes at a cost to us or our loved ones.

Some of us are unfortunate enough to have found ourselves with a boss who has totally unreasonable expectations. They give us an extraordinarily high workload, with minimal support, and expect us to be available seven days a week.

Some of these managers will be more reasonable if you give them a powerful enough rationale for easing back - your partner threatening separation, you are close to having a nervous breakdown, or are thinking about leaving the workplace. Otherwise, you are left with either becoming increasingly miserable or finding yourself a better workplace.

More common is the fact that we have unreasonable expectations of ourselves. We think 'Once I get this work done, then I will take it easy'. Although this sounds rational, the trouble is that the job takes much longer than we thought and there is always something else to do. Or we aim for perfection rather than simply a good enough standard.

As is so often the case with problem behaviour, it is the problem thinking that we need to change first.

People also work long and hard due to the benefits of doing so. Here I am not talking about their pay, but more getting caught up in the challenge of the work they are doing.

There might also be benefits for some that come from avoiding an unsatisfying personal life. If this is you, you need to also start appreciating the costs to you and your family from your current commitment to work or start to make your personal life more enjoyable.

Obsessive behaviour is another reason people work far too hard. If ever you have found yourself compulsively checking on your emails 50 times a day, you will know what I mean. Here you need to channel this ability by giving yourself something else to focus on - a healthy obsession - perhaps an interest you are passionate about.

It is not so much saying 'No' to work, but more saying 'Yes' to your personal life. When you have said 'Yes' to attending your child's school play or have made a

commitment to go cycling with your mates, it makes it so much easier to set limits with your work.

Where possible, you need to structure your work around your personal life. I guarantee you will feel happier as a result.

Claim Back Your Weekends

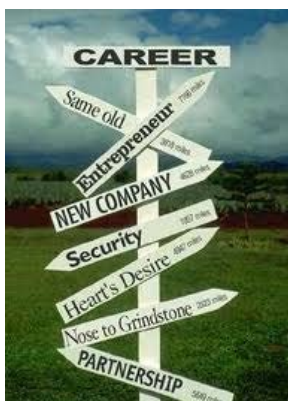
Most of us work hard these days. Many of us even work hard on our so-called 'days-off'. Now I think it is OK to occasionally do some work in your free time, but many of us become trapped in a continuous cycle of working 50, 60 or 70 hours or more each week. The dilemma of working too hard for too long is that the stress comes out one way or another - perhaps through health problems, intolerance in our relationships, or out-of-character behaviour. Certainly, you will not be happy living your life out of balance for so long. And neither will your family. So, how do you reclaim your weekends or days-off? Here are my top five tips for doing so.



1. **Schedule other things to do in your free time.** It might be pursuing a hobby or interest, something fun to do with your partner or family, or perhaps an activity to take you away from where you usually do your weekend work. Schedule your work for certain days of the week only. And make Friday your deadline for completing work instead of Monday. Many people find if they schedule time both for work as well as free time, they work more productively when in work mode, getting more done in less time.
2. **Manage the expectations of others.** Maybe you need to let your workplace know when you are unable to be contacted. Or perhaps you need to negotiate with your partner so they are supportive of what you are trying to do.
3. **Change your environment in some way.** Some people find they need to get away from their home office or computer so they are not tempted to check their emails or do other work. Others place their home office off-limits for the weekend.
4. **Find a way of thinking that helps you to find a better balance.** It could be, "That's enough for now", "My family is more important than my work" or "Maybe a proper break will help me to work more productively when I restart". As is the case with so many things, we need to be thinking about the choices we are making rather than simply operating on automatic pilot.

5. **Know your limits.** If you do weaken and start doing work in your free time, at least limit the time you spend doing so. But beware of falling into this trap. Some people find they have good intentions of working for just a couple of hours, but end up doing much more. Others find that even a couple of hours work, puts them in work mode for a much longer period of time. You need to know when you have given enough to your work. If you wait until you have an empty in-basket to ease up on yourself, you might be waiting a long time.

Time for a Change?



For most of my working life, I had counselled individuals, couples and co-workers and managed counselling programs in the government, community and business sectors. For the great majority of those 24 years, I enjoyed my work.

But in 2007, I started thinking about whether I wanted to continue doing this type of work. As worthy as what it is, did I want to subject myself to other people's pain for the rest of my life? For me, the answer was 'No'.

It was time for a change. Was I burnt out? I honestly don't think so. But if I had stayed, I may well have ended up that way. Don't get me wrong – I still enjoyed the majority of my work, but I was feeling somewhat 'dry'. There are some jobs, I believe, that you cannot do forever.

Apparently, I was not alone. According to the research, the longer you do a particular line of work, the more your satisfaction with your work declines. It appears that most of us like some variety in our work, as well as opportunities to learn and grow.

The challenge is to find work that is still a good fit for your strengths and which engages your interest. You may have to give quite a bit of thought to what are your strengths and interests and to ask yourself, 'How can I do more of the work I enjoy?' or 'Who else needs what I have to offer?'

For me the leap was not so hard, given that speaking engagements comprised a large part of my private practice. The hard part was letting go of my identity as a therapist, not to mention stepping away from 60% of my usual income. Maintaining income and working conditions are often barriers that stop people taking action. But I think it is a real tragedy to be stuck in work that makes you miserable.

Here action of some sort is needed – to make yourself feel more satisfied at work or to get yourself into another workplace. You can, of course, opt for simply coping better with the challenges at work. One way is to make yourself happier in your personal life. If you become happier at home, you tend to become somewhat happier

at work. But I think many of us have gone past the point of simply coping with the challenges. Other actions are needed.

Perhaps you can ask your boss for more variety in your work. You may be able to negotiate some changes – perhaps taking on a new challenge, mentoring others, or swapping roles with another team for a period of time. You might also be able to find a seminar or course that engages your interest. At the very least, notice the aspects of your work that you most enjoy and let people around you know. You may well be able to do more of the work you especially enjoy.

But perhaps the action you need to take is to change jobs. Clarity on your options tends to come with activity. Often, the more you look into various options, the clearer a choice becomes. It also becomes easier to make hard decisions when we have the support of good people around us. Throughout my career, I have always sought out a good person to mentor me who has expertise in the areas that I need. I continue to do so. I have also been fortunate to have a number of good people around me who love and believe in me.

Has the change in my career been worthwhile? Absolutely! Although the learning curve has been steep and there have been challenges along the way, I am very glad I made the decision. My energy for my work has returned and, financially, it has been a good move for me as well.

Sometimes change can be achieved with very small steps. Other times, a chasm needs to be leapt in a single jump.

The Next Step

If you would like further assistance, there are a number of options open to you:

1. Subscribe to my [free fortnightly newsletter](#)
2. Check out my range of [products and resources](#)
3. Look into my [coaching programs](#)
4. Book me to run a [customised program for your workplace](#) (details following).
5. Stay connected through [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), or [LinkedIn](#)

You can also contact me through 0406 402 800,
ken@positivepeoplesolutions.com.au or www.positivepeoplesolutions.com.au

About the Author

Ken Warren BA , M Soc Sc, CSP is an expert on People Skills and Human Behaviour.

With his presentations and coaching programs, Ken has shown thousands how to ...

- Improve Team Performance
- Work Well with Difficult Customers
- Enhance Staff Resiliency and Well-being

Ken is no ivory-tower theorist. He draws on 28 years hands-on experience ...

- Managing his own teams in the government, community and business sectors
- Mentoring team leaders and professionals in helping roles
- Counselling couples and co-workers in conflict, team members over their performance, and individuals with aggressive behaviour



Ken has achieved recognition as a Certified Speaking Professional (CSP) - a certification achieved by less than 10% of professional speakers.

It is your guarantee of professionalism, eloquence, and expertise.

Ken speaks to audiences, large and small, throughout Australia. You will enjoy his stories, his interactive style, and find his ideas easy to put into practice.

Ken's most popular speaking topics

Team Performance Programs



1. Grow Your Team – Working with Strengths
2. Difficult Co-workers Made Easy
3. Attract and Retain Quality Staff
4. Customer Service Excellence: What Every Workplace Needs to Know
5. Advanced Negotiating Skills: Getting to Agreement
6. Workplace Bullying: What You Can Do

Staff Resiliency and Well-being Programs



1. Enhance Your Resiliency and Improve Your Well-being
2. Work-life Balance: What You Need to Know Before You Tip Over the Edge
3. Get on Top of Your Workload and Free Up Your Time
4. 'You Want Me to Do What?' Coping Well with Workplace Change

Difficult Customers and Clients Programs



1. De-fusing Explosive Situations: Managing Aggressive Behaviour
2. Engaging and Motivating Difficult Clients
3. Becoming Solution-focused in Brief Therapy
4. Bullying in Schools - Best Practice Prevention and Intervention
5. Adjusting and Moving Forward: Working with Normal and Complicated Grief

Further details can be gained by contacting Ken through 0406 402 800, ken@positivepeoplesolutions.com.au or www.positivepeoplesolutions.com.au

