Larry Chapman MPH, Nancy Lesch and Sandi Aitken

WELCOA

Special Report:

Resilience

Hard Times,Tough People
Is Resilience In Your Future?

Nearly one-third of US workers say they often feel overworked or overwhelmed by what they have to do, according to a recent report by the Families and Work Institute (Bond, 2002). Ellen Galinsky, institute president and co-author of the study says," when you feel pressured and pushed, when you feel not respected, when you feel tension at work, when you feel the work that you do isn't of real value, that leads to overwork…Our findings strongly suggest that every employee reaches a point when increasing work demands simply become too much..."

In this case study, we will examine the concept of resilience from a wellness perspective, and entertain a proposed new construct for programming, while exploring the ways in which Resilience can be addressed in worksite health promotion programs. The topics we will be addressing here include:

✔ Defining the concept and the term

✔ Why Resilience as a programming concept makes sense

✔ Implications of this approach:

✔ Creative approaches to programming: The Motorola Approach

✔ Integrating Resilience into your overall program strategy

✔ Measuring your effects

✔ Applying Resilience to your own life.

Defining the Concept and the Term

In every era, people feel stressed and overwhelmed, and in every era we indulge ourselves to believe that ours is the most difficult of times. In today's economy and society, we blame work (industry downturn/ upturn, layoffs or hiring frenzies, NASDAQ peaks and valleys) for our sense of imbalance. According to a recent Integra Realty survey, only 1 in 5 people have found what they consider to be the "right" work for them— work that truly plays to their strengths and fulfills their passions—and 1 in 5 individuals have quit because of workplace stress. At the same time, an estimated 50 percent of all deaths each year in the U.S. are due to social and behavioral factors often connected with stress, such as smoking, diet, alcohol use, sedentary behavior, and diet (McGinnis, 1993).

How can today's "want-it-all" individual find meaning, calm and productivity in the midst of all this chaos and uncertainty? What keeps someone from getting sick,

About The Authors:

Larry Chapman MPH
Chairman and Co-Founder, Summex Corporation and Editor, The Art of Health Promotion

Nancy Lesch
Wellness Program Manager, Motorola Corporation

Sandi Aitken
Director of Benefits, Freescale Corporation

"You can't have it all, but if you know what's important, you don't want it all."

-Unknown source

quitting a job? Making critical mistakes or bad decisions? Harming themselves and others?

Why would we allow jobs, or anything else for that matter, to threaten our health or define our happiness? Why do we blame faulty decisions on everything external? Why does the need to work harder replace common sense and the innate ability to feel good?

Inevitably, workers are forced to decide how to take control of their situation, or they will surely become a statistic on the unemployment roles or on the dissatisfied side of the ledger sheet. If we are to produce, to be innovative, to contribute fully, to find meaning that makes life and work worthwhile, we must understand resilient behaviors and how to live them.

When it seems that "the job" is what an unsatisfying life is all about, chances are it's not about the job; it's about our personal abilities (or inabilities) to cope and thrive, and own up to our responsibilities. No matter the economic conditions,

stock prices, dot.com failures or other high stress situations of the day, our role is to take care of our health — physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually.

The traditional perspective on "Resilience" is that it is generally defined as strength in the midst of change and stressful life events; the power of springing back or recovering readily from adversity. Much of the early development of this concept emanates from the fields of psychology and psychiatry and more specifically the psychology of children who are raised in very dysfunctional families with traumatic histories. Much of the research shows that resilient individuals: take responsibility, focus on empowering interpretations, have meaningful connections and move on with their lives. (Schissel, 1993)

Taking responsibility—owning the power of choice and creation in situations.

Focus on empowering interpretations—placing attention on

"Lifelong good health is far more dependent on a positive, purposeful life orientation than on aerobic workouts and rigid low-fat diets."

-Ken Pelletier, Ph.D., M.D.(Hon), Stanford University School of Medicine

understanding situations, events, relationships, etc., in ways that bring power to as opposed to ways that diminish power.

Meaningful connections—seeking and maintaining relationships that create or add a great deal of significance to a person's life.

Moving on—not dwelling on the past, but looking forward into the future.

Let's examine each of these in detail.

1. Taking Responsibility

Taking responsibility is defined as owning the power of choice and creation. Another way to look at this is to see what it's not. It's not about shaming yourself, laying blame on others, being in denial, or providing endless justifications about why things are the way they are. It's about moving to a place of acceptance, understanding what part you play in the reality of a situation, and what part you will play to create the next steps. Once you understand your "place" and develop your sense of responsibility, you are on a healthier and more productive path to success, and usually much more able to meet daily challenges with energy and clarity.

Let's look at taking responsibility in terms of *expectation* versus *aspiration*.

Expectation is defined as something you anticipate the occurrence of; something you feel you are entitled to. Aspiration is the strong desire to achieve something high or great; a sense of hope and vision. One can have low expectations, but have very high aspirations. In fact, keeping your expectations low allows you to create space to experience reality as it comes your way. There is no loss of quality of life or productivity

when expectations are low and aspirations are high. In fact, quite the opposite may well be the case.

People who follow their passion in this way are not sacrificing quality or sense of direction. They are taking risks, collaborating, holding themselves and others accountable to high standards, and doing it all with zeal. Researcher Srully Blotnick interviewed fifteen hundred people about their career plans and the basis for their decisions. Eighty three percent were motivated by money and wanted to make as much as possible

> **"What we must decide is perhaps how we are valuable and not how valuable we are."**
>
> -Edgar Z. Friedenber
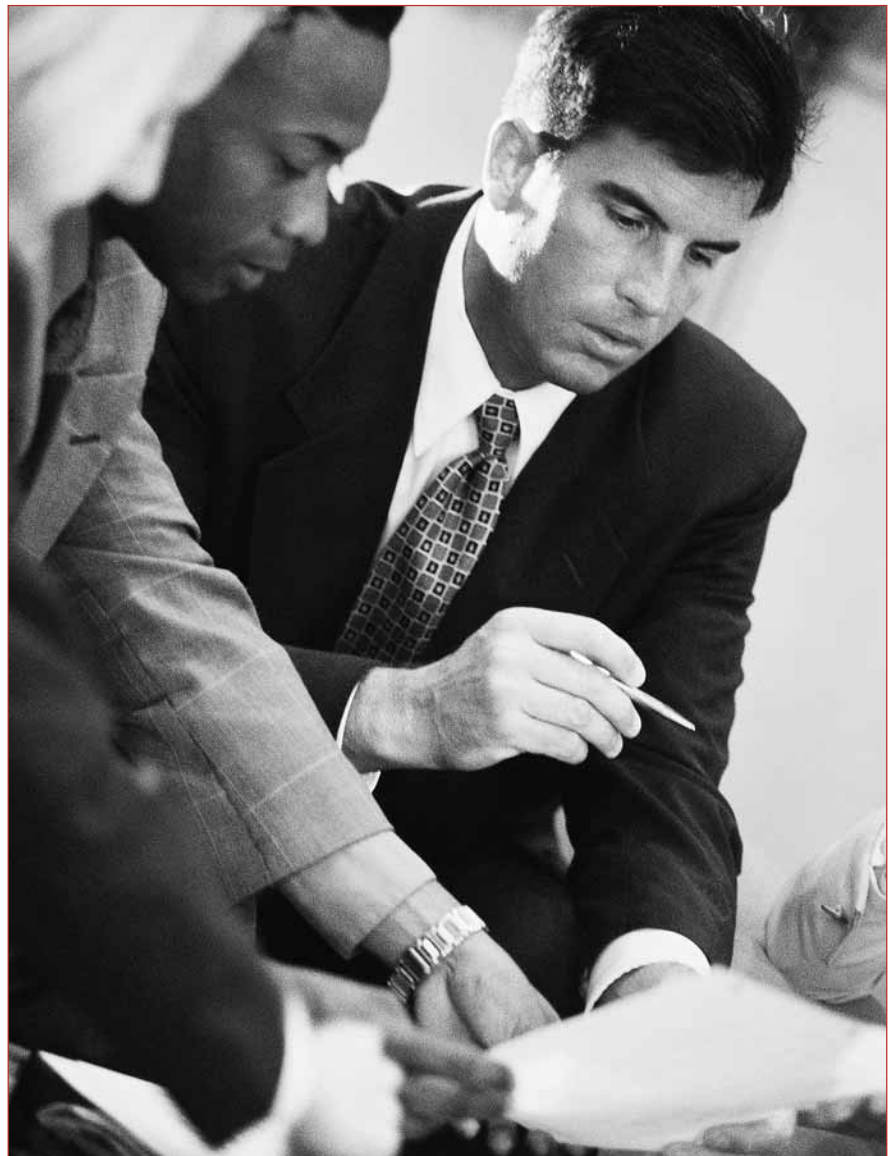
as soon as possible. Seventeen percent were determined to follow their passion. Twenty years later, one hundred and one (101) had become millionaires. One hundred (100) were from the seventeen percent who followed their passion.

Think about times when you've turned down the wrong road only to come upon a spectacular sunset or other brilliant and unexpected display of nature. Contrast that with turning down the wrong road (why is it ever "wrong" anyway?) and being filled with shame and frustration over not following directions. Or blaming the person who drew the map. Or perhaps you received a card or a kind word from someone you hadn't thought of in awhile.

Contrast the feelings of happiness and warmth with those feelings that happen when you just knew the phone would ring, and it didn't. Or, you always get a card from Steve on your birthday, but he didn't send one this time. Unrealistic expectations can cloud aspirations, and lead to a stressful and negative spiral, often

resulting in at least a loss in focus and productivity and disappointment, and ultimately, depression, illness or injury. With high aspirations and minimal expectations, failures can turn into lessons; waste can become investment, and experiences in criticism or disaster can become exercises in responsibility. (Taylor, 2000)

Often our expectations are driven by ambition. Ambition is defined in the dictionary as an ardent desire for rank, fame, or power or the desire to achieve a particular end. There is a prevailing notion that ambition is a good thing, but the sacrifices that are made in the name of ambition unfortunately can include family, health, even the very career path you seek. Ambition without meaning is devoid of some of the most precious aspects of humanity. How does one place ambition in perspective? The answer appears to be…by taking responsibility.

One can have the ambition and the drive to climb a mountain or achieve career success, but that alone

does not make for fulfillment and gratification. One must choose to understand her/his power to create and exercise choice in a given situation; and look both internally and externally for the best resources. We must choose to plan for and embrace uncertainty not knowing where the end points are. We must also choose to accept situations as they are rather than continually evaluating what we think they should be because of the expectations of ourselves or others. Aspirations without elevated expectations heighten the sense of life's excitement.

2. Empowering Interpretations

To have empowering interpretations is to view situations in a way that reflects optimism and potential, rather than limits and confusion. In addition to taking responsibility for situations, empowering interpretations allow us to see how uncertainty can lead to positive outcomes; to accomplishments beyond one's expectations. Having empowering aspirations is a way of reframing situations.

Many employees view the current recessionary downturn and the resulting layoffs and cutbacks as a devastating personal assault. Decisions are made without their input that dramatically impact their lives. Uncertainty reigns as people walk the halls silently, head down, trying to appear thoughtful, focused and busy—and trying to avoid being next in line for layoffs or pay cuts. In the Families and Work Institute report mentioned earlier, workers repeatedly demonstrated that perceptions may be more influential than measurable facts. For example, respondents on average reported working 41.2 hours a week, which doesn't sound excessive. But on the average, the respon-

dents said they preferred to work only 34.5 hours a week. Those who reported the greatest difference between actual and preferred amount of work were more likely to feel overwhelmed. The survey found some employees who worked more than 50 hours a week, but didn't feel overburdened because they worked long hours by choice.

Conversely, there are ways to view these situations in a positive or productive light. Consider spending time preparing for the inevitable upturn, reflecting on how to simplify areas of life that have become too complex, exploring career or hobby options that you didn't have time for before.

One employee faced with the possibility of taking a higher paying position with more responsibility was carefully weighing her options. She perceived that taking this new job would require more time, more energy, more travel and more responsibility. Having just recovered from a serious injury with a renewed focus on what's really important in life, she went to the hiring manager with some concerns. "I'm concerned that taking this job won't leave me time for a personal life," she said.

The hiring manager shook his head. "If you blame your job, you'll always have that as an excuse and you'll never have a personal life. Get it –it's not just about the job, no matter how high you get in the corporation." His reframing of the situation helped her decide that she could indeed take the promotion and take the responsibility for achieving a meaningful personal life.

3. Meaningful Connections

Having meaningful connections is defined as seeking and maintaining relationships that create or add a great deal of significance to a person's life. Studies show that having a variety of meaningful social and family connections in your life can have a positive impact on your health and your ability to heal. This is not necessarily good news for Corporate America, where we have "individual contributors" and we "pull ourselves up by our own boot-straps", or "take no prisoners," and it's "my way or the highway." The spirit of fierce independence doesn't allow much room for collaboration on a meaningful level.

Determination and individuality are not bad traits; but knowing when to rely on others can add strength and clarity to your work. "In the real world, it's the relationships—the formal and informal networks of people—that really govern how the organization runs and how value is created." (Michael Schrage – The Wall Street Journal, March 1990).

Deepening the meaning in your work is dependent upon deepening relationships with others. Although this could be perceived as a decidedly "touchy-feely" point of view, consider the benefits of the right relationships, at work and at home. Many of the best ideas and strategies have their beginnings outside the walls of the boardroom—in the hallways, over lunch or on the golf course.

During any times of uncertainty, there is opportunity to focus on the things that we can influence, such as the quality of our relationships with others—family, friends and co-workers. Also, consider for your personal strategy adopting a recommendation put forth by Richard Leider, founding partner of The Inventure Group, respected author, and pioneer in the field of career coaching: "I recommend that you develop your own "Board of Advisors." Just as an organization has a board of directors, you can elect your own group of trusted people to offer you counsel and support. Your board of advisors may only have one thing in common you. You don't need to go it alone. Take advantage of the support and expertise that others can provide."

4. Moving On

The challenge for all of us is intentionally moving our focus onto what is ahead rather than what has passed behind. The past clearly has important information and insights to be gleaned, but an excessive preoccupation with the past will likely provide little in the way of helpful direction for the future.

By putting your energy into taking responsibility, empowering interpretations and meaningful connections, and focusing on the future, you can go beyond "survival" to personal power and a significant life. Resilient individuals help create an engaging and compelling workplace where people matter, where ideas count, where creativity sparks new opportunities, where each of us can make a difference.

These core elements of "resilience" can be used to build an expanded version of "Resilience" that can be used in worksite health promotion programming. *Figure 1* below contains a diagram of "Resilience" that has ten separate elements. These elements all have several dimensions or factors that can be addressed through programming and education interventions. All the elements contribute in some fashion to the fulfillment of issues of personal responsibility, empowerment, meaningful connections and moving on in life.

This expanded construct of Resilience is intended to provide a practical way of addressing a wide range of issues that are central to one's health and well-being while attempting to strike a workable balance between: physical, psychological, intellectual, social and spiritual aspects of human health. A brief description of each of the ten elements is provided below:

Energy Management

Our energy levels often drive our activity levels and are essential to our ability to take responsibility for our circumstances and lives. Energy management at the individual level includes: personal energy level awareness, physical activity patterns, rest habits, pacing strategies, use of "quiet" times, engaging in prayer or meditation, periodic shifting of focus, varying intensity of effort and choice of energizing pursuits. (Handoll, 2004)

Sleep Choices

Sleep choices involve personal sleep patterns such as average hours of sleep per day, use of wakefulness counter strategies, preparations for sleep, regularity of wake-up times, exercise prior to bed time, ingestion of caffeinated beverages, food consumption before sleep times, use of napping, use of sleep medications and habits of cognition associated with sleep. (Brown, 2004)

Social Support

Social support reflects the many relationships that we all have along

Figure 1
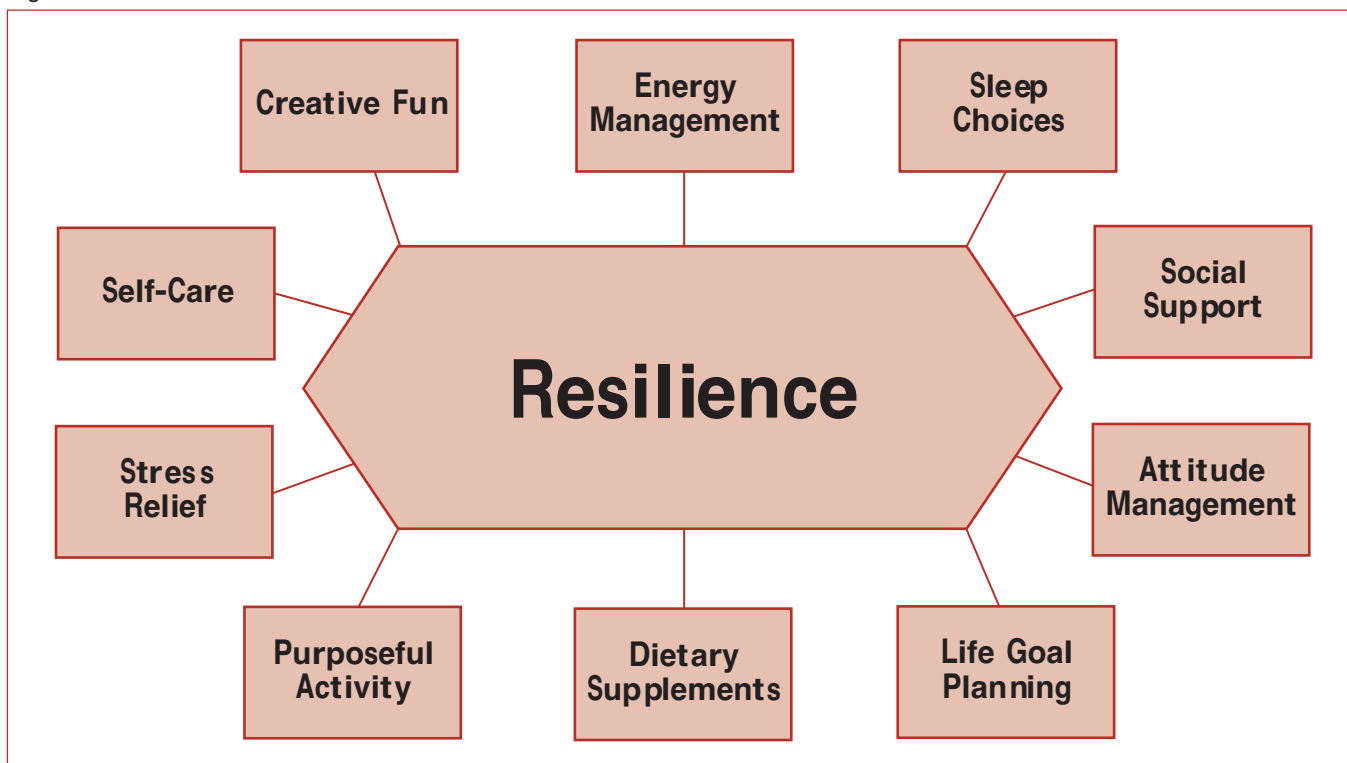
with the level of intimacy and support we derive from them. Some of the issues under this element include: number of close family members and friends, frequency of contact, length of contact, degree of openness experienced, level of intimacy and/or vulnerability and sense of support received. (Bovier, 2004)

Attitude Management

Attitude management encompasses a range of issues that include: extent of self-awareness of attitudes, emotions and feelings, anger management, learned optimism, calming pursuits, intentional self-talk, use of coping strategies and cultivation of a positive outlook. (Torabi, 2001)

Life Goal Planning

Life goal planning provides an opportunity to focus on issues of: life purpose, nature of major life goals, engaging in intentional experiences, balancing materialistic pursuits with spiritual or religious pursuits, service to others and community contributions, professional and career pursuits and changing orientations to life throughout the life cycle. (King, 1998)

Dietary Supplements

Dietary supplementation as a resilience strategy involves the choice of specific dietary supplements, the amount and the timing of their use. Issues here include: energy effects, disease prevention effects, memory and retention enhancements, sleep related effects, cognitive effects and anti-oxidant use. (Marriott, 2001)

Purposeful Activity

Purposeful activity as an element of resilience provides a focus on making sure that work or other pursuits are purposeful for the individual. Lack of purpose has a general tendency to

undermine resilience so that a clear perceived purpose in a major activity area is important for personal resilience. (Gragnolati, 2002)

Stress Relief

Stress relief involves the variety of relaxation and activity strategies that are useful for relieving the effects of excess stress. Many of the traditional strategies for detection, management and prevention of excess stress can be utilized here. Resilience oriented issues related to excess stress can also be emphasized to create new or renewed interest. Mindfulness techniques can also be utilized. (Grossman, 2004)

Self-care

Self-care begins with recognition of personal signs and symptoms associated with lowered resilience. Then a variety of self-care strategies can be used to enhance personal resilience. These include: moderation, stretching, remaining flexible, present-moment thinking, injury prevention, avoiding over-taxing circumstances,

Figure 2

taking rest breaks, change of focus exercises, symptom awareness and quiet time. (Callaghan, 2003)

Creative Fun

Creative fun as a resilience strategy involves finding perspective and humor in circumstances of life. This can include experiencing humor or lightness in a regular way or finding a way to re-interpret the typical over-seriousness of many life circumstances. The creative approach to fun reflects the way that each individual has the ability to find humor and perspective in a creative way for their own life circumstances. (Martin, 2001)

Why Resilience As A Programming Concept Makes Sense

We believe the expanded Resilience concept suggested here makes sense for worksite health promotion programs for several reasons. These reasons are identified in *Figure 2* below.

Why Resilience Makes Sense

1. The psychological dimensions of health promotion usually get very minimal attention in most worksite health promotion programs.

2. It is an efficient way of "bundling" a variety of areas of important program content to ease understanding, implementation and assimilation.

3. It provides a way of addressing sensitive issues that are often ignored in most programs.

4. It emphasizes important issues for preparing people to function more effectively in the ever changing and increasingly challenging process of work.

5. It also allows flexibility in selecting which aspects of Resilience are addressed for each workforce.

6. It provides a new way of addressing the traditional core area of stress and stress management.

7. It also provides a way to bring some of the newer areas of complementary and alternative therapies into programming, if desired.

Implications Of This Approach

There are many important implications associated with the use of this expanded programming construct for Resilience. First, the use of Resilience in programming signifies an emphasis on psycho-social issues in human health and of necessity, broadens the usual scope of health promotion programming. Second, the expanded concept of Resilience presented here encourages the empowerment of individuals rather than their dependence on their employer. Therefore, the overall program and this particular programming initiative needs to be fully congruent with the attitudes and philosophy of management toward employees. Third, the inclusion of this programming initiative implies that program staff will need to apply this Resilience construct to their own lives, because that's often where the real power of personal example comes into play. Finally, the last major implication is that this proposed construct is itself a "work in progress" and will likely evolve further over time.

Integrating Resilience Into Your Overall Program Strategy

Resilience, in the proposed expanded context, can be integrated into virtually any worksite health promotion program. Some of the ways Resilience can be integrated are aptly identified in the Motorola example. The areas of integration identified in the example include: as part of your business strategy, as part of the internal employee communications, as part of virtually all the educational efforts of the health promotion program, as part of the web-based strategy of the program, and as part of Occupational Health and EAP provided training.

There are also a number of additional ways in which Resilience can be integrated into a worksite health promotion program. Some of these additional ways are identified in *Figure 3* below.

As with introducing any innovation into an organization, the more of these strategies that are used, the more quickly the change will generally be assimilated into the organization.

Measuring Your Effects

The measurement of the results of a Resilience initiative could be accomplished through a variety of methods. Some of the more prevalent methods are as follows:

Collection of participant satisfaction data: The use of post session or post web visit survey questions that use a quantitative scale on participant satisfaction (e.g. "Please indicate on a 1-10 scale your level of satisfaction with the ……...Where "1" = poor and "10 = excellent)

Changes in HRA cohort data: Adding to a Health Risk Assessment (HRA) questions that assess behavior or attitude changes in issues that are addressed in the Resilience initiative. (e.g. "Of the following activities check all that you are engaged in on a regular basis" – list the major elements of the Resilience construct)

Responses from an annual program evaluation survey: Use of an anonymous annual evaluation survey for program participants that asks whether they participated in the resilience offerings and also asked if they have made changes in any of the areas that were covered.

Responses correlated with the results of a presenteeism or work productivity questionnaire: Compare the responses of participants in the Resilience initiative with non-participants on their scores from the use of a presenteeism or work productivity questionnaire.

Applying Resiliency to Your Own Life

The challenge for us all is to apply this expanded model to enhancing

Figure 3

Strategies For Integrating Resilience Into Your Program

1. Place Resilience into your program mission and vision statement.
2. Develop some program objectives around a Resilience initiative.
3. Use Resilience as a new program initiative at the beginning of a program year.
4. Integrate Resilience into educational program offerings.
5. Bring Resilience into web-based resources.
6. Provide self-guided materials on the topic of Resilience.
7. Offer Resilience coaching opportunities for employees.
8. Build Resilience into your Human Resources and human capital strategy.
9. Institute a Resilience initiative as part of a Health and Productivity Management initiative.

Creative Approaches To Resilience Programming: The Motorola Approach

To best explain Motorola's approach to wellness, it's important to understand a little bit of the history and philosophy of the program. Why have wellness initiatives at all?

Over ten years ago when we started, the reasons were different than they are now. Employee retention in a booming economy was a key factor. In order to provide a workplace that was competitive, we needed to address work/life balance issues. We created a program that not only addressed employee needs, but also integrated with our business strategy. The program is based on a "salutogenic" model of wellness, in other words, it's not about 'how did I get sick,' it's about 'how do I stay well.'

As we look at current issues in health and wellness, while our philosophy remains the same, we have changed our program design somewhat to fit the times. We still work closely with managers to make sure our programs align with business goals and issues around 'people,' we still address the health and well-being needs of our population, but we are also working hard to address the issue of rising health care costs. Jeff Rubleski said it well in his WELCOA interview (9/15/03):

"When this cost shifting occurs on a large scale, health promotion and wellness will be uniquely poised to play a major role in a new type of system. I say this because, when more costs are shifted to employees, they'll start saying, "Wow, I'm really starting to feel these costs now. I'd better start taking my health a little more seriously."

–Jeff Rubleski,
"Beating Healthcare Costs:
Is it Really Possible?"

In other words, as companies like Motorola begin to seek ways to manage health care costs, it's inevitable that more of the responsibility will fall to the employee. How can we make employees better consumers when it comes to managing their personal health and well-being? How can we provide programs and resources that aid their efforts?

Physical health in terms of avoidance of illness is critical, but there are so many more factors that contribute to overall well-being. Motorola's programs and resources also address employees' ability to remain resilient in challenging times, providing tools and tips on coping with stress, feeling connected and engaged, and making a productive contribution to the workplace.

Another important component of resilience is its position in our internal marketing messages. Every other aspect of our education and awareness efforts contains messaging with a resilience component. For example, as we deliver information on weight management, self care or even flu immunizations, we focus on how employees can take responsibility for their health and well-being.

Resilience Definition—Resilience is currently defined as "strength in the midst of change and stressful life events." Besides providing strength in the form of coping behaviors, resilient individuals also perceive change as a challenge rather than a threat. They perceive a higher level of supervisor support, co-worker cohesion and overall social support. These perceptions can lead to some significant health benefits. If a person can learn resilient behaviors, studies show that one's immune system function is enhanced, thereby creating not just psychological but physiological benefits as well.

Resilience Tools—At Motorola, we've created a web-based Resilience Tool Kit (scheduled launch was October 2004). The Kit contains self-assessments, web links, tips and facts, and information on how to connect with all available resilience resources on-site. Additionally, we have developed a four-part resilience curriculum, and trained about 40 Wellness, Occupational Health and EAP staff to deliver the hour long classes on-site at our US locations. The curriculum focuses on three areas where employees can work on behavior enhancement; "Taking responsibility," "Reframing," and "Social Support." Along with a Resilience 101 overview, each component of the curriculum contains a business case for wellness and an overview of resilience. Delivery of these courses began in Q3 of 2004. We are beginning to collect data on how employees perceive these classes, and we hope to be able to eventually link improvements in resilience to overall corporate employee engagement data. Additionally, an interactive on-line resilience curriculum was being developed by an external resource, and was to be made available at no cost to employees by the end of 2004.

our own Resilience. Most of us already do many of the identified activities but few of us do all of them. Yet health promotion and wellness professional frequently face many challenges that virtually demand high levels of Resilience. (i.e., minimal budgets, wavering management support, overcoming the "instant gratification" culture, reducing the effects of "learned helplessness." to mention a few) In addition, as mentioned earlier, the real power of teaching and learning often comes through the credibility of personal examples. How better to help others enhance their own Resilience than by using our own personal examples?

Perhaps it is even more important that health promoters have high levels of Resilience in order to continue over time to lead in strength instead of possibly burn-out as we confront the many challenges of a larger culture that actively resists many of the core concepts of health promotion and wellness.

Conclusion

This expanded construct of Resilience is intended to offer a practical way that a number of important health issues that often get lost in programming can be addressed in a coherent manner. The construct will likely evolve as we learn more, but Resilience does provide a useful context to conveniently add issues important to health and well-being for our working populations.

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About the Wellness Councils of America

The Wellness Councils of America is one of North America's most trusted voices on the topic of worksite wellness. With over a decade of experience, WELCOA is widely recognized and highly regarded for its innovative approach to worksite wellness. Indeed, through its internationally recognized "Well Workplace" awards initiative, WELCOA has helped hundreds of companies transform their corporate cultures and improve the health and well-being of their most valuable asset—their employees.