



Managing the peaks and troughs of your career

Bad days. Crap days. Days when you don't feel like getting out of bed and going to work, or once you get there, wish you had stayed in bed. We all have them, particularly when work is stressful and overly challenging

As an EA, much of how your work day flows is impacted by your boss' mood and how things are going for them. Their bad day may trigger a bad day for you. Alternatively, you may be on the hunt for your next role and find the slow progress frustrating, having just been knocked back for a role you really wanted. How you respond to a bad day will either make it worse or better.

WHICH WILL YOU CHOOSE?

Do you ruminate and let yourself spiral into the 'bad day funk', making the day worse for everyone around you, or do you find a way around it or through it? We all know those people at work who you are warned to steer clear of when they are having a bad day so you don't get caught in the cross fire. This reputation impacts their professional identity and leadership ability.

On the other end of the spectrum are people, who in the face of incredible adversity, appear remarkably calm and in control and are able to bounce back, reframe what has happened to make it easier for them to accept, and move on.

RESILIENCE IS A LEARNED BEHAVIOUR

In a world that's constantly changing and throwing up obstacles and challenges, this ability to withstand stress and adversity and be resilient is critical. Taking this approach doesn't mean you ignore how you feel or that you don't experience stress, sadness or hurt. It's about how you respond to it. People who are resilient have a way of recognising what's created the 'bad day', reframing what it means and so adapting to the changed circumstances.

CHECK YOUR APPROACH

It helps to identify your natural style for handling challenging situations – both at work and in the home environment. Check your approach by answering the questions below.

■ How physically, mentally and emotionally resilient are you?

The more flexible and adaptable you are, the more likely you are to see change, uncertainty and disruption as an opportunity to work through.

- **How tolerant are you to ambiguity and disorder?**
Today's working world is constantly changing. The more you are able to understand how you react, the better able you'll be to determine the best approach to manage.
- **How do you react when things go wrong?**
How you react to mistakes is a hallmark of whether you have a fixed or growth mindset. Having a growth mindset is a key to thriving through change.
- **How attuned are you to the needs of others?**
This is about broadening your field of view when things are changing, so that you don't only focus on what it means for you, but consider others and how you can help them.
- **Are you willing to invest in acquiring new skills/capabilities to make you more effective?**
Adapting to new circumstances and work environments often requires you to do things differently, including learning new skills and capabilities. You need to be prepared to put in effort.

LEVERAGING YOUR RESILIENCE

The good news is there are actions you can take every day and, in particular, on your bad day, to bounce back. When you have a bad work day or get unwelcome news that makes you feel like you are on the back foot, here are eight actions to help you put your best foot forward.

■ Understand yourself

Examine the mindset you are applying to the situation. Letting assumptions drive your thought processes and, ultimately, behaviour can negatively impact how you view the day, your decision making and interactions with colleagues and stakeholders.

Consider: Are you approaching the work issue with a fixed or growth mindset?

■ Get connected

Maintaining strong connections with friends and family – sharing how you feel, talking to people and being open about experiences is critical for your health and well-being. It gets even better when you help others – because doing something nice for others helps you feel good about yourself.

Consider: Who can I reach out to today to talk to or offer help?

■ Focus your energy wisely

Be clear on what you can and can't change at work. It's easy to spend a lot of time focusing on the things you can't change, rather than directing your energy towards the things you can change. Similarly, when you face an unwelcome situation work through the options and what decisions you can and can't make. Feeling like you have a choice as to your response puts you in a more

positive state.

Consider: Are you focusing too much on things you can't control with your career?

■ Reframe the game

Be curious and have an open mind about the issue you are facing. Reflect on how you are feeling and what's driving the feeling. Investigating issues through multiple lenses helps you see things from different perspectives. This, in turn, helps you realise that your view may be negatively skewed.

Consider: What alternative ways can I look at this issue?

■ Get busy, on purpose

As Socrates said: "Beware the barrenness of a busy life". It's easy to be busy, and yet get to the end of the day feeling like little progress has been made. The alternative is to strive to find purpose and meaning in your life. People with a clear sense of purpose are generally happier and more resilient as they have identified goals and areas of focus.

Consider: What inspires me and encourages me to do what I do, and how does this career choice align with my purpose?

■ Learn often and always

Learn from your mistakes and view mistakes as an opportunity to experiment, learn and grow, rather than viewing them as a failure. This includes recognising when things go wrong that you are a not failure, you just happened to not succeed on this occasion.

Consider: What can I learn from this event and what would I do differently next time?

■ Be grateful

Adopt a gratitude mantra because expressing gratitude is scientifically proven to help you feel happier, more resilient and less stressed. This includes finding time to laugh and, at the end of each day, writing down three things you are grateful for and why.

Consider: What are my intentions today and what am I grateful for?

■ Practice self-care

Exercise often, eating well and meditating are all key ingredients for releasing the pressure valve. When an event arises, notice the feeling and ask yourself what triggered it. Take the time to stop, breath, reflect and then respond to the event which caused the stress, rather than immediately reacting to it.

Consider: How have I taken care of myself today?

Life is a series of ups and downs – particularly when it comes to your career. Living life through the peaks and troughs successfully and sustainably requires constant awareness, acceptance and action. ☘

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THE EXPERT

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