Ten Ways Leaders Can Connect Resilience and Empathy

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The daily work routine can be exhausting for employees, especially when they feel overwhelmed, stressed or burned out. Feelings of isolation, stress or burnout at work are common and can tax employees' mental health and physical and emotional well-being. In fact, a recent World Economic Forum & McKinsey survey found that 28% of U.S. employees reported symptoms of burnout, among the highest levels in the world.[1] Employers can help their employees by addressing resiliency in the workplace and learning how they can lead with empathy to help create a workplace culture where employees feel supported, respected and motivated.

Resilience refers to the ability to overcome setbacks, adapt to change and maintain a positive outlook in challenging situations. Empathy is vital as a leader as it allows you to understand your employee's feelings and perspectives and use that understanding to guide actions.

Addressing resilience in the workplace and leading with empathy go hand in hand. As a leader, you can play a crucial role in nurturing resilience among your team members while demonstrating empathy.

Here's How Employers Can Help:

1 **Foster Open Communication:** Encourage open and honest communication within your team. Create a safe space where employees can express their concerns, share challenges, and seek support when needed. Be open and approachable: Actively listen to their perspectives and validate their feelings. Be open to feedback and criticism and use it as an opportunity to learn and grow as a leader.

2 **Provide Psychological Support:** Recognize that everyone faces difficulties and setbacks at some point. Be attuned to signs of stress or burnout among your team members and offer support. Check in regularly to ask how they are doing and steer them to company-provided resources for managing stress, such as access to counseling or wellness programs.

3 **Set Realistic Expectations:** Help your team members develop a realistic understanding of expectations and workloads. Clearly communicate goals and objectives and provide the necessary resources and support to help them achieve them. Avoid overloading individuals with excessive work or unrealistic deadlines, leading to burnout.

1. *Employee burnout levels are rising, what can businesses do? | World Economic Forum (weforum.org)*

4 **Encourage Self-Care:** Emphasize the importance of self-care and work-life balance. Encourage your team members to prioritize their well-being by taking breaks, engaging in activities they enjoy outside work and maintaining healthy habits. Lead by example and demonstrate the importance of self-care in your own life.

5 **Promote Learning and Growth:** Create a culture of continuous learning and growth within your team. Encourage employees to view setbacks as opportunities for learning and development. Provide constructive feedback and highlight training and development opportunities.

6 **Listen Actively:** Listen actively when your employees come to you with concerns or ideas. Put away distractions and focus on what they are saying. Paraphrase what they said to help ensure you understand and ask follow-up questions to show that you care about their perspectives.

7 **Show Appreciation:** Recognize your employees' efforts and accomplishments and express your gratitude for their contributions to the team. This will help them feel valued and motivated to continue doing their best work. Celebrate team milestones and accomplishments.

8 **Practice Emotional Intelligence:** Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand and manage your own emotions and recognize and influence the emotions of those around you. Pay attention to your feelings and how they affect your interactions. Try to regulate your emotions and respond calmly and empathetically, even in challenging situations.

9 **Foster a Sense of Community:** Encourage employee teamwork and collaboration. Create opportunities for socializing and bonding, such as team-building activities or company events.

10 **Show Empathy and Understanding:** Demonstrate empathy by acknowledging the challenges and emotions that your team members may be experiencing. Be understanding and compassionate when they face setbacks or encounter difficulties. Offer support, encouragement and guidance to help them navigate through challenging times.

By addressing resilience in the workplace and leading with empathy, a leader can create a supportive environment where individuals feel empowered to overcome obstacles, adapt to change and thrive professionally and personally.

About the Author

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Dr. Axler is a board-certified child, adolescent and adult psychiatrist with more than 30 years of experience in academic, private practice and insurance settings. He is a Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association. He serves on several executive committees and organizations, including the Georgia Psychiatric Physicians Association and the Georgia Council on Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

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