

Hi everyone and thank you for being here today for this presentation—Become mentally fit, building resilience muscles.

Some of the objectives for today—understand how thoughts play a role in impeding our performance more than our ability. Learn how to curate the right mood and thoughts before entering stressful situations. Modulate our own physiology by practicing deep breathing. Conduct an in-the-moment self-assessment to identify changes to be made. And cultivate a curious lens to look at a situation from different perspectives.

Ok, so, I want you guys to just first start off by reflecting on a recent time that you have felt stressed or challenged by change. I'm going to give you a couple of seconds there just to think of the most recent time that you felt stressed. How did it affect you? And how could your life improve by increasing your levels of personal resilience?

And now I want you to reflect about what you think is resilience, what your beliefs are on resilience. Is it nature? Or, is it nurture? So just think as to if this is something we are born with or is this something that we gain throughout life? Maybe think where your beliefs come from, what you think about each? What are your pointers? Just giving you a couple of seconds there to think about that. So, the truth is that nobody is born with resilience; babies are the opposite of resilience. So, resilience, it emerges through your life experiences, your thoughts, and the beliefs you adopt about yourself and your place in the world. Resilient people are not invincible, but they develop resilience by their ability to recover from events that cast it or challenge them. They do not allow such events to break them or defeat them. This suggests to us that resilience can be nurtured and as like any muscle which can be strengthened with effort and focus and allowing ourselves to make the right choice.

So, these are just a couple of questions again and I want you to reflect and take note on your answers. So, the current crisis right now, coronavirus—adapting to change, facing uncertainty, and dealing with stress can take its toll on our energy levels and ability to remain resilient in the face of adversity. So, how would you have described your mental fitness before the crisis? And how would you describe it now? Is it different? Is it the same? I know it's impacted a lot of people, and so I'm assuming that definitely there's been some changes in your life. How did you adapt to these changes? Where do you feel like your mental state is at? Where was it, you know, before? And where is it now? Is it in a worse place? Is it in a better place? Just to think about that.

Now today we'll focus on five muscles. One is accepting personal accountability, developing a belief system that encourages and supports success, accurately and objectively assess your moods and blind spots, perfect your deep-breathing technique, and curate curiosity to view situations from different angles. These represent a combination of skills and choices; some will come more naturally to you and otherwise others will require practice to allow you to develop these more healthy habits. The important message to remember is that these can all be strengthened.

So, it starts with you. Resilience is self-made and starts with yourself. If you lack self-discipline, regulation, and awareness, you may make snap judgments and assumptions in a difficult situation. If you lack self-assertion and respect, you may find it difficult to set limits, say no, and manage the expectations of others. If you lack self-value and worth, you may not prioritize your own health and self-care and put everybody's needs before your own. If you lack self-empowerment and self-purpose, you may struggle to identify with your own sense of connection and gratitude, and purpose in life and struggle to find a healthy perspective of what is important to you. So, this starts with you. Take a moment now to focus on something or someone that is bothering you, causing you stress, annoyance, or frustration and that you're blaming for how you feel in this moment. What was it? Maybe a constant stream of emails, the colleague who you can never agree with, a loved one who never listens, the morning commute today. Are these situations and people causing these emotions? So, no, we're choosing them. We cannot choose how other people behave or the situations we encounter in life, but we can always choose how we respond. And this is typical for living a resilient lifestyle. All of this comes down to the simple fact of personal accountability. Circumstances may trigger you in some way, but the trigger can't control how you react. Only you can do this yourself. If you don't control it when you're giving your power away to someone or something else, it's called *victimism*. We also come to this disease at various times in our life. We feel sorry for ourselves and we look around to see who or what we can blame for how we feel.

To increase your self-awareness and consider how competent you are in being personally accountable, here are 10 introspective questions for you to go through to start to consider your level of personal accountability, responsibility, and ownership. Be open and honest with your answers. So, one, do I spend more time whining or working? Do I more often procrastinate or push forward? Am I envious of others' achievements or eager to emulate them and learn? Do I live an entitled life? Or am I excited to earn my own way? Do I tend to point fingers or

problem solve? Do I encourage and praise my family, friends, and coworkers? Or do I tear them down? When life doesn't go my way, do I play the victim or become a victor? Which matters most, others' opinion of me or my opinion of myself? How often do I complain versus offer constructive ideas? Am I wasting energy trying to change others instead of choosing to change myself? Just going to give you a minute or two to take a look at these, answer them for yourself. These are very interesting questions to really see if you take accountability. OK?

So, personal accountability isn't a trait that people are born with, as I've mentioned before, it's a way of living that you can learn. It is the belief that you are fully responsible for your own actions and consequences. When you're personally accountable, you take ownership of situations that you're involved in and you see them through and you take responsibility for what happens, good or bad. You don't blame others if things go wrong, instead, you do your best to make things right. In time, you'll build new skills and better ways to deal with difficult situations and people and, as a result, keep your integrity, perception, and overall performance and happiness in check. So, one, know your role. It's almost impossible to be personally accountable if you do not have clarity and expectation about what you are responsible for. If this is the case for you, seek confirmation as to expectations of your role and what it should include, where the boundaries are, and ask questions about any ambiguous areas. You can apply the same strategy in your home life too. Ask questions and make sure that all parties are clear so that you know moving forward what you are responsible for. The second one is show humility. Success, effectiveness, and happiness all usually come hand in hand with complete honesty with ourselves, meaning an ability to demonstrate humility when you've made a mistake. Nobody's perfect and it's vital to be able to put aside your pride when necessary. Avoid blaming others and focus on your contribution to the situation and what you can learn about this situation. Third, own your mistakes. Accountability doesn't stop with personal humility and honesty. If something has gone wrong and you're responsible, you need to step up and right the wrong. Your focus needs to be on rectifying mistakes through communication and sincerity, being open and honest as opposed to defensive. This allows everyone to feel respected and move on towards a shared goal rather than becoming consumed by the problem. Four, manage your time. So, effective time management is skilled—is a skill that many need to actively work on. An inability to manage time effectively means that procrastination and delaying accountability or taking responsibility can often occur, resulting in others needing to take ownership and control. It's important to be proactive and prompt in tackling issues to make sure that you are not perceived as somebody who deflects or delays dealing with the problem. Five,

manage expectations. If failed to realistically manage expectations, you are setting yourself up for a fall and potentially will let yourself or somebody else down. Be mindful saying yes without being certain that you can meet expectations and fulfill the request. When you say yes, you are therefore accountable for that commitment. Setting boundaries and saying no contributes towards effective time management and prioritizing. And six, ask and listen. Accountability can open up powerful learning opportunities but only if you unlock the door. Whether you overcommit, take on something without asking questions, or mismanage your time, asking for feedback can provide you the key opportunities to learn and ensure you don't have a repeat performance. Try to get into the habit of looking back on accomplishments and your level of success, reflecting on what could have been done differently.

So, managing your beliefs—so, four core beliefs are the very essence of how we see ourselves, other people, the world, and the future. They often motivate our behavior and how we respond to people around us. It is often our beliefs that keep us stuck in repetitive cycles that adversely impact our thoughts, values, and behaviors. If we take a closer look at some of our beliefs, some of our core beliefs start to be shaped when we are tiny babies and develop through childhood as our experiences grow. These core beliefs are like a lens or a filter we look through that interpret beliefs about yourself, other people, and the world. Your core beliefs are called *core* because they are the center of what we believe. They are also called *iceberg beliefs* as what you don't see is what's below the surface. In order to cope with these core beliefs, we develop rules and assumptions that guide our behavior. In reality by the time we reach adult life, most of our core beliefs already exist even if we are not conscious of them—they are there beneath the surface.

It's important to make the connection between your behavior and their roots, not so you can dwell on the past and become even more anxious and depressed, but so you can build resilience, shape your future, and challenge your core beliefs. Resilience is the mental toughness to face and overcome adversity. It will keep you up and running a long time after others have given up. Nothing is more important to success than resilience. At the core of building resilience, is the need to recognize that our own beliefs and attitudes are fundamental to our resilience, and to build our resilience, we need each to understand the relationship between the external world and our internal world.

So, by becoming more self-aware of your beliefs and subsequent response at first or challenging situations, you have choices in the future as to how you react

and can change the result and emotional and behavioral consequences. The results in doing so will be to increase your resilience. Increase your resilience to adverse situations and enable you to positively manage change and be significantly more in control of your destiny. Core beliefs tend to fall under three main categories. Achievement—so I must always get it right. Mistakes are seen as failures—you forget someone's name you met once last year and you think you're stupid, just as an example. Acceptance is the strong need to be liked, accepted, and praised and included by others, so people who say I always want people to like me. I'm in control—people can feel uncomfortable when things are not in their control and unsuccessful things is seen as a failure. So, for example, saying being uncertain is absolutely awful.

Here are some examples of common beliefs and rules. I want you to think which of these contribute to the way you think, do they work for you? How do they affect your relationships in daily living? So, just up on the side—I have a little control for what happens to me. People can't be trusted. The world is dangerous. Never ask for help; it's a sign of weakness. It's easier to avoid difficulties rather than to do something about them. I must be lied to everyone. I must do everything perfectly. Things should be fair. There are just some examples of automatic negatives thoughts.

When something happens, our first automatic thought may be more negative and unhelpful. Some psychologists believe the mind focuses on more negative details as a form of self-protection. Our ancient ancestors had to prepare themselves for the worst as the world they lived in was full of danger. Modern living does not have the same level of hazards, but that's the way our minds have evolved, it takes more effort to see the positive. This is often referred to as ANPS or automatic negative thoughts. It helps to learn what kind of unhelpful thinking habits you have—you have come to use automatically. Your moods may also be a signal; they tend to make us make a major conclusion based on inadequate or incomplete information. That is why they are unhelpful. Instead, start to feed your ant eater. So ANP, automatic negative thoughts—firstly, echo back the belief, repeat it back to yourself, or rate it down. Next, rate it down by asking questions, like is it true? Is the negative thought true? Can I absolutely know that it is true? Am I confusing thoughts with facts? Am I making assumptions or jumping to conclusions? What are the advantages and disadvantages of thinking this way? Am I exaggerating? Am I being overly negative? Am I condemning myself as a person because of one event? Tackle the belief you think the answers to the questions then evaluate objectively using the evidence gathered, and then, rectify the belief.

A mood is part of your emotional rhythm but a little less intense than an emotion. It is usually, has a trigger, such as an event or experience. Your mood may be something that you've tried to achieve, such as peacefulness from doing yoga, or something over which you feel you have no control, such as annoyance about a parking ticket, and it may last only a short while or hang around. Understanding your moods may help you work out what causes them and how you tend to behave when you are in different moods. You probably know that you feel good when you are in a positive mood, such as when you feel content, loving, or excited. And you probably know you feel much worse when you're in a negative mood, such as when you feel anxious, disgusted, or annoyed. Your moods are useful to you, and they are big part of how you choose to behave and think. A negative mood can be a useful indicator of a problem that needs to be tackled. Most moods pass within a day or so and even in a hot mood, you can still go about your daily activities, but if down or dark moods are significantly disrupting your life, it's important that you seek help.

It's important to identify the specific emotions you're experiencing instead of saying to yourself that you're stressed out. Ask yourself, what are you really feeling? Name or label the feeling. Are you frustrated, worried, overwhelmed, angry, frightened? Is there a pattern in your reaction to the specific event or people? For example, do you get impatient and upset if you have to stand in long lines, get stuck in traffic, etcetera? Do you get irritated or others have expectations that you have trouble meeting? Are you frustrated that you don't have some time to yourself each day? Do you get anxious when you are given many tasks to do at work? By identifying and labelling the specific feelings, you'll be able to understand your reactions and have more insight into the options that will help the stress or resolve the situation.

So, take a moment to pause and stop gives you the opportunity to assess your current mood and to check your state. A good acronym to remember is STOP. So, S would stand for begin by stopping and taking stock. Put down everything you're doing. Turn away from your computer. Shut off any distractions, Bring yourself to the present moment by asking yourself, what is my experience right now? What are my thoughts? What am I saying to myself? What images are coming to mind? What are my feelings? Do I feel enjoyment, neutral, upset, excited, sad, mad? What are my physical sensations? Muscle tightness, lightness, shallow breath—now take a breath. Gently direct your full attention to breathing—to each inhale, each exhale. Breathe normally and naturally and follow your breath coming in and out of your nose. Perhaps, follow your breathing

with your internal dialogue. Think in as you inhale and out as you exhale. Take a full minute to connect with your breath. And observe your experience just as it is, including thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Reflect on what is on your mind now; gently remind yourself that thoughts are not facts—they are not permanent. Notice any emotions present and how they are being expressed in the body. So, what is your posture? Are you slumped in your chair? Are your shoulders rigid? Do you feel neck tension or body pains? Notice any sensation with curiosity and wonder. Let your attention now move to the world around you, sensing how things are right now at this moment. Rather than reacting habitually, be opened, curious, and respond naturally with no expectations of the outcome. And now, proceed. So, proceed with something that will support you in the moment either talking to a friend, getting a good stretch, have a good cup of tea, coffee, and return to your day with a renewed sense of calm. So, this exercise can be really helpful during moments of stress or when it's needed—to just take a moment to stop.

Now, another one, breathing—sit in a relaxed but upright position that you feel you can comfortably maintain for about 3 minutes. Rest your hands lightly on your thighs or wherever it feels right for you. Place your feet flat on the floor; you're supported and calm. You can also try this practice lying down or sitting on the floor. Notice the rise and fall of your gentle, natural breath. Where do you feel it most? In your nose? Your throat? Chest? Belly? Be aware of any part of your body in contact with a surface. Observe the air going in and out of your body. Your breath is your anchor to return to recenter yourself at any time. Trust your breath. Now, count each breath up to 20.

Now, another one is visualization. So, close your eyes and move into a soft gaze whichever feels right to you. Imagine it's early morning and you're standing at the lake. Everything is quite still and peaceful. You breathe in the fresh air and fill your lungs completely. Take another breath in through your nose, hold, and breathe out completely, letting your body relax with each cycle. It is a cool and comfortable morning full of possibilities. The sun is just rising and filtering through the leaves of the trees surrounding the lake. You look out at the water and it's like glass; it's so still and quiet. Your body relaxes more as you take in the beauty of the lake, the water, the trees, the sounds. You hear birds in the distance. You feel relaxed and calm in this place. Take a moment to picture this scene; notice the details of nature around you. Now gently stretch if this feels right. Slowly count back from 10 as you become more fully aware of right here and right now and notice your natural breath in and out. So, these are just a couple exercises to do that can be helpful.

Moving forward, curiosity helps to fuel the ability to bounce back, to know yourself and the world around you, and to thrive in the face of adversity. The good news is that curiosity like resilience can be cultivated and learned. In fact, the pursuit of deep knowledge or at least deeper knowledge in an area that interests you is a great place to start. Benefits include, benefits can include so—curiosity brings us a beginner's mind to look at the system of our performance like a scientist wondering what makes that system pure. It allows us to access more of our brain for learning, for activities, and problem solving. It naturally reduces fear like the fear that we won't like what we'll find if we honestly analyze our stress-coping style. It helps to manage the denial we form to protect ourselves. It can help us break out of old patterns to create new healthier ones. It brings us rewards so dopamine activity in our brain reward center and a shot of natural opius.

Curiosity gives people a fresh perspective that allows them to find answers to problems that others might miss. Here are some top ways to build your curiosity, so eliminate the sense of "I'm bored." The more you say you're bored, the less opportunity your mind has to grow. If you look at something and find it boring, you're not looking hard enough. Stuck in the waiting room and bored out of your mind, then grab a magazine you would never read otherwise and read an article that peaks your interest. Strike up a conversation with a stranger and ask them to tell you an interesting story. Watch the mannerism of the people around you and be fascinated by their own personal quirks. Choose to search for the positive, so if you expect something to be dreadfully boring, it will be. If you tell yourself you'll have no fun, then you won't. Instead of agonizing during a traffic jam, take the opportunity to call a friend and catch up or listen to a few chapters of a good audiobook. Expecting things to be fun and interesting will help you develop a positive mindset that is more opened to new ideas. And then, question everything. So, could you tell me why the sky is blue? Do you know why bugs are responsible for the insects that sting when darkness falls? Have you ever wondered what your dog does at home while you're at work during the day? Why does it keep us longer to begin a chore than it takes us to actually complete it? Pay more attention; life is full of questions. Live in the present and notice the things that fascinate you most. Solve the mysteries that you can't stop thinking about. And then, do something different. Do you usually listen to hard rock while you're at work? Try to work while listening to smooth jazz, classical music, or R&B. Do you usually stick with self-help and autobiographies? Then read a trashy romance novel or horror book. Do you usually stick with mainstream movies? Find an independent theater and watch a foreign film. You'll never really

know if you don't like something until you give it a fair chance. And then lastly, conquer fear. Most people stick with the same old, same old because they're afraid to try something different. Change can be a scary thing when we become so used to routine—that we don't even have to think about it. The more curious you are, the less afraid you will be. Focus on the positive outcomes when you try something new. So, for example, let's say you're interested in theater arts, decided to audition for a play for the first time ever, got cast, and now, it's opening night. Don't think about how embarrassed you would be if you forgot your lines. Instead, visualize blooming applause and a standing ovation at curtain call.

So, I hope that this presentation has been helpful for you. Please remember that your employee assistance program is there for you to reach out at any time. It's free; it's always available 24/7— confidential, so if you do need support on this topic or anything else, please feel free to reach out and see what kind of support that you can get. We will be pleased to be there for you and guide you the right way, 24/7.

Thank you for being here. I hope that this was helpful and have a good day.