

Hi everyone. Thank you for being here for this presentation today: Know Your Strengths—Focus on What You Can Control.

Some of the learning objectives will be to emphasize the importance of resilience, understand the role of strengths, identify your strengths, and focus on what you can control.

So, when we're facing high levels of uncertainty and change, it can feel quite overwhelming. Chronic stress can rewire the brain to think in a more negative way, shifting our perception of ourselves and the world. All this can make us feel more powerless and less positive. But, by knowing our strengths and drawing on these during difficult times, we can feel empowered.

So, what is resilience? The ability to bounce back in the face of adversity, remembering that this too shall pass, holding the negative and positive side by side, built by positive emotions, it's an attitude, it's a muscle that we can build, and it can be a way of life. And it needs, it's like any other muscle, right? So, it needs to be used and worked to get stronger and the importance of constantly striving to grow.

Resilient people tend to use the strengths they have. For different people, those are different, so, some people have a great personality. For other people, it's the intellectually talented or possessing some sort of talent or real work ethic. They use that to grab on to get through whatever is in front of them. Strengths may be tasks or actions that you can do well; talents, knowledge, and skills; personality traits. And people use these traits and abilities in their daily lives to complete work, relate with others, and to achieve goals. It's important to know that everybody has them. Everyone has strengths, but not everyone knows them. So, each of us has a unique profile of strengths. Being confident and knowing what we are good at helps us approach situations with a strength mindset. Instead of looking at scenarios and feeling worried, and feeling worried about what we don't have, we can call on the talents that we do have and leverage those strengths to get us through. Increased awareness of your strengths can help you to respond more creatively to challenges. So, if for example, we may need to have a difficult negotiation, instead of feeling worried about not being good at confrontation, we can feel empowered that we are good at planning, and we can run through some

scenarios in our head before we approach the negotiation to feel better prepared, right?

So, what are your strengths? So, I'd like for you to take a pen and paper and complete the sentence. Remember, strengths are not only things you are good at but also things that are good about you. OK? So, what are your strengths? Just name your top strengths. Are you aware of when and where you're using them in your personal life and professional life? If you are in a work environment where some of your top strengths are underutilized, look for opportunities to develop them more fully. Once you know your own strengths, you can be more intentional about the choices you make when you're faced with obstacles. You can also identify the resources you need to compensate for your weaknesses, OK? So, I'd just like for you guys to all take a couple of minutes, write down your top strengths, maybe just five. OK?

These might just be a couple of examples. So, if you're having a hard time, hopefully you are finding some things that are very genuine to you—things that kind of come up right away. But if you're having a little bit more of a hard time, to note these things, these strengths, while this is just a list of some good characteristics. I'm just going to leave that up there for a minute.

OK. Moving forward. So, reflect back on the year so far. What personal skills have helped you overcome challenges that you faced? So, maybe think in your head of a challenge that you faced this year. I mean, one thing that we've all faced is COVID. So, you know, one thing, a challenge of this year. If you can't think of one quickly, think of COVID—how it's impacted your life, how, you know, the changes that have happened due to this in your life, and what personal skills you've used, what strengths you've drawn on to help you through this time? And, also, how you've helped others during this time, either personally or professionally? So, just to help you draw on your strengths, just another exercise if you're having a hard time with that list, you know, maybe you want to think about different challenges you've been through in your life and what has helped you through these, these challenges, what has helped you push forward, what has helped you, you know, cope. And these are all things that would be kind of classified as your strengths. Even if it's going to seek some counseling, your strength would be that you're resourceful, that for having thought of needing extra

support, reaching out to that support, and following through with that support. So, being resourceful, being open, just as an example.

So, what does your list look like? If you don't yet have at least ten items on your list, persevere until you get there, OK? So, just write a couple more things that you can think of. OK? Hopefully, we're all at ten items.

So, now just to know, was that easy or hard to do for you? Think of, you know, if things came up quite easily. You were done even before I finished talking. Or, if it was quite hard, you had to look at that list to get some, you know, extra ideas to come up with this list. Do you feel that you would have found it easier to come up with the list of your weaknesses?

So, take things you don't like doing, and find a way of using your highest strength. Know what you're best at, knowing what you're best at and using them at work. Designing your life not to correct your weaknesses but to use your strengths more. Take challenges that you may be facing in your life. See how you can leverage on your strengths to not only overcome those challenges but also to enjoy the journey of doing that. And this is just a quick survey not to do now but, you know, whenever you get the chance to see your character strengths. OK?

So, doing, the doing part is what is visible to others, and, so often, that is what we focus on, OK? The doing part of me. What shows up here. But the strength really comes from the being part, quite like in a building where the strength comes from the foundation, OK? So, on this illustration here, that being part of me is at the very bottom, meaning it's, it's the foundation, OK? It's what's going to help us.

Balance your seesaw: strengths and weaknesses. So, it's knowing that, you know, your strength plays, your strengths and your weaknesses, yes, are important, but balancing that. So, knowing both and being able to balance both and have that, really have that balance like the seesaw.

So, resilient people take responsibility for their own lives. They choose their response to what happens around them. They focus on what they can change or influence, what they have control over and what they don't. So, one really can't control anything outside of oneself. Helplessness and hopelessness arise because people feel a lack of control. They don't know what's happening; there's

nothing they can do. So, there will always be things one will not be able to control. The key is to recognize what it is that, what it is that one can control, and focus on just that. Your company may shut down, or your department may shut down. You may lose your job. You can't control the economy, the performance of the company, etcetera. You can control your response to this situation, how you interpret the situation, and how much significance you give it in your life. You can choose to play victim and say, "What can I do? The department shut down. The world is such an unfair place. Poor me. Now what will happen to me, my life, my family?" Or, you can choose to say that "this happened. It was not because of you but "how do I put together a plan to make the best of this less than perfect situation? How do I bounce back?" OK. So, it's just about reframing the mind. Of course, this is not to devalue, and I understand it's unfair, OK? And, you can have some emotions, frustrations, sadness, whatever it is in regard to that, but, you know, we've got to move forward and using your strengths to do that. OK?

So, reactive people don't take responsibility for their own lives. They feel victimized. They feel they are products of their circumstances, their past and other people. They do not see the creative forces within them. So, reactive people say, "There's nothing I can do" versus resilient people and proactive people will say, "Let's look at our alternatives." Reactive people may say, "That's just the way I am." Resilient people will say, "I can choose a different approach." Reactive people will say, "It makes me so mad." Resilient people will say, "I control my own feelings." Reactive people will say, "I must." Resilient people will say, "I prefer." Reactive people say, "If only," and resilient people will say, "I will." So, it's really the way that you frame things that's quite important, and it will have an impact on your choice of behavior, OK? Choosing to be more proactive, more positive rather than focusing on the negative stuff.

Think about a recent challenge you've faced again. What aspects are out of your control? You can go back to that same one that you thought before, or think of something else. What aspects were out of your control? Or you can think of a challenge right now. So, what aspects are out of your control? How can you develop a plan to not be reactive to these? And, so, what aspects are in your control? How can you develop a plan to be proactive and influence these in a positive way? So, I'm going to give you two minutes to think about these questions. And it's very important to have this approach with every challenge that you face, OK?

OK? So, how do people explain bad events? People who think habitually that bad events go away in time, are they habitually better off and less helpless? If you have a break-up, do you tell yourself you're unlovable, which is permanent, or that the partner is fickle, which is about the other person and not in your control. If you fail in a test, do you tell yourself "I'm stupid," or will you say, which is permanent, or will you say you're bad at math, which is just about one specific situation. OK? So, it's important to take a look at these three dimensions that constitute vulnerability to bad events. Is it temporary or permanent? Is it pervasive or localized? Is it controllable or uncontrollable? Pessimists will be more of the mindset that it's permanent, pervasive, personal, uncontrollable. Optimists will say it's temporary, local, not personal, and controllable—will look at things that are controllable. OK? Again, how do you frame your bad events, what do you take out of your bad events, your challenges?

So, to conclude, for strengthening your resilience muscle, you've got to know your strengths, and you have to focus on what you can control. So, if you can take something out of this presentation it would be these things: know your strengths and focus on what you can control. And to remember, it's a muscle, OK? So, you've got to use it; you've just got to continue using it.

If you do need additional assistance, we are your Employee Assistance Program. We are here 24/7, around the clock. And, so, be sure to give us a call if you're looking to talk further about any issues relating to this topic, any issues regarding anything else that's going on in your personal life—if you're impacted by COVID—whatever it is, whatever comes up for you. Any kind of support you are looking for, please feel free to reach out to your Employee Assistance Program, here 24/7 for you. It's a great advantage too, from your company benefits, that you have access to for free. And, so, definitely take advantage of that.

So, thank you again, everyone, for being present today. I hope that you took a lot out of this presentation, and you all take care. Thank you.