

## 12 Habits of Resilient People

### Looking after your own psychological wellbeing at work!

by Derek Mowbray BA., MSc., MSc(Econ)., PhD., DipPsych., CPsychol., CSci., FBPsS, FIHM., FISMA..

These habits will help your resilience and will enable you to stay in control of yourself and your working day. Apply them and you will find that you will have a more robust attitude towards the challenges you face during the working day.

**1. First thing in the morning – talk to yourself in the mirror in your bathroom. Tell yourself you'll have a brilliant day ahead.**

The brain responds best to self-talk. Talking out loud overrides silent talk (the imagination) and stops the imagination from doing what it likes doing often, which is thinking about things not going well. Stopping this is important.

So, talk to yourself, out loud, and tell yourself how fabulous you are and what a fantastic day you are about to experience. This will elevate your mood, and alerts the brain to look out for everything that goes well during the day – all the trivial things like the car starting first time, as well as the big things (the boss smiling! Or finding a car parking space first time). If you live in a household that thinks people talking to themselves is odd, then lock the bathroom door!

**2. At the beginning of the working day – complete the first task on your list. Then look at your emails.**

Avoid procrastination as you know you have to start work sometime, so don't go to the coffee machine and chat to your mates or waste time on social media. Instead, do the first task on the priority list you prepared last evening. You'll feel fantastic once that is completed and over. Now you can look at your emails and reward yourself with a coffee. You will be less stressed and under less pressure.

Completing tasks makes you feel great. It feeds your sense of wellbeing, particularly if you complete something first time, without interruptions and quickly.

**3. Be disciplined at work – lock away distractions such as social media and manage your emails and other forms of communications, don't allow them to manage you. You will find you have far more time for clear thinking and great work.**

Only check your emails when you have completed a task or at a time you have set for yourself. Let others know that you will be doing this and that they will not get an instant response. If you work in a noisy office, get a good, comfortable set of headphones.

If you sit next to a chatterbox, let them know that you need to concentrate or find somewhere quiet to tackle difficult projects.

Learn to say "no" when you need to and don't take on more than you can realistically do. Let your manager know if you are struggling with the workload.

**4. Mid morning – take a walk around your place of work.**

It is normally advisable to concentrate on something for about 50 minutes in each hour, if you can manage that. Not everyone is the same and not every task requires 50 minutes, but, in general, try to focus and concentrate for 50 minutes at a time. Then have a complete break for ten minutes. During the break go for a walk, stretch yourself, climb some stairs, get the circulation going. You'll feel better for this, and be better able to concentrate for the next 50 minutes.

5. During the morning – do some mindfulness exercises. Sit somewhere that is quiet and absorb everything that is around you. It will only take 5 minutes to make a big difference to the way you feel.

By this stage of the day you may be getting a little tense and your energy levels may be beginning the slip. An exercise to enable you to regain a sense of calm and get back in control of yourself is to sit quietly somewhere and focus hard on looking at all the different shapes, colours and materials that are within eyeshot, as well as listening out for all the different sounds that surround you. Smell all the different smells that you can pick up, and see how many different things you can sense. This is an exercise in mindfulness, which is about being in the present and concentrating hard on the present, not thinking about anything else but what is in the immediate vicinity.

#### **6. Lunchtime – choose a light lunch and then go for a walk**

Try and find something to eat that is both light and nutritious. The main aim is to eat food that energizes, as this time of the day could be a low point for many, in terms of energy and experiences from the morning. Once lunch is over, go for a walk outside. This will get the circulation going again and provide a real break in the day. Look on the walk as something refreshing. Take a companion with you on the walk so that you can talk about anything other than work.

Alternatively, if you do have a pressing issue that requires you to work out a solution, take a walk and think through the issue. Walk briskly; don't amble along, it doesn't do you as much good as walking quickly.

#### **7. After lunch – check your to do list. Work out what you can realistically achieve during the afternoon.**

The experiences of the morning might result in you feeling out of control over all the tasks you need to complete during the day as a whole. To get back into control again, write down the tasks you know you can realistically complete over the remainder of the day. It's important not to be over optimistic about what you can complete, as this will only build up anxiety and make the calming down process at the end of the day more challenging. You need to end the day with a triumph of completed tasks – that will make you feel as though the day has been worthwhile and terrific.

#### **8. Mid afternoon – at some point during the afternoon, close your eyes for five minutes and concentrate hard on your breathing.**

Try and find somewhere quiet, close your eyes and concentrate on your breathing. You may find that you think your breathing has stopped. It hasn't, so don't worry. You will find that it is difficult to concentrate on your breathing, and you'll need to force yourself to think and focus on your breathing, and get your wandering thoughts back onto your breathing. This has a calming effect, and gets you back in control of yourself.

#### **9. Late afternoon – stretch your legs and take a walk around your place of work**

Once again, take a walk, climb some stairs, stretch yourself. You may find it helpful to go through a series of exercises that stretch each of your limbs and your back. This time the focus is on tensing your muscles and relaxing them, so you are starting the relaxation process before the end of the working day. You may have an hour or so to go before going home and this walk and the stretching both starts the relaxation process and equips you to end the day on a high, completing all the tasks on your afternoon list with energy to spare.

**10. Before you finish work – plan for tomorrow. Make a note of the tasks you expect to complete tomorrow. Leave the list at your place of work.**

Part of the process of clearing the brain so you can relax is to prevent the mind from leaping ahead to all the issues and demands that may arise tomorrow. A way of dealing with this is to write down all the activities you expect to take place tomorrow, including the main tasks you are expected to complete. Place everything you expect to do in priority order (even though you know this may change first thing in the morning). The process of listing everything, thinking about the list and turning the list into a priority order list helps the brain to settle down, and enables you to remain in control of your hectic life.

To switch off from this, put the notebook away in a safe place. Say ‘goodbye, see you in the morning’, and switch off.

**11. Reflect on the day just passed – what did you learn today?**

After a day working, it is useful to clear the brain to be able to relax, and find the energy to do other things – domestic and recreational. Domestic life is hectic for many people, and a clear head is vital to tackle all the normal tasks, and these can be very demanding after a hard day work. So, a method of clearing the brain and putting the working day events to bed is to reflect on what has happened during the day, and to get the best from the reflection by asking yourself what you have learnt. There's nearly always something that we learn during the day, and sometimes what we have learnt needs 'digging out' from the recesses of the mind, so sitting down quietly and thinking about the day can start the relaxation process. It, also, clears the brain when you write down somewhere what you have learnt and put your notebook, away somewhere safe.

**12. End of the working day – breathe deeply down to your diaphragm – breathe in over 6 seconds, hold your breath for 12 seconds, breath out over 6 seconds.**

The end of the working day might signal the beginning of a hard working evening doing domestic tasks before being able to do nothing but relax. So, this exercise is to enable you to take the tension out of the body and get in control of yourself before going home. Deep breathing helps you maintain control over your anxiety and tension that might have built up over the day, arising from experiences and the behaviours of others to you during the day. So, do some deep breathing for about five minutes, and then continue to do the exercise as you walk to the car park or bus stop, and continue in the tube or whilst stationary at traffic lights, as the exercise can be done whilst you are on your journey home. You'll feel so much more relaxed by the time you get home.

Now you can turn your attention to matters domestic and recreational and **enjoy your evening!**

## Our programmes for Psychological Wellbeing and Performance - to help your organisation become a fabulous, high performing place to work

- Establishing and applying a strategy for wellbeing and performance
- Psychological Responsibility at Work
- Sharing Responsibility for Future Success amongst everyone in the workplace
- The BOLD leadership development programme
- The leader and manager's role in the prevention of stress.
- The leader and manager's role in the resilience of their teams
- Team resilience
- Personal resilience
- Brief Mindfulness
- Resilience train-the-trainer programmes – Personal Resilience and The Manager's Role in Resilience

Call 01242 241882 or email [barbara.leigh@mas.org.uk](mailto:barbara.leigh@mas.org.uk) to discuss running these programme in your organisation.



**Derek Mowbray** BA., MSc., MSc(Econ)., PhD., DipPsych., CPsychol., CSci., FBPsS, FIHM., FISMA..

Derek Mowbray is a Chartered Psychologist and Chartered Scientist with a doctorate in leadership. With CEO experience in public, private and voluntary sectors, Derek has held various top leadership positions prior to turning his attention to helping organisations understand the link between psychological wellbeing and performance.

Derek specialises in the primary prevention of stress at work (a major inhibitor to performance) by focusing on elevating psychological wellbeing in the workforce. He facilitates the application of The WellBeing and Performance Agenda, a framework that transforms organisations by focusing on the behaviours and actions of leaders so they provoke the workforce to thrive and perform at its peak.

With a special interest in organisation health psychology, which aims to harmonise the relationship between organisations and their workforce, Derek's specialties are building organisation-wide positive work cultures, the performance related behaviour of leaders and managers in relation to their employees and strengthening mental resilience.

He is the originator of **Psychological Responsibility**, which places on the individual a responsibility for feeling psychologically well, as well as a responsibility to do no psychological harm to others. He is, also, a sponsor of the method of '**sharing responsibility for the future success of the organisation**' as a principle underpinning organisational success and high achievement.

His work approaches and interventions are well recognised and adopted throughout the UK and internationally.

**Derek's mission is to create and sustain 'the workplace as a fabulous, high performing place to work'.**

## About MAS

Our work focuses on the prevention of stress at work. Why? Stress costs and inhibits performance!

There are three interlocking features that prevent stress at work –

- Creating and sustaining a culture and environment where managers and workforce are fully engaged with the organisation and are *provoked into peak performance*.
- Leaders and managers exhibiting the behaviours that encourage commitment, trust and engagement which will *provoke peak performance in others*.
- Building and sustaining personal resilience against challenging situations which will *provoke peak performance in individuals*.

**Our purpose** is to help organisations achieve peak performance and productivity; to strengthen corporate and personal resilience and to prevent stress from occurring in the first place.

**Our approach** is to help organisations establish psychologically healthy workplaces by facilitating the implementation of our WellBeing and Performance Agenda framework.

**We provide a range of help and services for organisations:**

- We undertake **organisational health and cultural assessments** that include an assessment of leadership and management styles and approaches.
- We provide **facilitated implementation of The Wellbeing and Performance Agenda** framework, with a focus on leadership, management and culture.
- We provide a **range of programmes** introducing a broad range of topics within the WellBeing and Performance Agenda, all **designed to help leaders, managers and the workforce bring about change**.
- We act as a '**critical friend**' to internal champions or ambassadors for wellbeing and performance, providing individual support as needed.

## Our Products:

### Personal Resilience ELearning

An in-depth e-learning programme designed to strengthen personal resilience.

<http://www.mas.org.uk/personal-resilience-elearning-programme.html>



### Derek Mowbray's Guides – innovative, practical resources

The Guide to the WellBeing and Performance Agenda

The Guide to Corporate Resilience

The Guide to Adaptive Leadership

The Guide to Psychological Responsibility

The Guide to The Manager's Role in Resilience

The Guide to Personal Resilience

The Guide to the Manager's Role in Stress Prevention

The Guide to Team Resilience

<http://www.mas.org.uk/publications.html>



### Our Questionnaires – available for use under licence

'Just how fabulous a manager are you?'

Quick Leadership Assessment Q (a mini 360° instrument)

The Adaptive Leadership Questionnaire

Emotional Intelligence

Behaviour Assessment Questionnaire

The Ethical Questionnaire

Organisational Cultural Assessment

Cultural Values Questionnaire

Corporate Values Questionnaire

Intelligent Behaviour@Work Questionnaire

The Wellbeing and Performance @ Work Questionnaire

Psychological Responsibility@Work Questionnaire

The Personal Values Questionnaire

The Values and Beliefs Questionnaire

The Resilience Assessment Questionnaire (RAQ 40)

### Individuals

**Tips Booklets - extensive range of high quality tips booklets which make great giveaways to accompany wellbeing initiatives. These could be branded for your organisation.**

Tips for Personal Resilience

Tips for the Manager's Role in Resilience

Tips for Fabulous Managers

Tips for Introducing Adaptive Leadership

Tips for Taking Psychological Responsibility

Tips for Creating a Culture of Sharing Responsibility for the Future Success of the Organisation



**For details about our products and services, email [barbara.leigh@mas.org.uk](mailto:barbara.leigh@mas.org.uk) or call 01242 241882**