

On the Professional Edge...

with Mike Jay

Newsletter

Leading Edge Information for Professionals

The Path to Resilience

“This above all: to thine own self be true; And it must follow, as the night the day; Thou canst not then be false to any man.” - William Shakespeare

Resilience can be achieved in at least two different ways.

One way to achieve resilience is to respond to each event that occurs in a successful manner in order to resolve tensions in that event-space. This I call *event-based resilience*.

Event-based resilience is the reason why some of us achieve resilience during portions of our lives or during particular events. This also explains why someone who has been and appears to be resilient encounters periods where the person demonstrates little or no resilience—being downsized, outsourced, or even struck square-on by midlife crisis that never seems to end. Each of us has particular gifts that when aligned with particular conditions match up well. It is that moment, event, or series of events not directly in alignment with our natural or nurtured capability that gives us trouble.

Event-based resilience is an important form of resilience, but is less effective than what I call *path-driven resilience*. In contrast to event-based resilience, which in large part depends on successfully reducing the tensions of each event or set of conditions using our inductive bias, natural gifts or disposition, path-driven resilience uses success AND failure to create resolution of tensions over time.

Path-Driven Resilience

What I mean by path-driven resilience is encompassed in nurtured—natural capabilities that allow us to learn from the current situation regardless of success or failure. Remember in event-based resilience, which is an important form of resilience; we rely on our capability to overcome the demands on the conditions placed upon



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- *NOW WHAT? A Strategic Leadership System for Discovering & Operationalizing What Really Matters*
- *COACHING as a Transformational Leadership Competency*
- *COACH OF MANY COLORS: the CosMos Coaching Model Utilizing Spiral Dynamics Integral*
- *CPR FOR THE SOUL: Creating Personal Resilience By Design*
- *EMERGENICS: How to Solve More Problems Than You Create, featuring the Mindful Leadership™ System (in progress)*

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us in the moment.

Here are some examples:

- A salesperson overcomes the negative attitudes of the client to get the sale.
- An athlete overcomes a stumble to win a race.
- A leader transcends negative stock market news to merge with a large company.
- A person fights back feelings of self-doubt and moves in spite of fear.
- A parent picks up a fallen child and nudges them back in the game.
- A partner, after losing a significant other, resolves to find another relationship.

Each of these examples shows some degree of resilience in responding to an event which produced conditions where success was achieved. Each is valued for the response made in the moment.

Often, we call this resilience. And it is resilience. Yet, in most of these cases, if you really look into the attributes and the tensions resulting in those event-spaces, you will find that the actor was more than likely matched in terms of natural capability and the requirements of the situation.

For every example above, we know hundreds of examples where the person was unable to meet the conditions of the demand environment...

- The salesperson turns away from the sale because they think the person does not approve of them and that is why they have a negative attitude.
- The athlete stumbles and...falls...failing to finish the race.
- The leader fails to transcend negative stock news pulling back from the merger.
- The person's feelings of self-doubt prevent them from reaching out to others.
- The parent picks up the fallen child and soothes them, removing them from the game.
- A partner, after losing a significant other, blames himself or herself for the failure, avoiding another relationship of significance.

In each of these examples, we find that people are not matched through their natural gifts to the event, or conditions. In some cases, people find the capability to meet these events over time. In many cases, the failures become reinforcement as to why they cannot succeed. Event-based resilience is

often the result of a narrow, yet sufficient match between our innate capability and the conditions. In those cases where the match is sufficiently wide enough to bolster the person during the event, we get resilience. EVERYONE has some resilience. EVERYONE can be resilient at times. Yet what produces the resilient person, profession, business or network over and over? A Path of Resilience.

In my view, there is a way to design and produce resilience across a wide bandwidth of conditions. It is through *path-driven resilience*. Path-driven resilience is natural to a limited few, but possible for most who understand how to use design. There is not any question in my mind that some people naturally have what are called *hardy personalities* and through success and failure, they remain resilient, most usually because they refuse to give up or in—you might say that outright stubbornness has an indirect way of helping some people to be resilient. Although in their wake lies failure and distress they create among others through their “hardiness.”

One reason I point this out is that if it is not in your nature to be hardy, you have a much different path and need a different design than those whose nature it is to remain hardy through thick and thin. The other reason I point this out is for you hardy people to see the damage that is done as you move through life with your unconscious hardiness!

I see people (trainers, developers and coaches) making the mistake of trying to model outwardly the hardy personality to others, as if anybody can learn hardiness, overcome acceptance motivation. In large part I think this is due to people still believing in the humanist philosophy of what is called blank slate—where someone can be nurtured to be anything he or she wants to be; or in some cases needs to be, when we consider resilience or more broadly, material success.

In my opinion, this ability to learn the hardy personality is not probable. There are a very small number of lucky people who have this natural gift of “being anything they want to be”, yet we try to generalize this “nature” to all those nurtured. This results in inefficient approaches to motivation, training, development, success and resilience. Be advised that the blank slate moniker, “be anything you want to be”, in most cases does not apply to

you; much to the chagrin of those selling success-snake oil, who wish everyone were actually created equal.

If you are or are NOT one of those truly lucky ones with nature's gifts of resilience, you too can utilize the **CPR System** to enhance your success rate over time. It seems that while some of us may have the gift of hardiness, we also have the gift of learning by failing.

Even Thomas Watson, the founder of IBM may have exemplified this language when he stated to IBMers, *"If you want to double your success rate, double your failure rate."*

While there is no question that iteration is a powerful teacher, those of us who fail to succeed use up a lot of resources in the process. So, we, like our antithesis—those who avoid failure, do not iterate enough or risk enough—are likely to experience similar unsustainable fortunes, each in different ways.

Let me quote a few words about hardiness so you can recognize it when you see it and realize it is a natural gift.

In the late 1970s, psychologist Suzanne Kobasa, Ph.D., did a long term research study on the impact of stress on top AT&T executives when it was breaking up (Kobasa, 1979a & b). The employees were either losing their jobs or being reassigned.

Over a period of eight years, she found that there were two different patterns in the way these executives responded to the stress. People in one group became increasingly symptomatic. They had more medical and psychological problems and symptoms and more doctors visits.

In contrast, the second group showed no difference in symptoms during this stressful period as compared to before its onset.

Surprisingly, they seemed healthier and more robust. They essentially rose to meet the challenge. Dr. Kobasa referred to this second group as having a stress-hardy personality (www.hardiness.com).

In some ways, the constitution or nature of these people is more a gift than a human design, although inherent in the gift is a design.

Many motivational speakers and pundits tell people—from their points on high—that all they need to do is get going, just do it, or use passion to overcome setbacks, barriers and failure; much the same as the naturally resilient personality would model.

Yet, to our dismay, it is much more than feel-good, motivational, impact events which produce resilience over time...and in most cases—in time.

“Unfortunately our culture continually reinforces this belief and maybe even wants it to be true; it’s just a matter of finding that right program, redoubling our efforts, or having an attitude adjustment....

If this thing didn’t work, maybe the next one will, so keep looking. This constant scanning and pumping up distracts us away from a “true path of resilience” - that of really getting to know ourselves, accepting what is and what naturally fits.

It fuels runaway consumption...You haven’t tried this one yet, so how can you know unless you try... I’ve spent thousands of hours and dollars on just that approach and it has probably reduced my resilience (in certain areas) over time through loss of confidence and it has certainly eaten up a tremendous amount of energy.

What has produced the most resilience for me is staying engaged in a process of stripping away the barriers to self awareness.” -**CPR System** User

Over the years, I have realized that I am naturally one of those hardy personalities. You might say that along with it, I do not get ulcers but I am a carrier! Just by telling people how I have done it, or how I do it, is not enough as I have discovered over my many years of working with people around the globe.

I have discovered that what really works to create resilience is to create a unique path of individual purpose resulting in a resilient design.

This is done through self-knowledge activities, a strong desire to be self-directed and self-correcting and often with a coach trained developmentally. This is where I have arrived in supporting increased resilience with the people I coach and the systems I work in and around—through design based on their gifts.

There is a story I related in my first book called ***Coach2 The Bottom Line***, where I refer to a story by David Whyte. It is called the kayak story and it basically discusses how a mountaineer prepares perfectly for a kayak trip—in mountaineer design, taking only essentials, weighting and packing carefully; only to find that the people showing up to go kayaking are bringing everything including the kitchen sink. The design of the kayak (system) allows the “water” to carry the weight. A mountaineer, in contrast perfects a way for the person to carry the weight. What the analogy shows is that YOU do not have to carry the weight of resilience. The design will carry the weight if you understand the territory.

Side note: Now I do not intend to become religious here, nor point to increasing correlations between spirituality and religion in this entire system or design. Yet I do want to point out that a resilient design, from whatever source it comes from—if it is resilient—will carry the weight of finding the alignment required to produce enhanced levels of aliveness.

Most of us in the world today are caught up with semantics of naming the design, rather than making sure that we create the path of design. I would suggest, rather indirectly, that there are many source paradigms of resilient design, including religion.

Are you ready to find out how to create a path of resilience by design?

Get access to my complete white paper on Path of Resilience with specific examples and recommendations on finding your path of resilience using our Resilience Mapping Indicator at:

www.resilienceworks.com

Purchase my new book ***CPR For The Soul: Creating Personal Resilience By Design***, which contains this white paper and mapping tools, or get all of my published works each month at

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