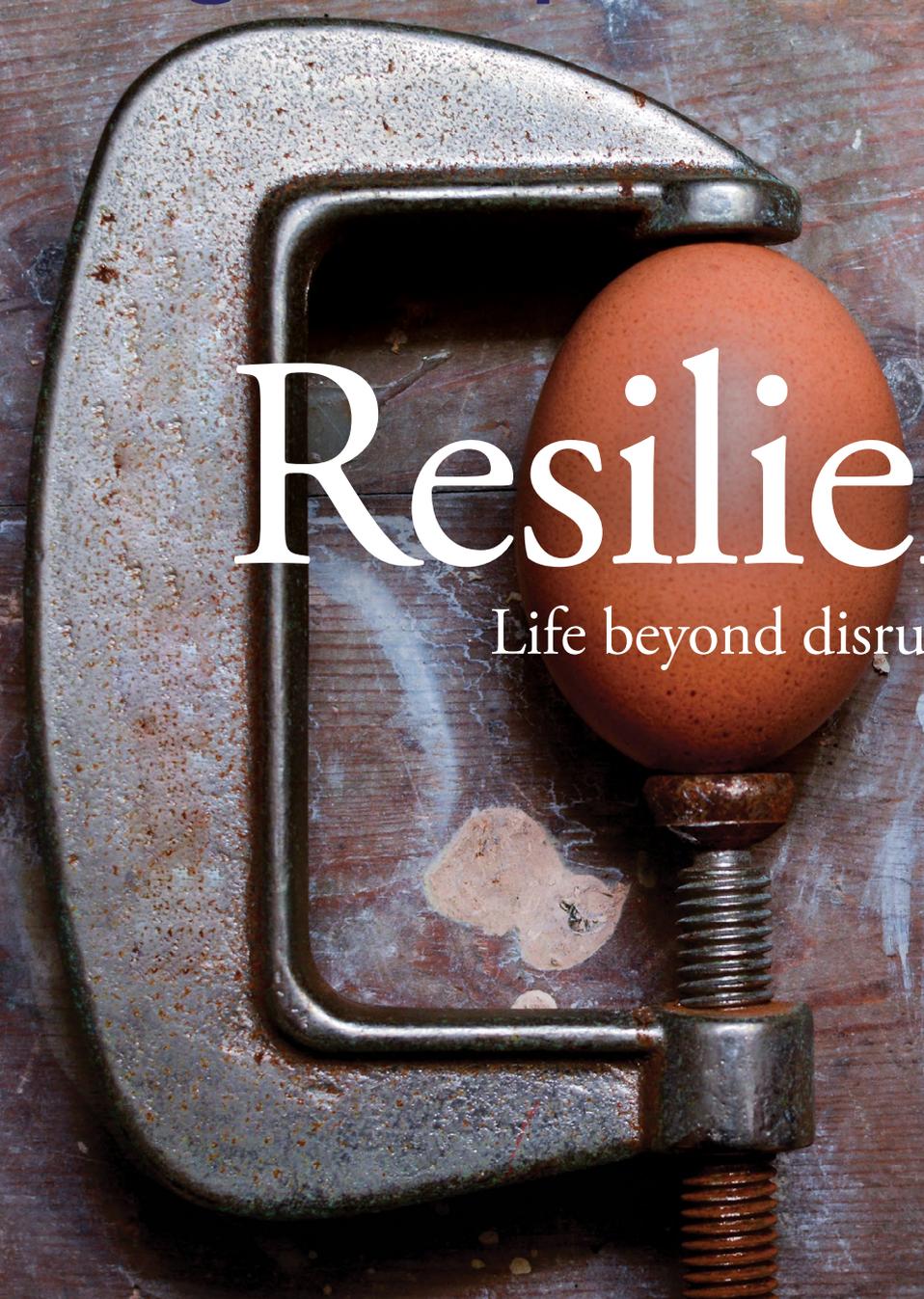


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Resilience

Life beyond disruption

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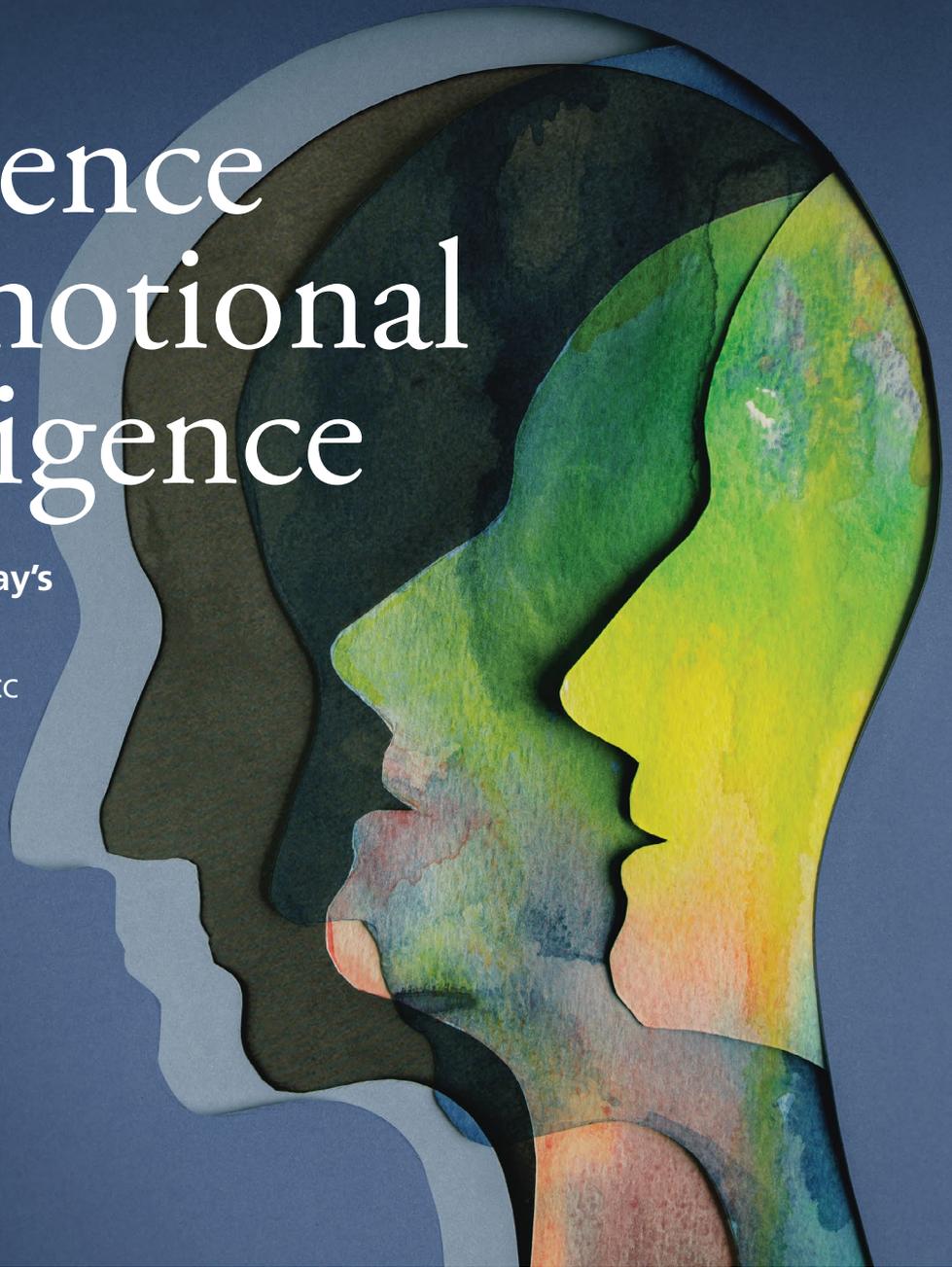
Life beyond disruption

What are the unexpected blessings and opportunities that have emerged as a result of recent world events? How do we now connect to our communities and our world differently and more deeply? How has our perception of reality changed? What is possible now as we explore our ongoing growth, learning and development? With this opportunity in our changing world, if we are creating a NEW world that embodies all we believe in, what would that world look like? Join us as we explore our emergent reality and how coaches can meet client needs in this time of rapid and unexpected change.

Resilience & Emotional Intelligence

Power skills for today's
emerging reality

By Laura A. Davis, MBA, MCC



The topic of resilience has been at the forefront this year as individuals, teams and organizations have struggled to adjust to the massive sea changes of global disruption due to the ongoing pandemic. And just when we thought we might have turned the corner and were about to enter a healing period of recovery and renewal, we experienced a resurgence of an even more virulent strain of the virus.

As an executive leadership coach, I have been working with a large, prominent health-care system, so I get to hear first-hand the strain and emotional exhaustion health-care workers are experiencing. Of course, the challenges the pandemic has wrought are not limited to health care, but perhaps we can all reflect upon

what we have learned individually and collectively as a result of this crisis rather than dwelling solely on its many challenges. My intent with this article is to provide you with some insight and greater clarity regarding how you can best support your coaching clients to uncover the unexpected opportunities emerging as we navigate this new era.

First, what do we mean by the term “resilience”? Generally, we are referring to the ability to “bounce back” after change, disruption or adversity and come out stronger on the other side. What does it look like behaviorally to “be resilient”? In my observation, many people mistakenly take a militaristic, “toughen up” approach to resilience and grit as in “pull yourself up by your

bootstraps and get on with it.” We’ve all seen movies of football players picking themselves up for one more play or of soldiers slogging through blood and guts in the mud to fight one more battle. While this strategy may work in the short-term, it certainly isn’t sustainable for the long haul.

During the pandemic and the resulting shift to working from home, the lines between one’s work and personal life blurred for many. While it allowed us to see one another as more fully human (hard to put on a purely professional face with kids and pets interrupting the Zoom meeting), it also made traditional home and office boundaries harder to navigate. The temptation to answer one more email or join one more video conference was now in our personal spaces always calling to us despite the fact that we’ve reached the limits of our energy and attention.

Research by Shawn Achor and his fellow researcher wife Michelle Gielan has shown that this “grin and bear it” approach is scientifically inaccurate and potentially harmful. We need to take time to recover, regroup, and practice adequate self-care. This “just deal with it” misconception of resilience can come from parents who think that resilience is demonstrated by a high school student staying up late to cram for an exam, or by encouraging a child to spend the majority of their time cultivating extracurricular activities and skills to excel in sports, music, or playing chess, etc. Don’t get me wrong, I’m not against discipline and hard work, but a well-rested child or adult is a more resilient one.

Overwork and exhaustion are the opposite of resilience in practice. As Jim Lohr and Tony Schwartz, authors of *The Power of Full Engagement* have written, if you spend too much time in the performance zone, you need more time in the recovery zone; otherwise you risk burnout. If you really want to build resilience and encourage more resilience in your clients, start by modeling strategically stopping. Create time slots in your schedule to take short periods of relaxation during the day. Shifting or changing to other work tasks when the mental, emotional or physical resources for the task at hand are momentarily depleted is also a great strategy. Sharing such simple strategies with clients can make a big difference as we continue to deal with the ongoing uncertainty and potential burnout many are experiencing.

Thus far I have been addressing resilience on a personal level, but it is important to consider what we have learned about resilience on an organizational level as well. Certainly, if we have learned nothing else from the global health pandemic, social and political unrest, and worsening climate events, we have learned that we are all

interconnected and interdependent upon one another. Sadly, there are still many who are still not looking at the collective good and are politicizing issues that are common to us all.

Polarization aside, we can learn from some of the organizations who have successfully navigated much of the turmoil without a playbook for this kind of crisis. As the Chinese symbol for change reminds us, out of crisis is borne opportunity. We can look at those organizations who have fared fairly well throughout all of these disruptions and learn what they have done to weather the storms. As Greg Tretiak, EVP and CFO of Power Corporation of Canada said, “Once you’ve gone through a period of disruption on the scale we have in 2020 and seen how you can be more resilient, it really changes you. You see how resilience can make your business more flexible, resilient, adaptable, and forward-thinking, and you can’t go back to how it was before.”

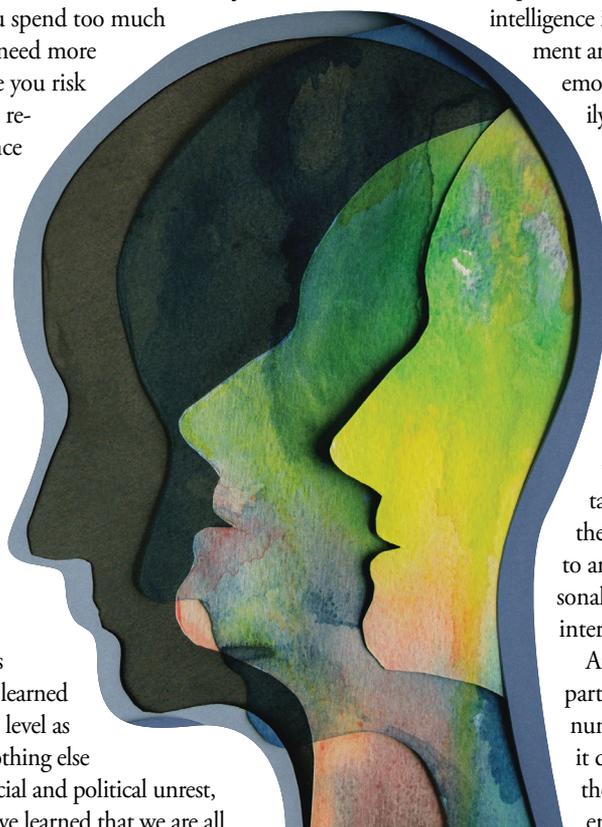
Clearly, being adaptable is an important aspect of resilience, but it is not so easy to achieve at scale. As coaches, we can help our clients become more flexible and adaptable by helping them to cultivate their social and emotional intelligence and skills. As Yeti’s Senior VP of Talent and ESG Hollie Castro confirms, “To succeed in this environment, organizations need people who are agile, comfortable with ambiguity, and are able to move forward on a dime.”

Resilience and emotional intelligence were typically skillsets sought by those interested in self-development. Today, they are power skills for us all, and especially so for leaders who are depended upon to lead teams, make tough decisions, chart new directions, and provide context in uncertainty.

One helpful tool to build and not just to measure emotional intelligence is Wiley’s Everything DiSC Agile EQ assessment and the associated learning experience. Many emotional intelligence assessments focus primarily on measuring an individual’s level of EI at a given time and then provide somewhat conceptual, vague, generalized suggestions that may or may not be relevant to the individual. Instead, the “Everything DiSC Agile EQ,” provides personalized data on the person’s EQ strengths and challenge areas.

Even more significantly in times of crisis and disruption, it measures the mindsets that are needed to address various situations and the level of effort it takes to stretch into that mindset. It takes the cultivation of additional helpful mindsets to an actionable level by providing specific, personalized behavioral suggestions at the beginner, intermediate, and advanced level.

At the beginning of the pandemic, this was a particularly useful resource for me as I coach a number of hard-driving, results-oriented, “get it done now” executives who needed to further develop their empathy, compassion, and emotional intelligence. Of course, it is always



important to listen deeply and to connect on a human level with those you live and work with, but it is essential in times of great fear and uncertainty.

If you really want to build resilience and encourage more resilience in your clients, start by modeling strategically stopping. Create time slots in your schedule to take short periods of relaxation during the day.

We can help clients learn to communicate more effectively, manage their reactivity, understand and appreciate people more fully, and become more creative and innovative thinkers. No one can possibly know all there is to know about all of the complex issues facing us today, so we need to tap into the collective wisdom from multiple disciplines from both within and without an organization. For this reason, another major skill coaches can help clients develop and practice now is collaboration. Collaboration

is essential in today's organizations especially across traditional departments and siloes. This also requires the ability to cultivate an environment of trust, transparency, and psychological safety.

The people who will succeed in the future, whether they are in business or not, are those who are looking beyond their own jobs and/or agendas to see the bigger picture on an organizational and societal level.

To recap, coaches can help their clients to see and take advantage of the opportunities emerging in the new era by reframing the definition of resilience to include rest and rejuvenation. Science shows that just "soldiering on" can be detrimental to creativity and innovative problem-solving not to mention our health and happiness.

Second, coaches can help clients to become more adaptable by cultivating their social and emotional intelligence and skills. We can demonstrate and help to cultivate today's power skills such as the ability to empathize, listen deeply, and communicate and collaborate effectively across cultural, societal, and organizational boundaries.

Finally, one of the greatest gifts coaches bring to clients – and indeed, the world – is the ability to ask powerful questions. In the paraphrased words of Meg Wheatley, "In times of great despair and uncertainty, we can always ask ourselves, what are we learning?" •



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