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## Resilience – Thriving at Work and at Home



**Effects of Stress** in the Workplace: NIOSH<sup>1</sup> reports psychological disorders are among the top 10 leading occupational diseases and injuries, costing “billions of dollars of economic loss”<sup>1</sup> and impacting illness, ageing, hypertension, depression, headache, fatigue, lack of focus, overeating, anxiety, panic attacks, etc.



**Thriving and Flourishing**<sup>2</sup> are far more than an attempt to manage or reduce stress. They are the healthy alternative, creating more positive attitudes, more energy, more creativity, more productivity, and more fulfilling lives. That is why we focus on Resilience and not on stress management.



**Brain Science**<sup>3</sup> helps us understand why and how we react, and helps us identify activities that can increase resilience. Our amygdala is constantly scanning for danger so it can keep us safe. It reacts in milliseconds, with one of the following three F responses. Our thinking mind is far slower to react but has the ability to override our amygdala in certain situations.



**Fight**<sup>3</sup> in the wild looks like animal aggression, growling, teeth bared, attack. In the office or home it is an attack – sometimes physical, more often verbal. Cues are raised voice (sometimes shouting), angry facial appearance, angry gestures, aggressive or foul language, destruction of property, throwing things.



**Flight**<sup>3</sup> in the wild looks like fleeing the scene. In the office or the home it is often more subtle – not showing up for a scheduled meeting, “sorry I’ve got to run,” avoiding the person who seems to be the cause of the anxiety.



**Freeze<sup>3</sup>** in the wild supports hiding from a predator with little or no movement and no sound. In the office it is an attempt not to be seen – lowered eyes, blank and disinterested look,



The **Blue Zone** is the relax zone – you are resting and recharging, day-dreaming, listening to calming music, sleeping. Your brain is organizing and storing memories. The immune system is repairing your body's systems. The amygdala is quiet.



The **Green Zone** is the growth zone – you are calm and confident, and usually doing things you are fully capable of doing. Your amygdala is fairly quiet. This is where we can learn new tasks, laugh easily, and consider multiple options.



The **Yellow Zone** is the risk zone – you are engaged in something new or challenging with a risk of failure. There is significant stress but we differ in how well we manage it in this zone. Some like this stress, while others dislike it. The amygdala is constantly scanning for danger.



The **Red Zone** is the panic zone – pounding heart, tunnel vision, and only one option seems available (one of the 3 F-responses). Often, nothing except the perceived threat can penetrate our awareness. Stress levels are very high and our bodies are flooded with biochemicals needed to take extreme action. Our amygdala is in charge and it assumes a life or death situation.



**Calm the Caveman:** Our parasympathetic nervous system sends out biochemicals that help us relax, recharge and refocus. They help us think more calmly and clearly<sup>8</sup>. When we balance the energy of the Caveman and the calm of the Thinker we can achieve a solution-focus. Plus, a solution-focus helps us to find this balance. It works both ways. This is one of the many wonders of how our bodies work. Some ways of calming the caveman are: slow, deep breathing; positive imagery; taking a break from a situation; stretching, emotionally enriching experiences; thinking about the positive traits/accomplishments of the person you're upset with; soothing music... and a solution-focus.



### **Resilience Action Plan**

List the ideas you plan to put into action - add a date if you can



### **Humor at work**

What are appropriate, resilience-enhancing ways to have humor at work?



### **Gratitude List.**

Gratitude moves you toward the green zone, and positive imagery soothes us. Create a list of people you are grateful to and why.



### **Calm the Caveman**

When you are feeling symptoms of stress, what do you already do to calm your caveman?

What else would you like to try?



### **Personal Stressors**

Write down a few tasks at work that fit into each zone.

Blue

Green

Yellow

Red



Where do you see Freeze at work?

Where do you freeze? What are your triggers?



Where do you see Flight at work or at home?

Where do you flee? What are your triggers?



Where do you see fight at home or at work?

Where do you show fight reactions? What are your triggers?



What do you already do to increase your resilience?

What else would you like to try? When?

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References used in the Solution-Focus Training

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Other Positive Change Resources:

- Daniel Goleman’s “Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ”
- Martin Seligman’s “Learned Optimism”
- Positive Deviance Method: [positivedeviance.org](http://positivedeviance.org)