



## 7 STRATEGIES FOR RESILIENT LEADERS

Leaders require certain capabilities to be successful in today's complex work environment. While the importance of 'technical' skills decreases as you rise within the organization, the importance of self- and social-awareness increases. Interestingly, research shows that the **capacity** for self- and social awareness declines as leaders rise within the organization. The difference seems to be in applying the habits of resilience learned from neuroscience.

What follows are 7 resilience strategies for leaders, presented in simple, brain-friendly (memorable) language!

### 1. To do more, 'do' less.

- The rat race is for rats. Your effectiveness will increase when you move from all-doing to more 'being'. A part of that all-doing has to do with how you use technology. Rather than immediately picking up your phone at the start of your day (or worse, sleeping with it!!), spend your first few seconds of wakefulness reflecting on the overall desired experience of your day ahead. Pause. Imagine.

### 2. You can't be here if you are there.

- Do you know you have a voice in your head? I'll bet you do. It is always on, nattering away at you. That voice is generally ruminating about the past or worrying about the future. Practicing presence allows you to move from living in the default narrative, to directly experiencing what is happening in the moment. Pause. Close your eyes. Connect to your breath.

### 3. Shrinkage happens.

- Your brain is wonderful and also very simple. You are either moving away from what you don't want (threat, negative), or toward what you do want (reward, positive). When you are in a negative state, you literally have tunnel vision; you are focused on the threat and miss much of what else is around you. When you are in a positive state, your perspective broadens and you are more aware of the people, resources, and information around you that will help you to achieve the results you want.



**4. Say it, don't spray it.**

- When you experience a challenging emotion (frustration, anger, fear), don't suppress it because it will just get 'bigger' inside your brain. Also, don't go on and on about what you are experiencing (i.e. don't 'spray' it). Instead, name it and frame it. Pause, name the emotion you are experiencing, and reflect on the story you are telling yourself that has resulted in that emotional response.

**5. 'Dope' is good, 'Cort' is not.**

- Dopamine ('Dope') is the neurotransmitter of desire and your brain is filled with it when you are moving 'toward' what you want (see #3 on page 1). Cortisol ('Cort') is coursing through your brain when you are in distress (usually in an 'away' state). Identify your personal distress signals (headache, rumination, digestive problems) so that you can be aware of them when they are whispering to you. Then, use an alignment strategy to reframe the experience and focus on moving forward.

**6. If I am 'foe', you are 'slow'.**

- Your brain is social (see [Matthew Lieberman's](#) research). People with healthy social relationships are happier, healthier and live longer. If you look at others as a threat to you, as untrustworthy, you will literally be less smart, because you will be focused on the threat (remember, 'Shrinkage Happens'). You will miss good ideas, and misinterpret what others say and do. Instead, decide that people are with you rather than against you, and your brain will be open to what is possible.

**7. Tell me you love me.**

- The number one strategy to increase dopamine (desire), serotonin (pleasure), happiness (joy) and testosterone (achievement) in the brains of the people around you, is recognition. That same strategy reduces cortisol, which limits performance capacity in those same brains. Let others know what you appreciate about them, and recognize them for what matters to the organization and to you. You will even notice that your brain gets a hit of positive chemical too!