TAKE AND TEACH LESSON

Staying Resilient in Times of Change

PURPOSE
This lesson includes activities to supplement the online course, “Staying Resilient in Times of Change.” Job Club personnel and other facilitators should use this lesson to help participants better understand the five characteristics of highly resilient people and the importance of developing these characteristics themselves.

OBJECTIVES
By the end of this lesson, participants will:

- Understand the need to develop enough resilience to deal effectively with multiple or major stressors – negative changes – in life.
- Acquire a deeper understanding of the key dimensions, or characteristics, of highly resilient people.
- Gain some insight on how to reframe unexpected negative change – an unfortunate situation or occurrence – in order to re-gain power and become more resilient.

LENGTH
Allow 45-60 minutes; provide this lesson after participants complete the online course.

HANDOUTS AND MATERIALS
Handouts accompany this lesson. For each participant, make one copy of the following:

- “Stories About Resilience” worksheet.
- “Reframing Negative Situations” worksheet.

Also provide pens or pencils for participants to complete the worksheets.
PREPARATION

Before starting the lesson:

- **Review the "Stories About Resilience" worksheet.** Think about how you will lead a discussion on the two questions following each story. **Also see** pages 4-5 of this lesson plan for advice on helping participants respond to the second question under each story.

- **Review the “Reframing Negative Situations” worksheet.** Review the worksheet of the same name and be ready to answer any questions participants might have about the activity.

LESSON PLAN

Welcome and Introduction

- Welcome participants and ask them to introduce themselves.
- Provide a basic definition of resilience: “The ability to recover readily from life's difficulties, and to ‘bounce back’ when faced with unexpected, negative change.”
- Next, ask participants why they think it's important to develop enough resilience to deal with adversity in life. Listen to a few responses.
- Thank participants for their answers and urge them to continually consider why developing more resilience is important to them personally. Emphasize that developing more resilience will help them cope with current, or future, problems they are facing – as well as help them enjoy life more.

Start Lesson

- Begin the formal lesson by saying something like the following:

  As we just discussed, resilience is the ability to recover quickly from life’s difficulties – to adapt well in the face of adversity, such as family and relationship issues, major health problems or financial hardships.

  Everyone has stored different levels of resilience to use when necessary. Fortunately, no one is stuck with the same stores of resilience their whole life. All of us can become more resilient through learning and practice.

  Let's start by looking at some stories about the five characteristics of highly resilient people: **Positive, Focused, Flexible, Organized, and Proactive.**

Stories About Resilience

- Pass out the “Stories About Resilience” worksheet to all participants. Tell them they will be looking more closely at the stories about resilience they heard in the online course and answering some questions about the stories. Give participants about 10 minutes to complete the worksheet.
Reframing Negative Situations

- Pass out the “Reframing Negative Situations” worksheet, and say something like the following:

Now let's talk about “reframing” negative situations to increase resilience.

As your worksheet says, “reframing” simply means looking at something in a different way, or stated another way – taking a different view of it. When you face a problem, or an unwanted situation you can't change, you have three choices:

1) Adjust your involvement in the situation.
2) Adjust your view of the situation.
3) Adjust your reaction to the situation.

The first choice essentially means putting some distance between yourself and the situation – walking away entirely if that’s possible, or reducing your exposure and interaction with people, places and things involved with the situation.

The second choice means changing your attitude about the situation. For example, you could reframe a money problem from – “I can't buy my son the guitar he wants” – to “My son can rent a guitar until he's certain that's what he wants to play.”

The third choice calls for changing how you respond to people connected to the situation. While you cannot change someone else’s behavior, you can change how you respond to his or her behavior.

Reframing is part of being flexible – one of the five characteristics of resilience. Above all, reframing lets you re-gain personal power – and increases your resilience!

- Ask participants to take a few minutes to write a few thoughts in response to the question at the bottom of the worksheet: Can you think of how reframing could help you deal more effectively with a problem or unwanted situation you're facing now?

WRAPUP

- Close by asking a few participants to share their thoughts about reframing a problem or situation they're facing now. Thank participants for coming and say something like: “I hope you've learned some things in this lesson that you can use every day. Good luck in your efforts to become more resilient!”
STORY DISCUSSION RESPONSES

Note: Responses to the second “why” question under each story come from pages 3-6 of the “Understanding and Building Resilience” report, posted under “Resources” in the online course. The responses come from the descriptions of how people with high levels of each characteristic react to challenges.

Story 1
Question: What characteristic of resilience did Andy show when he decided to see a grief counselor?

Answer: Organized

Question: Why does Andy’s action demonstrate this characteristic?

Response #1: Because it shows that Andy recognizes when it’s time to ask others for help.

Response #2: Because it shows that Andy sorted out confusing information and decided that he was not dealing with things well on his own.

Story 2
Question: What characteristic of resilience did Laura show when she went out with friends and began thinking about a new life?

Answer: Positive

Question: Why do Laura’s actions demonstrate this characteristic?

Response #1: Because her actions show that Laura expects the future to be filled with constantly changing conditions and views disruptions or unmet expectations as natural.

Response #2: Because her actions show that Laura has a sense of humor about change.

Story 3
Question: What characteristic of resilience did Jerry show when he accepted his new role as shooting guard?

Answer: Flexible

Question: Why does Jerry’s action demonstrate this characteristic?

Response #1: Because his action shows that Jerry recognizes his own strengths and weaknesses and knows when to accept his own limitations.

Response #2: Because his action shows that Jerry challenges his own assumptions and is able to see things in a new way.
Story 4

Question: What characteristic of resilience did Sam show when he visited the Workforce Center?

Answer: Proactive

Question: Why does Sam’s action demonstrate this characteristic?

Response #1: Because his action shows that Sam invests his energy in problem solving and teamwork instead of blaming and attacking others.

Response #2: Because his action shows that Sam reframed the situation to see opportunities, and he found resources to help him cope with change.

Story 5

Question: What characteristic of resilience did Vanessa show when she chose to finish high school and explore ways to pay for college tuition?

Answer: Focused

Question: Why does Vanessa’s action demonstrate this characteristic?

Response #1: Because her action shows that Vanessa has a strong vision in life and stays focused on that vision – whatever obstacles might occur.

Response #2: Because her action shows that Vanessa set an important goal and managed a problem to achieve that goal.

REFERENCES

