

Resiliency in Preventing and Adapting to COVID-19—Personal Responsibility©

Probably the most challenging resiliency skill, in practice, during the present COVID-19 crisis is **Personal Responsibility**. Particularly, at a time where we are all dealing with more unanswered questions than accurate information. In spite of this situation, we can focus our attention and actions on those activities that provide some means of expanding *our* resiliency in terms of prevention and adaptation. Personal responsibility means that we have the power to transcend being victimized by any circumstance, condition, or event we encounter. Even in an environment of confusion, overwhelm, and anxiety about the future. Without explaining the justification of this assertion, let's examine its power.

We begin by defining personal responsibility. It is a *predisposed mind-set* that views oneself as the *source* of the events, circumstances, and conditions which exist in one's life. This definition assumes **ownership** of *our* sphere of experience as well as the influence and impact we have on others. Based upon this definition, I pose the following statements, for your consideration, as a basis for adopting the mental fortitude (resilience) to address your personal challenges involving the COVID-19 crisis or *any* adversity you may be facing:

Personal Responsibility, in action, is synonymous with:

1. **Self-Determination** with respect to resolution of an adversity;
2. **Ownership** of the circumstances of an adversity;
3. **Accountability** for the consequences and results of the resolution of an adversity; and
4. **Success**, in spite of unfairness and/or unreasonableness involving an adversity.

Driving this framework are competent, creative, and resourceful individuals. The major objective of this discussion of personal responsibility is to underscore the challenge and corresponding power of this concept as stated above; particularly when dealing with adversity. Let's apply these concepts to a recent situation.

I recently received a call from one of my consulting clients, Natalie Watson. (fictitious name) She shared, in working from home, that an issue had arisen between her

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and her manager, who was also a temporary home commuter. I asked her what seemed to be the problem. She said that the amount of work she was responsible for was overwhelming. “Then why don’t you tell him; I don’t understand the problem,” I replied. “It goes much deeper,” she said. “He thinks I’m his slave.” I asked if those were his words or hers. “Mine,” she responded. She indicated that it was her job to ensure that all reports were perfect, so she either typed them herself or approved them. When she got behind for a special client, he got angry and told her, “You need to get your act together.” I asked her what she thought the solution might be. She replied, “more remote part time help.” After more discussion, I asked if I could go straight to the point that I was thinking.

She said, “Of course.” “I have a saying,” I stated, *“Anyone experiencing overwhelm, more often than not, is really dealing with their own self-importance.”* “What!” she exclaimed. “Are you talking about me?” “Yeah,” I said guardedly. “That’s insulting, Bill. I’ve been using **your** list, Self-Determination, Ownership, and Success.” I suggested she add Control to her list. “Looks like you’re confusing personal responsibility with control.” Then I suggested that we take a break, to let my remarks sink in. When we resumed, she agreed to have a conversation with her spouse about the issue of control.

We met a week later. She asked, “What do I have to do to get things back to normal? I need my job.” “You have to take responsibility for your part in whatever creates a disconnect between you and your manager.” She said, “I only try to make sure that the stuff he needs is perfect. That’s why he gives the important projects to me to do personally.” I suggested to her that once she discovers the truth about *her* involvement **first**, the problem would slowly dissipate and she would be open to selecting, mentoring, and seriously utilizing others. I asked, “What did your spouse say about control?” “Confirmation,” she replied. Then I said, “It’s hard to admit that trying to make life easier for some else can sometimes be a cover to maintain control of the process. I assume you’ve heard the expression, *‘If you want it done right, do it yourself.’*” Needless to say, she’s on course to resolving this situation, triggered by working virtually.

In a similar manner, I recently read a post on the Internet about a series of women who decided to confront areas of discrimination they uniquely experienced. The post is titled, *These 13 Women Battled Workplace Discrimination—and Won*. Some took years to decide to take a stand. However, they all had, in common, the **courage** to take personal responsibility to confront the unique issues they faced. Some started their own companies and some moved to higher deserved positions

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within their organization. While the article focused on *how* they all achieved success, one of the women interviewed emphasized a *realization* she had about what kept her tied to the organization and her position. It was the area of discrimination to which *she* was most sensitive and vulnerable. Once she realized the impact of that issue, she stated that her career path was clear. I am convinced that similar realizations probably occurred for them all.

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