

# THE COACHING HUB

## *Podcast Episode 23 - The importance of resilience*

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Hello, and welcome to The Coaching Hub Podcast with me, your host, Ruth Kudzi. If you're a coach or you're coaching-curious, this is the place for you. We're going to be talking all things coaching, personal development, and business development, in a really fun way. You're going to hear live coaching sessions, and you're going to come away with tools and techniques that you can practically use and take away. If you enjoy this podcast, I would love you to subscribe. If you really enjoy it, give me a review.

Welcome. We're talking about one of the most important things, I think, in life, and that is resilience. We know many positive psychologists, including Angela Duckworth, talk about the importance of resilience in getting what we want. Honestly, in my own life, my own experience, both as a business owner, a coach, and a former senior leader in education, I have seen that those that are most resilient often get the best results, even when we look at every other factor.

So as a coach, I help my clients build their resilience. I think it's a really important skill for us to demonstrate, as well as to help our clients get the results. I remember when I was younger, I used to think resilience was about hardiness. I used to think resilience was about always doing more and pushing yourself, so you're going to be working all of the hours to get the results. This is truly what I believed.

I used to look at people who didn't reply to their emails in the evening or at weekends, I used to think they were lazy because I thought resilience was actually showing up and being hardy, and keeping going and doing the hours, and being like that elephant that just keeps going, no matter what. Then I remember I was working, it was my first job as deputy head, I was working at a really big school in London. It was a school that had a lot of challenges, and I was definitely finding it challenging, being my first senior leadership role, being in that new school. There were lots and lots of difficulties.

I remember having an Ofsted inspection, which was quite early on, I think it was in the first term. The day after the feedback... we'd had the feedback that evening before and we'd gone in the next day, and we had a senior leadership meeting. Now, I remember just breaking down in tears, and I can really clearly see it now. I can see two of the amazing people that I worked with comforting me. I was so angry. I was angry and I was frustrated. I was frustrated that as a leadership group, which was led by a really amazing, considerate, intelligent man, and some truly inspirational other people, how we could not have had an impact.

Really, the thing was that we weren't able to make changes quickly enough. The leadership team was new. There were lots and lots of structural challenges in the school. There were some things that were happening that made me really angry, because I didn't feel... and remember, this is about me... I didn't feel that other people were putting the students first. I realized in that moment that I actually wasn't putting the students first either, because I had this crazy idea that if I was working more hours, then I was going to help more. And that if I measured my output by number of hours worked, then the more hours I worked, the better the result.

But I was a mess. I was crying. I was exhausted. I looked pretty awful. I'm not going to swear, because I don't want to get a red mark on the podcast, but I looked pretty awful. My skin was really bad. I used to get these really weird episodes where my vision would go really blurry, and I'd just have to sit down. I felt sick, which is apparently the beginning of a migraine that I was getting because I was putting myself under so much stress. Now, this will sound crazy to you all, but I never even did anything about that until years later, because I was so stressed that I didn't think that I could take time off, because I needed to be there. I used to work odd hours and I needed to sleep with my Blackberry.

The only person who was saying this to me was myself, the only person who had this story that resilience was working hard, working long hours. I don't know where I got it from. I probably do know where I got it from, because my first job in recruitment, actually my second job, was all about being there, being present. Presenteeism was the most important thing. You have to be there for 12 hours a day. Somehow that had slipped into my subconscious. I think the culture in lots and lots of schools is, how long do you stay? How hard do you work? Are you up every night working? Because the unwritten and the unsaid thing is that if you're not, you're not doing right by the kids and you're not demonstrating resilience.

For me, this is not resilience. Resilience is not working yourself to a state where you are an emotional wreck. It's not working all the hours. It's not looking like... I'm half-Irish and that comes out in the winter anyway... but it's not looking like you're even more pale because you don't see sunlight. You don't see sunlight, because that's what resilience is. Let's be honest, probably in that description, giving what I know about burnout right now, I could have been incredibly close, if not in burnout.

So what did I do? I actually went back to the fact that I've studied all of this stuff, and I knew on a conscious level that what I was doing wasn't sustainable. But at that moment I wasn't working my conscious. I was working with my unconscious, and by working with my unconscious, I was able to... yeah, I was able to realize that I had this story about working hard. I had this story about what I needed to achieve, and that story was not true. I needed to work on that story if I wanted to move forward. That was my reality.

So I worked on that story and I would highly recommend, if you have that story, to work on that story too. That is what is going on. I think that it's really important that we acknowledge, if we have any stories, how they're serving us and what we can do differently. Let's go to what I think emotional resilience and resilience is. For me, from this experience, from my research and from my knowledge, I know that emotional resilience is resilience which is on a deeper level. It's looking at the resources that we have, and it's really making sure that we are able to have the emotional reserves there, which means that we can deal with challenges, which means that we can bounce back.

But if we do not work on our emotional and physical reserves, then I don't believe that we can be truly resilient. What does that mean? It means that this whole idea of self-care being selfish, if we really think about how we're going to increase our capacity, we need to look after ourselves. We know that if we're working in the way that I was working, that we're more likely to get ill. That our immune functioning, if we are under prolonged and continued stress, because of course it's all levels, our immune functioning is going to be weaker. That we're not going to be operating at the same level that we can do.

So if we are aware of this, if we really want to build true resilience, it's about building our physical resilience, which is things like sleep, exercise, diet, managing our stress in whatever way that we can. It's also about our emotional resilience. So it's about tuning into what is going on for us, and starting to recognize when we are close to that emotional edge, when we are more likely to get upset by things, when we are more likely to feel triggered by things, and when we're more likely to react rather than respond.

If we start to truly tune into ourselves and what is going on for ourselves, then we're able to see on a deeper level where our pain points are, where our crunch points are, where our triggers are, and we're able to respond, not react. So I really want you to think about what are you doing to make sure that you're physically and emotionally in the best state possible so that when things do happen, that don't go to plan, you are able to bounce back more quickly.

This is about thinking of ourselves as a whole person, the physical, the cognitive, and the emotional. A tool that I love to use when I'm working with resilience... In fact, I actually love a couple of tools by Stephen Covey. He has, in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, he talks about a time management tool. In that time management tool, he does a grid. There's four boxes. On one axis, it says 'urgent', and then one it says 'important'.

Urgent, important things are things that we need to get done now. They're things that we need to do. As a deputy head, it was teaching my classes. It was leading my assemblies. It was being on the gate. I had to do them. As a coach, it's showing up for my client calls. These are essential things. Then we have what is urgent and not important. This is where we build our capacity so we can do more in that first box. This is personal development. This is exercise. This is spending time with people that make us feel good. This is about being out in nature. This is about hobbies. This is about relationships.

The more that we're able to do in that quadrant two, the more we're able to build our capacity for all of the things that are hitting us in quadrant one. If we stay there, if we stay in the important-urgent, and the important-not-urgent, we don't go to what is not important. Meetings, emails, scrolling on Instagram. Because we have nourished our soul, we have nourished our body, and we have nourished our mind. Therefore, we're able to focus more.

When we are just in quadrant one, when we're not paying attention to building that capacity, we're actually not as productive, because we're going off into quadrant four, which is not urgent and not important. Which is things like scrolling on Instagram, looking for a holiday when we're not even going on holiday. It's those things that we do that do nothing for our goals, do nothing for our mental wellbeing, do nothing for our emotional wellbeing, but we still do them. We do them because we use them as distractions, because we are mentally overloaded and we are not paying attention to what is going on in our bodies and our minds. That is a great tool to use.

A second tool that I love from him... maybe this should be sponsored by Stephen Covey, thank you for all of the work that you do, Stephen... is his circles of control. This is also talked about in James Clear's Atomic Habits. He says, really simply, draw two circles, what you can and what you can't control. You can look at why they overlap as well, and focus down on what you can control. What you can't control, take that out of your mind. Stop worrying about it. Stop thinking about it. Stop spending valuable time looking at it.

I'm talking about watching the news endlessly, when we have no control over what will happen. If we start controlling what we can control, in fact we become more influential. We become happier and we become more resilient. I'd love to know any takeaways that you've got from this. If this is right up your street, feel free to join my group, The Coaching Community. Have a great day. Thank you for listening to The Coaching Hub Podcast with me, Ruth Kudzi. If you enjoy this, I would love you to join my Facebook group, The Coaching Community, for more of the same.