



# Enhancing Resilience: A Lawyer's Guide to Successfully Navigating Your Career and Life

**Friday, September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

**Virginia Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program**

**Link Christin, JD, MA, LADC** – Executive Director, Legal  
Professionals Program





- Resilience is the art of bouncing back in the face of setbacks or challenges and emerging stronger, wiser, and more powerful.



“Fall seven times, stand up eight.”

- Japanese Proverb



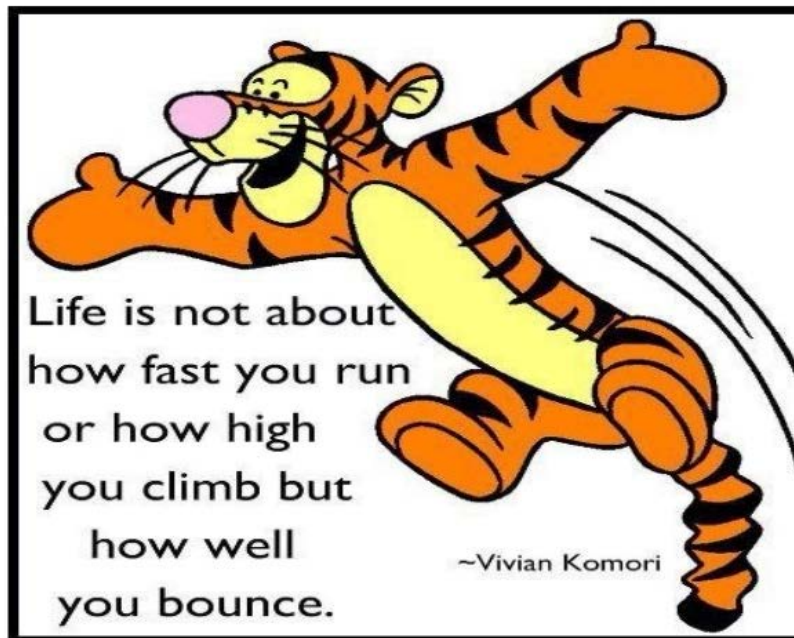
- It is not necessarily a trait you have or do not, but involves your thoughts, behaviors, and actions that can be learned and developed.



Many studies show that the primary factor in resilience is having caring and supportive relationships within and outside the firm. Relationships that create love and trust, provide role models, and offer encouragement and reassurance help bolster a person's resilience.

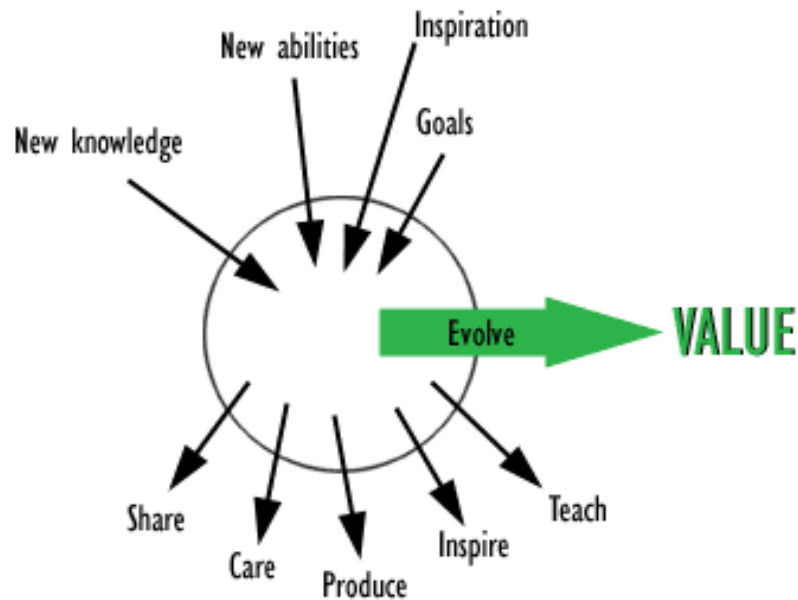


# Core Beliefs and Behavior of Resilient People





1. The most successful and resilient lawyers are in it for more than a paycheck, because they see how their work has value and impact.





2. Thinking differently. Some people jump to conclusions about a situation while others maintain a flexible and accurate thinking style. Some people catastrophize- they let their worst-case scenario thinking get the best of them and it stops them from taking purposeful action.





3. Using stress as an opportunity to connect with others. The stress response is actually meant to push you closer to resilience by causing you to reach out to others. Helping behavior serves as a stress buffer – something counter-intuitive to most lawyers.



4. A positive view that can produce results. And a belief that problems can be solved as a result of effort.

5. Motivation to achieve in many different areas of their lives and flexibility to adapt to challenges, adversity, and changing life circumstances.



6. Development and maintenance of high-quality relationships, and drawing upon these when they need help coping with stressful life events.



7. An optimistic, calm explanatory style when in the midst of chaos.

8. High-quality professional and social connections with others.



9. Capacity to make realistic plans and take steps to carry them out.

10. Ability to manage strong feelings and impulses.



## Increasing Resiliency Also Enhances Many of Critical Skills Framework Performance Factors, specifically including:

- Client accountability
- Open and regular communications
- Self-management
- Adaptable change
- Organization
- Team problem-solving
- Taking a big picture perspective
- Making calm, reasoned choices after considering outcomes
- Maximizing strengths and setting goals to overcome weaknesses



## A Stark Fact

One might assume that most lawyers are resilient, given their skill levels, problem-solving, and managing difficulty daily. In fact, the opposite is true.



On a percentile scale which ranges from zero to 100%, the average for this resilience trait among the public is the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile; among lawyers, the average is the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile. Even more concerning is the distribution – 90% of the lawyers’ test score is below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile.

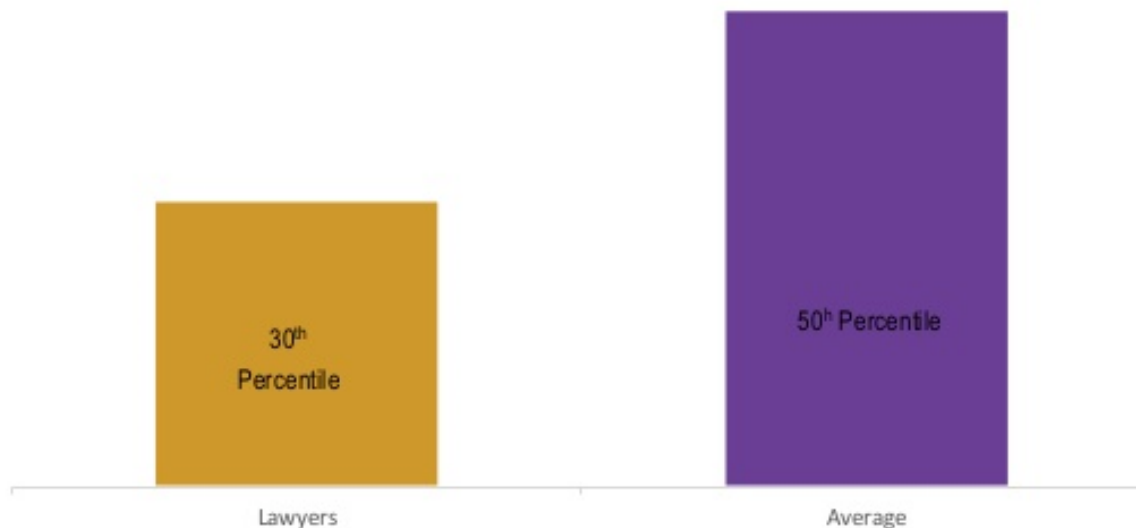




# Lawyers Have Low Resilience

*Average of 30<sup>th</sup> percentile & 90% score below the 50<sup>th</sup> Percentile*

---



Source: Herding Cats: The Lawyer Personality Revealed, Dr. Larry Richard



“Out of massive suffering emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars.”

- Khalil Gibran



# Observations on Why Lawyers Are Below Average in Resilience

- Take in other people's setbacks, problems
- Rare that everybody you help is happy at the end of the case
- Younger lawyers are often not prepared for the profession
- We bottle up our emotions and do not connect or ask for help



- Thin-skinned, do not take criticism well, overly defensive
- Often our chronic stress and anxiety result in burn-out or other negative conditions (e.g. addiction, depression) which are difficult to reverse





- Our perfectionism creates unrealistic expectations and self-blame
- Increased isolation
- Social alienation
- Tendency to be pessimists, skeptics, viewing bad events as unchangeable



  
www.BRADVELEY.COM

*“Hey, you stick your neck out on a regular basis,  
it’s gonna happen. The important thing is to  
just get up and keep moving forward.”*



# What Predictable Issues/Situations During the Practice of Law Require Resilience



- No work/life balance
- Burnout
- Chronic stress
- Anxiety
- Exhaustion
- Depression
- Isolation
- Panic attacks
- Compromised health







- Increased difficulty and challenges of practicing law in 2018
- Too much work; too many deadlines
- Loss of control; unhealthy coping mechanisms
- Personal problems
- Unhappy clients, lack of civility, 24/7 responsibility





“If you’re going through hell, keep going.”

-Winston Churchill



# 10 Keys for Lawyers to Build and Sustain Resilience



1. Adversity is a daily part of being a lawyer. Endure it without the expectation of perfectionism or of controlling what you cannot. Perform with excellence and confidence and detach from the results.



2. View struggles as opportunities for self-discovery and strength.



3. Embrace stress as a challenge. Take it head-on and do not procrastinate.



4. Be flexible in your thinking and how you react to events.





5. Construct greater self-awareness. Make changes – large or small – based on those insights.



6. Proceed with optimism, perspective, and self-compassion. Avoid “negativity bias.”



7. Create distance and remember the meaning of life and your larger purpose.



## 8. Stay in the present.



9. Build personal and professional support systems and connect with them during adversity.



10. Self care: sleep, diet, exercise, and fun.



“ Do not judge me by my success, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again.”

-Nelson Mandela



# Conclusion





**Link Christin, JD, MA, LADC**

Executive Director, Legal Professionals Program

Caron Treatment Centers

P O Box 150

Wernersville, PA 19565

[lchristin@caron.org](mailto:lchristin@caron.org)

Office -610-743-6562

Cell -484-788-8624

[www.caron.org](http://www.caron.org)