RESILIENCY IN THE CONTEXT OF SUPPORTING THE MENTAL HEALTH OF THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY

Nykonenko Iryna O. PhD psychologist, Head of HR data & Mental Health
DENTSU UKRAINE, Ukraine

Resiliency is a concept of foreign origin that appeared in Western scientific cognition and is now a widely used concept. Depending on the context and professional orientation of its application, it has specific aspects of understanding. Resiliency, as a phenomenon, first gained prominence in the legal field, particularly in politics, and was defined as the ability of individual members of the legal profession or political parties to resist the views of opponents. In other words, a common characteristic of resiliency, regardless of the area of application, is the ability to resist psycho-emotional resistance.

Turning to the understanding of resiliency in the context of supporting the mental health of the professional community, an organizational psychologist cannot lose sight of the emergence of stressful situations in the daily and professional lives of employees that cannot be predicted and prevented. At the same time, individuals can learn how to perceive stress with the least amount of harm to themselves and promote personal emotional recovery.

Resiliency is a psychological trait that determines a person’s ability to show mental stability, prevent mental and emotional burnout, anxiety, apathy, and depressive tendencies. In the context of workplace mental health promotion, resiliency is not only the ability of an individual employee to be emotionally resilient to everyday challenges, but also the ability of a professional community or work group (microgroup) to be emotionally flexible to unforeseen circumstances.

For the most part, professional communities have internal rules that are followed in unpredictable situations; it is these internal professional rules that build full-fledged professional relationships in stressful situations. Undoubtedly, the level of personal development of resiliency of each employee has an impact on the development of resiliency of the professional community. It is worth noting that the personal ability to be emotionally resilient depends on the characteristics of the nervous system, upbringing, and the degree of trust in others and the world in general (the foundation of trust is formed from birth). At the same time, resilience can be trained, promoting the development of emotional flexibility, and influencing the development of practical actions, skills, and strategies for behavior in stressful situations [3].

Based on an understanding of a person’s ability to develop resiliency, there are
five main ways to do so:

1. training in awareness of personal emotional states in different life and work situations; this method encourages a person to track the emergence and progression of emotional processes in order to understand how to perceive, respond to, and experience emotional feelings in the context of maintaining personal mental health in the future;

2. manifestation of respect for personal boundaries; it is a way of being true to oneself in the desire and need to say “no” to proposals and requests that do not concern a person or that contradict one’s values;

3. tolerance of inevitable change; this method promotes a comprehensive understanding and perception of circumstances that are beyond the person’s control, and therefore it is not worth wasting resources on getting angry, anxious, and triggering mental activity;

4. creating a pleasant personal space; this method contributes to the development of a welcoming environment, i.e. things and activities that inspire and create comfort and/or people with whom communication is easy, relaxed and does not cause discomfort;

5. self-care; this method promotes the understanding of the importance of meeting personal needs, because in order to have the resources to care for others, to be a professionally active person, and to be useful to society, one should take care of personal needs and maintain internal, psycho-emotional resources.

It is worth noting that being resilient does not mean that a person is indifferent to circumstances or emotionally detached. Rather, resiliency is the ability to coexist harmoniously with personal experiences, the people around you, and the environment in general. Practicing resilience to unforeseen circumstances and stressful situations is a mental trait that a person is not born with, but can master. Mastering the path of resiliency is an art that manifests itself in a person’s thoughts, mental activity, and attitude toward life [1].

It is commonly believed that mental resilience is a personal trait, but in fact, the professional community can learn to develop a culture of resiliency by taking care of their own mental health first and foremost. Building a culture of resiliency requires organizing educational activities to support physical and psycho-emotional health that provide members of the professional community with practical information, in particular:

1. organizing webinars to provide a comprehensive understanding of the functioning of human mental activity;

2. introducing relaxation practices to develop practical skills in mastering mental states and living with them constructively;

3. disseminating information with practical advice on maintaining personal mental health and encouraging employees to become familiar with it.

At the same time, each employee’s personal responsibility for maintaining personal mental health and thus influencing the development of resiliency in the professional community is an important contribution to the development of a culture of resiliency in the professional community [2]. Developing trusting professional relationships, where each team member is not afraid of being judged when expressing his or her opinion, is actively involved in solving urgent problems,
thus creating psychological security, where each member of the professional community is valued for his or her ability to withstand unpredictable, stressful circumstances. As a result, no matter what micro- and macro-climatic processes occur (leadership change, pandemic, war), resiliency is a sign of the resilience of the professional community.

References: