

# Resilience and Root Cause

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We are a giving community. It is often in our nature, as folks drawn to this work, to put a significant amount of our energies toward the well-being of others. We are also a group of entrepreneurs. Largely self-employed and self-directed, there is a tendency to take on everything and anything that comes our way, either out of ambition, financial need or both. The high energetic cost of our patient care model, and the often uncertain nature of our compensation model converge to create the ideal conditions for burnout to manifest.

We are also uniquely equipped with the knowledge and tools to thrive in situations of stress and hardship. That is, if we decide to apply our professional wisdom to ourselves. We can make health-modifying lifestyle choices and draw on the myriad treatments at our disposal. But we must also address the deeper roots of holistic wellness. In my view, the underlying thrust of holistic care revolves around tuning into one's authentic self. In this way we can understand and respond to our needs, desires and aversions. We can plan for them and recognize them as they arise. This is both treatment and prevention. This is health care and a way of life. The way we foster resilience as a community is by following our own advice.

## CULTIVATE SELF-AWARENESS, PRACTICE HONEST SELF-REFLECTION

The fundamental starting point for building a life that reflects who we truly are is the cultivation of self-awareness and the practice of honest self-reflection. By tuning into ourselves as a



regular, intentional process, we learn what is essential for our survival and success. We harmonize the cognitive dissonance that arises when our sense of self, intentions, and goals are out of sync with our everyday actions. It helps us to respond to stressors before they overwhelm us. It empowers us to be who we are fully. Moreover, it allows us to do our job better. When we walk our talk, patients respond. Where there is patient success, there is the power of referral from a group of true believers in our ability to offer invaluable care. Though economic success is not the most important driver here (and is not the primary reason

most of us have chosen this work), it is an important aspect of professional resilience. If we cannot economically sustain our practice, then most of us cannot practice at all.

**WE NEED TO BE CLEAR ON OUR WHY, AS WELL AS OUR WHAT**

It is easy to get caught up in day-to-day demands. To find ourselves pursuing goals but no longer recalling why we care about them. When we develop an on-going practice of mindfulness and self-reflection, we are better able to maintain clarity on what we are doing and why. When we are anchored to a purpose that resonates with our sense of self, it is harder to become derailed by distraction and uncertainty. From a marketing perspective, practitioners and clinics that communicate a clear sense of purpose, that answer the question 'why?', have a high degree of resonance with their target market. Our personal clarity and certitude are reflected in our professional enterprises.

**ARTICULATE OUR NEEDS AND BOUNDARIES**

With a strong sense of self-awareness, we are well placed to identify and articulate our needs and limits. Boundaries are paramount when it comes to protecting our ability to survive and thrive. From a tendency to take on too much, to the nature of serving a population with a high level of need, if we are not clear on identifying and maintaining boundaries, we put ourselves at risk of harm.

We also run into what I call 'entrepreneur's guilt'. The feeling that we always need to do the most, take every opportunity, never say no. The fear of scarcity is real. When we are overrun with fear and overwhelmed by the work we have committed to, it is crucial to re-ground in our purpose and tap into our practice

of self-awareness. When we take on too much, too often, or for too long, our ability to perform, deliver and recover suffers. Our mind, body, spirit and career eventually pay the price. We have to proactively tend to our needs and assert boundaries to maintain our capacity to survive and thrive; and to help others do the same.

It is within your power to build around your own priorities and needs.

**BUILD OUR WORK AROUND WHAT WE WANT OUR LIVES TO BE**

When we practice self-awareness and honest self-reflection, when we articulate our core values and assert boundaries that protect foundational integrity, then we can envision a life that feels good to live and that resonates with our authentic selves. Which aspects of your life take precedence is up to you. It is within your power to build around your own priorities and needs. That said, our ideal vision of a life well lived does not automatically come to be. The vision helps us to make choices, to maintain or change direction as needed, and to feel grounded in our purpose as we adapt and build.

There are ample opportunities for NDs to apply our knowledge and skills in a variety of arenas. From group programs, to educational seminars, to corporate consultation and beyond, we



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need not depend solely on in-person one-on-one visits to sustain our careers. Telemedicine has allowed us to stay connected with patients and colleagues during an incredibly challenging time. Many have found its convenience, safety and overhead-reducing benefits to be worth restructuring practices permanently. Others have found that online connection leaves much to be desired. For many, a return to clinic has affirmed that there is no replacement for the power of sharing physical and energetic space. Even with full PPE donned, there is a clarity of subtle cues, an ease of connection and a settled assurance that comes with in-person interaction.

The point is, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. We are diverse in our skills, interests, and preferences. Accordingly, we can attend to our varied client and patient communities in the assorted ways that serve them best. This is a strength that we have and can share as a community.

We know that to survive we must be flexible, adapt as our environment changes, and be prepared for the unexpected. That means diversifying our income streams, being ready to change our day-to-day operations, and saving whenever we can for that impending rainy season. This is the reality of life as an entrepreneur. This is not a new concept borne of the pandemic.

Amid the need to adapt, our service portfolio and patient treatment model still have to resonate with our core values. We must find the balance between recession-proofing and our ideal vision. Recall that life, much like healing, does not proceed in a straight line. Veering in a different direction and ending up somewhere unexpected is not a sign of failure. When we integrate self-awareness and reflection into our daily habits, we find ourselves able to navigate tremendous challenges, including building a career that both serves and sustains us.

### SUPPORT EACH OTHER

It is important to take care of ourselves in order to ensure that we are up to the challenges this profession demands. It is also crucial to support each other. Humans thrive in communities. Let's not forget, we are colleagues, not mere competitors. Let's make opportunities to support each other. Let's connect and share our ideas, our resources, and our concerns. Let's build solutions together.

From sharing clinical resources that make patient care more efficient, to bouncing service model ideas around, to commiserating about the shared challenges that the last several months have brought, there is no doubt that the connections I share with my colleagues have improved my quality of life.

### PRINCIPLES OF RESILIENCE

As Naturopathic Doctors, we are charged with doing no harm. We are called to find and address root cause. And we must treat the whole person. To be resilient as a community, we need to be resilient as individuals. To thrive professionally, we need to care for ourselves personally. The business model we choose, the diversity of services we offer, these are the trellises upon which we grow. However, to nurture robust growth, we have to understand what we are growing. We have to care for ourselves at the root, so that we can cultivate the conditions for us to thrive.

In many ways, the challenges of the pandemic are not distinct from other professional trials we face. The difference is that so many of us are facing these challenges at the same time. Pandemic or not, the principles of how to foster resilience among our community are the same. Live authentically, mindfully and tend to your needs. Develop a business structure that resonates with your individual needs and your style as a practitioner. Find ways to diversify your income within a care model that works for you and your target patient or client group. Offer genuine care. Provide support and seek support from colleagues, friends and family. If we trust in the wisdom of Naturopathic Principles to support our patients, we can be confident that we are supported when we draw on this wisdom to build our collective resilience. 🌱