



Taryn Stejskal, Ph.D.

Former Head, Nike's Global Executive Leadership Development

- Author of the highly anticipated book ***Flourish or Fold: The Five Practices of Particularly Resilient People***
- Lead, Nike's Global Executive Leadership Development Strategy
- Former Head, Cigna's Leadership Development & Executive Programs
- Doctorate degree, University of Maryland, College Park
- Neuropsychology Fellow with the National Institute of Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), Virginia Commonwealth University Medical Center

Areas of Expertise

resilience | leadership | innovation | peak performance | growth | talent | authentic leadership | workplace motivation | change | well-being | communication | women in leadership | mindsets

Bio

Hello, I am Dr. Taryn Stejskal (*pronounced Stay – Skull!*)

I've always been fascinated by people – in particular, what allows people to be at their very best. In this quest to understand our potential, I have become an expert on resilience and leadership. My research and leadership development work has proven something remarkable: We know significantly less about resilient **doing**, than we do about resilient thinking.

It is my pleasure to share what I have learned with you!

Currently, resilience is the media's darling. We are a nation, a planet even, in which

our human experience is defined by facing challenge, change, and complexity on an order of magnitude to which prior generations have not been exposed. We live in a day and age when, as humans, we are “on” 24/7, inundated with an unprecedented flow of information and the pressure to respond in real time. Add to that the unrelenting quest for perfection and achievement in a culture of frequent shaming and ridicule.

The concept of resilience is built on the human ethos, on the very ideology that we have the capacity to face hard things: trauma, loss, misfortune, and the like, and come out on the other side; not diminished, but instead, enhanced. Resilience is not about bouncing back, returning to a prior state. No, resilience is about learning, through practice, to bounce forward. Resilient doing allows us to capitalize on the inescapable challenge, change, and complexity to grow and bloom, to be better than we were before.



Resilience Leadership is about supporting people in recognizing their worth and value, believing in themselves, appreciating their inherent strengths, recognizing their skills and talents, and being more resilient in order to reach their full potential. When we are operating from a place of full potential, we have the greatest capacity to positively impact our world.

Let me tell you a little bit about myself, and the challenges I’ve faced that help my crystalize my purpose:

I grew up with undiagnosed dyslexia and a series of traumatic experiences in high school that left me with two decades of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In short, growing up, I didn’t think I was very smart, and I felt very afraid of the world a lot of the time.

So, how did I, with a learning disability and trauma symptoms, manage to complete a doctorate degree, and go on to become a corporate executive at a global Fortune 50 company heading up leadership development, a writer, a Mom, an athlete, an international traveler, and a philanthropist...earning accomplishments beyond my wildest dreams?



First, it started slowly. Little by little, I began to see my potential. I wouldn't volunteer to lead a project, but then think, as I watched the person in charge, "You know what, I think I could actually do that." So for the next time, I stepped forward. Each time I stepped forward, I learned that by stepping outside of my comfort zone, I would eventually get comfortable, which was key for my growth and development.

Each time I challenged myself, I built another molecule of confidence, and my confidence began to accumulate over time.

The second element that supported me on my journey is deeply knowing myself. I took my first leadership assessment that gave me valuable feedback on my strengths that make me unique as a person and as a leader. My eyes were opened wide to my capabilities, and for the first time, I understood that I had a special ability to formulate strategy, communicate effectively with people, share a positive vision for the future, and stay focused to generate results.

The third and final element is the notion of resilience. I wanted to know why, when presented a challenge, some people flourished, and others folded. When challenge, change, and complexity inevitable arise, how can we as humans bounce forward and keep going?

My post-dissertation research focused on resilience in the realm of neurological injury. This led me to start exploring the factors that help or hinder all individuals as they face challenge, whether it is a new job, a cross country move, a new baby, or an unexpected health diagnosis. So, I began asking people a simple question "When you've faced a challenge in the past, what have you done to effectively face that challenge?"

Based on asking hundreds of people that question and collecting qualitative data, I developed the **Five Practices of Particularly Resilient People**, the behaviors that all of us can engage in to effectively address a myriad of challenges in our daily life, both large and small.

Speech Topics

From Fried to Flourishing: Challenge, Change, and Complexity

Challenge is placed in our path, not to make us falter, but to form us. Change is one of the few constants. We live in an age when humans are exposed to the greatest volume and complexity of information. The workplace is no different. Both the level of change, and the speed of change can be exhausting, wreaking havoc on engagement, and many times, leading to reduced productivity, even burnout.

In these moments, **Resilience** becomes a force multiplier to transform adversity into advantage.

In her riveting presentations, Taryn explores the three ways to combat challenge, change, and complexity that provide a roadmap to resilience.

- I. **Control the Controllables:** *“You can’t turn the wind, so turn the sail.”* — African proverb. The surest recipe of exhaustion and burnout is to be a control freak. How many times have we worried over a delayed flight or pounded our fist on the dashboard over traffic? What’s fascinating is that we spend over 2/3 of our time and energy focused on things we can’t control, and only 1/3 on elements of our lives that *are* within our control. So, let’s embrace our limitations. Allow yourself to let go of what you cannot change, and instead, refocus our energy on the areas we can actually impact.
- II. **Get Comfortable Being Uncomfortable.** *“There is discomfort sitting with our own discomfort.”* - Ari Kushner. When you feel afraid or vulnerable or disconnected, it’s easy to go into protection mode. Surround yourself with people who can be comfortable with your discomfort and allow you to express your authentic experience. Trials always teach us something about ourselves. No pain is wasted. No experience is without learning.
- III. **Create Brave Spaces, Not Safe Spaces.** *“Faith and fear both demand you believe in something you cannot see. You choose!”* — Bob Proctor. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs tells us that safety and security are fundamental human needs. Yet there are precious few places where we are truly, fundamentally, without question, safe. Rather than prioritizing safety, focus on bravery. Lead with candor by telling the truth with grace.

The Five Practices of Particularly Resilient People

If you have a heart and a mind, you have the capacity to be a leader. Leadership isn't a title or a team or a scope of responsibility, it is recognizing that all of us have the capacity to be a role model for at least one other person.

Taryn explores her research on what makes people resilient, providing a framework to guide our behavior during times of challenge, change, and complexity. We know quite a bit about resilient **thinking** through work by Carol Dweck on Growth Mindset and Positive Psychology, but we know significantly less about resilient **doing**, the actions we can take on to behave in a resilient manner. The Five Practices of Particularly Resilient People expands our understanding of resilient behavior in order to prepare us for stress during times of challenge.

- I. **Vulnerability:** The ability to holistically integrate our internal and external selves. To allow what we think, feel, and believe on the inside to be congruent with the person we show the world on the outside. Vulnerability is the cornerstone of authenticity and requires overcoming the Shame Bias.
- II. **Productive Perseverance:** The intelligent pursuit of a goal; knowing when to maintain the mission, despite challenge, and when, in the face of diminishing returns, to pivot in a new direction. How to engage in single-minded pursuit of a goal and knowing when to have a plan B.
- III. **Connection:** The ability to find, rely on, and gain encouragement from existing or created communities; to draw strength from the support of others. Connection is about creating and deepening connection with ourselves, as well as connections with other people, including developing our intuitive abilities to listen to and know ourselves.
- IV. **Grati-osity:** A compilation of the words for gratitude and generosity: this practice is the ability to, looking back, have gratitude for challenge, change, and complexity you experienced, and to appreciate how you changed for the better. Then, to share of these experiences, generously, for the benefit of others.
- V. **Possibility:** The ability to see possibilities and potential for progress, even in the face of obstacles. An enhanced "Adversity Quotient" AQ that allows all of us to better tolerate environments riddled with the potential for fear and failure. This practice is both resilient and cultivated by resilience in the sense that more resilient people are better able to resist perfection and focus on progress and possibility.

Articles

Flourish or Fold: The Five Practices of Particularly Resilient People

Why Do We Face Challenge?

Resilience in the Workplace: How do we flourish amidst challenge, change, and complexity?

Vulnerability: The Courageous Cornerstone of Authenticity, Leadership

The Truth About Resilience: Why Real-Life Resilience is Different Than We Think

An Interview with Taryn Stejskal, Ph.D.

Podcast: Dr. Taryn Stejskal, on Resilient Leadership and Community

Testimonials

"Your presentation was outstanding and resonated with attendees in a very significant way. We can't thank you enough for sharing your message about resilience and innovation. Your unique perspective helped make our 10th Annual Conference the best ever. Thank you for putting in so much effort to customize your presentation for our audience. You made a difference for many. "

- Executive Director, Greater Richmond SHRM

"An IV for the soul."

- Market President of Sales, Cigna

"Taryn is like a Tic Tac. Small, but powerful. Very easy to comprehend. She uses words with purpose."

- Vice President of News, NBC Philadelphia & TeleMundo

“Taryn has incredible empathy and intuition, so it’s no surprise that she is such a great coach! During the time that I worked with Taryn ..., I experienced firsthand her ability to quickly tune into what’s happening with others, ask a critical question to laser focus on what’s most important.”

- President HRD, Talent Strategist

“Taryn is uniquely qualified to provide HR consulting services based on her deep expertise in human relationships, motivation, and coaching/feedback. Her background allows her to understand diverse perspectives and to efficiently get to the root of real challenges. I see her adding value to large and small organizations regardless of industry.”

- Senior Manager, Global Learning Services at Roche

“The Forum received excellent reviews from the attendees, thanks in large part to your hard work providing the Forum with an enlightening and provocative conference session.”

- Chief Learning Officer, Greater Richmond SHRM