

RESILIENCE

**THE NEW CURRENCY
OF SENIOR LIVING**



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It took a pandemic.

COVID-19 has become a lens that allows us to see, in bold relief, what is valuable and important in the work we do as well as the vulnerabilities to meet future challenges. It has, in fact, cleared the film of regulation, tradition and process, to put purpose in the spotlight.

We help build resilience in our residents, our associates and in our organization. It really is that simple. We want our residents to enjoy a best-possible longevity; our associates, job satisfaction and a commitment and dedication to doing it well; and our organization to be a desired destination in a continually evolving environment.

WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

In physics and engineering, resilience is the ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape; elasticity.

In terms of a human trait, it is the capacity to recover from difficulties; toughness.

In organizational terms, resilience is the intrinsic ability of a system or organization to adjust its functioning prior to, during or following changes and disturbances, so that it can sustain required operations under both expected and unexpected conditions.¹

RESILIENCE AND RESIDENT HEALTHY LONGEVITY

The research is clear. Successful

aging, healthy longevity, optimal aging predominantly is a function of sound holistic lifestyle choices, including continued movement, intellectual vitality, substantive social connection and satisfying meaning and purpose. Such targeted lifestyle choices can prevent disease and impairment, but more importantly, they result in resilience to meet the inevitable challenges of longevity and continue to flourish. Human resilience is not, as often thought, a birth trait, either present or not, but rather a multi-faceted trait able to be cultivated.

In our technology-rich world, this cultivation has become a sophisticated process of awareness, knowledge, data, focused intervention, coaching and careful tracking.²

No longer sufficient are cruise ship-style wellness offerings without context, where a resident samples programming as if a buffet, with minimum knowledge of the nutritional value. Likewise, the mere presence of “wellness opportunities” or vague unsubstantiated claims of a healthier life do not ring true for the emerging older adult who is tech-savvy and interested in experience and continued growth

“With increasing adoption by seniors, advances in technology have radically changed the preferences and expectations of residents seeking resilience in healthy longevity. I believe partnerships with credible and experienced resources are a must.”

— Dan Hermann, president, CEO and head of investment banking at Ziegler

offered in a customized, data-rich, way. Building resilience with such an approach will require proof of progress. (See graphic)

ASSOCIATE RESILIENCE

The COVID lens has revealed much with regard to staff resilience. Whereas before the pandemic, turnover was the one crude measure of our workforce focus, we now have vivid insight into the knowledge and traits necessary for success. Associates require more than the skills and knowledge of their particular position if they are to contribute to the overall culture of the community, find job satisfaction and be able to meet unforeseen challenges and an evolving requirements — i.e., resilience.

Training will require robust curricula beyond specific position skills if we are to minimize turnover, groom associates who positively represent the



Resilience In A Masterpiece Partnership

We compared match data across our network from 2019 (pre-COVID) and 2020 (during the pandemic) to see how residents fared in the areas of overall health, purpose and support. We discovered that resilience-related variables remained stable over nine months of the pandemic, and continue to remain stable.*

Residents Feel*

82%

They maintained or improved their overall health.

91%

They have a robust support system.

80%

Their ability to focus and practice mindfulness.

79%

They retained a strong sense of purpose.

85%

Their ability to be supportive of others

“Partnering with a group with recognized expertise and documented outcomes has significantly upgraded the quality of our training and made a profound difference during the assault of this pandemic.”

— David Mills, vice president, Agewell Senior Living

community, and build and enrich resilience.

Understanding of the aging process, the potential and human capital of elders and basic communication and coaching skills, cannot be topics considered to be elective. The traits most frequently seen in resilient people

— mindfulness, positive outlook, flexibility, concern for others, healthy lifestyle, sense of humor, and strong sense of purpose — can be taught and enriched with training.

Such training, of course, will require credible, entertaining and easy-to-use modalities most likely developed by a credible partner. Given the rapidly evolving environment of senior living and our knowledge of aging well, this training must be continuously updated with new information both from research and from cultural shifts occurring in the older demographic.

ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE

Eric Hollnagel, MSc, Ph.D., an internationally renowned expert in resilience engineering, has identified the four essential

abilities of a resilient organization:

1. The ability to respond to variability, disturbance and opportunities.
2. The ability to monitor what matters.
3. The ability to anticipate developments such as technological innovations or customer needs.
4. The ability to learn from experience.

In his paper “How Resilient Is Your Organization,”¹ he offers a Resilience Analysis Grid that can be used to provide an overall assessment of an organization’s degree of resilience.

Once again, the lens of the pandemic has taken something previously abstract and made all of us keenly aware of the

“Where you live does, and will continue to, matter. The relationship between resilience, healthy longevity and where you live is no longer debated. An organization that brings together the best-in-class resources for resident success will be a magnet for the new older adult.”

— David Schless, president, American Seniors Housing Association

possibilities of dramatic and unexpected change in senior living environments and, more importantly, the absolute requirement for resilience in residents, associates and in the organization itself. COVID-19 has been called an accelerant of current trends, so even in a post pandemic world, the requirement for resilience to weather and capitalize on a more rapidly evolving environment of aging services will be essential for success. In particular, the dramatic changes occurring in the longevity, preferences and expectations of the older adult demographic will demand that anticipation and robust response be a cultural trait of any organization.

SUMMARY

As individuals, organizations and as a species, we are under assault.

The response of aging services has been noble and heroic. We will prevail, but clearly, more major challenges are ahead. The pandemic is a clarion call for cultivating resilience in residents, associates and our organizations.

We would be wise to heed it. ■

¹ Erik Hollnagel. *How Resilient Is Your Organisation? An Introduction to the Resilience Analysis Grid (RAG). Sustainable Transformation: Building a Resilient Organization*, May 2010, Toronto. <https://halmines-paristech.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-00613986/document>

² Roger Landry, MD, MPH. *Where You Live Matters: The Role of Culture in Our Aging Journey. American Seniors Housing Association Special Issue Brief, Spring 2017.*



Provide Residents with the Tools to Flourish

A Masterpiece partnership provides the content and expertise to build resilience and help residents thrive.

