



# Think **positively** when faced with challenges

## The challenge

When faced with unforeseen or inexplicable situations, the most common reactions are to try to take back control, rush into action, withdraw, or over-analyze. All of these responses are a form of escape from the fear generated by unfamiliar situations. In so doing, however, we deprive ourselves of the chance to learn from new situations and explore the resulting opportunities. Finding ways to be resilient, on the other hand, requires that you put yourself in a positive and constructive frame of mind.

## Three exercises to facilitate resilience in a crisis

The way we approach a situation largely determines our ability to emerge successfully from it.

1

### Show measured optimism

Optimism is a powerful action driver. Researchers have shown that “seeing the glass half full” helps us to recognize opportunities and capitalize on them. Yet, being overoptimistic can be harmful by blinding us to risks. The important thing is thus to remain clear-headed without being utopian or fatalistic.

- **Make an inventory of your resources without preconceived notions about which ones you will effectively be able to mobilize.** Then rank these resources from easiest to the most difficult to mobilize, and from the most to the least useful. This will help you form an objective assessment of the range of potential strategies and your means to achieve them.
- **Banish negative thinking**, such as, “This will go wrong!” Get back to the facts: “What were the good reasons I was entrusted with this responsibility? What are the really important objectives? Etc.”

2

### Visualize your way out of adversity

Mentally visualizing yourself emerging from a crisis will help identify what you need to do to achieve this outcome. High-level athletes and soldiers often use this technique in high-stress situations to overcome paralysis linked to stress and the unknown and gather strength to take action.

- **Visualize what an ideal outcome to the crisis would look like.** E.g.: You are preparing to facilitate a seminar that is likely to be tough. What do you want the audience to take away: a feeling, a piece of information, motivation, etc.? How will you know that you have achieved your goal: murmurs, nods, applause? Visualizing how things will go will help you come up with strategies to attain your goal and will provide concrete markers to keep you on track in the heat of action. Be careful, however, not to lock yourself into a single scenario. As when negotiating, imagine several possible outcomes. This will make you more adaptable in dealing with unexpected developments.

3

### Consider failure without dramatizing

Professional situations are seldom black or white. However, our emotions and underlying fears drive us to exaggerate our perceptions, in one direction or the other. Thinking about the possibility of failure in a level-headed manner will help you draw relevant lessons and respond appropriately, provided you don't fall into excessive guilt that will deprive you of the energy you will need to rebound.

- **Dare to talk about failure openly, starting with yourself!** E.g.: It is becoming clear that you will not meet established project deadlines.
  - What is your share of direct responsibility, and what depends on external factors? How does this challenge your qualities as a professional? As an individual?
  - What are the real consequences of this slip? For you? For the organization? In the short run? In the medium term?
  - What lessons can you draw between now and the end of the project concerning your management? Concerning your future projects?