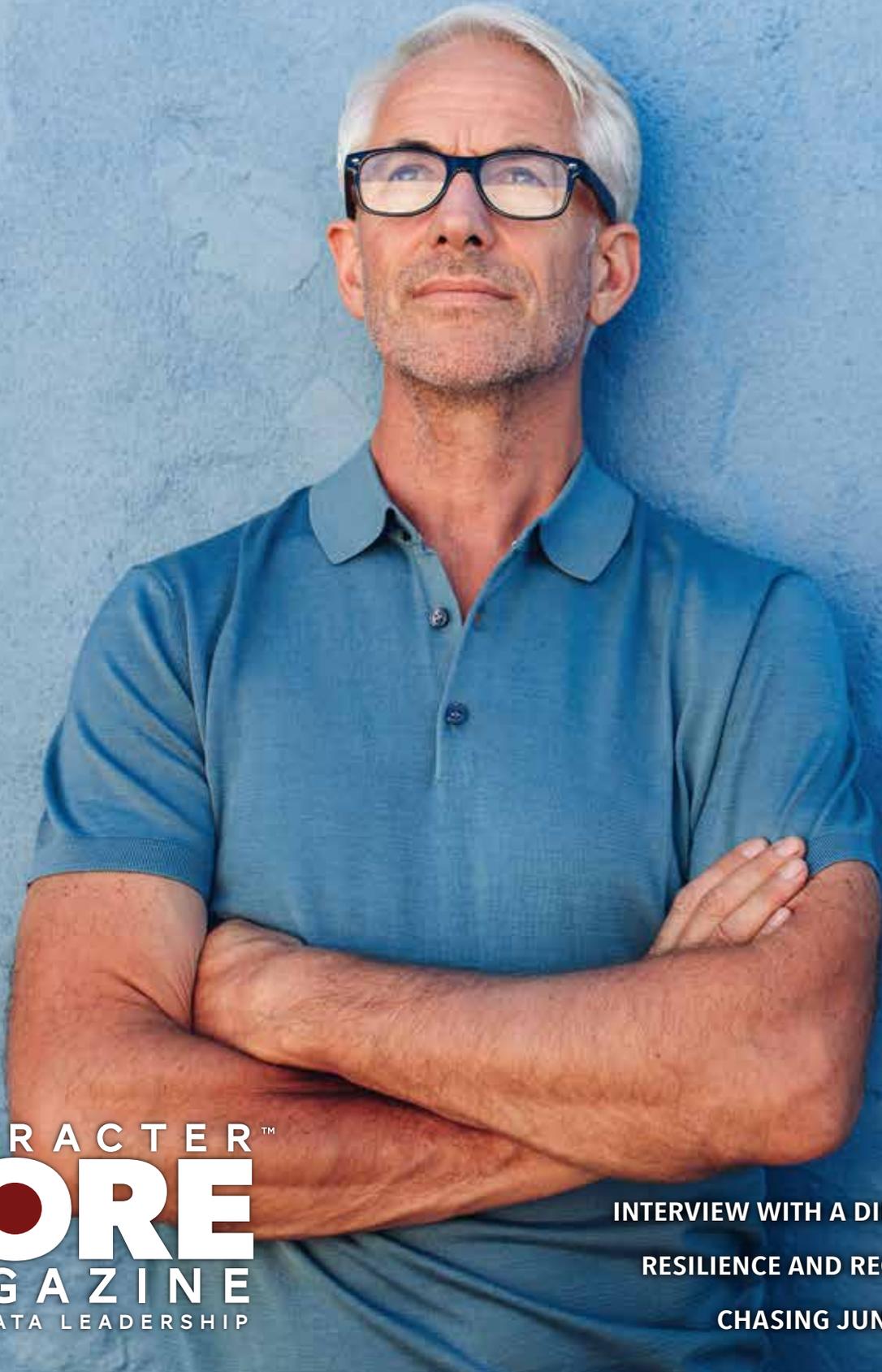


RESILIENCE

RECOVERING FROM ADVERSITY



CHARACTER™
CORE
MAGAZINE
BY STRATA LEADERSHIP

INTERVIEW WITH A DIRECTOR - PG 3

RESILIENCE AND RECOVERY - PG 5

CHASING JUNE BUGS - PG 6

Digital Magazine for Character Core Members

RESILIENCE

At some point in everyone's life, there will be setbacks, disappointments, or tragedy. It is inevitable. What is important—and what defines us—is how we respond to those setbacks. Do we give up? Do we get sidetracked? Or do we get back up, dust ourselves off, and start again?

Resilience is “Recovering from adversity,” and it is an important quality to develop so that we can reach our potential in life. Rather than remaining a victim, we make a decision to give it another try, even if it is difficult. Resilience is an empowering quality as it gives us choices rather than dictating to us our personal value, or what we must do. The definition, though brief, has two main components:

Adversity. Raise your hand if you know someone who has never had any sort of disappointment or setback—or you yourself have lived a “charmed life” and never experienced any hardship. Anyone? Probably not. If there is one thing that everyone on this planet has in common, it is that our lives are not perfect, there has been at least a little bit of trouble or inconvenience. So, it is important to be able to recognize adversity for what it is—a challenge, a curve ball—something to be dealt with rather than defeated by.

Recovering. This is where empowerment enters the picture. When we make a conscious decision to get back up and start moving again, that is when we regain control over our lives, rather than being buffeted by whatever winds may be blowing. When we begin moving, we begin recovery. Sometimes the road of recovery is long and curvy, other times it is relatively short. Different people recover differently—but recovery is important if we are to make progress toward our goals.



ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR SITUATION

Sometimes events or challenges in life knock you down. Maybe you have been let go from your job, your home has been damaged by a storm, or you have experienced loss. It is important to step back, acknowledge what has happened and how you feel about it. By identifying the obstacle challenging your progress, you can learn to deal with it.

- *Think about a time when you were knocked down by life. What happened? How did you feel?*
- *Was there someone in your life who was there with you, who helped you deal with your situation? Who were they? What did they do?*
- *Is there someone you know who has dealt with extreme adversity? What situation did they face? What did they do?*

MAKE A NEW PLAN

If your current efforts or situation are not working, it is important to reevaluate. Is there a new approach you could attempt to overcome your challenge? Is there a new way to think about your situation?

- *Think about a time when you had to change direction. Was the change your idea? If the change wasn't your idea, did that modify the way you dealt with the change?*
- *Why can making a new plan be difficult to do?*
- *Think of someone who is good at handling change. Do you like being around them? Why? Does knowing someone like them make it easier for you to deal with change? How?*
- *Who is someone you can ask to help you get a new perspective?*

PICK YOURSELF UP AND TRY AGAIN

Everyone gets knocked down from time to time. The important thing is not to remain down. Sometimes it takes a lot of effort, but it is critical that you pick yourself back up, dust yourself off, and try again—this time with a new plan, new perspective, or new approach.

- *Have you ever known someone who never recovered once life knocked them down? What happened to them?*
- *When life knocks us down we have two choices—we can either let that defeat define us and determine our destiny, or we can make the decision to get up and try again. When have you felt like giving up? When have you felt like tackling the problem again?*



Alan Garcia, an alumnus of Cornell University and the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, currently serves as Assistant Director of Regis High School's Reach Program in Manhattan.

INTERVIEW WITH A DIRECTOR

ALAN GARCIA

Character Core Magazine recently had the opportunity to sit down and talk with Alan Garcia, Assistant Director of the Reach Program at Regis High School in Manhattan.

CCM: Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with us and share your thoughts on resilience. Please tell us a little bit about yourself.

Garcia: Well, my name is Alan Garcia and I'm the Assistant Director of the Reach Program at Regis High School. The high school is located in Manhattan—New York City. To understand my story, you really have to understand my parents' story. My mother is half Mexican and half Polish. She was born in New York City, but spent a lot of her time between New York City and Mexico after her parents separated. My father was born in Mexico and so when my mom finished high school she moved to Mexico and married my father. They had my older sister and me in Mexico, so we were both born and raised there and had no intentions of coming back.

CCM: What made you leave Mexico to come to the United States?

Garcia: We had a nice comfortable life in Mexico. My parents were small town farmers—the supply people between what is grown in the fields and what goes out to market. All of the family was down there; but when NAFTA was signed, even though it was good for big business, it wasn't good for the small business folks and my parents' business went under. My mother told my father, "We can either start from scratch in New York City, or we can start from scratch in Mexico." My sister and I were given dual citizenship at birth because my mother was born in New York City. So with citizenship and bus passes we took a seven-day bus ride from Mexico to New York City.

CCM: So you arrived in New York City, having left extended family behind in Mexico. What did your family do then?

Garcia: With an entrepreneurial spirit, we arrived in New York and went from there. My father couldn't come with us initially, but we were reunited a year later. My grandfather, who lived in New York City, drove a cab and welcomed us with open arms. My mother only had a high school diploma, so she had to get a job and go back to school. So my sister and I would go to school during the day and then go to the bank where my mom worked—and then would go to night classes with her in the evening.

CCM: What influenced you to go into education?

Garcia: I'm indebted to my sister who would tutor me after school and who, because she was a couple years older, would also help me understand American culture. But probably the biggest influence was seeing my mom graduate from college. I was in the fourth grade and at her graduation was the most family I had ever seen in one place at one time. Seeing my mom all dressed up in her graduation robes was huge for me. My grandfather took the day off of work, which he never did. She was so happy. That is when I realized that was what I wanted to do. I wanted to be like mom—to make my family feel this proud. That was the springboard that motivated me to be a great student, to follow directions, prioritizing classwork before other things.

CCM: What happened next in your life?

Garcia: Well, I applied to attend Regis High School in Manhattan. Out of the thousands of applicants, somehow I was selected. It was like getting the "golden ticket." It was tough. I had to commute an hour one way from the



Bronx to get to school. I left all of my friends behind...my neighborhood...to make it in a new place. I failed the first couple of tests. I felt like I was letting my family down—myself down. I got a little lost in the shuffle. It was on me to do a lot of the remedial work to make it. Between basketball practice after school and the hour commute, I would get home after 8:00 every evening and still I had to do homework.

CCM: Did you ever feel like giving up? When you were knocked back, did you ever think to yourself that you were finished and that you should just go home and go back to your neighborhood?

Garcia: Yes, I did get discouraged. But I never gave up. I thought about it, honestly, but I never did. Then when I graduated, my father said a very humbling thing to me. He said, "Alan, I'm very proud of you and all you've accomplished. You're now smarter than me and can do even more. You and your sister not only studied hard and did well in school, but you came to a new country and learned how to get along with others and succeed. You've done things like kids who grow up in one spot for generations who have enjoyed a lot of resources. Their parents knew what they were doing—your mom and I didn't know what we were doing—you competed in that environment and made it." It was his confidence in me that gave me the resilience to survive and thrive in high school, college, and beyond.



BUILDING RESILIENT FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

by DR. GRACE WILSON

Resilience isn't an innate quality that exists in individuals, families, and communities, but a skill that is exercised in times of adversity. Resilience looks like adapting to change, finding ways to move forward, and being flexible to realign to new circumstances. Having said that, like any skill, resilience can be built and strengthened! I'm going to supplement the other suggestions in this month's edition by focusing on ways we can build resilience in our families and communities.

RESILIENT FAMILIES

Stand on your beliefs. Value systems help us to define what is essential in the realignment that comes after adversity. Families can prepare for the discomfort of change by having clearly defined values and belief systems. Discuss within your family what you believe, and why. Honor disagreements and hold your shared values and beliefs as guideposts for decision-making.

Own your strengths. Just as individuals have strengths that help them persist through difficult times, families have strengths that are more than the sum of the individuals. Perhaps your family is great at communicating or maintaining affection for one another even during conflict. Maybe you have ways of coping that bring you together. Whatever your family's strengths, highlight them and be intentional about falling back on them in difficult times.

Turn towards one another. Stress has a way of pulling people apart, particularly when there are disagreements about the situation. Amidst adversity, choose to turn toward one another, rather than away from one another. Have grace and patience for your family members, and agree that people are not the problem—the problem is the problem.

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Know your neighbors. Resilient communities are made up of members who rely on one another for support in difficult times. To do this, you need to know your neighbors! Make an effort to know not only their names, but their backgrounds, preferences, and personalities. Then, when a challenge arises, check in with one another and seek ways to meet needs.

Lead with your own style. There is often chaos after a disaster or difficult event, and leaders are needed to step up and help the community reorganize and respond. Some people are great at being leaders in the traditional sense—making decisions, delegating tasks, and being a voice for the people. Others are strong in supportive roles, perhaps doing behind the scenes organization or bringing needs to others' attention. Know yourself and your leadership style so that you can contribute to reorganization and growth in the community.

Bridge gaps in services. When a challenging situation arises, services or resources need to already be in place and operational to help fill the needs that arise from the problem. To prepare, take a look at your community and evaluate what needs or gaps in services exist. Consider not only what you and your family would need if adversity arose, but also think about the more marginalized members of your community. Then, do what you can to fill those gaps before they are needed. You might serve on a board, contribute financially, or provide some other kind of support to the development of community structures and programs that will tangibly prepare your community to be resilient for future challenges.





Dr. Jason Jones is a Workplace Psychologist, a recognized expert in human motivation and work performance, and author of the book "28 Days to a Motivated Team." He served as a training and development leader for several organizations before joining Strata Leadership in 2014 as Vice President of Leadership Development.

RESILIENCE AND RECOVERY

by DR. JASON JONES

Life isn't easy—especially the work part of life. Expectations continue to rise. We are under more pressure than ever, and work-related stress is at an all-time high.

Recently, the World Health Organization noted that stress in the workplace is the "global epidemic of the 21st century." Couple this with a 2014 global survey conducted by Deloitte revealing 57% of people believe their organizations are "weak" at helping leaders manage the pressures and stress of work.

This is the reason the character quality of resilience is so important. Resilience is recovering from adversity. It's important that we don't confuse resilience with endurance. Resilience is differentiated by a focus on recovery, while endurance is the strength to continue during stress and adversity. Endurance is like a marathon runner's ability to continue running toward the finish line while enduring muscle pain and blisters. Resilience, on the other hand, is like the marathon runner's ability to recover physically and mentally after the race to be healthy enough to continue training and run another race in the future.

A PLAN FOR RESILIENCE

Here are three ways to build recovery into your life:

Attitude. The first place to start is your thoughts, beliefs, and values. Each of these will ultimately determine your outlook on life, your stress level, and your commitment to recovery and taking care of yourself. Remind yourself of the value of recovery time and the benefits for your health, career, organization, and most importantly the people you love.

Recharge Breaks. It's easy to talk ourselves out of taking a break and, instead, continuing our progress or work flow. Our focus cycles are typically 90-120 minutes. After working with focus for this amount of time our mental abilities, physical accuracy, and energy begin to deplete significantly.

Taking a break of at least 10 minutes will allow you to reset this cycle and renew a high level of focus, creativity, and mental capacity. It is important to use these breaks to completely detach from your work. Think about something enjoyable. Take a walk. Get outside. Stretch your muscles. If you are using a computer screen, be sure to do something that doesn't involve a device or electronics.



Connection. Taking time to connect with people is one of the most effective ways to recover and increase your sense of well-being. In fact, people who connect with others often have lower levels of depression and higher levels of life satisfaction.

You can connect with others through one-on-one conversation, group discussions, meeting new people, a telephone call to a friend or family member, or pretty much any activity that allows you to have a positive interaction with another person.

While there are still some who believe the need for recovery is an indicator of being "soft" or uncommitted, organization leaders are beginning to understand, and value, the power of rest and renewal. Building resilience through recovery is more than a feel-good idea, it's a necessity for high performance and long-term success. According to a study conducted by PwC (formerly PricewaterhouseCoopers) in 2014, organizations that support and invest in employee recovery time and skill development received a return on investment of \$2.30 for every dollar invested. The returns came in the form of reduced healthcare costs, lower absenteeism, decreased turnover, and higher productivity.

Building resilience is a daily commitment to become better and stronger. Make this commitment for yourself, your organization, and those around you.



CHASING JUNE BUGS

by DR. VIRGINIA SMITH



It was late in the evening and I had opened the door to the backyard to let the dog in. Normally, Sable, my son Josh's 7-year-old German Shepherd is already there when I turn the knob because her incredible hearing has alerted her that I have clicked the deadbolt to the open position. This time, however, was different. Outside, the air was still warm as it was late August, and Sable had been merrily chasing June bugs off the back deck. So, when I opened the door and called her name, she bounded happily up onto the deck and toward the door. As she did, her back right leg buckled.

At first, she looked confused but then that look of confusion gave way to one of fear. With Sable being a very large German Shepherd—large for even that breed—I was not used to her looking frightened and my heart sank into the floor. I fought back tears as I called for Josh and rushed outside to help her as she struggled to get up and come inside.

THE LONGEST NIGHT

My husband and I were getting ready to leave to take a group of university students to study abroad for a semester, so Josh had agreed to move in and house-sit while we were gone. It was his final year of medical school and free housing was a great exchange for mowing the late-season lawn. Thankfully, Josh was home with me. He and I struggled to carry her inside. We took her into the room by his desk where she loved to lay while he studied. As we spread out a blanket for her, Sable laid her head into my son's arms.

It was a tough night. I couldn't sleep for worrying. Early the next morning, Josh took her to the veterinarian who gave us the news. A portion of bone had snapped off and injured Sable's spinal cord. Even though this type of injury isn't extremely rare for large breeds, the prognosis isn't very good—partial, or in some cases complete, paralysis with little chance for recovery. However, the vet continued, there was hope. With concerted effort, Sable could possibly learn to walk again and could live a meaningful life.

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

Josh lifted Sable into his truck and we went home. He carried her inside and immediately got to work. He made a large sling for her out of a blanket that he used to carry her outside when she needed to "go." He and my husband would take her outside and one would hold her up with the sling while the other worked her legs back and forth in a walking motion. This was no easy task as Sable was more than 120 lbs. worth of stocky German Shepherd.

We saw little progress before leaving for Europe with the students, but Josh—and Sable—never gave up. The entire time we were overseas, the minute Josh got out of school or off rounds at the hospital he worked with Sable. I don't know how they managed, boy and dog—by themselves—walking slowly step by step by step, but they did. For love of the boy, Sable tried, working what abilities remained, until one day, legs shaking and almost collapsing she took a step—on her own! Days went by and there were more milestones—more steps and more until she could walk the length of the living room. It was slow and her foot would "knuckle under" but it was progress!

THE GIFT OF RESILIENCE

In December when we returned from study abroad, Josh picked us up at the university and gave us a ride home. As we opened the front door, Sable was there to greet us—the weight of her tail wagging, almost knocking her over. She may never chase June bugs like before, but I can say that I was never so happy to see a dog able to stand as I was that morning.

Resilience is powerful. You may never be faced with having to learn to walk again, but determining to get back up when life knocks you down will mean that you cannot be defeated. As my dad used to tell me when I was little, "The definition of success is getting up one more time than you've been knocked down." Life isn't easy. Adversity will happen. But determining to be resilient will help you to make it through.



Dr. Nathan Mellor has a passion for serving leaders. Through his writing, speaking engagements, and coaching, he helps leaders shape their culture to reflect their commitment to character and competence. Nathan earned the doctor of education in organizational leadership degree from Pepperdine University, and he serves as President of Strata Leadership and CEO of C3 Brands.

BREAKFAST AND A STORY

by DR. NATHAN MELLOR

A few years ago, just after moving to Oklahoma, I was invited to a breakfast meeting with local leaders. The speaker that morning was a highly respected entrepreneur who would be sharing his vision for the future of his company and Oklahoma City. Although the speaker was inspirational, the conversation that was most impactful was the one I had with an older man who sat beside me.

YOU'RE NOT FROM AROUND HERE

As a newcomer to the area, I introduced myself and explained that I had not lived in Oklahoma very long. When I mentioned I had moved from California to Oklahoma, he stopped eating his breakfast for a moment. He looked at me and said, "My dad spent some time in California." He then asked what I thought about Oklahoma. I told him that I was impressed by what I had experienced and he said, "It is amazing to see all the good things happening here. It is hard to believe how far things have come in just one lifetime."

SENT OUT

I was intrigued and asked more about his experience. He said, "My father was 14 years old when his dad sat him down and explained why he needed to go out on his own. Things were bad in this part of the country and no one knew what to do. He told my dad that he was old enough to make his own way; and that the family would try to

stay connected so when things got better, they could reunite." The older man paused, and then continued, "I cannot imagine what that was like. They didn't send him on his way because they didn't want him around, they sent him on his way because they thought it was the right thing to do." He looked up and said, "He went to California for a time but eventually made his way back to Oklahoma." After a few very tough years, the family found better footing and was reunited. He ended with, "It was my father who taught me how to work."

SETTING THE PACE

I wish I knew the man's name, but I have not forgotten the look in his eyes when he spoke about his family. It was clear that it was not the difficult times his father had endured that defined him, but his response when those difficult times knocked him back. His resilience—his choice to pick himself up and keep moving forward in times of uncertainty—set the pace for future generations.

You do not have to live long to realize how challenging life can be. Sometimes the challenges we face are self-inflicted. At other times, they are the result of things beyond our control. In either situation, choosing to be resilient makes all the difference. When we pick ourselves up after experiencing a setback, our character emerges. Where there is character, there is hope.



Questions? Comments? Call 877-357-0001 or write info@strataleadership.com.

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ON THE COVER

Resilience is a conscious decision to get back up and start moving again.

COMING IN OCTOBER - DEPENDABILITY

Fulfilling commitments even in the face of difficulty

SIASM HUMILITY ALERTNESS FLEXIBILITY COURAGE PUNCTUALITY RESILIENCE DEPENDABILITY WISDOM COMPASSION POSITIVITY HONESTY DE

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