

The Generation of Bounce

We are all encouraged by a leader who demonstrates powerful resilience. We respect the ability to bounce back because, for most of us, quitting is easier.

I read an article recently about the documented decline in resilience among college students. This is no surprise to me because I've observed the trend in my own classrooms. Students today view a grade of B or C on an exam as failure, which frequently results in the student dropping the class. More serious than class dropping is the onset of depression, aggressive behavior or thoughts of suicide stemming from academic performance.

In the vocabulary of youth, "This place is whack, let's bounce."

It's hard for me to forget a student who appealed his grade of A- because the grade indicated something less than perfection. The student's behavior was threatening and severely imbalanced. Faculty have become fearful of honest reporting of grades due to fear of personal attacks or other administrative hassles caused by grading.

Psychology Today reports that "there has been a decrease in the ability of many young people to manage the everyday bumps in the road of life." Faculty are called upon to do much more hand-holding and "helicoptering-in" to help students solve problems. The balance between support and challenge has tilted heavily toward support.

I believe this trend has been percolating for at least the last 5-7 years. Many of you would agree because we are now seeing these young people in our workplace. Human resource directors are working diligently to help with onboarding in a much more serious manner. The workplace doesn't offer a mollicoddled environment. Many of our young people are waiting for helicopter rescues that will not come.

The impact on leadership is somewhat numbing. Leaders must be able to cope with the emotional state of young underachievers while attempting to develop the neophytes into future leaders.

We learn to be resilient through mistakes and failure. We must create an environment in which mistakes are noted, coached and tolerated. We must allow the sting of a mistake to actually sting a bit. The sting is a good memory tool.

At the same time, we must demonstrate that errors and failures are productive tools of growth. We must help our young people develop an improved mindset about failure. And we can only do this in a nurturing, restorative environment.

We must teach the next generation of leaders to stop bouncing out and learn to bounce back.

“As they were saying this, Jesus Himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be unto you.’ They were terrified and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit. He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Feel Me and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.’ When He said this, He showed them His hands and His feet” (Luke 24:36-40). {eoa}