



Book Review

'Resilience' for Andrew Zolli and Ann Healy

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Introduction – Why Review this book?

“Life is a process of becoming. A combination of states we have to go through. Where people fail is that they wish to elect a state and remain in it. This is a kind of death.”
Anais Nin.

The 'Resilience' book takes us through a journey we need in our current era that is having the characteristics or practices or striving towards “resilience”. The book really re-introduced the word and the concept of “Resilience” to the knowledge community in a time where we need such an inspiration. More than ever before the practice and results of “Resilience” is highly needed to create or even restore all the inspirational deeds that our world societies in order to flourish and compete.

As an innovation practitioner and professional writers both Andrew Zolli and Ann Healy produced for the world a comprehensive review of the types of resilience we need to visualize and work for a better life. The 'Resilience' book of Zolli and Healy (2012) takes you as a book in many forms of potential inspiration if we relook at the nature of life or refocus on how life is taking us towards more demand for being more resilient. Zolli and Healy researched resilience needs in every aspects of life, from global warming to world financial systems. Luckily, a new book claims to discover the key to bouncing back.



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Meaning and Definition of the Word Resilient

The British dictionary defines resilience for an object or material as being “capable of regaining original shape or position after bending, stretching, or being compressed, or other deformation”. While resilience for a person was defined for the British dictionary or community as recovering easily and quickly from shock, illness, hardship.

The word “resilience” thus means the ability to spring back or rebound or even return to the original form or position after being bent or compressed, or stretched. Therefore “Resilience” can be seen in recovering readily from war, illness, depression, adversity. A person or an organisation or a society described with resilience they are more buoyant, and flexible enough not break.

Zolli and Healy (2013) defined resilience as the ability to dynamically react to the unexpected, to patch up holes as they appear, to keep things from spiraling out of control.

Resilience Importance to an Inspired World Economy

OECD (2013) reports that in the last two years, the concept of “resilience” has achieved significant attention on the international stage, due to the observed trends of growing risks caused by violence, conflicts, climate change, disasters, global shocks, urbanisation and ageing populations which are all considered to be inter-connected in being a source of the world instability and turbulence.

As per OECD literature review, having the concept of resilience established in our society’s emphasis that working in silos no longer makes sense if we are to deal with these risks properly. Therefore, OECD calls all the society development actors and even states leaders to work more closely together.

Zolli and Healy raises the need to work in a collaborative and holistic manner today more than ever. The authors ‘resilience’ examples in different situations seen of why do things go wrong and what can be done to fix them. The authors tried to discover Resilience: Why things bounce back and then came with vital themes that can be applied to our needs of an inspired world economy.

How can “resilience” help an inspiration economy world, a question I was looking for an answer in Zolli’s and Healy’s book review. I have to admit that even though I found some of the answers, the book couldn’t address the ‘how’ as much as addressing the ‘what’ of ‘Resilience’. However, the Zolli’s and Healy’s arguments did have an impact on my understanding of what connects all the types of instability we experience in our life, but I was not really confident of how to create this resilience practically in our societies. Therefore, one could say that further research is needed in addressing ‘how’ to create a resilient situation or resilient society or economy, or even in this matter, a resilient spirit (Lopez, 2010).

After finishing the first review of the book, I was more inspired towards the need to work in a more focused way on initiatives that would connect the different communities of the world and the different specialties to address such an important issue and also to consider the keyword ‘resilience’ to be part of Journal of Inspiration Economy main keywords. Actually, ‘Resilience’ as a word has the potential to bring together scientists, practitioners, humanitarians, development actors to work together on such issues as societies conflicts, disaster planning, conflict mitigation, social or economic development and most of all social



acceptance or co-existence. Yes, after reading the book and doing my own research, I can see how 'Resilience' has an inspirational edge to let us join forces of multi-disciplined game changers or change agents that would build new layers in our communities and establish research clusters that would deliver more focused efforts to transform our goodwill into better working practices on the ground.

Resilient Organisations

In understanding the 'Resilience' book of Zolli and Healy (2013) one can appreciate many wrong practices around us today, such as seeing really how organisations, people and societies complicate systems designs to the extent when things go wrong it would lead to a series of failures that nearly cause total collapse, similar to the latest world financial crisis. Zolli and Healy did a great job in showing us how resilience can play a major role through examples as overcoming the poisoned wells in Bangladesh to the cases of coral-reef preservation efforts in Jamaica.

One really has to pause as the analogy of both Zolli and Healy in using a car approaching a cliff, when talking about the major challenges facing human civilization. The authors believe that we live in a world of connected cliffs, i.e. an ecological cliff is believed to be connected to the economic cliff, which is connected to the social cliff, which is connected to the technological cliff. A disruption in one could, like a bunch of steers on a rope line, pull everybody all over." Therefore, resilience here would focus on mitigation of the damage that might occur to any of the cliffs.

Thus the book focuses on adaptability.

Zolli and Healy (2013) believe that we can come with systems more resilient in general when we empower individuals, communities, small groups of actors. i.e. Resilience might occur because of inspiration and/or inspiration might occur because of the presence of resilience. While resilient organizations do have some level of hierarchy, says Zolli, the best way to maximize resiliency is to employ a networked, decentralized approach that empowers actors to attack problems.

Resilience that is not covered in Zolli and Healy (2013)

The book Zolli and Healy (2013) has comprehensively covered the concept of resilience from all angles, except for how it can be planted or transferred in our lives, our families and our community. In other words I felt the book didn't address well how to become more resilient. Therefore, one can argue that the book doesn't give enough inspiration if people want to have their communities' and families' future to be stable with co-existence and full of harmony (Namka,2014). Social resilience means that our communities must be taught or even challenged on how to compromise between what is taught in schools with what is not taught in schools; specially in the concept of resilience. Today with depression and society disorders increasing in our societies, the skills of resilience need to be discussed in more detail.

In a study yet to be published by me and my colleague in Ministry of Education in Kingdom of Bahrain, we found that students who had the chance to work in helping society through e.g. NGO or even their teams in schools, are more potentially happy than others with same conditions, but without such the contribution. So, resilience can be created through certain conditions or environments.



The resilience book Zolli and Healy (2013) couldn't cover also the types of natural enablers that support the presence of the ability to bounce back. For example, more and more (published today that) researchers are studying the role of certain genes and hormones that enhance depression or minimize the human ability to bounce back (Wicks, 2010). Therefore, the psychologist Elizabeth Lombardo (2009) believes that resilience should be defined as "realistic optimism, hardiness, determination, and self-confidence". The *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (2009)* also revealed that families with a history of depression, i.e. low resilience were found to have significantly thinner right cortex, or outer surface of the brain, which affected their memory abilities.

Resilience and meditation were found to play a great role in enhancing those ruminating thoughts about the difficulties of life by making us focus on something else—mindfulness. Though experts differ on whether resilience can be developed as an adult, many believe it can through practices similar to meditation. Our "explanatory style" and how we deal with things of being happy and optimistic also are found to play a role in our ability to bounce back and stay resilient (Free Press, 1998). How we look at things positively in life has been found to alleviate our pleasures in life, or allow us to live fully. Different types of meditation found to reduce the level of pessimism and believing in a permanent and never ending bad situations (Wicks, 2010).

Resilience then is not the same as becoming unrealistically always sweet, it is actually the opposite in a way that makes you become more realistic about what's happening in your life. However, these tools that create resilience, like anything, require practice and repetition.

To be resilient means you have to capitalize on your strength. In a large-scale study done by the Andrew Shatte (2002) author of *The Resilience Factor*, it was found that resilience capability of both men and women are equal, however women are less convinced of their skill of problem solving. Resilience requires the practice of breaking down a problem into parts, then determining which one you can solve.

Resilience is the symptom of the inspired people.

Thomas Edison is a good example for a resilience personality. History proves that such resilient characters are most prone to survive challenges (Minton, 2010). Names such as Abraham Lincoln, Henry Ford, Walt Disney, show that inspired people never give up and keep trying till the last moment and that what makes them more resilient. History shows that such resilient spirits prevent such legends from labelling themselves as a failure and instead shift them to learn from mistakes towards making more better lifetime judgments or directions (Pulley and Wakefield, 2003). Such resilient people see any predicament as temporary and their mindset looks always forward towards success.

Inspired people spend more time focusing on their strengths and have a unique ability to bounce back with all the setbacks and move forward. Resilient people are also very good at stopping in order to learn from their mistakes (Reivich and Shatte, 2003).

Resilience therefore is a trait that can be built through reframing our mindsets and through trying continuously to look at the situation from different angles and letting go of ego control. This type of ability, i.e. the ability to continuously reframe our mindset, make us more resilient not to react emotionally to anything unless we decide to. Such resilience becomes more of a habit from continuously building the ability to gain a new perspective,



through being open to ideas while detaching yourself from the situation.

Then a new plan on how to proceed or to overcome a failure can lead up to bounce back towards embracing a new path and focus (Everly et. Al., 2010).

Final Remarks

Resilience by Zolli and Healy (2013) is a well-structured, well researched book that uses holistic approach to introducing the concept of resilience to the knowledge community. However, the review of this book show that Zolli and Healy (2013) didn't cover in their scope enough material about the role of 'experiential learning' that would help to create a more resilient spirit (Lopez, 2010). Also, the book doesn't have active interventions on how to create resilience.

If we believe that resilience can be developed, we need to utilize more tools that would make it spread in our societies forever. Resilience is another discovery of a natural inspiration mechanism that is available and accessible to all humanity no matter who or what they are.

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