

*Siobhan Soraghan, Active Insight*

"Hi. My name is Siobhan Soraghan and I have been working as a coaching facilitator with senior leaders since the early 90s.

Today we are going to talk about resilience. So my first question to address is what is resilience and why does it matter? Well it is quite interesting because a lot of people think that resilience is about bouncing back from some kind of challenge. And it is about challenge but it is not just about the bouncing back. It is about learning how to interpret and deal with the challenge that's presented in a way that you evolve and develop. Resilience is not something that is bestowed upon us like a gift at birth. It is something that we can grow and develop, and studies have shown that people in their early lives who have had to face difficult times, whether it was trauma, loss whatever, the ones that have actually thrived despite that are the young people who have had the right kind of social support, and that probably is true for adults as well. So having the right support to help you make sense of the challenges that happened to you is really what resilience is about, and that support can be very practical or it can be emotional and empathetic, and actually we tend to underestimate the importance of that. It is not just about social support, it is also about self-support, so one of the things that I advocate very strongly to my clients is some of the really really basic stuff that is second nature perhaps to people in the military which is taking care of your sleep; the amount of water you drink, your hydration; the exercise that you take and the diet that you have. And these are very fundamental because they affect your resilience and your openness to the emotional challenges that you have, and if you set a good foundation with your physiology you are much better able to encounter and see as potentially positive things the difficulties that happen to you and come across your path.

So...what about finance professionals? Well it is quite interesting because people who have risen to the lofty role of being a Finance Director usually have a very privileged relationship with the Chief Executive, and in my experience of coaching Chief Executives they put a huge store in the trust that they have for the FD. The FD is like a solid rock who has a real grip of reality, and not just the present but the past. But the question I pose to the people that I meet in the finance profession is - who is your rock and who supports you? Because it can be quite a tension between appearing to be very calm and in charge and quite happy about the things that are going on around, which is actually really important for people to see because your positive engagement with reality helps them. But if inside you are feeling stressed and concerned and anxious about the future or the challenges that you have, and that disconnect with what is going on inside and what you have to portray outside can take its toll on your physiology and your wellbeing; so it is really really important that you have a relief valve, some way of coping with that and dealing with it so that it is not all internalised.