



**NEXTGEN**  
PART OF LEAD NETWORK



# How to build your personal resilience

Yoerike Rijkers

At the end of 2021, the LEAD Network NextGen team ran a #Resilience Learning Journey where we explored ways to protect our wellbeing and improve our ability to bounce back. As part of this journey, we asked one of our NextGens, **Yoerike Rijkers, HR Business Partner at Unilever**, to share her experiences and tips on building resilience.

## What does your role involve?

I work with three of Unilever's supply chain VPs and I manage HR strategies for those three functions, as well as wider strategies for Europe. I also coach VPs and help to create a culture and environment where people can thrive.

## How do you handle stress at work?

Most often stress comes from the balancing of priorities between personal life and work. With working from home, the lines are more blurred and challenging. Everyone expects things 'yesterday' (or at least that's the impression), but I try to think consciously about what is important and truly urgent.

## Do you set boundaries?

Yes. If there is a need to work late, then I make sure to take a longer break during the day to compensate, and I decline meetings outside of hours if they are not critical, which for me is vital to protect my wellbeing. During weekends and holidays, I switch off my work phone. There is always more work to do, but to do well in the longer term, this kind of short-term decision making is important.

I might decide to do some work over the weekend if something needs to be completed or if I know important events are happening during my holidays, but that's rare.

### **What practical tips do you have for managing a busy workload?**

Stakeholder management is key. If everything comes in at once, I listen to the needs, then challenge or push back if I feel a misalignment of priorities, time, workload and people's wellbeing. The things that really help me are taking care of myself first (taking lunch breaks!), creating structure in my calendar/Outlook, blocking in time for tasks, and managing my inbox (deciding what to respond to the same day and what to do later).

### **What do you do to relax?**

Yoga, running, walking the dog, and combining a walk with speaking to friends and family are all nice ways to recharge and relax. When I feel things are too chaotic and I'm getting into a bad circle of stress, I take a few hours off to reset my thoughts and my routine. My focus then becomes doing enough value-adding and purposeful tasks which spark energy in me.

### **How do you ensure a good working relationship with your manager?**

My manager does not know everything that I do every day, so it is key that I let them know when I need help or when there is an issue. An equal conversation with trust is important and so is openness on both sides, i.e. the manager should also be able to ask for help. This helps to normalise that we are all human and we all have bad days.

### **What's your advice to other NextGens if they start to feel stressed?**

Speak up! Open your mouth with whoever you feel comfortable to talk to, discuss it with a fellow NextGen or with your manager, mentor, etc. People like to help others, so if you ask for advice and support it can make them feel good, as well as sorting your problem out. The idea is not vent but to get someone else's point of view.

Check out our [webinar](#) or tune in to the [podcast](#) for insights from our authentic guests and speakers on becoming more #Resilient.

### **Join the LEAD Network NextGen Chapter**

We are a dynamic new Chapter, representing the industry leaders of tomorrow. We want to empower NextGens to grow their careers, and to connect and share experiences along the way, for example through our #LearningJourneys events. We'd love you to be a part of it. Join our [community](#) to stay tuned!