

Death, Depression, and Drucker: Lessons in Metacognition from My Mother's Resilience and Me

Take into account the efforts made by your single mother to pay for your education; she committed practically all of her hard-earned mom-and-pop profits in the expectation that it would provide you with opportunities in the future. This was my depressing reality in 2018: I had just graduated from college and was eager and goal-driven, but I soon discovered that I couldn't get a job.

Fearful and desperate, my name rang out over the phone lines. I immediately sensed that something was terribly not right when I confirmed it was my mother. She told me that my immediate brother was fighting for his life in a Lagos hospital, and I remember my heart starting to race as she said this. I could not provide any physical assistance since I was about 54 miles away. I could only supplicate for Allah's mercy by saying the particular Nafila prayer that Muslims use. However, the calls continued, getting crazier with each call. All I could hear was my mother crying and it made me feel alone and powerless. As the oldest child, I was supposed to be the most powerful guardian in the house, and yet I was a jobless graduate, squandering the gifts I had and living in another individual's house. When my mom informed me that he had died, I felt a grave, piercing anguish that I thought could never go away. It was an ache that many Nigerians and Africans were all too familiar with—a sorrow brought on by poverty, neglect, and hopelessness.

Individual depression is deadly; family depression is catastrophic.

In the days and weeks that followed, our once-lively household became eerily quiet. We hardly spoke, lost in our grief and struggling to find a way forward. Neighbors brought food, but we hardly ate, too consumed by our sadness to find comfort in anything. The sad reality of losing a member of one's family has a higher possibility of breaking a strong family into pieces, resulting in a lingering phenomenon of sadness and negativity. I started off contemplating suicide at this time due to the fact that became overwhelmed with talks about why I was on this earth. Though I graduated from college, the loss was rendered even worse by the reality that I did not possess the means to help my brother. Millions of people are in a similar predicament to mine; despite having more obligations and few resources at birth, they are all very depressed.

Setbacks are real, and some who do not know how to bounce back have thrown in the towel or given up the ghost. But my mother was a rare breed. I agree with Peter Drucker when he said Leadership is not rank, privileges, titles, or money, it is responsibility. He undoubtedly intended that leadership is not about the sweet comforts of the position, but rather responsibility in the face of chaos, difficulties, and demands. My mother is a leader because she stood tall and persisted in the face of our grief. She came to the realization that she had to take action in order to prevent further harm from occurring to the rest of her children, especially me, who was suffering from major depressive disorder.

My Mother's Resilience and Peter Drucker: A Meta-cognitive Analysis for my Corporate Storm

I argue that leadership is critical to bouncing back from setbacks, whether at the individual, family, community, or organizational level. The ability to lead can be facultative or optional; it is not always a quality possessed by those who have suffered a setback. The leader is the one who steps up in the face of danger. In my family's case, it was my mother. She performed our family's recovery and advancement with excellence that would have pleased Peter Drucker. He once said something that pretty much sums up how she performed:

“Leadership is not a magnetic personality; that can just as well be a glib tongue. It is not 'making friends and influencing people'; that is flattery. Leadership is lifting a person's vision to higher sights, the raising of a person's performance to a higher standard, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations.”

Instead of taking a lesser-known route, I took a metacognitive journey into how we recovered from the setback. I conducted a metacognitive analysis of my mother's resilience throughout the scenario and how she championed the bounce back. I realized that there are lessons to be learned for individual and organizational resilience. Herein, I classify them as follows:

1. Prepare for future setbacks.

Unknowingly to me, my mother had saved over the years to buy and own a land. It was a mixed feeling secret for me. The hospital bills expended on my brother had emptied her purse and savings that some of her friends even had to lend us some money. Nevertheless, she bounced us back from the devastating loss of my brother, thanks to the wise financial planning she had done for years. Her long-term savings in buying land became the key to our resilience, as she sold it off immediately to reinvest in her herbal trading business. She usually says in the Yoruba proverb, ‘Ma fi owo mewewa jeun’, meaning don't eat with all your ten fingers. An ancestral wisdom that implies when you have an opportunity to earn, don't consume all. Her remarkable journey teaches us the emotional and wisdom-bound lesson of the power of foresight and perseverance, even in the darkest times. The story of my mother's resilience and her investment in land highlights the importance of saving and investing in order to prepare for setbacks. This informative approach could possibly be extended to individuals as well as organizations.

Given the current unreliable market, organizations are required to have financially strong foundations to withstand any possible storms. This means having savings and investments in reserve that can be used to bounce back from setbacks and maintain operations during difficult times. Moreover, building resilience requires a long-term view, much like my mother's approach to investing in land. This means being willing to forego immediate gratification and instead make strategic investments in assets that will pay off in the future. Organizations that prioritize financial resilience through savings and investment strategies are better equipped to navigate the ups and downs of the economy and can emerge stronger on the other side of any setbacks. The ones who refuse to listen are the ones who fail to learn from Peter Drucker's call for preparing for setbacks, “The best way to predict the future is to create it.”

2. Emotional intelligence in leadership

Peter Drucker famously remarked, "Your foremost job as a leader is to take care of your own emotional energy and then help orchestrate the energy of those around you." My mother's experience and her incredible capacity to recover from a heartbreaking loss exemplify the need for emotional intelligence in leadership. She exemplifies many of the attributes that experts have identified as crucial to resilience in the face of hardship as an African.

According to Bashir (2017), emotional intelligence is an important measure of leadership resilience. According to the study, leaders who displayed significant amounts of emotional intelligence are more prepared to deal with challenging circumstances and were more inclined to bounce back from difficulties. In particular, Lee (2009) established that the majority of African women have special features that lead to their resilience. This study shows the meaning of the capacity to understand people on a profound level as an individual quality and as a consider hierarchical flexibility. Leaders with high emotional intelligence are better able to steer their organizations through trying times and inspire their staff to persevere and inspire in the face of adversity. By embracing emotional intelligence in leadership, organizations can promote a culture of resilience and optimism where failures are seen as opportunities for growth and transformation. As my mother's story shows, we can all learn from the ability of emotional intelligence to foster optimism and resilience.

3. Emotional intelligence in leadership is an art.

My mother's experience taught me that having the ability to lead with emotional intelligence. She demonstrated leadership skills by overcoming challenges with poise, composure, and an unwaveringly optimistic outlook. She was aware of the significant effects her communication style during trying times could have on her family, friends, and community. She was a great inspiration because of her capacity for empathy, compassion, and self-awareness in leadership. This leadership skill of emotional intelligence can be advantageous to organizations. Strong relationships with workers can be fostered, a great work atmosphere can be created, and organizational effectiveness can be increased by leaders who are emotionally intelligent. They are able to develop trust among their coworkers, handle issues, and communicate effectively with team members. It is important that organizations foster a culture of resilience, flexibility, and growth by investing in the development of emotional intelligence in its leaders.

4. Relationships and networking

My mother's friends, our neighbors, and our family and religious community play a great role in calming our worries and depression. Before the incident that happened to my family, my mother ensured that we were active members of the family and community. The quality of our circle helps us in times of adversity. People who isolate themselves stand the worst chance in the face of adversity. Organizations can learn from this lesson. Partnerships and networks should be built not only for the short term but also for preparation against setbacks. Building networks is a metacognitive lesson that one can derive from my mother's experience fighting against depression. It's critical to have a solid network of support within the company and beyond, including peers, mentors, and sponsors. Employees will feel more connected and more prepared to manage difficult situations, thanks to this support system.

Businesses that put effort into developing strong bonds with their partners and workers are more likely to be resilient in the face of difficulty.

Resilience in Action: My Job, My Mother, and Peter Drucker

My mother was the guiding light that brought me back to the surface when my mind was enveloped in the darkness of a severe depression and I felt as though I was falling further and further into a pit of hopelessness. Her continuous motivation, particularly using our ancestral motivational words, assisted me to recognize my talents, resilience, and distinctiveness at the difficult moment when I felt too battered to pick myself up and move on. She stood by my side the entire time until it was time for me to move on and begin looking for a job. I gained the confidence to put myself out there despite rejection and disappointment because of her support and love.

I finally landed my dream job as a graduate trainee Odoo consultant in Lagos. I was thrilled to be learning how to implement Odoo business apps for clients, and I was looking forward to the six-month internship that was just around the corner. But then COVID-19 hit, and everything changed. Just six months after I started the job, my boss called us all in and told us that due to the pandemic, we were being laid off with no clear timeline for when we might be able to resume work. My heart sank. I knew my family was depending on me this time because the position offered a good salary.

However, I had learned a lot about resilience from my mother, and I knew giving up was never an option. So I turned to what I knew best: Odoo. I started using the Odoo CRM apps to search for medium-sized companies that didn't have enterprise resource planning, and I quickly found 17 leads. I started cold calling them one by one, and eventually, I got a hit: a Lebanese fleet company that only used Excel as their software. COVID-19 had threatened their business, and they needed an urgent ERP system. I got in touch with them quickly and their HR officer scheduled a meeting for me with the executive team. I was still able to land the position by putting my abilities, experience, and perspective to use despite the shock and uncertainty of being dismissed. I was successful despite my boss and my team not expecting it. I came to see that wisdom, experience, and perspective are more important predictors of resilience than merely age or generation.

This experience taught me further that resilience is about more than simply overcoming setbacks; it's also about adjusting to change and seizing new possibilities. According to Peter Drucker, "The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence; it is to act with yesterday's logic." Because of the COVID-19 epidemic, there was never before seen turbulence, yet I came to the realization that if I thought and behaved the same way as before, I would get trapped and be unable to go ahead.

The Inquiry on Resilience: My Mother vs. My Boss, with Peter Drucker as the Judge.

My boss made two excellent managerial choices, including firing myself and other team members and adjusting to new developments. These choices might be seen as resilient since they allowed the organization to continue moving forward. However, in

the event that a company experiences difficulties, should managers always choose to fire employees as a last resort? Many businesses used this strategy to survive during COVID-19, but does that indicate it is the right course of action? Perhaps the choice was made out of fear, believing that workers lacked imagination and couldn't assist businesses endure difficult times. I reject this point of view, and I guess Mr. Nayar does too.

At the 10th annual Global Peter Drucker Forum in Vienna, Austria, Vineet Nayar from Sampark Foundation said, "It is the age of the employees. Trust them and they will create magic." This statement reflects the concern that some organizations do not engage or trust the power of their employees to assist during adversity. Employees should be given the trust to create magic, particularly in the face of setbacks.

My boss never imagined that I, a graduate trainee, had the answer to the Covid-19 hit on the company. However, I was able to provide a powerful deal for the company, demonstrating that employees can be a valuable resource during difficult times. This reflects Drucker's quote, 'Management is doing things right, leadership is doing the right things,' which dichotomizes the resilience of my boss and that of my mother against setbacks. While I appreciate the resilience of my boss and the adaptability of the company, I also appreciate the way my mother stood out for the family during difficult times. I believe that companies should learn from my mother's example and recognize that employees are integral parts of the business. When we fight for employees, they fight for us, and when we motivate and support them, they blossom and steady our company in the face of setbacks.

Admittedly, uncertainty surrounds the issue of whether or not the upcoming generation of managers and leaders will possess greater or lesser resilience than their forerunners. While some could contend that young professionals like myself in today's workforce are better able to manage upheaval and change, the reality is that resilience is a trait that cuts across age and demographic lines. Peter Drucker once observed, "The entrepreneur always searches for change, responds to it, and exploits it as an opportunity." The ability to embrace change and transform obstacles into chances for development and creativity is ultimately more important than the generation or cohort we belong to.

However, greater power to recover from calamity can come with experience and perspective. Take the instance of my mother and my boss. In the case of my boss, despite being older and belonging to the older generation, he resulted in downsizing. On the other hand, my mother also belonged to his generation but was able to find a way against our family setbacks. This means that age or generation does not necessarily connote resilience, and people of my age who are technology-savvy and adaptable may not necessarily stand strong and find resilience in situations like my mother's. This suggests that although life experience and perspective can undoubtedly influence resilience, they are not the only ones.

Concluding thoughts

From our family's event, I can see that the difficulties we encountered had hidden advantages when I look back on the journey. They bolstered our family ties and contributed to our personal growth. They showed us resilience, patience, and

perseverance, and they made us see the worth in the extraordinary times considerably more. It is important to state that as the experience of my family demonstrates, developing strong networks and connections, being emotionally intelligent, being financially prepared, and being emotionally intelligent are all essential for people and organizations to be ready for setbacks. Despite the daunting depression and contemplation of suicide, I am happy that my family survived the storms, and we are now living well and content

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