

Do you crack under pressure?

Many otherwise strong leaders have a glaring weakness: They buckle under pressure.

When fires rage and tensions mount, they wither. Their fortitude crumbles and they wind up making misguided decisions.

To withstand pressure, you need to adopt the right attitude. Here are three keys to persevering when it counts:

Enjoy the ride. If you dread your work, then you're less likely to stay the course amid crises. Passion can help you power through disappointments and disasters.

High performers sustain their passion over years of challenges and setbacks. Their love for their job—and their belief in the difference they're making—fuels their drive.

Change with the times. While it's important to maintain a laser-like focus on what matters most, leaders who face pressure are also able to adapt to changing circumstances. As new developments unfold, absorb fresh data and assess whether you should make midcourse corrections.

As long as you're open to new information, you can continually improve your performance and judgment. You will avoid stubbornly sticking to fixed positions when a more flexible approach might help you navigate high-stakes situations.

Calm down. Keeping your outward cool in nerve-racking moments helps you channel your energy productively. If you're too emotional, you can come across as a weak or impulsive leader.

When you're tested amid high pressure, bear down and keep your feelings in check. Don't storm around in a panic. Maintaining your composure can in itself help you exert control and think more clearly about what to do next.

— Adapted from *The Melting Point*, Christian Marcolli, Urbane Publications.