


**Building & Sustaining
Personal & Professional Resilience**

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Webinar Series

July 16, 2020 – [Coaching to High Performance](#)
July 22, 2020 – [Supporting Others in Managing Stress](#)
July 29, 2020 – [Evaluating Performance](#)

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AGENDA

- The Impact of Stress**
 - Types
 - Brain & Body
- Building Resilience**
 - Pathways
 - Strategies

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The Impact of Stress

- General Stress
- Cumulative Stress
- Acute Stress
- Traumatic Stress





Photo credit: Edison Sobola

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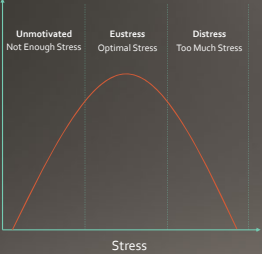
General stress

- Normal condition of life
- Necessary for health and survival
- Can be positive or can be negative
- Most people deal with it daily and function well



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The Stress Response Curve

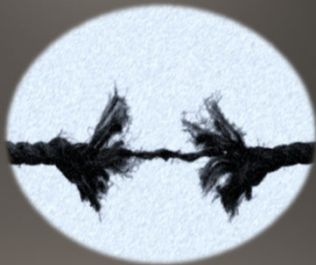


STRESS = the physiological response to any demand for change

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Cumulative Stress

- Piled up, unresolved general stress
- Destructive pathway of stress
- Produces negative changes in:
 - Mental and physical health
 - Performance
 - Relationships
 - Personality



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Acute Stress

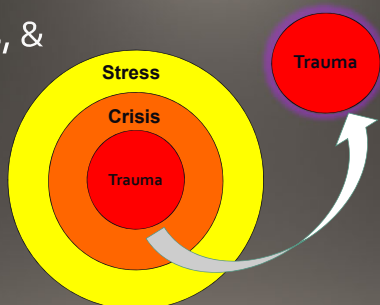
- Body's response to a situation perceived as dangerous or threatening
- Fight or flight reaction as the body prepares to defend itself



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Stress, Crisis, & Trauma

The stress experienced by trauma can feel overwhelming and outside of normal experience.



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Stress in the Current Context

- **Pre-existing Stressors**
- **Pandemic:**
 - Invisible
 - Unpredictable
 - Chronic but rapidly changing
- **Racial Injustice**
 - Chronic
 - Acute
 - Traumatic

➔

Result:
Constant need to adapt, with ratcheting up of our baseline stress levels combined with multiple incidents of acute stress!

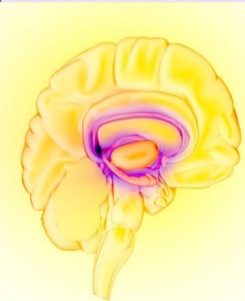
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Stress and the Brain

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The Emotional Brain


- **The monitor of danger (the alarm system)**
 - Judge of what is pleasurable or scary
 - Arbiter of what is, or is not, important for survival purposes
 - Makes quick decisions, but is not fine-tuned
- **Develops first.** Shaped by early experiences that create children's emotional map of the world.



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Focused on understanding and thinking about the world around us

- Responsible for the interpretation of all our experiences
- Regulates 'executive functions':
 - Planning and decision making
 - Sequencing actions
 - Predicting consequences of our actions
 - Keep us from acting on all our impulses
- Slower than the emotional brain, but more fine-tuned



The Rational Brain

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The Smoke Alarm & The Watchtower


- **First, the emotional brain (the smoke alarm) detects a potential threat (i.e. a stressor)**
- **Next, the rational brain (the watchtower) examines the potential threat, decides on a plan of action, and activates that plan**
- **Then, the emotional brain (the smoke alarm) returns to baseline and continues monitoring**

(Van der Kolk, 2015)

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In Daily Life

Managing stress relies on a healthy balance between the emotional and rational parts of the brain.



In Times of Extreme or Traumatic Stress

- The smoke alarm is constantly going off - suggesting danger; it gets stuck in the 'on' position.
- The brain becomes out of balance; the watchtower is overwhelmed by the smoke alarm.
- All the brain's attention gets focused on trying to shut off the smoke alarm, at the expense of other brain functions.

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Building Personal Resilience in the Face of Stress





Photo credit: Edison Sobala

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Resilience = Being able to stay in, or quickly return to, a place of physiological, emotional, and mental balance after being disrupted.



It is maintaining the ability to **respond** vs. **react** to difficult situations

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Responding vs. Reacting

<p>Responding = Green Zone</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional and rational brain are in balance • Body is in its resting state • Restoring & refueling • Acting from a sense of perceived safety 	<p>Reacting = Red Zone</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brain is in 'fight or flight' mode • Body's immune, cardiovascular, hormonal, and digestive systems are disturbed • Acting from a sense of perceived deficit and disturbance
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Three Levels of Resilience Practice

Preparing & rehearsing are the keys to success. In times of stress, it is a lot easier to activate a pre-existing strategy than to develop one on the fly.

Stress reduction in stressful moments
Level 1

Daily activities/routines to maintain wellness
Level 2

Long-term investment in wellness
Level 3

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We develop psychological resources by having sustained and repeated experiences of them that are turned into durable changes in your brain.

Photo credit: Edison Sabala

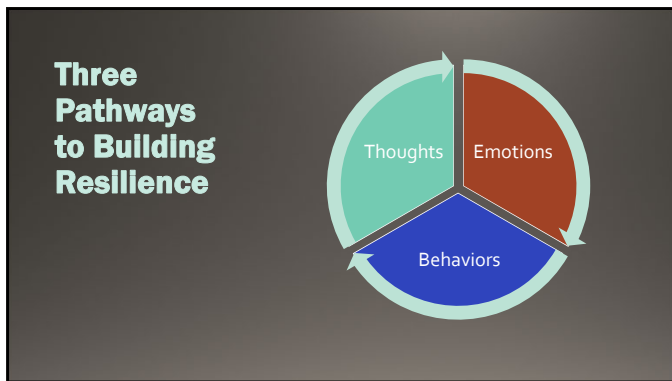
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Rehearsal Leads to Rewiring

- Cells that fire together, wire together.
- Our experiences are shaped by what we attend to.
- Whatever you focus on literally becomes a part of you...

- ➔ Can you keep your attention on any of the positive or enjoyable moments of your day?
- ➔ Or, do you get preoccupied with the worries?

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Emotion-Based Strategies

Goals	Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthen brain's ability to stay in balance<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mental Muscle• Improve emotion regulation• Regulate attention to allow us to hold our focus• Noticing (and accepting) your reactions gives you more control over it	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mindfulness• Meditation• Relaxation/Breathing• Yoga

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Cognition-Based Strategies

Goals	Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid sustained activation of the 'fight or flight' system• Combat the brain's negativity bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'Self-Talk'<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the chatter in your head• Is it full of self-criticism, resentments, etc.?• Cognitive Restructuring<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can you replace these "automatic thoughts" with more neutral/realistic/helpful thoughts?• Stress Inoculation<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mental rehearsal and preparation for specific stressful situations

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The Brain's Negativity Bias

- Scans for bad news
- Focuses tightly on it (losing sight of the big picture)
- Overreacts to it
- Fast-tracks the experience into memory
- Becomes sensitized, creating a vicious cycle



Our brains are Velcro for bad experiences and Teflon for good ones
Hanson (2018)

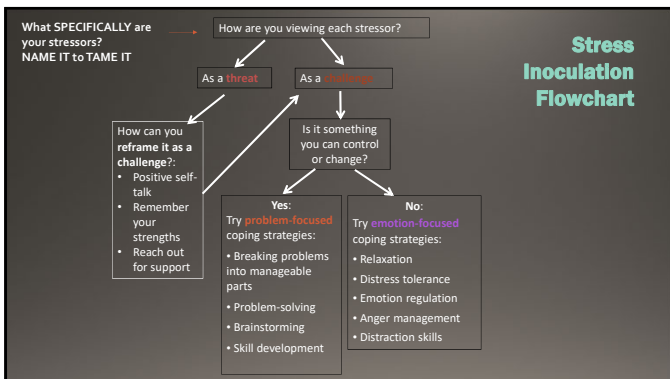
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Cognitive Restructuring

It's not what happens to us that creates an outcome, it is what we tell ourselves about it, that influences the outcome.

- A activating event
- B belief
- C consequence

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Conclusion:
What you do is less important than picking something and doing it regularly

- Pick something that is pleasurable, and make it a regular practice
- Doing something once creates a temporary positive experience; doing something repeatedly creates lasting change
- To grow any psychological resources is to have repeated experiences of it that create lasting changes in brain function

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Q & A

Thank you!

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