



# **REVITALIZING YOUR RESILIENCE**

## **OPTIMIZING YOUR RESILIENCE**

**Allan Weisbard, L.C.S.W.**

# RESILIENCE

Resilience sounds easy, but mastering it can be as difficult as life's inevitable challenges and crises.

Employing new psychological and sociological discoveries, we will explore practical strategies to help you master adversity.

Easy-to-use tools so you can develop flexible strategies to cope with life's changes.

Learning to Thrive=Response Flexibility and Adaptability



## OPTIMISM BY JANE HIRSHFELD

More and more I have come to admire resilience.

Not the simple resistance of a pillow, whose foam returns over and over to the same shape, but the sinuous tenacity of a tree: finding the light newly blocked on one side, it turns in another. A blind intelligence, true.

But out of such persistence arose turtles, rivers, mitochondria, figs—all this resinous, unretractable earth.

*“Optimism”* by Jane Hirshfield, from *Given Sugar, Given Salt*. © Harper Collins, 2002.



# BRAIN NEUROPLASTICITY

- Lifelong ability to grow new neurons
- Strengthen Synaptic connections
- Create Faster connections



# SELF-DIRECTED NEUROPLASTICITY

- Every experience shapes our brain
- Brain is simply a chemical organ
- Brain is 2% of body weight uses 20% of Oxygen
- Each experience causes neurons to fire
- Repeated experiences—create synaptic connections and neural pathways
- NEURONS THAT FIRE TOGETHER WIRE TOGETHER



# PRE-FRONTAL CORTEX

- C.E.O.—regulates body and nervous systems.
- Helps manage emotions
- Gives meaning and perspective to our experiences
- Allows for considering more response options.



# LIMBIC SYSTEM

- Seat of our emotions
- Amygdala
- Rapid survival reactions.



# RESILIENCE TOOLBOX

- Calm
- Courage
- Clarity
- Confusion
- Connections and Community
- Commitments to Others
- Competence and Confidence
- Compassion, Concern, Caring
- Cooperation and Collaboration
- re- Creation and Humor
- Change is Constant





# RESILIENT THINKING

- Understands disruption is intrinsic, healthy, normal and necessary as part of the human condition
- Sees we are human beings in the process of becoming
- Understands that if we take the time to unfold we won't unravel
- Understands that who we are keeps changing
- Self-reflection time helps us to open to who we are
- Recognizes strengths so that disruption in one area of our life doesn't extend to all areas
- Thoughts come and go—but in the moment I can be peaceful



# CALM

Healthy Optimism is the basis of resilience since by providing energy and hope it facilitates an active and creative approach to challenging situations. It reduces reactivity to stress by helping us remain calm.

“Serenity is not freedom from the storm but peace amidst the storm”

Relaxation Rituals

Hand on heart releases Oxytocin



## EMOTIONAL BALANCE

As we get older and wiser we can see our life as a  
movie— a series of scenes:

Praise and Blame,

Gain and Loss,

Sorrow and Pleasure

Come and Go like the wind.

To be happy,

Rest like a tall tree in the midst of them all.

Isn't this an amazing movie!



# COURAGE

## Facing Fears

We all have fears and typical reactions are fight, flight or freeze. Recognizing our reactions and being mindful rather than by only responding mindlessly to our conditioning is helpful.

Observe the fear and its impact on your thoughts and emotions:

F.E.A.R. **F**antasized **E**xperiences **A**ppearing **R**eal

F.E.A.R. **F**ace **E**verything **A**nd **R**ise



# COURAGE

- Understand negativity bias
- Brain Hard-wired to remember negative and dangerous experiences for survival
- What have you survived before? And how?
- “Sometimes what appears to be a catastrophe becomes the foundation for a good life.
- It’s possible to live a good life even if it’s not an easy life” Rachel Naomi Remen



# H.E.A.R.

- **H**ave A Positive Experience
- **E**nrich It
- **A**bsorb It
- **R**emember it in Difficult times.
  
- Adapted from Hardwiring Happiness by Rick Hanson



# CLARITY STOP, LOOK & LISTEN

- FOCUS on problem—don't avoid
- DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU THINK!
- See from different perspectives—witness
- Dispute your way of looking at the world.  
Without doing this you only see things from your point of view
- Re-frame
- Evaluate options
- Decide on an action



# CONFUSION

QUE SERA, SERA—WHAT WILL BE WILL BE!

- Accept ambiguity and our inability to predict and control the future. Worrying only diminishes our vitality and creativity. Much of our stress comes from resistance to our life as it is. By accepting ambiguity we can actually feel more secure.
- Be compassionate to yourself.
- To be uncertain is to be uncomfortable; to be certain is ridiculous





# CONNECTIONS

- SPECIAL PEOPLE
- SPECIAL PLACES
- MEMORIES
- RITUALS
  
- At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have light the flame within us.

Albert Schweitzer



## CONNECTIONS AND COMMUNITY

- Kierkegaard said “The door to happiness always opens outward.”
- Who can count on you?
- Who can you count on?
- Altruism releases Oxytocin and gives a sense of meaning and purpose which can reduce symptoms of depression.

**Help Yourself by Helping Others**



## COMMITMENTS TO OTHERS

- Where can you give back some of the support and gifts that you have been given?
- Giving Back to Person, Object, Community, Purpose
- Forgiveness=let go of pain, betrayals, hurt and choose the capacity to love others. An inner correction that lightens the heart. It is for our peace of mind first. But being at peace we now have peace to give to others.



# MEANING AND PURPOSE

As Nietzsche said, “Those who have a **why** to live, can bear with almost any **how**.”

Ask Questions such as:

- What gives my life meaning?
- How do I cope with suffering?
- What have I learned about courage and strength?
- What have I learned about vulnerability, intimacy?
- How can I best share with others what I have learned?



## VIKTOR FRANKL

- We who lived in the concentration camps can remember those who walked through the huts—comforting others and giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number but their very existence points to the greatest of human freedoms. The freedom to choose your spirit, no matter what the circumstances of life.



# COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE

- What knowledge and experience do you bring to this situation?
- How can you get more knowledge or experience?
- TAKING IN THE GOOD!
- Visualize a good resolution



# COMPASSION, CONCERN, CARING

- For yourself and others
- Know you are not alone
- Breathe kindness and compassion in
- Be aware of 'overcare' compassion fatigue
- Permission to be human and make errors
- "If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion." Dalai Lama



# COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION

- Who is on your team?
- Who can you discuss and admit your fears and mistakes
- Brainstorm what you could have done differently





# RE-CREATION, HUMOR AND FUN

Even in the dark pain of living in a concentration camp Viktor Frankl wrote that each day he would find something, anything to laugh about.

As Frankl put it:

"Humor is another of the soul's weapons in the fight for self-preservation."

Or as Swami Beyondananda said:

"To be happy in life, you must be able to take a joke. And if you can leave a few as well, all the better."

"Life is a sitcom, so sit calm and enjoy it."



# ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE!



# CHANGES FOR THE GOOD

- 1) Positive Mood/ Optimism
- 2) Common Sense
- 3) Peacefulness, Contentment, Serenity
- 4) Endurance, Motivation, Self Discipline
- 5) The difference between try and triumph is a little OOMPH
- 6) Compassion for self and others
- 7) Social Support
- 8) Altruism wishing others well and being in service to them
- 9) Your perception of the stress
- 10) Self-care physical and emotional



# CHANGES

- How have you and your priorities changed?
- What have you learned about your ability to adapt and change?
- What strengths have you discovered in yourself?
- What tools are in your tool box.



# LOVE AFTER LOVE BY DEREK WALCOTT

- The time will come  
when, with elation,  
you will greet yourself arriving  
at your own door, in your own mirror,  
and each will smile at the other's welcome,
- and say, sit here. Eat.  
You will love again the stranger who was your self.  
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart  
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you
- all your life, whom you ignored  
for another, who knows you by heart.  
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,
- the photographs, the desperate notes,  
peel your own image from the mirror.  
Sit. Feast on your life.

