Cultivating Resilience

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Outline

- Introduction
- Definitions and Components of Resilience
  - Social Connection
  - Attitude
  - Values
  - Emotional Acceptance
  - Skillness
- Conclusions
First Nobel Truth of Buddhism. Life is Dukkha-pain that seeps at some level into all finite existence. An axle which is off-center with respect to the wheel, A bone slipped out of its socket.
We are all dislocated, our lives are filled with interpersonal conflict, blocked creativity, and pain.
“If your heart is broken, make art with the pieces.”— Shane Koyczan

She had fouled off of the curves that life had thrown at her.” — W.P. Kinsella, The Thrill of the Grass
Definition of Resilience

• “Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress—such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace and financial stressors. It means "bouncing back" from difficult experiences.

• Research has shown that resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary. People commonly demonstrate resilience.” –The American Psychological Association
Definition of Resilience

- Resilience can be described by:
  - Good outcomes despite high-risk status
  - Competence under stress
  - Recovery from trauma
  - Using challenges for growth that makes future hardships more manageable.
- Only 10% of happiness predicted by external environment. 90% by individual processing. - Shawn Achor
Components of Resilience

- Colleges and universities at their best balance this dynamic tension of providing enough stress to challenge and motivate our students and our staffs without overwhelming them.
- Teaching resilience as part of the process of learning can become part of the environment.
- Components of Resilience - Adapted from Southwick and Charney (2012) *Resilience: The Science of Mastering Life's Greatest Challenges*

Resiliences SAVES
We are social creatures, part of the superorganism of human society.

Social connection is one of the most important components of resilience and is protective against mental illness.

Biologically, isolation is toxic to the human nervous system.

Social connection leads to a release of oxytocin which dampens the stress response by inhibiting the Amygdala.
Oxytocin is the “moral molecule.” It is essential in providing and receiving social support.

One of the most natural ways to release oxytocin is to give and receive a hug.
What can I do?

...you're doing it.
SOCIAL CONNECTION - Altruism

- Research in ethology - mental health and resilience are related to helping others.
- When we help others our brain is rewarded with an increase in Dopamine.
- Harlow monkey experiments. The only way monkeys raised without nurturance could recover was to nurture younger monkeys.
SOCIAL CONNECTION - Resilient Role Models

- Surround yourself with people who regularly work to overcome obstacles
SOCIAL CONNECTION - Resilient Role Models

- Find a mentor - Mentoring is the imparting and receiving of life’s wisdom.

- Good mentors offer the following: safety, respect, listening, questioning, modeling, responsibility, gratitude, opportunity, identity, hope, boundary setting, patience, humility and freedom.

- “Quality is a probabilistic function of quantity. The more successes there are, the more failures there are as well” - Simonton.

- Find your swan
The greatest discovery of any generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitude. -William James
ATTITUDE- Learned Optimism

- **Permanence**: Negative evaluations seen as ongoing (Taoist story of the farmer)

- **Pervasiveness**: Allow positive events (this meeting) to brighten your entire experience rather than letting the negative events darken the other areas (Milton Erikson)

- **Personalization**: Acknowledge the contextual causes of difficult events and your own internal contributions to positive events. (First staff meeting)
ATTITUDE-Mindset

- **Fixed Mindset** Definition of “smart” -
  - Make no mistakes; Finish tasks quickly; Finds tasks easy.
  - Potential is innate; “you’re a natural”; You have to be.
  - Being smart defined as special, different from others, or better than others.
  - Feel urgency to succeed. Failure is intolerable and provides no future direction.
ATTITUDE-Mindset

**Growth Mindset** Definition of “smart” –
- When I figure something out; harder the better.
- Potential is developed over time; You become.
- Luxury of becoming.
- Being smart defined as improving individually and is no different than others. Success is cultivated.
- Failure hurts but isn’t defining.
- Inherent value known.
VALUES-Spirituality

- About balancing contrasts and undefinable experiences. Must be acknowledged and welcomed. Expression of gratitude.

- “Keep two truths in your pocket and take them out according to the need of the moment. Let one be “for my sake the world was created.” And the other: “I am dust and ashes.”

-Rabbi Simcha Bunam
VALUES- The Need for a Moral Compass

“To be nobody but yourself in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make you everybody else—means to fight the hardest battle any human being can fight, and never stop fighting.” e.e. cummings
VALUES-Meaning and Purpose

- Victor Frankel- *Man’s Search for Meaning*.
- Teach despairing men and women that it does not matter what we expect from life but rather what life expects from us.
- After choosing not to escape the concentration camp and stay with his patients his “unhappy feeling” left him and he “gained an inward peace” he had never experienced before.
- Pursue what matters
“You will not be punished for your anger, you will be punished by your anger.”
Culture sanctifies language and tells us:

Psychological problems can be defined as the presence of unpleasant feelings, thoughts, memories, bodily sensations, etc.

Undesirable experiences are signals that something is wrong and has to change.

Healthy living cannot occur until negative experiences are eliminated.
Emotional Acceptance

- Alternative to avoidance
- Active and aware embrace of what's going on inside
- Without trying to change things, especially if attempting to change causes psychological harm
- “Creative Hopelessness”- engendering a posture of giving up strategies when giving up is what is called for in the service of larger goals.
For all your ills I give you laughter.

-Rabelais-

We are all here on earth to help others; What on earth the others are here for I don’t know.

-W.H. Auden
Our work can be FUNNY

DOING A GOOD JOB HERE

Is Like Wetting Your Pants
In A Dark Suit

YOU GET A WARM FEELING
BUT NO ONE ELSE NOTICES
existence HAS A HUMOROUS COMPONENT

INGENUITY

Don't just get a leg up on the competition, get 'em both up.
LAUGHING AT THE FACT WE CAN'T POSSIBLY KEEP UP WITH EVERYTHING
HUMOR ALLOWS us not to take ourselves too seriously
Which of the following is the largest?

A: A Peanut
B: An Elephant
C: The Moon
D: A Kettle

ELEPHANTS
Larger than the moon
HUMOR

- Humor helps us integrate opposing perspectives and make meaning of suffering.
- Numerous studies have shown that laughter helps relieve pain, increase happiness ratings and strengthen the immune response.
- Our lives and sometimes work can be incredibly serious and sad in so many different ways. Humor brings back some balance.
- Laughter yoga - ho, ho, ha, ha, ha
Thrive (don’t just survive!)@Cornell

- The key to thriving is balance. Regularly engaging in thought patterns and behaviors that replenish physical, mental and emotional reserves will help you maintain balance.
- Increase awareness of your thoughts & feelings
- Form & Maintain Strong Relationships
- Cultivate Optimism
- Learn from Experience
- Take Care of Yourself
Thrive (don’t just survive!)@Cornell

Practice these activities to thrive!
- Reflect
- Meet a variety of people
- Express your gratitude every day
- Get out of your comfort zone
- Take purposeful breaks

Resources for faculty and students
- www.gannett/cornell.edu/resilience
Social connection—Find your swan
Attitude—get your Ps straight
Values—pursue what matters
Emotional acceptance—accept what is
Silliness—laugh
Get out there, make art with the pieces and foul off the curve balls.
Resources

- [www.acceptanceandcommitmenttherapy.com](http://www.acceptanceandcommitmenttherapy.com)
- [www.contextualpsychology.org](http://www.contextualpsychology.org)


Resources

Resilience Tests:

- http://www.resiliencycenter.com/resiliencyquiz.shtml
- http://testyourself.psychtests.com/testid/2121
Laughter Yoga

http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=laughter+yoga&FORM=VIRE1#view=detail&mid=EDD243EAF6076E0D7CCDEDD243EAF6076E0D7CCD