

Embrace Loans

June 23, 2017

Bouncing Back:

Rewiring Your Brain for Resilience and Well-Being

8am

S-1 Title

S-2 LG intro

I've been a therapist for 25 years. Helping clients become more resilient in dealing with the challenges and crises of their lives is at the heart of what I do. I've been a live coach for 12; helping clients overcome blocks and obstacles to their own thriving and flourishing is at the heart of what I do.

I work with people coming from many different walks of life: entrepreneurs, single moms, small business owners, secretaries and admins, nurses, physicians, chiropractors, teachers, professors, lawyers, economic analysts, musicians and organic farmers.

All subject to vulnerability of being human. All have to learn to cope skillfully with disappointment, difficulty, even disaster.

How we cope with disappointments that happen every day, losing our wallet and car keys, discovering mold in the bathroom, missing three days at the office to care for a sick child, difficulties that happen every day, disruptive, unwanted changes of the washing machine going on the fritz or the car needing a new transmission.

BIG disappointments and difficulties that are an inevitable part of being a human being that happen over a lifetime, infertility or infidelity, a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer, losing a job, a son wounded in combat overseas. Even with disasters that threaten to completely upset our life as we know it, or the lives of those we love and care about, meaning and purpose and values that we care about.

Sometimes too many things go disastrously wrong all at once: a daughter arrested for selling pot, a laptop left on a plane, finding out that the contractor repairing the roof is being sued for shoddy construction work, all in the same week they are placing an aging parent in a nursing home. We begin to feel like we are drinking from a fire hose and about to go under.

If we or someone we care about loses a job, or loses a relationship, or loses our home, or our health, or our hope, how do we bounce back from the challenges, even disasters inevitable in the human condition?

Why DO some people cope with potentially traumatizing events better than others, what are the factors that help people cope more resiliently?

Begin with framework offered by Paul Gilbert, psychologist in the U.K., because I have found his framework very useful with people who are caught in coping strategies that are less than resilient, that are maladaptive in some way, or stuck in shame or guilt because of those behaviors. People get this framework pretty quickly, and it shifts the work of recovering resilience into a pro-active approach to change, growth, and healing from the very beginning.

Paul says:

Given the evolutionary development of the human brain over hundreds of millions of years, and...[meaning unless there is organic impairment, we are all hard-wired with the same automatic survival responses of autonomic nervous system, the same negativity bias of the right hemisphere of the cortex, the same vulnerabilities to stress hormones killing brain cells in the structures that encode experience into long-term memory]

Given the genetic templates any of us have inherited from generations of ancestors, and...[can be multi-generational transmission of trauma]

Given the conditioning of our attachment experiences in our family of origin, optimal or less-than-optimal, and...[we just learned: we depend on being regulated by other people early on to learn how to regulate ourselves, and the development of the pre-frontal cortex, the center of executive functioning, is kindled and shaped in our earliest attachment relationships]

Given the norms and expectations of our culture and our society... [whether we learn to have realistic expectations of our capacities or not] And there can be intergenerational transmission of trauma.

Who we are...and how we cope...is not our fault.

This kernel of wisdom can be a tremendous relief to anyone who feels stuck and feels badly about feeling stuck. There are so many forces that converge and shape who we have become as an individual human being. No matter how dysfunctional our client's behaviors or how stuck they feel in them, everything they think and do and feel has a reason that is fundamentally understandable, and as we shall see, fundamentally workable.

Then Paul goes on to say...

**S-28      given neuroplasticity....**

Given neuroplasticity, and especially given the power of our choices of self-directed neuroplasticity, who we are and how we cope becomes our responsibility.

I'm going to focus on the power of choice, period, here first, before I talk about the power of our self-directed neuroplasticity.

Because what's emerging from all of the latest research research, and behavioral science research, and trauma research, and post-traumatic growth research, is that how we choose to perceive the crises and catastrophes we are called upon to cope with, and how we perceive ourselves in relationship to those events, and how we manage our reactions to those events, managing our internal stress response to an external stressor, is what determines our resilience, our bouncing back from adversity, from the truly awful.

There was a wonderful article in the February 11, 2016 issue of the New Yorker last winter: "How People Learn to Become Resilient." (reference on slide)

In that article was this quote from George Bonano, director of the loss, trauma, and emotion lab at Columbia University:

*Do you conceptualize an event as traumatizing or as an opportunity to grow.”*

I experienced this myself, many years ago, when I was diagnosed with osteoporosis. At first I simply fell apart, I couldn't believe, with as athletic and healthy with my nutrition as I had been all my life, that I could have osteoporosis. But my friend Erin, who was a nurse, said, “Linda, if you do what you have to do to strengthen your bones now, even with the osteoporosis, you'll be healthier in a few years than you are now.” She was right, and I did, and I am. That diagnosis, which could have been traumatizing, became a growth opportunity for me.

It all comes down to this phrase from my colleague and friend Frankie Perez:

*How you respond to the issue...is the issue.*

Another story to illustrate, small story, big concept:

### **Shoes in wet cement story**

Here's a story from my own experience that perhaps illustrates how we can bounce back from difficulties and take

responsibility for shifting how we cope with challenges, overcome suffering and learn to sail our own ship.

When I had an office in the Sunset neighborhood of San Francisco, I would park my car in Golden Gate Park and walk the two blocks to my office, something I could do on automatic pilot.

One day, more distracted than usual mulling over something I was worried about, I wasn't paying enough attention to where I was walking and blithely stepped into a sidewalk of freshly laid wet cement - up to my ankles.

The cascade of critical thoughts erupted immediately, "You stupid klutz! Look what you've done! You've ruined your shoes! Now you'll be late to work; you'll have to cancel clients today; you'll probably lose clients over this. How could you!" The whole deep slide into the rabbit hole of shaming-blaming-catastrophizing.

Fortunately, by then I had enough mindfulness and self-compassion practices under my belt to catch up to myself. "Whoa! Wait a minute! I need to shift my entire approach here! I'm not the only person on the planet who made a mistake today just because they weren't paying attention. This is probably not the only mistake I'm going to make today. I need to slow down

here, collect myself, try to be a little kinder to myself right here, right now, step out of this sidewalk, and deal.”

With that shift in attitude and shift in response, I did pick my feet up out of my shoes and pick my shoes up out of the cement.

There happened to be an apartment building with an outdoor water faucet just a few steps away. As I began to wash off my shoes, I began to think a little more clearly. “This happened. Other than my own embarrassment and my own inner critic wailing the hide out of me, there’s no catastrophe here. Shit happens. This happened. I’m dealing with it as best as I can. This is going to be okay.

As an on-site construction worker came over to me with some paper towels to wipe off my shoes (I’m grateful to this day for his kindness - no teasing or taunting, no further embarrassment) I began to have some hope that I could save my shoes (I did). I also began to have a little pride and a lot of gratitude that I was coping as well as I was.

Then came the big shift. “Yeah, shit happens, but shift happens, too. If I can shift my attitude in these circumstances, I can shift my attitude in any circumstances.” That’s the big shift.

**S-11 Shit Happens. Shift Happens**

Shit happens. Shift happens. If I can shift my response in this moment, I can shift my response in any moment. That's the big shift. And modern neuroscience helps us understand the neuroplasticity that supports our capacities to respond flexibly to challenges and crises in life that make that shift possible.

### **S-10      Q Friedman-Hill**

- Catch the moment; make a choice
  - -Janet Friedman
- Every moment has a choice; every choice has an impact
  - - Julia Butterfly Hill

### **S-9      Q Frankl**

Between a stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom. The last of human freedoms is to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances.

- Viktor Frankl, Austrian psychiatrist,  
survivor of Auschwitz

Choice is key. Choosing response is key. Response flexibility is key.

Resilience used to be thought of as inborn traits of hardiness, grit, determination, the will to endure and survive. That is shifting, because of the discoveries of behavioral science, and neuroscience, to the role our own perceptions and choices play in strengthening our resilience. How we choose to perceive the event and how we perceive ourselves in relationship to the event.

Resilience is actually a capacity innate in the brain, that can be cultivated and strengthened when we know how. It's the capacity of response flexibility, one of the functions of the pre-frontal cortex, the center of executive functioning in the higher brain.

The capacity to shift gears, shift perspectives, to shift our attitude and our approach to whatever is happening that we wish wasn't happening, to whatever is disturbing or distressing to us, whatever seems potentially tragic or traumatizing to us.

Resilience IS a capacity innate in the brain; it is a capacity of the pre-frontal cortex (the area in red on the slide) - the brain's center of executive functioning that gives us the capacity for response flexibility - to shift gears, shift perspectives, see options that we couldn't see before. The response flexibility - innate in our brains - to shift out of very automatic, habitual reactivity of our survival responses into a more skillful, flexible responsiveness to whatever is happening that we wish wasn't happening, to whatever is disturbing or distressing to us to whatever seems potentially tragic or traumatizing to us. That capacity to create shift can be learned, cultivated and

strengthened, and we can do that by strengthening the functioning of the pre-frontal cortex. Strengthening the pre-frontal cortex is what will allow us to create new patterns of response and rewire old ones.

We know the pre-frontal cortex as the center of executive functions like planning, judgment, decision making, etc. But it is much more than that.

### **S-14 Functions of Pre-Frontal Cortex**

The full maturation of the pre-frontal cortex (the area you see in red on your screen) is what allows our brain to regulate the body and the nervous system, to keep it in a baseline physiological equilibrium known as the “window of tolerance”, not too revved up, not too shut down, able to be relaxed, relational, and resilient. The pre-frontal cortex is what manages a broad range of emotions - joy and sadness, shame and guilt, love and trust, and it especially down-regulates the survival fear and anger responses of the amygdala.

When the pre-frontal cortex is fully developed and fully functional, meaning it can integrate input from many, many different parts of the brain and create coherent responses to those inputs, we can attune to our own physical and emotional experience in response to a dangerous, toxic or life-threatening situation, and we can attune to the physical and emotional

responses of other people as well. We can empathize with - understand, accept, and make sense of - our own responses and understand, make sense of, other people's response, too, even if we don't agree with them.

We can use all of these functions working together to make all kinds of executive decisions, plans, analyses, judgment and discernments. The pre-frontal cortex is also essential to developing an ongoing self-awareness, knowing who we are and how we fit in with other people around us, as we move through time and evolving phases of our life. PFC most integrative structure of brain.

And, the pre-frontal cortex IS the structure in the brain we rely on the most to utilize our innate capacity for response flexibility.

It IS the CEO of resilience, to perceive our own perceptions, catch our own filters and beliefs, or blocking beliefs, about our circumstances, and to use all the tools and techniques that allow us to shift those perceptions and beliefs when necessary. So anything we can do to strengthen the functioning of the pre-frontal cortex to be more flexible in its responses to life experience will strengthen our resilience, and we'll spend the day learning how to do that.

I've learned there are 5 keys factors in helping the brain cultivate those inner capacities of resilience:

[slide of all five]

1. **Safety.** The brain's neuroception of safety within itself, which can be at quite an unconscious level, that we are safe and not in danger or life threat, primes the neuroplasticity of the brain for learning and growth. This mean learning to manage the too much revving up of our sympathetic nervous system when we are startled or anxious or frightened or angry, calming down to our natural physiological baseline of calm and relaxed, yet engaged and alert. And managing too much shutting down of our parasympathetic nervous system into numbing out, collapsing into depression or shame. Re-activating back into that natural physiological baseline of calm and relaxed, yet engaged and alert. That baseline equilibrium is known as our "window of tolerance" or range of resilience.

2. **Safety in relationships.** Human beings are social beings, and human brains are social organs. The safety and trust and resonance between us and another human being or from being part of a community, will activate the neuroplasticity of the brain to do what it does best - learn and grow and rewire in interactions with other brains.

One of my favorite quotes of all time about resilience is from my mentor Diana Fosha:

*The roots of resilience are to be found in the felt sense of being held in the mind and heart of an empathic attuned, self-possessed other.*

We'll learn more about safety in relationships strengthening our resilience this afternoon.

3. The role of **positive emotional experiences in relationships** that channel the brain's patterns of coping into more openness, receptivity, and larger perspectives.

Positive psychology pioneer Barbara Fredrickson found, in her book *Love 2.0*, that when two people are in physical proximity, making eye contact, sharing a positive emotional experience, sharing mutual care and concern, the neurochemistry of the brains of the two people begins to sync up and generate a sense of resonance that she calls love, that certainly is an experience of safety and trust.

We'll do an exercise to experience that in a moment.

4. That the brain learns from experience

Any experience will cause neurons in the brain to fire, any experience, positive or negative. Repeat the experience, repeat the neural firing. The axiom in neuroscience is "Neurons that

fire together wire together.” So when we repeat an experience enough times we’re creating circuits that will remember that pattern of firing and the brain will go there more easily.

So any time we cultivate a gratitude practice, or deepen our listening skills, or develop more mindfulness or practice self-compassion, we are creating new circuits in the brain that make those practices the new habits, the new go-to’s of the brain.

It can be especially helpful for learning for the brain to have novel and challenging experiences to learn from. Novelty motivates the brain to pay attention, challenge requires the brain to work a little harder and grow more connections, more pathways among the neurons. Increases density of connections among neurons so can process more complicated information.

Q Davidson

*The brain is shaped by experience. And based upon everything we know about the brain in neuroscience, change is not only possible, but is actually the rule rather than the exception. It’s really just a question of which influences we’re going to choose for the brain. And because we have a choice about what experiences we want to use to shape our brain, we have a responsibility to choose the experiences that will shape the brain toward the wise and the wholesome.*

*- Richard J. Davidson, PhD*

*Center for Investigating Healthy Minds*  
*University of Wisconsin-Madison*

5. And the brain learns best “little and often.” Small experiences, repeated many times. Researchers have found it may be more beneficial to meditate 10 minutes a day, every day, than for one hour on the weekend. It may be more beneficial to write down things we are grateful for in a journal every evening that to save it up for the weekend.

S-94      Sharing kindness exercise:

From Theodore Rubin:

*Kindness is more important than wisdom. And the recognition of that is the beginning of wisdom.*

And from Martin Seligman, considered the founder of the positive psychology movement:

*Doing a kindness produces the single most reliable momentary increase in well-being of any exercise we have tested.*

This is one of my favorite exercises to do in a training or a workshop. Reflect on a moment of kindness you have received,

earlier today, last week, back in the third grade. Jot down several examples. Choose one; find two other people to work with in a small group. Introduce yourselves, decide who's going first, and then each take a turn (two minutes) sharing some moment of kindness you have received from another human being, something that was helpful or useful. Then you go around the circle again, (one minute each) reflecting on what it was like to share your story and hear other people's stories.

### S-95 image of friends talking

When you make eye contact with people in your group, and sense openness, receptivity, acceptance, you've experienced the social engagement system creating a sense of safety. The energy always shifts toward openness and friendliness when people share these kinds of stories. Activates the brain for learning, think thoughts we haven't thought before or learn from each other as examples and role models. Strengthens brain for learning. As we learn later this morning, the direct measurable outcome is resilience.

Just explored 5 factors of helping brain cultivate resilience: safety, safety in relationships, positive emotions in relationships, learning from experience, especially novel or challenging, and learning little and often.

Another set of factors that will help the brain strengthen its resilience, or any capacity we wish to strengthen;

## S- 4 Practices to Foster Brain Change

Presence - conscious brain must be online to process and install learning. Come out of distraction, dissociation, denial into presence, engaged, show up. Engage brain in choice and learning

Purpose - set intention, set a goal, have a reason for doing what you're doing and learning what you're learning. Intentionality also primes neuroplasticity.

Practice - do the practice you choose to rewire your brain. May be exercise - we'll learn later this afternoon that exercise is the very best way to get your brain to grow new brain cells. May be listening, deep listening to a co-worker. Do the practice.

Persevere - little and often, over and over.

*How long should you try? Until. - Jim Rohn*

*The difference between try and triumph is a little "umph." – author unknown*

## **S-34      Mechanisms of Brain Change**

Now learn briefly four mechanism of brain change - conditioning, new conditioning, re-conditioning, de-conditioning, that *will* shape the brain toward the wise and the wholesome. People love to learn how their brains work. It gives them a sense of empowerment and mastery and efficacy that is very helpful to them in recovering resilience and resolving their traumas and moving into post-traumatic growth.

## **S-35      Conditioning**

First, oversimplified: **conditioning** which is what the brain does all the time on its own when we're not directing it to do something else. When we're not guiding the installing of new patterns of coping in the brain, or rewiring old patterns, the brain does its own learning and automatically encodes responses to experience in its neural circuitry.

Any experience, any experience at all, positive or negative, will cause neurons in the brain to fire. When we repeat the experience, we repeat the neural firing. When we repeat the experience enough, and the pattern of neural firing is repeated enough, "neurons that fire together wire together," the neurons strengthen the synaptic connections between them, meaning the

brain is now likely to fire in exactly the same way when the same or similar experience is repeated. These synaptic connections stabilize into new neural pathways, generating new, stable habits of response.

### **S-36 photo of grooves in hillside**

A metaphor that is often given for conditioning is that of rain falling down a hillside. When rain first starts falling down the hillside, it can run down the hillside any way that it wants. But eventually the falling rain starts to develop little grooves and ruts, then bigger gullies. Eventually the rain can only fall down the hillside in those grooves and gullies. That's a metaphor for how our brain develops pathways and habitual patterns of response so that, without intervention, we automatically respond to a stressor in ways that we have responded before.

Conditioning is what shapes our earliest attachment styles and early automatic patterns of coping, long before there is any conscious choice in the matter. So very often we see these old habitual patterns coming up out of implicit memory and derailing the client's capacities to cope flexibility and adaptively now.

When we want to rewire old patterns of coping, ever rewire trauma responses themselves, we can use three mechanisms of brain change to create new experiences, new wiring.

Again, over simplified:

### **S-37 New Conditioning**

**New Conditioning** is simply deliberately intentionally choosing to cultivate a new experience, a new practice, to shift the functioning of the brain, and the habits of the brain, in a new direction. Any time we help clients cultivate a gratitude practice, or deepen their listening skills, or strengthen the focus of their attention, or cultivate more self-compassion or self-acceptance, we are using the repetition of those experiences to create new learning, new circuitry, new habits of responding to life events, even potentially or previously traumatize events. We are helping them create new wiring in the brain, new memories, new ways of being.

New conditioning does not rewire the old conditioning. When we're stressed out or tired, our brain will default to the old pattern; it's easier, more efficient for the brain to do what it already knows how to do. But with enough repetition, we create a choice point in the brain, and with reconditioning, we actually can rewire the old circuits.

### **S-38 Reconditioning**

**Reconditioning:** The technical name for reconditioning is memory deconsolidation-reconsolidation. Neuroscientists have only been able to see this mechanism operate in the brain through their scanners in the last five to seven years, but it has been the basis of all trauma therapy for decades.

The best reference about reconditioning is Bruce Ecker's book *Unlocking the Emotional Brain: Eliminating Symptoms at their Roots Using Memory Reconsolidation*.

If we can “light up” the neural networks constellating a negative memory - meaning we can evoke a visual image of an event, the emotions associated with that event, locating those emotions in our body, and bring to mind negative beliefs about the self triggered by that event - and then deliberately evoke a positive memory or experience or even new positive memory that will strongly contradict or disconfirm the original negative memory, and hold those two memories, negative and positive in awareness at the same time, or toggle back and forth between the two, the juxtaposition itself will cause the neurons to fall apart and instantly rewire a fraction of a second later. When the positive is strong enough, it will trump the old memory and rewire it.

This mechanism doesn't change what originally happened, but it does change our relationship to what happened. It doesn't re-write history, but it does rewire the brain.

## **S-39        Modes of Processing**

Now, both new conditioning and reconditioning use a focused mode of processing in the brain. We are deliberately guiding the focus of the attention of the brain to a particular task, a particular exercise.

When neuroscientists first began scanning the brains of research subjects in their fMRI's, they assumed that when they weren't asking the brain to do something, name a color or solve a puzzle, that the brain would be quiet.

No.

They learned that the brain "at rest" was more active than ever and all over the brain. This has come to be known as the default network of the brain, what the brain defaults to on its own when we're not consciously focusing attention on a task, and we use it for what I call deconditioning.

## **S-40        De-Conditioning**

The de-focused attention of the default network, when we're not guiding the attention of the brain's processing, allows the brain to "play" on its own, creating its own associations and links. We can use that mode of processing in the brain to create random

change, and use the insights from that meandering and playing of the brain to create new behaviors.

We can experience the default network anytime we're experiencing a sense of reverie or in our daydreams, the brain just meandering where it wants to. We can use the default network in deconditioning exercises using our imagination, in guided visualizations and guided meditations, to open the brain into what Dan Siegel at UCLA calls "the plane of open possibilities." It's true that the default network sometimes has a bad rap, from meditators who notice the brain's wandering into a thousand thoughts when we're trying to concentrate on the breath or on a mantra. That's what the brain does. And we can drop into worry and rumination in the default network if ongoing concerns about our social self drops us into thoughts - do they like me? Do I belong? Did I just do something stupid in front of other people? What do they think?

Any time clients fall into that worry mode of the default network, and clients can go there easily if they are carrying a sense of shame about any potentially or previously traumatizing event, we can help them shift their focus again to being in the present moment, being in the room with us, noticing the sensations in their body or the rhythm of their breathing. Coming into focused attention in the present moment to pull out of the defocused mode of worry and rumination, shaming and blaming. But we can also use the positive aspect of the default network, the imagination and free association, to create new insights, new behaviors, from our own deep intuitive wisdom.

There's an intuitive wisdom in teaching the mechanisms of brain change in the above order.

## **Four Mechanisms of Brain Change**

Conditioning - awareness of implicit patterns of coping so don't get hijacked. When aware....

New Conditioning - cultivating practices to create new habits/circuitry. When functioning of higher brain is stably online....

Re-conditioning - deliberately rewiring old patterns from memory deconsolidation-reconsolidation. When able to focus and safe to de-focus....

De-conditioning - relaxing the brain into its own default network, trusting the arising of deep intuitive wisdom.

At a meta-level, we begin to develop a sense of ourselves as someone who *can* use these mechanisms to effectively create brain change. We see ourselves as someone who *can* learn tools to cope with difficulty, disappointment, even disaster. We can become more resilient; we can move into thriving and flourishing.

## **S-41 Four Intelligences**

As we proceed through this training we will be applying these four mechanisms of brain change to four intelligences:

**Somatic Intelligence** - healing trauma from the bottom up using body-based tools to return the body-brain to a baseline physiological equilibrium, to settle the nervous system and prime the neuroplasticity of the brain.

**Emotional intelligence** - working with the upside of the client's dark side to use emotional expression to shift the functioning of the brain, to perceive, regulate, manage the information coming from their own emotions and to attune to, empathize, and understand the information coming from other people's emotions.

**Relational intelligence** - using regulation and resonance in the relational field, strengthening the capacities of our brains to cultivate connections with other people, social or intimate, as resources for our own resilience and well-being to help clients move through trauma into growth.

**Reflective intelligence** - using mindful awareness to perceive patterns clearly, strengthening the capacities of our brains to

monitor and modify our own perceptions of life events and our reactions to those perceptions of those events, so we can discern options and choose wisely, and make sense of and integrate any trauma stories in the larger life narrative.

## BREAK

### Somatic Intelligence

So very often we live in our heads, analyzing, planning, judging, comparing, competing. We can ignore our bodies and the wisdom of our bodies, but one of the greatest challenges we face in remaining resilient these days is the stress, the chronic stress response, the chronic elevation of the stress hormone cortisol which courses through our bodies to get us moving away from danger or threat, but if we don't calm down in between moments of needing to respond to threat and move quickly, then the cortisol levels stay high, causing damage to our immune system, stress underlying most modern diseases, and damaging our brain cells. Cortisol kills new brain cells generated in the hippocampus, the structure of the brain we use to encode experience into long-term memory. So when we are chronically stressed, we're actually damaging our brain's capacities to learn and remember anything new.

So, offer a series of tools to strengthen somatic intelligence, bringing more calm and equilibrium to body and nervous system,

even using the wisdom of the body to rewire old stressful or negative experiences.

The brain changes through experience, and in all the exercises I will guide you in or describe, we'll be creating safety, coming into presence, focusing attention on experience, reflecting on experience, taking in the good of the experience as a resource, learning to repeat the experience, little and often, to install it in neural circuitry.

In any exercise we practice, please stay within your own comfort zone, or slightly on the edge of it. Nothing we do in these trainings, is ever meant to re-trigger or re-traumatize.

## **New Conditioning - Calming the SNS Spike**

### **S-60 Affectionate Breathing**

Find a comfortable position so that your body is supported and you don't need any effort to remain in that position for the entire meditation.

Close your eyes if you wish, or allow your eyes to soften their gaze.

Take a few slow, easy breaths to release any unnecessary tension.

Begin by listening mindfully to the sounds in the room.

Notice physical sensations in the body as they come and go.

Now focus your awareness on your breathing, noticing where you notice the breath most easily - through your nostrils, through your throat, through the rise and fall of your belly.

Let yourself notice the simple sensations of breathing; just feeling your breath for awhile.

See if you can orient toward yourself and your breathing as you might toward a new born child or beloved pet, with curiosity and tenderness.

If you notice any discomfort in your mind or body, see if you can allow the experience to be, soften toward it, accepting that this is so in this moment.

Bring a sense of kindness toward yourself.

Notice how your breathing nourishes your body even when you're not paying any attention to it.

See if you can feel your whole body breathing. See if you can let your body breathe you.

Give yourself over to the breath. Let yourself become the breath.

Allow your body to be rocked and caressed - internally caressed - by the breath.

And now, release your awareness on your breathing. Allow everything that comes to awareness to be just as it is, for now.

Appreciate your own intentions and effort in coming here. This is the beginning or deepening of your self-compassion practice.

When you're ready, open your eyes.

**S-61 Soles of the Feet**

1. Stand up and feel the soles of your feet on the floor. (Remove your shoes if you wish) Notice the sensations in your feet, feeling the floor or ground.

2. Rock back and forth a little, and side to side. Notice any changes or shifts in sensation. Make little circles with your knees, feeling the changes of sensation in the soles of the feet.

3. When your mind wanders, simply focus your attention on the soles of your feet again.

4. Begin to lift one foot up and place it back down; lift the other foot up and place it back down. Notice how the sensations in your feet change as you lift and place in place. Notice that sensations may change in your entire body.

4. Begin to walk slowly, noticing the changing sensations in the soles of your feet. Notice the sensation of lifting a foot, stepping forward, and then placing the foot on the floor. Do the same with both feet while walking.

5. Return to standing, standing still. Notice the sensations in your feet, in your body now.

5. Notice how the small surface area of the feet supports your entire body. Perhaps allow a moment of appreciation or gratitude for the amazing work of your feet, all day long.

6. Return to standing, then return to sitting.

## **S-62      image of HOH**

One of the very first exercises of **new conditioning for somatic intelligence** I always teach my clients is Hand of the Heart, which helps a client manage their sympathetic spikes and return to their window of tolerance. It is powerful enough to calm down a panic attack in less than a minute.

Simply place your own hand on your own heart, breathe gently, softly, deeply into your heart center. If you wish, breathe in a sense of ease or safety or goodness into your heart center. Then remember one moment, just one moment, when you felt safe, loved and cherished by another human being. Not the entire relationship, just one moment. This could be a partner or child, a friend or therapist or teacher; it could be a spiritual figure; it could be a pet. As you remember this moment of feeling safe and loved and cherished, let yourself feel the feeling of that moment, let the feeling wash through your body, and let yourself stay there for 20 or 30 seconds.

## **S-63      Hand on the Heart**

When we do this Hand on the Heart exercise, the warm, safe touch of our hand on our heart center begins to activate the release of oxytocin, the brain's hormone of safety and trust, bonding and belonging, calm and connect. Warm, safe touch anywhere that feels comfortable on our body can release the oxytocin, but there are neural cells around the heart that communicate directly with the brain and more quickly begins the activation of the release.

Breathing deeply into the heart center activates the calming branch of the nervous system, the parasympathetic branch, and our body begins to relax. Breathing a sense of safety or ease or goodness or any positive emotion into the heart center puts the brakes on our very fast, very automatic survival responses of fight-flight-freeze. Remembering a moment of feeling safe and loved and cherished with someone really activates the release of the oxytocin. Blood pressure goes down, heart rate stabilizes.

Oxytocin is body-brain's hormone of safety and trust, bonding and belonging, calm and connect. Body-brain's direct and immediate antidote to stress hormone cortisol. Cortisol kills brain cells (neurogenesis in hippocampus, structure we use to encode experiences into long-term memory. Stress - less memory, less learning. Oxytocin directly related to resilience.

As I said, this technique is powerful enough to calm down a panic attack in less than a minute.

And visualization is real to the brain. Imagined banana, real banana. Imagine people we feel safe with, we feel safe.

I suggest to my clients that they practice Hand on the Heart ANY time they experience a startle or an upset, to be able to back out of a difficult emotional reaction before it hijacks them. Or even just to practice it to train the brain to create this new response to any difficult moment even before the moment happens. Research has shown, oxytocin flowing through the body-brain can pre-empt the stress response altogether.

## **S-64      Touch**

The fastest way to calm down the spikes of the sympathetic nervous system is through warm, safe touch. These practices can be cultivated as the new automatic responses to the stress response.

HOH, hand on cheek

Head rub, foot rubs, massage

Massage back of neck

One hand on forehead, one hand on back of neck

Hold thumb as “inner child”

Hugs - 20 seconds, full-bodied

Story Francis PN 30 seconds

## Jim Coan research

### **James Coan**

Of course, it's in relationship that the release of oxytocin is most easily activated. And when oxytocin is already flowing the body, it can provide a buffer against stress, even pre-empting the stress response altogether.

An excellent example of this kind of priming was reported in a study by James Coan at the Laboratory for Cognitive and Affective Science at the University of Wisconsin. In the study, three groups of women subjects knew they were going to be administered a slight but unpleasant electric shock on their ankles. Their brain functions were monitored using an fMRI scanner.

The control group of women subjects, who were left alone in the scanner, registered anxiety before and pain during the test. Women holding the hand of a stranger (the lab technician) registered less anxiety and less pain. But the group of women holding the hands of their husbands registered the least anxiety and pain, in some case, no anxiety or pain at all. The pleasurable security of holding the hand of someone who loved them released oxytocin, reduced their stress, and overrode both anxiety and pain. These women instead reported experiencing

peacefulness throughout the procedure. Holding hands with someone they felt safe with primed or conditioned their brains to remain in the calm and relaxed, yet engaged and alert, state of the window of tolerance. It turned off the threat switch in the brain and overrode anxiety and pain, even in a situation that was stressful to others.

## **RECONDITIONING**

Reconditioning is the juxtaposition of one movement with another, or the experience of one memory with another, to light up the neurons in the brain holding a particular pattern so that a new pattern can rewire an old one.

Now using the **reconditioning of movement** to ground in the body and soothe nervous system, come to equilibrium of WOT, prime NP of brain

### **S-65      Reconditioning through Movement** **Progressive Muscle Relaxation**

Progressive Muscle Relaxation - good to stop ruminating at night

Our bodies cannot be anxious and relaxed at the same time. Progressive muscle relaxation helps a person relax their entire body, step by step, moving through the body either foot to head or head to foot. [These instructions are given foot to head.] The entire exercise takes about 7-10 minutes and can be done lying down or sitting.

Begin by curling the toes of the right foot, holding that muscle tension for the count of seven. Let the tensing go and count to 15. Then curl the entire arch of the right foot as though pointing the foot, holding that muscle tension for the count of seven. Let the tensing go and count to 15. Then flex the foot, toes back toward the leg, holding that muscle tension for the count of seven. Let the tensing go and count to 15.

Continue tensing and relaxing various points of the body as you count to seven and the 15. [The counting focuses attention. Breathing into the area of the body as we let go of the tension helps that area relax.] Tense the lower right leg, let that go; tense the upper thigh of the right leg, let that go. Tense the hip and buttocks muscles of the right leg; let that go. Repeat for the left leg.

Move through the torso of the body, tensing and relaxing parts of the torso in turn.

Tense the fingers of the right hand into a fist, then let that go, tense the forearm, the upper arm, the shoulder; repeat for the left hand and arm. Tense the muscles on the back, the neck, the facial muscles. End the session by blowing a nice raspberry; rest a full minute in a relaxed state.

As we become more comfortable with the sensations in our body, we can become less afraid of and more interested in the meaning of the sensations. As we move to the next exercise, rewiring those memories through movement, remember that all of this recovering resilience is small work, little and often. One moment of one memory, never to re-trigger or re-traumatize, never to overwhelm. Always to engender a sense of success at being with and moving through and releasing the body-based memories of the responses to an event.

## **S-66      Movement with Attention**

My friend Anat Baniel, clinical psychologist and dancer, has developed a form of neuromovement therapy based on her years of study with Moshe Feldenkrais. Anat was Feldenkrais' protégé for many years and developed her own Anat Baniel Method based on her work with children with developmental and brain disorders.

Anat considers movement as the most fundamental language of the brain, and she uses movement to prime the brain to perceive differences in experiences, organize information differently, and thus encode new neural connections, i.e., “learn” new behaviors.

This helps a person move beyond brain-based limitations to greater brain integration, thus greater flexibility, strength, energy, and awareness in their bodies

I’m going to lead us in one of Anat’s exercises from her book *Move into Life* called movement with attention, what Helen Lavretsky, whose research I summarized in the Yoga and the Brain article, calls mindful movement. I’m going to give the instructions, as Anat does, to lead you through the entire exercise on the right side only. Normally in yoga we balance every movement to the right with corresponding movement to the left. Anat suggests doing the entire exercise on one side, and waiting for an hour before you do the exercise on the other side, so that you can experience the difference between one side and the other from doing the exercise; noticing the impact before balancing it out. So you may choose to do this exercise on the left side at lunch or later in the day.

1. Sit in the edge of the chair with both feet flat on the floor and a comfortable distance apart. Approximately the width of your pelvis is ideal. Rest your hands, fingers down, on the tops of your thighs. Call this your neutral position. Turn your head to look to the right. Do so easily, always within your comfort range, without forcing anything, straining nothing. Take note of

how far you turn your head. You might want to spot a visual reference point you can use to measure changes as you go along. Now turn your head to the left and find a similar reference point.

2. While still sitting on the edge of the chair, place your right hand a few inches behind you on the seat of the chair and lean back on it so it's bearing some of your weight. Turn your head to the right and then turn your head back to look straight ahead of you. Make sure you move easily within your comfortable range of motion and notice how far to the right you see. Repeat this movement two or three times. Then come back to the middle, placing both your hands back on your thighs, stop, and rest for a moment.

3. Again, sit on the edge of your chair and place your right hand behind you and lean on it as before. Now lift your left arm, bend your elbow, and rest your chin on the back of your hand. Gently turn your head and your arm together, as one unit to the right and then come back to center. As you turn, make sure that your chin is in contact with the back of your left hand all the time. Do this movement three or four times. Stop, come back to your neutral position, and rest for a moment. Notice if there are any changes in the way you are sitting or feeling.

4. Using the same position as above, with your chin on the back of your left hand, turn to the right as far as is comfortable for you and hold that position. Now gently move only your eyes to

the right and to the left. Repeat the movement three or four times, then stop and rest in your neutral position.

5. In the same position as step 4, turn as far as you can to the right comfortable and stay there. Now lift your left buttock off the chair and inch or so and put it back down three or four times. Feel how your ribs move on your left side, coming closer together and then moving farther apart as you lift and lower your left buttock. Stop, come back to neutral, and notice if you are sitting differently on your right buttock compared to the left.

6. Once again, lean on your right hand behind you and turn your head to the right. Notice if your neck moves more easily and whether you see farther than before.

7. Now to back to your neutral position, with both hands palm down on the tops of your thighs. Gently turn your head to the right, then to the left, and notice whether you turn your head more easily to the right than to the left. You have just experienced the power of your brain learning through movement with attention.

## **S-67      Rewiring through Movement**

The body has its own wisdom and knows how it needs to move to “correct” something. You use this somatic wisdom intuitively when you take a break from working too long at your desk or

from weeding too long in your garden and get up and stretch or go for a brisk walk around the block. We can access this intuitive body wisdom by letting the body move first, without thinking, and then reflecting on what the movement might mean. This exercise is a prime example of how we can use our body's wisdom to rewire our brains from the bottom up.

The next exercise is **re-conditioning for somatic intelligence**, rewiring difficult, negative body-based experiences through movement. I first learned this tool of reconditioning from expressive arts therapist Natalie Rogers, Carl Rogers' daughter.

We use the wisdom of changing our body posture to change our mood, to change our state of being, and from there we can change our choices of behavior. You can experience this shift even in a preliminary way, if you close your hand in a fist like this, and notice how you feel in your body, and then open your hands like this, and notice the shift in how you feel in your body. Or you can hold a pencil between your upper lip and your nose like this, and notice if you feel a sense of frown in your body, or you can hold a pencil between your teeth like this, and notice if you feel a smile flowing through your body.

This exercise can be used to explore shifts of any agitation or shut down of the nervous system, any emotion of fear, anger, sadness, disgust, even nuances emotions of jealousy, resentment, disappointment, etc.

So take a moment to identify what specific emotion you want to explore and perhaps rewire through movement of the body.

And now you stand, and you let your body move into a posture that would inhabit or express that emotion. I can curl up here in the withdrawal and hiding of shame. (I demonstrate with shame because shame is one of the biggest derailers of our resilience.) Let your body assume or inhabit the posture of the emotion you are working with, and we'll stay here 30-40 seconds, to really let the neuroception of that feeling be strong. Then you let your body move, on its own, without thinking, without going to your head at all, to the opposite posture. Here I'm moving my torso and arms; I don't even have to know what this new posture, this new emotion is called. We simply stay here inhabiting this posture for 30-40 seconds. Then, let your body return to the original negative posture and we'll hold that for 20 seconds, then return to the second opposite posture again, and we'll hold that for 20 seconds, and now let your body come to something integrative in the middle, and we'll hold this integrative posture for 30 seconds.

Then take a moment to pause and notice and reflect on the experience of doing this exercise, noticing any shifts or insights from doing the exercise.

The first time I used this technique with a client, he was exploring depression. He had assumed the posture opposite to depression would be one of happiness. To his surprise and to his

learning, he realized the opposite of depression for him in that moment, was reverence. He had shifted his experience; he had learned from the intuitive wisdom of his own experience.

## **S-68      Power Posing**

All of this now used in the technique of power posing. Many people have now learned of this technique - to shift the posture of the body to shift the physiological state of the body to shift the emotional state in the brain - through the TED talk of Amy Cuddy of the Harvard Business School, who teaches Power Posing to help her students feel strong and empowered before they face a difficult situation like a job interview or a business meeting or appearing in court.

[demonstrate power pose]

Amy shares her own very moving story of bouncing back from disaster in her TED talk, now the second most viewed talk in the history of TED. When we use the moving of our bodies to shift from one emotional state to another, we are training our brain the reconditioning or rewiring of our emotional experiences, using self-directed neuroplasticity to rewire our sense of ourselves.

## **S-71      Creating a Safe Place**

1. Sit comfortably and quietly. When you are ready, imagine that you are standing in front of a gate. Imagine in rich detail how tall the gate is, how wide, how thick, what it's made of, what color it is. Make this gate as real as you can in your mind's eye.
2. Then imagine yourself opening the gate and walking through. When you are on the other side, visualize what lies ahead: a path, a hallway, a trail, or a street that will lead you to a place that is very special, just for you. This is your safe place.
3. Begin to walk along the path. As you walk, notice whatever you are seeing, hearing, smelling, or anything you are simply noticing.
4. After awhile, you come to a place that you know is your safe place. It may be a meadow, a cottage, a special room in a house, a beach, a garden courtyard, or anywhere that is a special place for you. Allow yourself to walk up to your safe place, and enter.
5. Take time to look around: notice all the things that help you feel safe and comfortable here. Relax and enjoy being here; feel the sense of confidence and inner strength your safe place gives you.
6. If you choose to, find a place to sit down. Add anything you want to this space to help you feel safer and more at ease. Remove anything you don't want. You can change anything you

want. Then simply relax, feeling at ease, enjoying your safe place.

7. When it's time to leave, imagine standing up, leaving the safe place the same way you came in, walking back along the same path or walkway you took to get here, eventually passing through the gate, turning around, and closing it. Your safe place is on the other side, but you know you can return anytime you need to.

8. Practice evoking this safe place in ordinary, non-stressful moments so that it is available to you when the flak hits the fan. Recognize that you are using your brain's neuroplasticity to create a new and reliable resource of coping.

S-72      image of head bowed, head smiling

In this session on **Emotional Intelligence**, we'll learn to use emotional experience and expression to shift the functioning of the brain, to perceive, regulate, manage the information coming from our own emotions and to attune to, empathize, and understand the information coming from other people's emotions, and to use emotional experience to create skillful ways of coping and rewire unskillful ways of coping.

**S-73      Neuroscience Revolutionizing Thinking...**

Neuroscience is revolutionizing our thinking about feelings, and fuels the normalization we can do of different - even difficult - emotions being part of being human, a *necessary* important part of being human. There's nothing wrong with you if you feel hurt, pain, angst; it's human; it's what the body-brain does.

This shift in perspective is summarized in the wonderful title of a book by psychologist Todd Kashdan at George Washington University: *The Upside of Your Dark Side*.

all emotions, every emotion we enjoy and welcome, and every emotion we dislike or dread, is a signal from our bodies to our minds, "Something important is happening! Pay Attention!" Every emotions has a specific somatic marker. We feel it in certain ways in our bodies, and every emotion has an adaptive action tendency.

## **S-74 Emotions**

Earlier, rev up, shut down, ANS safety-danger-life threat

Every emotion, when it's not blocked or repressed, causes us to move - anger will move us to protect ourselves and those we love from danger, from harm, from injustice, from betrayal. Sadness will move us to pull in people for support and comfort.

Fear will cause us to move away from danger or toxicity. Guilt, when it leads to healthy remorse, will move us to take responsibility and make amends for our mistakes and repair with those we've harmed.

This emotional intelligence has been posited in Daniel Goleman's books *Emotional Intelligence and Social Intelligence* to be a better predictor of success in life than family of origin socio-economic status or I.Q.

## **Q Goleman**

Emotions stream our decisions at the outset by eliminating some options and highlighting others. Emotions guide us in facing predicaments and tasks too important to leave to intellect alone: danger, painful loss, persisting toward a goal despite frustrations, bonding with a mate, and building a family. When it comes to shaping our most important decisions and our actions, the emotional brain is as involved in reasoning as is the thinking brain.

The two emotions that are the most difficult for most people to work with are anxiety, which is really too much revving up of our nervous system, the sympathetic spike, which we worked with yesterday morning, and shame, the dorsal dive of feeling not good enough, unworthy, a failure, unlovable that causes us to withdraw and hide from other people, from life experience, which we will work with this morning.

Even those two very difficult emotions we want to expand the bandwidth of our WOT, strengthening our capacities to feel all emotions, manage emotions, get info, deal with wise action.

This is all meant to manage, work with emotions, not control, not hijack, not repress. Managing, navigating the waves, we teach tools to do that, tools to strengthen PFC so we can do that.

## **S-76      Shame - Derailer of Resilience and Neuroplasticity**

A client once asked me if I knew anything about shame, I replied, somewhat flippantly, “I have a PhD in shame.” I don’t have a PhD in shame or anything else, but I do have long professional career of helping folks out of the emotional swamp, the undertow of shame, that is the most powerful destroyer of our resilience: the sense of inadequacy and failure, of feeling not good enough or unlovable that is the territory of toxic shame.

### **Shame**

Shame is somewhat inevitable in the human condition. All tribes, clans, cultures, societies have to teach their young how to survive, how to remain within the norms of acceptable [and life-saving] behaviors, how to stay deserving of the group’s protection if not love.

If the young developing child experiences too many moments of neglect, criticism, rejection, lack of connection, lack of mirroring and validation, the immature developing brain responds with the withdrawal from seeking connection and protection that we see in avoidant attachment, shutting down, numbing out, collapsing, “hiding. And that smallifying becomes the learned pattern of the brain.

We can also see the desperate seeking of attention and approval of the anxious attachment that comes from disconnection.

The meaning making system of brain says, “This happens to me because there’s something wrong with me and if in the future I don’t do that, I’ll be OK. If I can do what’s right and be perfect and please you, then you will love me.

Well into adulthood, whatever the triggering event might be, being blown off by a friend, failing to get a promotion at work, being criticized in front of co-workers or ridiculed at a family gathering, one of the most automatic responses is a feeling of shame, the protective dorsal dive of the shutting down of the parasympathetic nervous system. Any experience of rejection, humiliation, betrayal can trigger this implicitly conditioned feeling of shame and withdrawal and this evolutionarily hardwired response of the parasympathetic nervous system to collapsing. [Not the event but the relationships people have to themselves.] When the shame response happens, the folding

over and the closing in of the body, listening is muted, learning is blocked, change is inaccessible, seemingly impossible.

## **S-77      Q Brene Brown**

Brene Brown is an expert researcher on shame at the University of Texas-Houston, well-known to many of us by now through her TED talks and online course on shame, self-compassion, and rising strong.

Here's Brene's description of shame:

*Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging. Shame erodes the part of ourselves that believes we are capable of change. We cannot change and grow when we are in shame, and we can't use shame to change ourselves or others.*

*- Brene Brown, PhD*

## **S-78      Healing Shame Q Rogers, Hurston**

Shame has been called the great disconnecter, and we begin to help out of the swamp of shame by practicing self-awareness, self-compassion, self-acceptance, self-appreciation, self-love.

*The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.*

*- Carl Rogers*

*Love makes the soul crawl out of its hiding place.*

*- Zora Neale Hurston*

S-79      Q Goldstein

*Just that action of paying attention to ourselves, that I care enough about myself, that I am worthy enough to pay attention to, starts to unlock some of those deep beliefs of unworthiness at a deeper level in the brain.*

*- Elisha Goldstein, Center for Mindful Living, Los Angeles, CA*

## **S-80      Mindful Self-Compassion**

The best protocol I have found to help people **recondition** their emotional experience toward **emotional intelligence** and to use self-directed neuroplasticity on their own is the Mindful Self-Compassion protocol developed by Kristin Neff, psychologist at University of Texas-Austin and Christopher Germer, psychologist at Harvard.

Because Mindful Self-Compassion simply brings *awareness* to the clients' experience - awareness of what is actually happening *and* their reactions to what is happening - and *acceptance* to the client's experience, acceptance of what is actually happening *and* acceptance of their reactions to what is happening.

Awareness and acceptance of themselves as the *experiencer* of their experience. Neuroscientists have shown mindfulness and compassion are two of the most powerful agents of brain change known to science, and that allows clients to rewire their brains in ways that are safe, efficient, and effective.

## **S-81      MSC Activates Caregiving**

Mindful Self-Compassion works because it activates the caregiving system in the brain.

- Mindfulness
  - Focuses awareness on experience
  - May I accept this moment, exactly as it is
- Self-Compassion
  - Focuses kindness on experiencer
  - May I accept myself exactly as I am in this moment
- Common Humanity

- I am not alone; I am not the only one
- Activates caregiving system

There, there, I care. And that activates the release of the oxytocin that calms down the stress response and allows the brain to re-open into a larger perspective. The client shifts from reactivity and contraction to openness, engagement.

I can offer my own example of how powerful the common humanity piece can be. A few months after I moved my eighty-one-year-old dad out to live near me so that I could care for him as his health declined, he had a stroke severe enough to land him in the hospital for a few days and in a skilled nursing facility for a while after that. One morning, he became suicidal. That behavior was more than the nursing facility could take responsibility for. At 5:30 a.m. the staff called me to come and pick him up. In his confused mental state, and despite his frailty, he had managed to climb onto a second-story deck overlooking the courtyard and had threatened to jump.

When I arrived, my dad was waiting in the lobby. Getting him into my car to take him home was no problem, but I was completely bewildered about what to do next. Would he be safe at home? Did I need to move him to a board-and-care facility? Before I got in the car myself, I burst into tears. Right there on the curb in the parking lot, I collapsed and sobbed. All my fear and confusion about his failing health welled up and spilled over. The nurse who had discharged my dad saw my collapse

out the window, came out of the building, sat next to me on the curb, and gently took my hand. For the next fifteen minutes, she never said a word. She just held my hand and gently stroked my back as I cried out wave after wave of grief and anguish.

Eventually, as the tears subsided, I looked into the nurse's eyes and saw someone simply seeing me and my pain, caring for my pain and all the pain of all the family members who had ever gone through what I was going through, all the pain of the human condition. In that moment I knew that my struggle was completely seen, understood, and accepted and I knew I was not the only one. My pain was the pain of common humanity. Her perceiving and accepting that common humanity allowed me to regroup. Her presence conveyed to me that I could find my way through this dark time and helped me recover my confidence. My dad continued to live at home for another 9 months. We had a sweet journey together.

## **S-82      Hand gestures**

- Tightly closed fists (suffering)
- Open palms (mindfulness)
- Arms outstretched (common humanity)
- Hands on heart (compassion)

You can see how essential the steps of MSC would be to help people recover from any trauma. To not run away from their experience or to be hijacked-flooded by it either, but to be with, in an open compassionate mindful way, which allows the brain to pause and settle and shift out of any contracted reactivity into a more open, more bigger picture perspective.

### **S-83      Benefits**

Increased motivation, efforts to learn grow, less fear of failure, greater likelihood to try again, take responsibilities for mistakes, apologies and forgiveness

As other positive emotions, less anxiety, depression, loneliness, better relationships, more social connections, more well-being

### **S-84      Self-Compassion break**

I teach my clients to practice a self-compassion break any time they are feeling stressed, distressed, upset, worried, startled. I will combine it with the hand on the heart exercise we learned earlier. Simply pause, put your hand on your heart or your cheek. The warm safe touch is calming to the nervous system. Come into a compassionate awareness of “Ouch! This is hard! Or scary or I don’t like this” whatever acknowledges your emotional experience in the moment. And then offering phrases similar to these - whatever works. Lately I’ve been saying to

myself “I’m not happy!” “May I be kind to myself in this moment.” “May I accept this moment exactly as it is.” (The mindful awareness - the acceptance of reality - is one of the factors that help people recover from any trauma.) “May I accept myself exactly as I am in this moment.” That is the key. Carl Rogers 50 years ago said, “The curious paradox is, when I accept myself exactly as I am, then I can change.”

“May I accept myself exactly as I am in this moment.” Then “May I give myself all the compassion I need.” I sometimes modify that and suggest my clients say, “May I give myself all the compassion and courageous action that I need.” Those phrases and that pausing to mindfully compassionately care for one’s self as the experiencer of suffering is what shifts the functions of the brain to be able to discern options and take wise action again.

Can practice, even when not startled, just to practice. Call up small amount of negative emotion, recognize in body, focus on breathing, focus on phrases, in and out, let go. So brain already knows how to find pathway.

Story to illustrate this:

**Oh no! No internet!**

**S-85      flow of compassion to others, from others, for self**

If it's challenging for clients to offer themselves compassion (research, 72% of people find it easier to offer to compassion to others, 20% are neutral, only 8% of people feel comfortable offering themselves, compassion), exercise, offer compassion to another (pet); receive compassion from another (us); offer compassion to self or to wounded part of self. All the same emotional flow.

- Sit quietly, comfortably
- Evoke sense of receiving compassion from another
- Evoke sense of offering compassion to another
- Stay in that flow; offer compassion to one's self
- "Don't go hating on yourself."
  - - George Mumford

## **S - 86                      Compassionate Friend**

I will also very often teach a **de-conditioning** for emotional intelligence exercise in evoking a Compassionate Friend, which helps resource clients in times of trouble, and is a baby step in reaching out to other people, even people created in their imagination, which we'll learn more about in the next session on relational intelligence.

I will lead this as though you are doing the exercise in your own imagination.

If you allow yourself to sit in a comfortable posture, or lie down in a comfortable posture, coming into a sense of presence, being aware of being in your own body, in this moment, focusing your awareness on the gentle rhythm of your breathing, coming into a sense of relaxation and peacefulness, and then, when you're ready, imagining that you are in your own safe place, a place that is comfortable for you, where you can feel safe and protected, at ease, content. This may be a room in your own home, it may be a favorite bench in a park or on a hill overlooking the beach, it may be in a café with a friend. You let yourself settle into the safety and comfort of being in your safe place.

Then, you let yourself know that you are going to receive a visitor, someone older, wiser, stronger, someone who knows you and honestly cares about you a great deal. They want you to be happy, and they want to visit with you for a little while.

So you imagine this compassionate friend in quite some detail, what they look like, how they're dressed, how they move, especially what it feels like to you to be in their presence, in their energy field. Then you imagine how you meet and greet this person; do you stand up and shake hands, do you hug, do you bow? Then you imagine you get to have a conversation with this compassionate friend, so imagine how you will do that,

sitting across from each other, sitting side by side, going for a walk.

Then, you get to share with this compassionate friend some worry, some upset, some distress that's current for you now. And you imagine your compassionate friend listening receptively, openly, understandingly. You imagine how you feel being listened to and understood and accepted by this compassionate friend. Then you imagine any words of acceptance or encouragement or support your compassionate friend might have to say. If you could hear whatever you need to hear right now, what would those words be? And imagine listening, imagine what you feel as you hear these words from your compassionate friend.

When the conversation is complete and it's time for the compassionate friend to depart for now, you imagine how you say good-bye, knowing that you can visit with this compassionate friend again any time you wish to. And after your compassionate friend has departed and you are in your safe place again with yourself, you take a moment to pause, notice and reflect on your experience, any shifts in your experience of yourself or shift of the upset you were working with, knowing you have tapped into your own deep intuitive wisdom.

**S-87      image of patient and caregivers**

Now here's an exercise in de-conditioning for emotional intelligence that is for us as clinicians. This is an exercise in compassion for caregivers, because scientists are now redefining compassion fatigue as empathy fatigue. We are motivated to care and to help; we attune to and empathize with our clients. We take in their feelings, and sometimes take them home. Empathy fatigue. This exercise help us stay grounded and nourished ourselves as caregivers, and stay connected to the client or whoever is struggling.

Besides teaching clients the Self-Compassion break, I teach clinicians this self-compassion for caregivers practice to help with compassion-empathy fatigue and burnout.

### **S-88 Compassion for Caregivers**

1. Sit comfortably, closing your eyes, and take a few deep, relaxing breaths. Allow yourself to feel the sensations of breathing in and breathing out. Notice how your breath nourishes your body as you inhale and soothes you body as you exhale.
2. Let your breathing find its own natural rhythm. Continue feeling the sensations of breathing in and breathing out. If you like, place your hand over your heart or any other place on your body that is soothing, as a reminder to bring not just awareness, but *loving* awareness, to your experience, and to yourself.

3. Aware of any stress you are carrying in your body, inhale fully and deeply, drawing compassion inside your body and filling every cell in your body with compassion. Let yourself be soothed by inhaling deeply, and by giving yourself the compassion you need when you experience discomfort.

4. Now focus your attention on your *in-breath*, letting yourself enjoy the sensations of breathing in, one breath after another, noticing how your in-breath nourishes every cell in your body, and then releasing your breath.

5. If you like, you can also carry a word on each in-breath, such as “nourishing,” or “loving,” or “compassion and care,” or “deep ease” or “inner peace.” Give to yourself whatever you need in this moment. You can also imagine inhaling warmth or light – whatever works for you.

6. Now, bring to mind someone to whom you would like to send warmth and kindness and care and goodwill, either *someone you love or someone who is struggling and needs compassion*. Visualize that person clearly in your mind.

7. Shift your focus now to your *out breath*. Feel your body breathe out, and send warmth and kindness and care and goodwill to this person with each exhalation. If you like, you can add a kind word with each out-breath – soothing, soothing, or ease, ease, or an image of caring and compassion.

8. Now, feel your body breathe *both in and out* – breathing in for yourself and breathing out for another. “Nourishing for me; nourishing for you.” Or “soothing for me; soothing for you.” Or whatever words works for you. Eventually, you can simply say, “one for me; one for you. One for me; one for you.” Feel the breath of kindness flowing in, flowing out.

### **S-89**                      **Caregiving with Equanimity**

As you maintain that rhythm, listen carefully to these words, letting them gently roll through your mind:

*Everyone is on his or her own life journey.  
I am not the cause of this person’s suffering,  
Nor is it entirely within my power to make it go away,  
Even if I wish I could.  
Moments like this are difficult to bear,  
Yet I may still try to help if I can.*

9. Allow your breathing to flow in and out, like the gentle movement of the sea, flowing in and flowing out. Let yourself be a *part* of this limitless, boundless flow, breathing in and breathing out.

10. You can focus a little more on yourself, or a little more on the other person – whatever you need.

Breathing in for yourself and breathing out for another.  
 “Nourishing for me; nourishing for you.” Or “soothing for me;  
 soothing for you.” Or whatever words works for you.  
 Eventually, you can simply say, “one for me; one for you. One  
 for me; one for you.” Feel the breath of kindness flowing in,  
 flowing out.

*Everyone is on his or her own life journey.  
 I am not the cause of this person’s suffering,  
 Nor is it entirely within my power to make it go away,  
 Even if I wish I could.  
 Moments like this are difficult to bear,  
 Yet I may still try to help if I can.*

11. Then gently bring your awareness back to breathing in and out, in this moment, in this place, and when you are ready, open your eyes.

### **[no slide] Skillful Distraction**

Whenever we’re working with powerful emotions, it’s important that we feel empowered to use another tool that is invaluable and often undervalued in managing emotions - that of skillful distraction - being able to shift the focus of attention, switch the channel. To take a break - make a cup of tea, walk the dog, call a friend, go for a swim or a bike ride - shift the focus of attention temporarily and shift the physical energy - do something different, move in a different way. When you feel settled and grounded again, then you can return to exploring the difficult

feeling or memory. It's a skillful way to transition between working with difficult emotions and cultivating positive emotions.

All of these exercises of Mindful Self-Compassion and related exercises use the positive pro-social emotion of compassion to help bring the functioning of the brain back into the window of tolerance so we can begin to deal with whatever adversity or crisis they are facing.

### **S-91      Positive Emotions Shift Brain Functioning**

The human brain has evolved over millions of years to pay more attention to negative and dangerous experiences than to positive and safe ones. To survive. To survive as individual and to survive as a species. We're never not going to have this negativity bias. Originally for physical danger; now for social-emotional danger. We will pay more attention to the one negative comment our boss said in a meeting or our lover said at the dinner table than we will to the 19 other positive comments our co-workers or friends or our children said that day. That's how the brain works. The brain is a social brain and we are social beings.

### **S-92      image of head bowed, head smiling**

Now, modern neuroscience is about 25 years old. The technology that allows scientists to peek inside the black box of the brain to see what structures of the brain light up and interact with each other when we are experiencing anger or anxiety or shame, is about 25 years old. One generation of research. And the positive psychology movement, which has investigated the power of positive emotions to shift mood and behavior is also about 25 years old. So now the research findings of modern neuroscience and the research findings of positive psychology are dovetailing to illuminate for us - not just how to work with negative or difficult emotions, but that cultivating positive emotions - compassion (that we just learned), kindness, gratitude, joy, delight, awe, love - not only shift a client's mood and shift a client's behavior. They shift the functioning of the client's brain.

Scientists and therapists are discovering that experience a positive emotion, any positive emotion, will shift the functioning of the brain out of the contraction, the narrow focus of negativity in an instant into a larger bigger perspective, again able to see the forest for the trees again. And with practice more and more steadily over time. And that shifting out of the negativity bias, the capacity to experience and take in the good of a positive moment, a positive experience, is also a huge factor in helping people recover from any trauma.

Neuroimaging has revealed that cultivating experiences of positive and prosocial emotions such as gratitude, and focusing attention on those experiences, causes an increase in neural

activity in the left hemisphere of the brain, exceeding the activity in the right hemisphere. Somewhat more rational, cognitive processing. This “left shift” indicates a shift in the brain from a stance of “avoid” to a stance of “approach” in responding to experience.

Because the right hemisphere of the brain develops significantly earlier than the left and thus has more neural connections to the survival-oriented lower brain, when it comes to processing emotions and responding with action, the right hemisphere and its negativity bias (engendering anxiety, depression, and shame) can block resilient action.

Because the left hemisphere is less connected to the lower brain than is the right, it is less affected by the lower brain’s orientation toward survival. And because it can draw on memories from later in life when our coping has (hopefully) become more resilient, the left hemisphere can more objectively evaluate safety or danger in a new experience, and so it tends to respond more optimistically than the right.

So positive emotions strengthen the capacity to approach rather than avoid challenges and catastrophes we and others face. They increase curiosity and engagement with circumstances and support more open-minded, optimistic, creative coping. They undo lingering negative physiological responses, helping us return to our window of tolerance. The approach stance or sense of openness to experience not only makes us feel better but also

creates a flexibility in the processing of our brains that makes it far more likely that we will find a solution to our problems.

Focusing on positive emotions tends to fuel resilience by overcoming any learned helplessness, moving from languishing to flourishing, building enduring personal resources that rewire the brain in an upward spiral of greater well-being.

Focusing on positive and prosocial emotions is not meant to bypass or suppress dark, difficult afflictive emotions, not at all. We persevere in our practices of mindful empathy, learning to hold and process those afflictive emotions. We deliberately cultivate positive, prosocial emotions as a way to turbocharge the conditioning of new circuits and new habits, new states of mind and heart, so that they become enduring traits of resilience leading to resilient action.

### **S-93      Benefits of Positive Emotions**

- Less stress, anxiety, depression, loneliness
- block negative, envy, resentment; increase other positives
- More friendships, social support, collaboration
- divert attention from stress and worry
- Shift in perspectives, more optimism
- More creativity, productivity

- more enthused, energetic, alive
- bring closure to trauma memories
- Better health, better sleep
- People live on average 7-9 years longer

Does follow pattern: younger - happier, no responsibilities. Middle age - least happy, most responsibilities. Older - happy again; less responsibilities, more resilience, already lived through difficulties.

So we cultivate positive emotions not just to feel good but because they shift the brain out of the reactivity of the negativity bias into a more open, engaged, ready-to-learn mode of processing in the brain.

And resilience is a direct outcome of that. Not just a correlation. A direct cause and effect outcome. More gratitude, kindness, compassion, generosity, joy, awe, love delight in our lives, more resilience and well-being. I could give you so much data. Instead, I'm going to teach you experiential exercises to help clients create that shift in their brains.

**Gratitude - story Barry**

Gratitude is another powerful positive pro-social emotion that can shift the functioning of the brain immediately and more permanently with practice over time.

A year ago, my sister-in-law phoned to tell me that my sixty-year-old brother had been rushed to the hospital with shortness of breath and pain in his chest. He was diagnosed with a blood clot in his right lung and several clots in both legs. When Mary handed the phone to Barry, I dove right into telling him how much I loved him, how glad I was that he was still alive.

And then, in the midst of all the uncertainty and dreadful possibilities, I began to feel my own gratitude for our connection: although we were two thousand miles apart, he was still present in my life. With his life depending on an intravenous drip of blood thinner, it occurred to me to suggest he try a gratitude practice. (I'm a nerd immersed in the science of gratitude, I know, but I'm a quick-thinking nerd.)

Barry is a stand-offish kind of guy, not inclined toward self-awareness practices of any kind. To my surprise, he started in, right there on the phone, grateful that Mary was there by his side, that the doctors clearly cared and seemed to know what they were doing, that his beloved poodles were safe at home, that the nurse brought him a drink of water as soon as he asked for it. It was a five-minute litany of everything he was grateful for, even as he hovered at death's door.

Barry didn't die, though the doctors insisted that he could have. The clots cleared two days later. My brother later told me he noticed a "disturbance in the force field" from so many of my friends sending prayers and blessings for his recovery. When he returned home, he became far more compliant with his doctor's suggestions regarding sleep, diet, and exercise. Whether or not Barry's gratitude practice actually saved his life, it certainly contributed to the conditioning of more resilient behaviors in his brain.

## **S-96      Gratitude**

Cultivating the experience of gratitude is one of the easiest ways clients can access the shift in brain functioning that comes from practicing positive emotions. When a client is having a particularly difficult time I will often begin our sessions with a 5-minute gratitude free-write, both of us silently writing down things we are grateful for. We don't even have to share what we've written. The exercise shifts the client's mood, their perspective, the functioning of the brain, and we begin the session from that more open minded, more optimistic place.

I can suggest they keep a gratitude journal every day of people and experiences they are grateful for, and I always encourage them to include the web of life - people they may never meet but who keep their life going - delivering the mail, picking up the recycling, testing local water quality, staffing the emergency

room. Extending our gratitude to the common humanity we are part of, the safety net we are held in.

I also suggest they work with a gratitude buddy, someone they can email, text, or phone every evening, or have coffee with once a week. One client has emailed her buddy every evening for three years.

### **S-97      Q Einstein - Web of Life**

*A hundred times every day, I remind myself that my inner and outer life depend on the labors of other people, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving.*

*- Albert Einstein*

Story: Barry, snow plow

Free-write 3 minutes, gratitude, people, processes, possession, web of life. Share in groups of three.

### **S- 98      Circle of Support**

## **Creating a Circle of Support**

We may seek refuge among good friends, people we can trust to not judge or disdain us when we become emotionally unglued or our thinking becomes unhinged: people who can simply be with us until we regroup and are ready to face the world again. These are people whose own stability and calm we can borrow until we can regain our own. They may be on our short list of “go-to” people whom we can call at 2 a.m., trusting that we will be held in what the psychologist Carl Rogers calls “unconditional positive regard,” that they will reassure us that we are (or will be) okay, even though our world is crashing around us.

If you don't have a lot of people in your life at the moment who can offer a refuge, don't be discouraged. You can create a genuinely effective circle of support in your imagination. This circle can include people you trust and feel supported by, or it may be made up of imaginary people you would like to meet. Your circle may include a spiritual figure like Jesus or the Dalai Lama. It may include your own wiser self. Visualizing ourselves as encircled by real or imaginary friends who “have our back” can greatly enhance our ease and resilience as we face an unknown or frightening situation.

I experienced the power of calling on support in my imagination almost a decade ago, when I chose to have Lasik eye surgery to correct lifelong nearsightedness and astigmatism. The operation was risky, so I went into it with understandable anxiety. I had asked friends to think of me that day, at the time I was actually in surgery, so that I would feel supported and not alone during the procedure. I had to remain conscious during the operation, and focusing my eyes on the light above me so that the laser could track exactly where to reshape the cornea to give me

20/20 vision. While lying on the gurney, as still as I could, I thought of all my friends thinking of me; I took in the love and caring that I knew were being sent my way.

About ten minutes into the operation, quite suddenly, I lost all sense of anxiety. Instead I was flooded with an overpowering sense of love and belonging. There was nothing to be afraid of, nothing at all. I remained in that state of serenity for the remainder of the surgery (which was completely successful).

Imagined experiences can be nearly as powerful as actual events for creating new brain circuitry. Neuroscientists have discovered that the same neurons fire in our visual cortex when we imagine seeing a banana as when we see one for real. When you use the power of your imagination to repeatedly visualize people supporting you, you are installing a pattern of coping in your neural circuitry that you can use as a refuge in any times of difficulty or challenge.

Neil - chemo - golden Labrador

**Story - Jack-Vietnam, SLPL**

**S-99      Positivity Portfolio (receive acceptance from others)**

This exercise is a positivity portfolio, based on the work of Barbara Fredrickson and her research summarized in her book *Positivity: ...How to Embrace the Hidden Strength of Positive Emotions, Overcome Negativity, and Thrive*. Because we thrive when we receive the genuine support and appreciation of other people, when we feel seen and valued for who we are, we deliberately use this tool of new conditioning to create a resource of inner self-acceptance, strength and self-worth within to better deal with the stressors of life without.

You begin by asking 10 friends or co-workers to send you a card or an email with one or two sentences of what they genuinely appreciate about you. You could even begin by emailing your friends first, sharing what you appreciate about them or about the friendship, and ask them to share in return what they appreciate about you. You can also gather appreciations like this from birthday cards or holiday cards.

We may not have 10 friends we can begin this exercise with. We may have two. We begin with those two.

You gather the comments onto a single sheet of paper, then tape the comments to the computer monitor or on the refrigerator. You can carry the comments around with them in their purse or wallet or on their phone.

The exercise is to read those comments three times a day for 30 days. There's no magic number in neuroscience about three times a day for 30 days; it's simply an easy way to remember to do the exercise. When you read these comments 3 times a day, take 30 seconds each time to take in the good of receiving this support and appreciation from people who know you and care about you. If you read and receive these comments three times a day for 30 days, you will create new circuitry in your brain that supports a newer view of yourself. And that newer view becomes a valuable resource every time you need to deal with difficulties in your life, and need to believe that you can deal with them.

### **S-101 Take in the Good**

Kindness, compassion, gratitude, joy, etc. are an important part of a client's emotional intelligence. And as my friend and colleague Rick Hanson teaches in his book *Hardwiring Happiness* and in his *Foundations of Well-Being* course, when doing these positive emotions practices, it's very important to take in the good of them. Pause, notice the feeling of the experience or the memory, get the felt sense of that positive feeling in the body, savor the feeling for 10-20-30 seconds, allow the brain time enough to process and encode the feeling in our long-term memory so now we can call upon it as a resource for our own resilience and well-being.

## LUNCH

Notice seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, movement  
Notice anything to be grateful for. Take in the good.

S-105     Q Fosha

I'm very fond of this quote from Diana Fosha, founder of Accelerated Experiential Dynamic Psychotherapy, which IS an attachment trauma therapy, that sums that up:

*The roots of resilience are to be found in the felt sense of being held in the mind and heart of an empathic, attuned, and self-possessed other.*

Diana calls this a relationship of a true other to a person's true self. And it can be any true other to any true self. When we are the true other to the true self of any other person we can see and reflect their true self back to them when they have forgotten, or perhaps have never known, who they truly are. We remember their best self when they are mired in their worst self and accept without judgment all of who they are. True others are not necessarily the people closest to us, though they may be: they are the people most attuned to the us, those most accepting of our innate goodness, our essential worth as human beings. For many people, a true other can be a spiritual figure or deity; for others it may be a teacher, or friend. When someone who is

acting as a true other genuinely sees us at their best, we can see ourselves in that light, too. This mirroring helps us rediscover our resilient self.

The power of the true other can be seen in the example of the Irish playwright Oscar Wilde when he was imprisoned in England in 1895 for homosexuality. As Wilde was walking through the throngs of jeering hecklers on his way to prison, his publisher and friend, Robert Ross, quietly bowed and tipped his hat to him. Wilde later recounted in his autobiographical work *De Profundis* that his friend's gesture of respect was what enabled him to endure his two years of imprisonment with his courage and dignity intact. When Ross acknowledged Wilde's true self, Wilde's resilience came to the fore.

### **S-106      Q Dinah Craik**

The felt-sense kind of empathy that creates the conditions for those roots of resilience moment-by-moment is expressed in the words of the 19<sup>th</sup> century British novelist Dinah Craik:

*Ah, the comfort,*

*The inexpressible comfort*

*Of feeling safe with a person.*

*Having neither to weigh out thoughts*

*Nor words,  
But pouring them all right out, just as they are,  
Chaff and grain together;  
Certain that a faithful hand  
Will take them and sift them;  
Keeping what is worth keeping and,  
With the breath of kindness,  
Blow the rest away.*

*- Dinah Craik*

*A Life for a Life, 1859*

Among my favorite stories that also illustrated the attunement and empathy and reflecting from a true other to a true self is one I heard from the meditation teacher Jack Kornfield. A seven-year-old boy and his family went to a restaurant for dinner. When the waitress asked the boy what he wanted for dinner, he replied without hesitation, "A hot dog and French fries!" His mother interrupted, telling the waitress, "He'll have meatloaf with mashed potatoes and gravy." After the waitress had taken the parents' orders, she turned to the boy and asked, "Do you want ketchup and mustard on your hot dog, son?" As the waitress was leaving, the boy turned to his parents and said, "She thinks I'm real!"

The safety this moment-by-moment deep listening provides creates a neural safety net in the brain that primes the brain's receptivity to new experiences, new learning, and activates the brain's neuroplasticity for change.

When we can engage with people in interactions that are safe, resonant, not shaming-blaming-judgmental or critical, but supportive, validating, we strengthen our own inner sense of belonging and worth, and that becomes a powerful resource to strengthen our own capacities of resilience, to shift from contraction and reactivity to a more engaged and open-minded perspective in any situation.

### **S-107      Cultivating the Wiser Self**

1. Find a comfortable position to sit quietly. Allow your eyes to gently close. Breathe deeply a few times into your belly and allow your awareness to come more deeply into your body. Allow yourself to breathe comfortably. Become aware of relaxing into a gentle field of well-being.
2. When you are ready, imagine you are in our own safe place, somewhere where you feel comfortable, safe, relaxed and at ease. This could be a room in your home, a favorite cabin in the woods or a place by a pond or lake, or in a café with a friend.
3. Then let yourself know you are going to receive a visit from your Wiser Self, perhaps an older wise, stronger version of

yourself. Someone who embodies the qualities you aspire to, and is mature and settled in them.

4. As your Wiser Self arrives in your safe place, imagine your Wiser Self in quite some detail. Notice how old your wiser self is, how they are dressed, how they move. Notice how you greet your Wiser Self. Do you go out to meet them? Do you invite them in? Do you shake hands, bow, or hug?

5. Imagine yourself sitting and talking with your wiser self, or going for a walk together. Notice their presence, their energy, and how it affects you.

6. Then, in your imagination, you can ask your wiser self how they came to be who they are.... Ask what helped them most along the way.... What did they have to let go of to become who they are?... Can they share examples of when and how they triumphed over adversity?... You may choose to ask them about a particular problem or challenge facing you now. Notice what advice your wiser self offers that you can take with you. Listen carefully to all they have to tell you.

7. Imagine what it would be like to embody your wiser self. Invite them to become part of you. Notice how it feels to inhabit your wiser self from the inside out and to experience your wiser self within you. When you are ready, imagine your wiser self becoming separate from you again.

8. Imagine that your wiser self offers you a gift—an object, a symbol, a word or phrase—to remind you of this meeting. Receive this object into your hand and place it somewhere in your clothing for safekeeping. Your wiser self will let you know their name; remember it well.

7. As you prepare to leave, take a few gentle breaths to anchor this connection with your wiser self. Know that you can evoke this experience of encountering your wiser self anytime you choose. Imagine thanking your wiser self for the time you have spent together; imagine saying goodbye. Take a moment to reflect on the entire meeting and conversation. Notice any insights or shifts from the experience.

## **Cultivating Self-Acceptance**

*The curious paradox is, the moment I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.*

*- Carl Rogers*

You can also try this exercise of reconditioning:

1. You can begin to accept aspects of yourself that you have previously found unacceptable by pairing a negative message or

belief with the embracing stance of self-acceptance. For example:

“Even though I feel lost and confused right now, I deeply and completely love and accept myself.”

“Even though my finances are a mess and I’m in real trouble, I deeply and completely love and accept myself.”

“Even though I feel like it’s all my fault that my wife left, I deeply and completely love and accept myself.”

2. If both the awareness and acceptance seem like too much of a stretch, head yourself in the right direction with a modified phrase like “I’m willing to consider trying to deeply and completely love and accept myself.” Let yourself notice that even if you deeply believe the negative statement about yourself to be true, the deep love and acceptance of yourself can simultaneously be true as well.

### **S-109      Guest House - Rumi**

This being human is a guest-house.

Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,

Some momentary awareness come  
As an unexpected visitor.  
Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still, treat each guest honorably.

S-110 Rumi....

He may be clearing you  
out for some new delight.  
The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
meet them at the door laughing,  
and invite them in.  
Be grateful for whoever comes,  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.

- Rumi

**S-90 Using Self-Compassion to Answer the Inner Critic**

- CHANGE RELATIONSHIP TO INNER CRITIC rather than getting rid of it
- Identify typical message/tone of inner critic
- Write letter to a friend describing reactions to inner critic
- (You write) letter from friend offering empathy, encouragement, support, suggestions
- Read friend's letter to you; write a response

Now, without a doubt the most difficult inner part to integrate into our sense of self is the inner critic, the voice that constantly runs a negative commentary about everything we do and think and feel. “How come you're still trying to get approval from your dad (or wife, or son)? Don't you know you're a lost cause? You don't even like yourself half the time!”

Very often clients would rather get rid of the inner critic, to never ever hear from it again, and that desire is understandable. They want to be free of the misery that the inner client causes them. And...the deeper healing is to come into a different relationship to the inner critic, to understand the job it is trying to do to keep us safe from harm; it's always jumping in to make sure we don't do something stupid that would cause us to be disapproved of...and exiled...by others.

This is a **de-conditioning** exercise to come into a different relationship with the inner critic. It is a written reflection exercise. We learn more about the power of written reflection to help us get a little distance from whatever emotional turmoil might be disturbing us in session on healing trauma and moving into post-traumatic growth. For now we'll just practice this exercise.

1. Ask the client to identify a typical comment or running commentary from their inner critic that causes them to feel badly about themselves: a habitual pattern of self-criticism or self-contempt that derails their resilience or at least tries to drag their efforts to be resilient through the mud. “You’re so lazy!” or “You sure are out of shape these day.” Have them write down the comment as you typically hear it. Have them notice the tone of voice the inner critic uses. Notice their own response to hearing that tone of voice inside their head.
2. Ask the client to write a letter to a trusted friend (or to you) about this comment and their struggles with it. (They won’t actually mail the letter.) Have them describe what usually triggers this self-criticism; their typical reactions—body sensations, feelings, and thoughts—to hearing this inner voice; any fears of a germ of truth in the criticism; their wishes and desires for understanding and support in dealing with this repetitive pattern.

3. Putting yourselves in the place of the friend they wrote to, ask them write a letter back to themselves. Writing in their friend's voice, (or your voice) convey empathy for the pain of being pummeled by these repetitive criticisms. Acknowledge how hard it is to be vulnerable to this particular form of suffering. Include an appreciation of the client's own wholeness and goodness, all the client's strengths, all their weaknesses, including the ones the inner critic is currently harping on. Include the friend's love and acceptance of the client, exactly as they are, with all of the client's human imperfections, and the friend's understanding of all the events that created the client's way of being and their particular flavor of the universally human inner critic. The client can include any suggestions they imagine their friend might add in the letter; be sure they include the friend's care for the client's well-being and the friend's wish that the client find their way to wise action and relief from this suffering.

4. After writing this second letter, the client puts it aside for awhile. When the client reads it again, ask them to receive and take in the compassion they have conveyed for themselves to themselves.

5. After the client has taken in the self-compassion from the second letter they wrote, ask them to write a third simple letter, this time back to the friend, (or you) thanking the friend for their support and reflecting on what the client has learned from the friend's letter. Ask the client to make a

note of any new behaviors of self-care they can now follow up with, based on the encouragement they have received through these letters.

[save these letters for later in training]

### **S-114 photo of two women talking**

### **S-115 Deep listening**

The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention....A loving silence often has far more power to heal and to connect than the most well-intentioned words.

- Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D.

When we shift our attention toward listening, our whole world changes. Learning to listen is equal to learning to love.

- Ruth Cox

### **S-116 Deep Listening exercise**

- What brings you joy in your life?
- What has brought you sorrow?
- What worries you now?

- When have you found courage in dark times?
- What are you grateful for?
- What are you proud of?

## S-117 Skills of Relational Intelligence

Reaching out for help keeps us connected to the resources we need to find a new job or a good doctor or the right tutor for our kid.

Setting limits and boundaries actually helps us stay calm in relationships, knowing we won't be intruded upon or have to do something that goes against the grain or could be harmful to do.

Negotiating change builds our competence in getting our needs met.

Resolving conflicts smooths the way to be more resilient, more successful in our daily living.

Knowing how to repair a rupture in a relationship helps us find the courage to take risks, confident that we can repair and even strengthen the bond with another person if need be.

Forgiveness requires the mindful empathy that allows us to see the larger picture clearly, holding our own behaviors and those of others, resilient or not, in a larger compassion that supports resilience.

## **S-126     Forgiveness**

The last skill in this section on skills of relational intelligence is perhaps graduate level work in interpersonal relation.

Forgiveness is an art, it is a practice, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. would say:

*Forgiveness is not an occasional act;*

*It is a permanent attitude.*

Whether the causes of a potentially or previously traumatizing experience lie outside of us in other people or circumstances or within ourselves, whether we bear no responsibility or some, or a lot, practicing forgiveness allows us to bring the brain out of the contraction of anger, resentment, grudge, hostility, shut down and withdrawal. Forgiveness is not an emotion; it's a behavior of an attitude of the heart and mind that brings the functioning of the brain out of the lower brain's survival responses and back into the larger perspective of the higher brain - utterly necessary for resilience.

Most clients will experience injury, injustice, disappointment, or betrayal at some point in their lives. Staying caught in those experiences can block their resilience and their relational intelligence from developing. Continuing to feel judgment, blame, resentment, bitterness, and hostility against those who have caused us harm can cause us pain and suffering themselves.

The same can be true if the client hasn't been able to forgive themselves for harm they have caused others or themselves. We want to help them rewire the behaviors of complaining, criticism, disgruntlement, and contentiousness they can so easily get stuck in, and re-open themselves to the genuine understanding, compassion, grieving, and forgiveness that are needed to move into resilient coping and relational intelligence.

It's important to say here: forgiveness does not mean condoning, pardoning, forgetting, false reconciliation, appeasement, or sentimentality. It is a practice, daily and lifelong, of cultivating an inner peace and wisdom that allows our clients to see that their pain is part of the pain of all human beings universally, to reset their moral compass, and to remain compassionate even in the face of injustice, betrayal, and harm.

They may even need to practice forgiveness of life itself, that they've been dealt the hand they've been dealt by life.

This forgiveness practice I will share with you comes for Jack Kornfield, a practicing psychologist as well as beloved spiritual teacher from his book *The Art of Loving Kindness: Forgiveness and Peace*. It's not the only skill needed for healing from hurt and betrayal into post-traumatic growth, but it is an important one.

### **S-127      Forgiveness I**

1. Let yourself sit comfortably, allowing your eyes to close and your breath to be natural and easy. Let your body and mind relax. Breathe gently into the area of your heart, letting yourself feel all the barriers you have erected and the emotions you have carried because you have not forgiven yourself or others. Let yourself feel the pain of keeping your heart closed.

2. Breathing softly, moving through each of the following possibilities for forgiveness. Begin reciting the suggested words, letting the healing images and feelings that come up grow deeper as you repeat the phrases of forgiveness.

3. Seek forgiveness from others with the following words:  
*There are many ways that I have hurt and harmed others, have betrayed or abandoned them, caused them suffering, knowingly or unknowingly, out of my pain, fear, anger, and confusion.*

Let yourself remember and visualize the ways you have hurt others. See the pain you have caused out of your own fear and confusion. Feel your own sorrow and regret. Sense that finally you can release this burden and ask for forgiveness. Take as much time as you need to picture each memory that still burdens your heart. And then as each person comes to mind, gently say: *I ask for your forgiveness, I ask for your forgiveness.*

## **S-128      Forgiveness II**

4. Seek forgiveness for yourself with the following words: *Just as I have caused suffering to others, there are many ways that I have hurt and harmed myself. I have betrayed or abandoned myself many times in thought, word, or deed, knowingly or unknowingly.*

Feel your own precious body and life. Let yourself see the ways you have hurt or harmed yourself. Picture them, remember them. Feel the sorrow you have carried from this and sense that you can release these burdens. Extend forgiveness for each act of harm, one by one. Repeat to yourself: *For the ways I have hurt myself through action or inaction, out of fear, pain, and confusion, I now extend a full and heartfelt forgiveness. I forgive myself, I forgive myself.*

## **S-129      Forgiveness III**

5. Find forgiveness for those who have hurt or harmed you with the following words:

*There are many ways I have been harmed by others, abused or abandoned, knowingly or unknowingly, in thought, word or deed.*

You have been betrayed. Let yourself picture and remember the many ways this is true. Feel the sorrow you have carried from this past. Now sense that you can release this burden of pain by gradually extending forgiveness as your heart is ready. Recite to yourself: *I remember the many ways others have hurt, wounded, or harmed me, out of fear, pain, confusion, and anger. I have carried this pain in my heart long enough. To the extent that I am ready, I offer you forgiveness. To those who have caused me harm, I offer my forgiveness, I forgive you.*

Gently repeat these three directions for forgiveness until you feel a release in your heart. For some great pains you may not feel a release; instead, you may experience again the burden and the anguish or anger you have held. Touch this softly. Be forgiving of yourself for not being ready to let go and move on. Forgiveness cannot be forced; it cannot be artificial. Simply continue the practice and let the words and the images work gradually in their own way. In time you can make the forgiveness meditation a regular part of your life, letting go of the past and opening your heart to each new moment with a wise loving kindness.

S-131 photo of contemplative woman

How many here have formal meditation practice?

We have been practicing mindfulness throughout this training. To notice and reflect on experience, to notice and reflect on our reactions to our experience.

S-132 Q JKZ

We'll focus on mindfulness practice first, as it has been brought to the West from Eastern contemplative traditions, as focused attention training. Jon Kabat-Zinn: focused attention on present moment experience without judgment or resistance. Now add with acceptance and curiosity. The openness shifts us out of reactivity into larger perspective; we can shift gears and be resilient.

Paying attention to our experience and our reactions to our experience exactly as they are happening in the moment. Knowing what we are experiencing while we are experiencing it. Now being applied in schools, business, hospitals, military.

Understanding that this secular, Westernized version of mindfulness is only the tip of the iceberg of the mindfulness practices as they are taught in Eastern wisdom traditions, where

the practice of mindfulness is meant to guide the practitioner to full enlightenment. Of course, even after enlightenment, there's the laundry. So what we're exploring here is still quite worthy.

We'll look at practices that help us pay attention to more and more complex objects of awareness so that we can stay steady in our awareness, PFC online and functioning, in the midst of catastrophe or crises, as essential neural platform for resilience.

Then we'll explore tools to help us use that strengthened capacity of awareness to reflect on and be able to shift their responses to the experience, to monitor and modify their responses as Dan Siegel of the Mindful Awareness Research Center at UCLA would say. The interrupt the automaticity of old habitual patterns and consciously intentionally choose to install new patterns through new conditioning and re-conditioning.

Then we'll take an excursion into the default network of the brain, the mode of de-conditioning where we may be able to access to experiences of non-self, very much part of the contemplative traditions that mindfulness is anchored in, to allow the brain to come into deep intuitive wisdom that can also guide our coping. The larger perspective informs our choices going forward.

### **S-133     Mindfulness - 7 steps**

Most of us operate on automatic pilot, out of awareness about 80% of the time. We're running on implicit memory/patterns; that's nature's way of being efficient; it saves the brain's energy to do what it has done before; to not have to evoke conscious processing of higher brain to decide what to do. We drive to work on automatic pilot. We remember our sister-in-law's name without having to think about it. We do need to evoke the consciousness of the higher brain in order to rewire those implicitly held patterns in a direction we want to.

As therapists, we teach clients to cultivate capacities of awareness, self-reflection, witness awareness, observing ego, all of which fall under the umbrella of mindfulness, what are you noticing now? Noticing what you are experiencing in the moment while you are experiencing it.

I teach clients some basic steps of the mindfulness practice:

1. We pause; we become present - coming out of distraction, out of dissociation, out of denial; we show up; we're engaged with the experience of the moment. Tara Brach - loving presence.
2. We notice and name our experience. When we give a label to our experience, we have activated the language centers of the brain and our higher conscious brain is online.

3. We step back, dis-entangle from the experience, and reflect on it, cultivating a witness awareness, noticing the witness awareness that is separate from what it is witnessing. Observer separate from what is being observed. Knower separate from what is known. Mindfulness can hold anything.

Mammogram story.

That practice came in hand one day a few years later. I was meditating in my office on a break, but I had I left the phone on, and when it rang, I answered it. My doctor was calling to say there was an abnormality in my most recent mammogram; would I schedule an appointment to come in and have another x-ray? My anxiety went right through the roof. All the stories about friends' courses of cancer treatment started rushing through my head. But because I had been meditating and had come into a state of calm awareness before the phone rang, I could clearly see my own anxiety go through the roof, see clearly that it was going through the roof, schedule the appointment for the second mammogram (which turned out to be normal), and return to my meditating, now with a different object of awareness but still held in awareness, aware of being aware.

4. We can then, if we choose, monitor our reactions to experience and modify them. We can begin to make choices about how to respond to this experience.

5. We practice shifting our perspectives, even in practicing knowing that we have a perspective.

6. This allows us to truly discern options and even the potential consequences of our options.

7. Then we can indeed choose wisely - we can let go of the unwholesome and cultivate the wholesome, shaping the brain in a direction that is wise and wholesome, as Richie Davidson says.

And we help clients build the capacities for focusing on more and more complex objects of awareness, which we are always trying to cultivate in our clients for more resilience and well-being.

### **S-134     Noticing more complex objects of awareness**

Notice content. Notice awareness of content. Notice awareness of Awareness.

We did practice noticing **Sensations** Tuesday morning in Somatic Intelligence - using the exercises of new conditioning and focused attention - affectionate breathing and soles of the feet - to bring an awareness to the felt sense of our embodied experience. We can practice a sense and savor walk; carefully

noticing whatever we notice as we walk through a garden, or along a trail, or overlook the ocean.

**Emotions** - we did practice noticing the flow and shift of emotions Wednesday morning in Emotional Intelligence.

Guy Armstrong, a senior teacher at Spirit Rock Meditation Center in the San Francisco Bay Area, tells of a time when he was having great difficulty settling into a long, silent meditation retreat. Restless and agitated, he could finally notice and name what he was experiencing: “Oh, despair!” As soon as he could name the despair, he was no longer embedded in it; he could observe it and begin to let it be, let it naturally unfold, and then let it go. Any time we can notice and name the experience of the moment, we have reengaged our prefrontal cortex. In Guy’s case, noticing and naming allowed him to reflect and come to resolution without feeling caught or trapped.

We can also choose to use and focus on positive emotions to shift the functioning of the brain to a broader, larger, more reflective perspective again.

And we reflect on **Cascades of emotions** - as I had to do when I stepped into the sidewalk of wet cement

For example, we might help clients notice that they react to a tickle in the throat by assuming that a cold is coming on, which

might mean missing work, which might mean losing their job, which might turn into a financial disaster for the family.. These dreaded outcomes are not always inevitable or even knowable, and jumping to conclusions about them makes us less resilient. When we can become aware of patterns of thinking that lead us in the direction of less resilience, we can begin to identify choice points where we might actually be able to identify and choose alternative options.

Discern when to be with, when to let go.

### **S-135     Noticing shifts in patterns of response**

As clients become more comfortable with focusing their awareness on the sensations in their body, they can become less afraid of and more interested in the meaning of those sensations and their emotions and their thought patterns. As I help clients recondition patterns of responding to the meaning of life events, I will use a guided visualization like the one I learned from Stuart Eisendrath, who studies mindfulness and depression at the University of California, San Francisco medical school. It simply uses our mindfulness - our pausing and becoming present, noticing and naming our experience, so that we can step back from our experience and reflect on it, so that we can notice patterns of response to connection and disconnection in relationship that might be quite unconscious and automatic, we can bring those patterns to consciousness so that we can monitor

and modify them, discerning new options and making wise choices about how to respond.

1. Imagine you're walking down the sidewalk of a busy street in your neighborhood. You notice a friend walking toward you on the other side. You wave and call out "Hello!" but the friend does not respond. Notice your own split-second reaction to that lack of response: a contraction in your body, a drop in energy. Notice whatever thoughts might begin to cascade in response to your body's reaction. Maybe you think, "Hmm, that's unusual. I'd better try again." Or, "Whew! He has a lot on his mind. I wonder if I should even bother him?" Notice any reactivity to those thoughts. "Gee, he seems a little stuck up today." Or "Oh, no! What have I done wrong?" Notice whether your thoughts follow a pattern that you have noticed before, such as feeling badly about yourself or wanting to reach out even more.

2. Now imagine that your friend sees you and, on his own, waves and calls out "Hello!" to you. Again, notice your own split-second reaction in your body to his connecting with you: maybe a smile, an uplift of energy. Bring awareness to any shifts in your body, notice any shifts in your thoughts: "He noticed me!" Or "I'm glad we weren't disconnected after all." As you reflect on your experience, notice whether your thoughts follow a pattern that you have also noticed before, perhaps of relief or gratitude.

3. Take a moment to name the reactions and the patterns you discovered, with compassion for any reactions that may have been triggered by the noticing. With every moment of practice in noticing and naming, you are strengthening your prefrontal cortex. And by pausing to do this, you are conditioning your brain to create choice points, giving yourself the chance to respond with more flexibility and choose a different response the next time.

**S-137      photo of contemplative woman**  
**States of Mind, States of Being**

Then we have clients practice noticing more complex states of mind, states of being.

**Story me on retreat, broccoli snit, jhana, awareness**

That practice came in hand one day a few years later. I was meditating in my office on a break, but I had I left the phone on, and when it rang, I answered it. My doctor was calling to say there was an abnormality in my most recent mammogram; would I schedule an appointment to come in and have another x-ray? My anxiety went right through the roof. All the stories about friends' courses of cancer treatment started rushing through my head. But because I had been meditating and had come into a state of calm awareness before the phone rang, I could clearly see my own anxiety go through the roof, see clearly that it was going through the roof, schedule the

appointment for the second mammogram (which turned out to be normal), and return to my meditating, now with a different object of awareness but still held in awareness, aware of being aware.

I help my clients practice mindfulness of states of being through this written exercise.

### **S-138     Five States of Being**

- Lonely, discouraged, down
- Friendly, warm-hearted, generous in spirit
- Tense, agitated, frazzled
- Thoughtful, contemplative, in a reverie
- Hostile, jealous, resentful
  - Identify five states
  - Identify conditions that trigger these states
  - Identify tools you can use to shift these states; practice to interrupt automaticity

### **Autobiography in Five Short Chapters**

S-139     I

I walk down the street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk  
I fall in.  
I am lost...I am helpless  
It isn't my fault.  
It takes me forever to find a way out.

S-140- II

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I pretend I don't see it.  
I fall in again.  
I can't believe I'm in the same place  
But, it isn't my fault.  
It still takes a long time to get out.

S-141 III

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I see it is there.

I still fall in...it's a habit  
My eyes are open,  
I know where I am.  
It is my fault.  
I get out immediately.

S-142 IV

I walk down the same street  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I walk around it.

V

I walk down another street.

-Portia Nelson

Exercise in the Brahma Viharas: Taking in the Innate Goodness  
of Others

*Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts,  
the depths of their hearts where neither sin nor desire nor self-  
knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that*

*each one is in the eyes of the Divine. If only they could all see themselves as they really are. If only we could see each other that way all the time. There would be no more war, nor more hatred, no more cruelty, no more greed. ...I suppose the big problem would be that we would fall down and worship each other. – Thomas Merton*

The Brahma Viharas – loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity – are considered to be “the divine abodes” in the Buddhist wisdom tradition: states of consciousness we embody as we move toward enlightenment. These four Brahma Viharas are also states of being we cultivate to further us on the path toward enlightenment.

1. This exercise is done with a partner, entirely in noble silence. Invite a friend to do this guided meditation with you. Sit across from each other so that you can easily maintain eye contact. Decide who will be partner A and who will be partner B.

2. Begin by simply gazing into each other’s eyes, allowing yourself to see in your partner the nobility of their true nature. Their innate goodness and radiance of their being; their sincere wishes for peace, happiness, and well-being.

3. Partner A closes her eyes. Partner B begins to silently wish her well, sending her sincere expressions of loving kindness: may you know the deepest happiness, may you have ease of

mind and heart. Partner A, let yourself know that your partner is sending you expressions of loving kindness; let yourself receive and take in the kindness being offered you.

4. Partner B closes his eyes; both partners sit in silence, reflecting on the experience and giving and receiving wishes for loving kindness, happiness, peace and ease.

5. Partner A opens her eyes; partner B keeps his eyes closed. Partner A begins to begin to silently Partner B well, sending him sincere expressions of loving kindness: may you know the deepest happiness, may you have ease of mind and heart. Partner B, let yourself know that your partner is sending you expressions of loving kindness; let yourself receive and take in the kindness being offered you.

4. Partner A closes her eyes; both partners sit in silence, reflecting on the experience and giving and receiving wishes for kindness and happiness, peace and ease.

5. Partner B opens his eyes; Partner A's eyes remain closed. Partner B begins to imagine what human sorrows Partner A might have experienced in her journey, what losses, what griefs, what pain of the human condition. Partner B silently begins to send Partner A expressions of compassion: May your sorrows be held in loving awareness, may your sorrows ease; may your sorrows cease. May you be free of suffering, and all causes of

suffering, and from causing any suffering. Partner A: let yourself take in the care and compassion being offered to you.

7. Partner B closes his eyes; both partners sit in silence, reflecting on the experience of giving and receiving compassion and care for sorrows and suffering.

8. Partner A opens her eyes; Partner B's eyes remain closed. Partner A begins to imagine what human sorrows Partner B might have experienced in his journey, what losses, what griefs, what pain of the human condition. Partner A silently begins to send Partner B expressions of compassion: May your sorrows be held in loving awareness, may your sorrows ease; may yours sorrows cease. May you be free of suffering, and all causes of suffering, and from causing any suffering. Partner B: let yourself take in the care and compassion being offered to you.

9. Partner A closes her eyes; both partners sit in silence, reflecting on the experience of giving and receiving compassion and care for sorrows and suffering.

10. Partner B opens his eyes; Partner A's eyes remain closed. Partner B begins to imagine what human joys Partner A may have experienced in her journey. What accomplishments and competencies she might have achieved. What blessings of abundance and love she might have experienced. And silently begin to send her expressions of sympathetic joy, happiness for

her happiness. May you fully delight in your delight; may you feel your joy deeply. Partner A; let yourself receive these sincere wishes from your partner for your own deepening joy.

11. Partner B closes his eyes; both partners sit in silence, reflecting on the experience of giving and receiving joy and delight.

12. Partner A opens her eyes; Partner B's eyes remain closed. Partner A begins to imagine what human joys Partner B may have experienced in his journey. What accomplishments and competencies he might have achieved. What blessings of abundance and love he might have experienced. And silently begin to send her expressions of sympathetic joy, happiness for his happiness. May you fully delight in your delight; may you feel your joy deeply. Partner B; let yourself receive these sincere wishes from your partner for your own deepening joy.

13. Partner A closes her eyes; both partners sit in silence, reflecting on the experience of giving and receiving joy and delight.

14. Partner B opens his eyes; Partner A's eyes remain closed. Partner B begins to imagine what ups and downs Partner A might have experienced in her life; what twists and turns. And begin to send her wishes for equanimity, for a calm abiding in centeredness and groundedness as she rides the waves of life.

Partner A, let yourself receive these wishes for equanimity, balance and deep inner peace.

15. Partner B closes his eyes; both partners sit in silence, reflecting on the experience of giving and receiving wishes for calm, for equanimity, for deep inner peace.

16. Partner A opens her eyes; Partner B's eyes remain closed. Partner A begins to imagine what ups and downs Partner B might have experienced in his life; what twists and turns. And begins to send him wishes for equanimity, for a calm abiding in centeredness and groundedness as he rides the waves of life. Partner B, let yourself receive these wishes for equanimity, balance and deep inner peace.

17. Partner A closes her eyes; both partners sit in silence, reflecting on the experience of giving and receiving wishes for calm, for equanimity, for deep inner peace.

18. With eyes remaining closed, both partners simply bring awareness to this entire experience, reflecting on the giving and receiving of kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity. Notice any changes in your sense of yourself or of your partner.

19. Both partners open their eyes; simply gaze into the eyes of the person you have shared this experience with. Give a bow of thanks and gratitude for creating this experience together.

Inquiry: which resonated more: giving or receiving? Which practice of the four resonated the most?

### **S-149 Resilience and Post-Traumatic Growth**

Focus on post-traumatic growth because focus on growth.

More than resilience, more than coping, surviving, getting back to baseline. When some life altering, life shattering event happens, no getting back to baseline. When a catastrophic tragedy happens, our world is completely upheaved, our sense of how the world is supposed to work is shattered, need specific tools to help us not only cope with potential trauma but actually develop strengths, resources, connections with other, that allow us to recover, even learn and grow and thrive and flourish.

new science of post-traumatic growth, pioneered by Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun at the University of North Carolina - Charlotte.

That while 75% of all Americans will experience at least one potentially traumatizing event in their lifetimes, only 8% will developed full-blown PTSD - the seemingly intractable symptoms of hyperarousal - flashbacks, nightmares, or hypo-

arousal - numbing out, withdrawal and isolation, depression. They found that more than half of all people experiencing at least one potentially traumatizing event will fully recover, *fully recover*, meaning they have

- New personal strengths
- New opportunities and possibilities
- Deeper sense of meaning and purpose
- Deeper relationships, intimate and community
- Greater appreciation for life *because* of process of recovery, not in spite of it

Tedeschi and Calhoun found that even among people who survived a plane crash, or lost a child in a car accident, or were detained in a prisoner of war camp or a refugee camp, people whose lives were completely upheaved by losing a limb or by losing their financial security, many such people could still move through the trauma, could find a new perspective in their lives, and choose to create changes in their lives that not only overcame the trauma but set the course of their life in a completely new direction.

*Trauma is a fact of life. It doesn't have to be a life sentence.*

*- Peter Levine, developer of Somatic Experiencing trauma therapy*

## **Post-Traumatic Growth**

Now I want to introduce the factors that contribute to post-traumatic growth. How we help our clients recover their balance, their resilience, their capacities to cope, even capacities to learn from and transform their lives after the trauma, not just in spite of the trauma they experience, but even learning-growing-thriving-flourishing because of it

## **Factors that Predict Post-Traumatic Growth**

### **S-150 Five Factors of Post-Traumatic Growth**

1) Acceptance of reality. This happened. Never should have. Not fair. The consequences are devastating and recovery could take years.

We wake up to “bad things happen to good people.” That we cannot do enough or be good enough to protect ourselves nor our loved one from the possibility, even the likelihood, of tragedy, trouble, even trauma.

Researchers have found that it can be particularly difficult for Americans to not only have their lives blown apart by the truly awful, but to have their world view of how the world is supposed to work blown apart - if you work hard enough and follow the rules and take care to take care, you should be able to

avoid or prevent bad things happening to you or your loved ones, and that's not what's true. That's part of why the results of the presidential elections and the ongoing aftermath of that election have been so devastating to so many people.

*Be willing to have it so. Acceptance of what has happened is the first step to overcoming the consequences of any misfortune. – William James, founder of American psychology*

Accepting this is the new reality is considered a significant predictor of how well people will cope with trauma. Mindfulness and self-compassion practices can be very helpful here.

S-151 Resourcing with people who understand the reality of the tragedy and who deeply believe in the reality of recovery.

When a person is struggling to keep their head above water, it's very important that they are held in a safety net of support of people who believe in their recovery, because very often it's difficult for the person to believe in their own recovery, to see the light at the end of a very long and dark tunnel.

And it can sometimes be difficult for a person to receive that support. "I'm fine!" is a way of coping, and people can cope that way, or try to cope that way, for years. So the trauma

remains compartmentalized , unresolved, and the potential learning and growth never gets to happen.

So it's very important that the person be offered help and support from family and friends in therapy that they are encouraged and helped to receive that support, and that they be protected from people who are also saying You're fine, move on! Or who doubt the person's capacities to recover or doubt the process of recovery.

So, physical, logistical, financial support are all very necessary and helpful, but it's the strength and abundance of relational resources that's key; therapy and group therapy can be very helpful here.

Several different phases to this.

1) First is people as refuge; resources of safety and protection. People who love us, care about us, believe in our resilience and recovery and growth. But who don't need anything from us, don't need us to be a certain way or move at a certain pace. They allow us and support us in being with whatever we need to be aware of, be with, and accept. Compassionate companion.

2) Then people as support, even resource. Here I'm focusing on sharing your story; telling other people what has happened, how you are coping and feeling received, understood, supported in

their listening. Why support groups can be so helpful. Don't have to explain or defend anything.

Resourcing with people can include participating in a community of shared trauma. It can be so helpful to receive help and support from people who have experienced the same trauma or similar trauma - and group therapy can be very helpful here - a cancer support group, an Alzheimer's caregiver support group, a group for parents who have lost a child to violence, illness, or natural disaster.

Being able to share the story and hear other peoples' stories, without having to explain or defend or justify anything, can be very normalizing and regulating. The experience of common humanity can be very healing. The client gets actual tangible support in moving from a victim stance to an empowered agentic stance. Receiving the understanding, help and support of others in the group can be very powerful, offering understanding, help and support to others can be even more powerful in recovering a sense of choice and mastery.

It is important to remember the sage advice of Brene Brown, author of *Rising Strong* and *Daring Greatly*. "Share your story with people who have earned the right to hear it."

**Sharing finding courage in hard times.**

Take a moment now to silently remember a time when you found the courage to meet and deal with something scary, difficult, potentially overwhelming. Take a moment to reflect, and then you'll do a written reflection, but for now an inward inquiry, when have I found courage in dark times? Specific times, specific moments. Not necessarily how I did that, though it could be, but when. Finding previous moments of courage in your own life journey.

Moment to reflect.

Three minutes to write.

Share in groups of three. Three minutes each sharing, listening, going around again reflecting, what was it like to share your story, hear the other person's story.

Large group de-briefing.

3) Then sharing our story with a larger audience and experiencing that when people hear our story and validate our experience, even learn from our experience of coping, recovery and growth, we get to feel more competent in this journey toward post-traumatic growth. Speaking to groups, get to explain. Strengthens sense of competence, mastery, efficacy. I am coping, I am growing and learning, I can change in real and significant ways.

This resourcing with other people is an important transition from needing a refuge, a place to retreat and re-group to feeling understood and support and accepted to re-engaging in the world, becoming a contributing member to the large society again with whatever we have learned from our particular trauma and our particular journey of coping with it.

152 Recognizing the positive. It may seem completely counter-intuitive at first to encourage clients to find positive moments in the midst of a catastrophe, and we certainly don't do that to avoid being with and empathizing with the fear, the grief, the agony of the experience. But finding moments of respite, in a warm cup of coffee, in the smile of a friend, in playing with a puppy, are essential to shift the functioning of the brain out of contraction, reactivity and rumination, into possibilities and a larger perspective. Cultivating positive emotions and taking in the good can be very helpful here. A temporary respite from unbearable uncertainty, fear, grief. Finding a space to breathe and re-group in the midst of a very difficult effort.

This step of recognizing the positive can include practices of skillful distraction. It's important that clients feel empowered to continue to cultivate these skills of self-regulation and moving through releasing trauma outside of the therapy sessions

When thoughts, feelings, and sensations begin to seem unworkable, And one tool that is invaluable and often

undervalued is that of skillful distraction - being able to shift the focus of attention, switch the channel, not distracting into denial or dissociation. Watch a favorite TV show, or cook a good meal, or work out at the gym.

Skillful distraction is a skill, and when we are mindful, wisely discerning whether indeed we are creating a refuge or going into denial, which could be a form of refuge, could be skillful sometimes, we are using that time of refuge to re-settle our molecules, to re-group and re-emerge to fight the good fight again. shift their focus of attention and their physical energy - do something different, move in a different way, and when they feel settled and grounded again, then they can return to exploring the difficult feeling or memory.

Returning to resourcing with the positive; one excellent way to bring brain and sense of self out of contraction, reactivity, negativity bias of brain, which the traumatizing event may have triggered big time, is a practice of gratitude. Gratitude is taught a lot in the Buddhist tradition, in programs like James Baraz's Awakening Joy, as part of Rick Hanson's Foundations of Well-Being program or Greater Good Science Center's Science of a Meaningful Life.

Here we use a gratitude practice to begin to identify one past event that triggered a trauma response in us at the time, we can go back now and find something in the event, or in the recovery from the event, to be grateful for.

Again, this is not to be pie in the sky or Pollyana, never to minimize or push away the real misery and confusion or impact of the trauma event. We are aware, we accept, we are resourcing. But the new meaning, new purpose, that is the hallmark of post-traumatic growth may hinge on our developing our capacity to find the gift in the mistake, turning a regrettable moment into a teachable moment, as the neuroscience writer Jonah Lehrer said in his book *Imagine*.

Exercise - written reflection. One-two sentences about the event; that's all; most of your writing on what you learned from the event or from recovering from the event. How you changed because of it. What the silver lining of the event was or the process of recovering from the event was.

3-4 minutes

Then groups of 3; not share event; sharing the learning, the gift. Then around again sharing what it was like to share your process in this journey of recovery from trauma to post-traumatic growth.

Large group de-briefing.

S-153

Coherent Narrative

These first three factors lead to a client being able to reframe the entire event, or series of events, or a lifetime of events into what's known in trauma therapy as a coherent narrative. The client's life story that includes the trauma as part of the story, but the trauma is not the whole story. When a person can come to a new larger sense of identity and purpose that includes the trauma but is not entirely defined by the trauma, then the trauma can take its place in the story without determining the rest of the story. We will do the coherent narrative exercise in just a moment.

Stephen Joseph, psychologist at the University of Nottingham, says:

*The ability to abandon the old assumptive self or narrative and to develop a new one is at the heart of the process that can result in post-traumatic growth. People are always telling themselves stories; it is how we make sense of the significance of what has happened to us. In the wake of trauma, people are often telling themselves stories of mental defeat and hopelessness. And they need to be in a position to begin reframing their story, as one that looks to the future and begins to view things in a beneficial way.*

And the other from Rachel Yehuda, director of the Traumatic Stress Studies Division, Mount Sinai School of Medicine.

*Trauma causes changes. There are a lot of opinions out there about how that change manifests, but you just don't stay the same. That is a really radical idea. You do recover in some ways, but that recovery doesn't actually involve returning to the baseline. It involves recalibration towards something new. PTSD is a way of describing that in a very negative light, and post-traumatic growth is a way of describing that in a very positive light.*

## **Journaling for Post-Traumatic Growth**

What can help a client move through all of these five factors and integrate the work of rewiring their brain for all four intelligences in the use of writing the coherent narrative, which is a **deconditioning exercise for Reflective Intelligence**.

James Pennebaker, chair of the psychology department at the University of Texas-Austin, found that reflecting through journaling can be a very effective way for clients to make sense of their story. The brain processes information and experience differently when we are remembering or imagining an experience from when we are talking with another person about the experience from when we are writing about the experience. Writing requires processing in the higher brain, the left hemisphere of the brain, the verbal, sequential, symbolic centers of the brain. So when clients write about their experiences, they are actually creating a little distance between themselves and the experience. They activate their observing ego or witness

awareness and can be less caught in the emotional turmoil of the experience.

Journaling can be particularly effective when 1) the client focuses on their process of recovery and what they are doing to cope, to learn, grow, and change, 2) when they can place the events they are writing about on a timeline of their life. The before, during and after (so they can begin to see that there IS an after) and 3) when they can create a complete coherent narrative of the event. When it seems like a client is edging into the growth phases of post traumatic growth, I will ask them to do this journaling exercise called the coherent narrative. I've adapted this format from what I've learned from Dan Siegel. In session or on their own outside, I ask the clients to reflect on these questions.

### **S-153                      Coherent Narrative**

The Coherent Narrative is an exercise to help people rewrite the story of the trauma and thus their story of themselves. Let go of stories that are not helpful, skillful, resourceful, that keep people caught in the feelings or the beliefs about the trauma or because of the trauma, and create a narrative of their life that integrates the trauma into the life story.

This reflection places entire event in timeline of entire lifetime. Was the event but also was a before, also an after.

- Trauma is part of the story, not the whole story
- Trauma included but not defining life story
- Trauma has its place in the story without determining the whole story

Coherent narrative is a big tool. It may take a long time to do this reflection and write the narrative. It can be done many times.

Here today use these worksheets in 3 phases.

Identify one event you want to work with. I do strongly suggest this is an event that you did cope with, processed and learned from. It's in the past. Important to work with something not much risk of being re-triggered. This is not trauma therapy daylong; stay with as much as you can safely work with so you can get the benefit of the exercise.

You see the prompts.

This is what happened; these were the consequences.

Again, mindfulness and self-compassion to be able to come to that observer awareness and acceptance and relate to the event somewhat objectively rather than caught in the trauma response.

These were the resources, practices, tools and coping strategies I used at the time.

Honest awareness and acceptance, so no shame-blame. Also recovering strengths and resources we did have at the time.

These are the resources, etc. I would use now if I could do this over.

Because there has been new growth and new learning. This step integrates that learning.

These were the lessons I learned, growth I experienced, positive meanings I found.

Taking time with this because this IS the turning point of post-traumatic growth.

This is what I now appreciate because of the event.

Post-traumatic growth is more than coping, it is learning, redeeming, thriving. This step make take some time also. But is the hallmark of fully recovering from trauma.

1) just sit and reflect on prompts. No right or wrong answer, no answers. Just using default network of brain, memory, imagination, intuition.

2) take 7-10 minutes, written reflection on all of these prompts.

## S-154     **Appreciating the New Life *Because* of the Trauma**

5) The final factor is appreciating that a new reality, life as it is now, might not have emerged at all if it weren't for the trauma, life lessons learned, the life's lessons lived, in new work, new relationships, a deeper sense of meaning and purpose with bows to the trauma and the recovery from the trauma that brought the person to the other side of the trauma, to a new day.

Positing this possibility is a huge shift in perspective in the trauma field - that suffering and overcoming suffering could have a redemptive purpose.

As Richard Tedeschi, pioneering researcher in post-traumatic growth says:

*Because there is no returning to baseline for people whose worlds have been upended by trauma, a traumatic event is not simply a hardship to be overcome. The trauma becomes a dividing line in people's lives. It can catalyze deep transformation. People do more than survive; they become wise.*

*- Richard Tedeschi*

And to quote Michaela Haas in *Bouncing Forward: Transforming Bad Breaks into Breakthroughs*:

*Post-traumatic stress is a catalyst for the emotional growth. The worst has happened, and we are changed. Let's face it. Few of us live our best and kindest lives. Most of us hurtle along, propelled by bills and responsibilities, somewhat impervious to our true potential. A breakdown also breaks down the musts and should-haves that ruled our daily routines, along with life as we knew it. Temporarily suspended in a vacuum, we can recalibrate, and maybe for the first time, tune into what truly matters.*

It's the process of re-building and re-discovering who you are in a world where "bad things happen to good people" that fosters new meaning, new purpose, new direction for people. Not just bouncing back but bouncing forward into a new sense of fulfillment and thriving. That's the growth.

Much, much good work goes into helping our clients recover from trauma. The entire training on neuroplasticity can be applied to helping clients recover from trauma.

We're really helping clients shift from an external locus of control - the power of the trauma is in the external event out there - to an internal locus of control - the power to choose how to respond to the external event lies within me. As we support

the client in experimenting with new choices to create new outcomes, we're helping them recover one of the main factors in being resilient in the face of trauma.

The outcomes of post-traumatic growth

Deepened sense of personal strengths and capacities

Deeper connections to other people, intimate and in community

Deeper sense of meaning, life purpose

Deeper faith in one's capacities to be resilient, and that we are part of a larger whole

Deeper appreciation of growth that came from the recover from the event, not just in spite of it.

S-155

*Ring the bells that still can ring.*

*Forget your perfect offering.*

*There's a crack in everything.*

*That's how the light gets in.*

*- Leonard Cohen, Anthem*

S-42      **Emerging Philosophy of Brain Care**

In this section we learn how to take care of the physical brain that allows us to use all the tools of neuroplasticity we will be learning about throughout this entire workshop. A key shift in perspective about brain care is consistent with the little and often philosophy:

### **Shift from Macro Care to Micro Care**

Shifting from - or at least balancing - macro care - big picture solutions - change jobs, take a vacation, work out at the gym - to micro - in the moment solutions - take a nap, stretch your body, take a self-compassion break.

The macro experiences will certainly work – a splendid vacation, a peaceful hike in nature, a resonant conversation with a good friend – will help rejuvenate us and restore our enthusiasm and confidence about ourselves and our work.

Those big practices, big tools, may take time and money; external resourcing to resource internally.

Micro tools are available more easily, more of the time, and the shift to a micro focus is excellent because micro practices can work more effectively to bring the brain out of any kind of fatigue because they operate precisely how the brain operates –

little experiences, in the moment, repeated again and again and again to install in the brain as a resource over time, eventually even becoming a new way of being.

The brain really does learn and rewire best in little micro experiences, processing experiences moment by moment, “little and often.” In other words, it can be better to pause and notice and register a positive pleasant moment, 30 seconds, 6 times a day, than to spend 30 minutes reviewing positive experiences of the week. Both are fine, but the brain changes steadily in repeated increments, and creating these micro tools and micro habits, “little and often” are the best gift of self care we could give ourselves.

I first learned about this shift from macro to micro first from Ashley Bush Davis and her book Simple Self Care for Therapists. You may have experienced benefits of both.

### **S-43      How to Replenish Human Brain**

Exercise-Movement

Sleep-Rest

Nutrition

Learning something new

Laughter-play

## Hang out with healthy brains

Exercise, sleep, nutrition, top three for health of physical brain. The rest are essential for health functioning and continued growth of the brain.

In this session, we'll focus on lifestyle choices we can make that will help us take care of the physical brain and help us harness the neuroplasticity of the brain.

### **S-44      Exercise-Movement**

#### **Macro**

A lot of research lately on the importance of vigorous physical exercise for the brain, and for good reason.

Whatever is good for the heart is good for the brain. Exercise is required to maintain health of brain;

Blood carries oxygen and glucose; are fuel

Signals dopamine, serotonin, endorphins - feel good

Exercise as powerful an anti-depressant as Prozac

Exercise is anti-inflammatory (underlying most diseases)

BDNF - brain's growth hormone: new neurons, stronger connections, myelinate faster;

BDNF in hippocampus, memory center, can reverse memory decline in elderly; reverse physical shrinkage of brain; improve memory and integration of functioning overall

(stress hormone cortisol binds to BDNF, why kills brain cells, runaway stress drives depression, disrupts serotonin, dopamine, social interaction)

protects telomeres on ends of chromosomes (like plastic tabs on ends of shoelaces to keep from unraveling); prevents copying errors; protects against all disease

Turns on genes linked to longevity; 2400 twins active and sedentary, active brains are 10 years younger

Any movement (30 min/5 times/week; 20 min/3 times/week.)

## **Micro -**

Christine Carter's better than nothing workout (3 minutes)

Anat Baniel - sitting is the new smoking

Kaiser poster - woman carrying groceries, Life is a gym.

Study of hotel maid; told work was exercise; showed physical benefits of exercise

move once every hour – wake up brain out of fatigue

sense and savor walk

yoga, chi gong – move energy

Feldenkrais, neuro-movement, slow, subtle movement,  
wake up, re-wire - re-map brain

## **S-45      Sleep-Rest**

Sleep not just absence of consciousness. Sleep is a different consciousness. (Secret Life of Sleep, Kat Duff). Essential (evolution)

Every function in body is affected by sleep, Affects genes, inflammation, immunity, metabolism, circadian rhythm especially brain. How we cope with stress, how quickly we process information, how organize and store memories

## **Macro**

8 hours - housekeeping, reset nervous system, consolidate learning

Sleep deprivation is catastrophic; 5-6 hours for 1 weeks, same level of cognitive impairment as if legally drunk.

Without sleep, less PFC, less impulse control, doubles recovery from depression

We don't need to become better people; we just need to become better rested - Kelly McGonigal

Two kinds of sleep:

REM-activates SNS-dreams

Slow wave, deep sleep - activates PNS, no dreams, deep peace of enlightenment

Deep non-REM sleep is what is restorative. Children - lots. Adults - 20% of sleep. Over 50 years of age, sometimes 0%

How to get there: sleep hygiene

Reduce stress; reduce stressing; news fast, media diet

Cuddle, resource with OT

Go to bed, get up at same time, even on weekends

Dark, cool, quiet room, only sleep and making love

No caffeine, alcohol after 6pm

Shut down TV/devices one hour before sleep

Yoga nidra - Richard Miller

## **Micro**

Nap - 20 minutes, 2pm-4pm

mini-meditate: stop for 10 breaths, soak in peacefulness of slow, gentle breathing, sense of being present, alive, preciousness of this moment.

take a recess, a mental break,

## **S-46      Take Mental Breaks**

Switch the channel – 3 minutes

focus on thinking about something else – -  
Skillful Distraction, positive is good

talk to someone else – relational regulation;  
resonant is good

move-walk somewhere else – nature is good

nature stats This is your brain on nature.

## **S-47      Nutrition**

Healthy Mind Cookbook; MIND (Mediterranean-Intervention for Neurodegenerative Disorders) slow the build-up of toxic materials that cripple memory and critical thinking. Vegetables, leafy greens, nuts, berries, beans, whole grains, fish, poultry, olive oil, one glass of red wine/day. Omega-3's in fish single nutrient most associated with brain health

Controversy and contradictions - Michael Pollan - eat real food, mostly plants, not very much;

macro – eat – fuel to body and brain

eat healthy! More protein (neurotransmitters), more water, (flushes toxins, keeps cells alive) less sugar, less carbs (Perlmutter Grain Brain neurotoxins), less calories, less caffeine/ alcohol (timing and volume); ironic, brain is 60% fat, do need fat. Do need Omega-3 supplements, not enough in diet anymore. Microbiome 100 trillion microbes in human body; extract nutrients, protect immune system, enhance brain function (processed food, antibiotics)

so sorry! Harm reduction; high sugar diets can prompt runaway inflammation and ultimately impair brain function; obesity directly impacts cognitive functioning and longevity; SAM Alzheimers = Diabetes III. Sharpagain.org

micro – savor what you are eating, eat a raisin meditation, eat one meal a day without doing something else at the same time (may be macro)

## **S-48      Learn Something New - Curiosity**

**Macro:** (requires **integration** of different brain functions)

learn to play a musical instrument (one neural cluster in auditory cortex dedicated to processing music)

learn to speak a foreign language

these two reduce risk of Alzheimer's by 50%

**MUSIC:**

heightens positive emotions through dopamine  
 reduces stress - heart rate and cortisol levels (singing  
 to antidote road rage)

can be more powerful than medication in recovering  
 from surgery, reduces pain, increases immunity

Alive Inside documentary

According to studies done by Tracy Shors, a neuroscientist at  
 Rutgers University, “Learning rescues these new cells from  
 death.”

“A colossal number of brain cells, hundreds to thousands, are  
 born each day but most die within weeks unless the brain is  
 forced to learn something new. Then more neurons revive and  
 sprout connections to their brethren. The harder the task, th  
 more survivors.

learn to play juggle or play chess

try a new recipe

drive a new way to work

visit a new city on the weekend

**Micro: Curiosity**

learn a new poem, new quote, flower, bird each day

not just facts but enthusiasm about facts  
 improves memory; increases longevity, 5 years

## **S-49      Laughter-Play**

Physiological mechanism; reduce stress, increase  
 catecholamines, (dopamine and norepinephrine) mind brighter

Play stretches imagination, comfort with unknown, uncertainty,  
 creativity rejuvenates brain; longevity and memory

macro – have a good time at a family gathering or dinner with  
 friends or a birthday party

dinner conversation; tell family stories/lore: best predictor  
 of academic success; more than time in school, time doing  
 homework, time in sports, time in church, across SES

schedule a play date – creative, cultural event with  
 friends – or a silly date – swimming with your grandchildren

join a laughing yoga class; acting; improv

micro – watch a 4-minute video on Happify Daily

Greater Good Science Center

## **S-50      Create With Your Hands**

- Knitting, woodworking, quilting

- Deep brain stimulation; meta-sensory cortex
- Flow state reduces stress
- Focus reduces worry, rumination
- Creativity evokes parallel psychological well-being

## **S-51      Hang out with healthy brains**

Social interaction essential. For many reasons, today 1/2 American have zero close friends. People who experience rejection and neglect over 5 years time more likely to have cognitive impairment

**Macro:** participate in a conference, a support group, book club, a choir, a cycling group

[Dan Siegel: could stay home and read the book]

Do a gratitude practice at family dinners

**Micro:**

Send text or email of gratitude, acknowledgement, appreciation to friend or co-worker; good business management now; don't wait until end of year review; send appreciation every day; make it 80% of someone's review.

## **S-52      Brain Care is Self Care**

- Choose one practice of brain care
- Practice every day for 30 days
- Reflect on difference in functioning, in resilience and well-being, in sense of self

1pm

### **S-156 Integrating the Take Aways**

What tools/exercises could you commit to practicing every day?

What obstacles might get in the way?

What resources could you draw on to overcome the obstacles?

Individual reflection, journaling, share in groups of three; large group Q&A

