

Cape Cod Institute

June 26-30, 2017

9:00am-12:15pm

Bouncing Back:

Rewiring the Brain for Resilience and Well-Being

Reflective Intelligence: Awareness, Acceptance, Action

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-136 Anything is a Cue to Practice:
 Interrupt Automaticity**

Then I will ask clients to:

1. Identify a habitual negative reaction—impatience, boredom, startle, temper, rejection—that they would like to use as a cue to practice rewiring their brain.

2. Identify the new response they would like to substitute: allowing, exploring something new, calming down, pausing to reflect, seeing the good.

3. Identify a positive code word or phrase they will use to break the circuit and cue yourself to change the channel in their brain: “Allow,” “Explore,” “It’s okay,” “Pause,” “What’s the good here?” The choice of words is up to them: what’s important is to use the cue as soon as they identify the trigger, to prevent themselves from falling into their old, conditioned reaction. They may choose a word that already brings to mind a state of resilience or well-being if they have one: “Love,” “Learn,” “Breathe,” “Slow down,” or “Open.” Practice saying their cue word to themselves while they’re in that actual state so that their brain conditions itself to shift to that state when it registers the cue.

My example, critical - critical-bitical-ditical

4. Each time the trigger arises, practice the new pattern of response: they say their cue word and shift to the state you’ve chosen as the new experience (for example, a genuine kindness)

as many times as you need to for the new pattern to become the new habit.

5. Notice as the old pattern fades away into the background and the new pattern becomes more automatic. They have conditioned new learning in your brain, and they have learned that they can do so. Take in the sense of success and mastery as they experience the actual rewiring in their brain.

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

My client Shirley told me this story about preparing her taxes last spring. She began early in the morning, and within thirty minutes got caught in an old mindset: “This is confusing; this is overwhelming; this isn’t workable. I don’t know what I’m doing; I never was good at numbers; I can’t do this!” Because Shirley had been practicing a form of compassionate reflection

for more than a year, she noticed her state of mind. That noticing broke the automatic pattern of her reactivity. She noticed her annoyance at her state of mind. She quickly realized that being caught in this state wasn't helpful. She also realized that she didn't have to stay caught in the old mindset now.

Shirley took a walk around the block to clear her mind, came back to her desk, and took another five minutes to create a different mindset for herself. Could she use preparing her taxes as an opportunity to practice? Shirley brought her mindful empathy to bear on the issue, noticing every moment that she stayed in her wise mind—open-minded and curious about how her mind was responding to the task of preparing her taxes. She noticed and named moments when she was learning something new—a changed rule about depreciation, a better way to categorize her expenses. She also noticed and named moments when her mind began to contract in the face of something she didn't know.

She did call her neighbor Tom, a retired accountant, for advice three times that afternoon, but she managed to finish her taxes by dinnertime. She also noticed her sense of pride in mastering the task that had threatened to overwhelm her that morning, enjoying the deepening trust in herself and her practice; she noticed her gratitude that she noticed her initial patterns of response and took them as a cue to practice. The noticing and naming kept her prefrontal cortex functioning well and brought her out of confusion into clarity.

Trajectory: old mindset, overwhelming. Mindful self-compassion. Cue to practice. Skillful distraction: walk around the block. Shift: growth mindset - opportunity to learn. Resilience. Pride in mastery.

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

S-143 photo of woman meditating

Now we shift to the **default mode of processing** in the brain and use tools of de-conditioning to create new insights that can build more resilience.

Just as in psychotherapy I help clients strengthen a sense of self - authentic and autonomous - that can be aware and accepting of experience, of themselves and take wise action to perceive, allow, reflect, and respond to experience, I also know there is tremendous value in being able to let go of that sense of self, as least not be so caught in it, not take it so personally,

With mindfulness, we begin to notice that all experience unfolds moment by moment. We notice our how breathing changes: inhalation, exhalation, quick or slow, deep or shallow. Our mood changes over longer periods. Maybe I felt hunky-dory two hours ago, but now the job of fixing a leaky faucet has turned into a major and expensive re-plumbing of the entire house, and I'm starting to feel deeply worried and unsure of what to do. Or maybe this morning I was so annoyed with my nephew that I wanted to ship him off to Australia, but now, watching him build

an airport out of Lego blocks, I can't even remember what the fuss was about.

As we mindfully focus on our experiences in the moment, we realize that it is in the nature of all experience to change: this too shall pass. That insight into the impermanence of all experience helps us to begin to unpack what's actually happening, to see clearly all the elements contributing to the situation and understand how they, too, are changing, no matter how inescapable or compelling the experience feels to us in the moment. Mindful awareness—observing and reflecting—allows us to step back from the experience of the moment and observe it from a larger field of awareness *that is not any of those experiences*, that is larger than any of those patterns. With that awareness, we can begin to see different possibilities of responding.

And we use tools of de-conditioning to do that. De-conditioning unfocused mode of processing in the brain is the brain playing, meandering on its own. So that they can even gain a larger more flexible perspective on themselves, their sense of self.

S-144 How Mindfulness Dissolves the “Stuff” of Self

One of the most important focuses of our awareness for recovering resilience is the self: the constellation of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors we come to identify as “me” or “I.” This “I” is seen in traditional mindfulness practice as ever-changing,

ever-unfolding, not a fixed or permanent entity but simply one of the many objects (however fascinating they may be at the personal level) that are categorized in Buddhist psychology as “mental contents.”

With steady practice, mindfulness begins to penetrate the “substance” of our personal self, much as modern physics has been able to understand the substance of any material object. We now know that there is far more space between atoms, and particles of atoms, than there is “stuff,” or matter. There is a vast spaciousness in the densest of matter, paralleling the vast spaciousness between the stars in the galaxies.

Similarly, the practice of mindfulness allows us to experience a spaciousness between the thoughts, judgments, and reactivities of the self and to experience the possibility of flow. As the functioning of our brain shifts from an intentional focus on stuff to a receptive awareness of the space between the stuff, we begin to experience a flow among the many parts that make up what we identify as the self. Instead of a self as a noun, an object with defined perimeters, we begin to see it as a verb, a process of continual change.

With a more fluid understanding of the self, we relax into an experience of openness, clarity, and calm. With practice in mindfulness, this can happen within a breath or two. Even though we have penetrated through the layers of “stuff” to the space that holds the stuff, a kind of emptiness or nothingness,

the subjective experience is often more of an all-embracing awareness of everything, a sense of abundance. This new object of our awareness—*nonself*—is called *true nature* in the Buddhist tradition or *presence* or *essence* in other traditions. It is a universal phenomenon of being human, no matter how much our conditioning might obscure it

This true nature feels like home. We feel centered, balanced, at peace, whole, and complete. The qualities that people have identified as the expressions of this true nature—trust, equanimity, energy, integrity, and generosity, to name a few—are the qualities we come to recognize as constituting the *true self*.

In meditation not focused concentrated practice like cultivating loving kindness or compassion but opening to open spacious awareness like vast sky with clouds blowing through.

Neuroscience of this state, open space awareness, is in its infancy. While the patterns of neural firing that generate this subjective experience of true nature have not yet been fully mapped by neuroscientists, - called the hard problem of consciousness - the experience itself has been verified by millions of individual practitioners over thousands of years.

S-145 Breathing into Infinity

But I can lead you in an exercise that I have found very safe and very reliable in helping clients experience awareness expand and the sense of self simply fall away, at least for the moment. They rest in a peaceful, spacious awareness, and awareness of awareness.

1. Sit comfortably. Allow your eyes to gently close. Focus your awareness on your breathing, gently in and out. As you follow your breathing, notice your own awareness of your breathing, the awareness that allows you to know that you are breathing.

2. When that awareness of your breathing is steady, begin to notice the breathing of any people around you, or people you imagine being around you. There's no need to do anything; just notice or imagine other people breathing as you are breathing, and notice your awareness of that. Notice what you are aware of in your own being as you rest in this awareness.

3. Staying anchored in an awareness of your own breathing, expand your awareness of breathing to include the breathing of more people you know, who are not necessarily physically near you. Notice your awareness of your awareness of everyone breathing. Notice your awareness of your own being as you remain aware.

4. Still anchored in an awareness of your own breathing, expand your awareness further to include people you don't know,

outside the building you are in, perhaps elsewhere in the neighborhood, throughout the city, across the region. Become aware of all of them breathing together. Notice your awareness of your awareness: you are simply being, being aware.

5. Continue to expand your awareness to include people all over the country, all over the planet, all breathing. Expand your awareness to include all living creatures breathing in the parks, the forests, underground, in the lakes and rivers, in the oceans, the sky, of all sentient beings breathing together. Notice your awareness of your awareness of existence, and your awareness of simply being.

6. Expand your awareness to include all forms of existence, some breathing, some not – the air, the water, the rocks.. And notice your awareness of your awareness of the breathing, and your awareness of simply being.

7. Expand your awareness beyond our planet to other planets, other stars, other galaxies, and the space between the planets and stars and galaxies. Expand your awareness as far as you can possibly imagine; notice your awareness of your awareness expanding. Rest comfortably, safely, in this vast spacious awareness, in this vast simply being, for as long as you choose. Take your time.

8. Gently bring your awareness back to your awareness of sitting in the room you are in, in this moment, breathing. Focus your awareness on simply breathing. Take a moment to shift gears and reflect more fully on your experience of simply being. You may experience a lightness, a spaciousness, or an openness in your being.

S-146 Belly Botany

You can practice this shift in perspective any time you're out in nature. Plenty of opportunity at the Cape; last year a ranger led a hike a Marconi Beach to do this.

- Select a one square foot patch of earth. Observe patch from two feet away/above for two minutes.
 - (light and shadow, movement and stillness, beauty and decay, life and death)
- Shift your view to the larger landscape, all the way to the horizon.
- Reflect on shift in perspective.

S-147 **Integrated Neural Platform**

We use this form of reflection access ever-changing flow of self, and we can toggle back and forth between the focused mode of

attention - we are paying attention to our experience, noticing, naming, stepping back and reflecting, shifting our responses to an experience, choosing to harness the brain's neuroplasticity to rewire old patterns of response - and this more spacious awareness that simply lets us rest in awareness our own goodness.

S-148 photo of contemplative woman

I am larger and better than I thought.

I did not think I held so much goodness.

- Walt Whitman

My friend Andy Dreitcer, professor of theology at Claremont School of Theology, says, I take it all seriously, and hold it all lightly.

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 hypoarousal - 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

Acute Trauma

In acute trauma, someone is going along in life and experiences a discreet event - they lose a job, a relationship, their home, their health, their livelihood - that is upheaving to their sense of who they are and how the world works, and overwhelms their capacities, at least temporarily to cope. They may lose, at least temporarily, a sense of connection to community, sense of meaning, possibility of future.

Because our sensory nervous system is constantly scanning the environment for safety-danger-life threat, 24/7, even while we're sleeping, the body-brain will react to any acute event. Any acute sense of danger will activate the SNS, rev us up - fight-flight-freeze to get us to move to meet the danger. Any acute sense of

life threat will activate the PNS, which will cause us to stop moving, to shut down, to collapse.

These autonomic assessments happen in the brain faster than any conscious processing and does not need conscious processing to mobilize our nervous system into action or immobilize our nervous system into collapse.

When a person has already cultivated some mindfulness practice of their own body sensations and emotions and thought patterns, even if we don't call it mindfulness, some self-awareness, they can see their reactivity clearly, we can help them see their reactivity clearly, without needing to react to the reactivity any further. This is not denying or repressing the reactivity of the body, or any negative emotions or catastrophic beliefs that arise; it's simply acknowledging them without reacting to them further. Staying in their own window of tolerance, or returning to it fairly quickly and fairly reliably, staying in equanimity. "Keep calm and carry on" was the motto of the British government in World War II when London was being bombed by the Luftwaffe during the blitz, and by all accounts many citizens did.

New Conditioning for Acute Trauma

We bounce back from any wobble in our resilience, stabilize the capacities of the brain to cope with anxiety and fear, any guilt or

shame, any sense of being paralyzed in victimhood. We use many tools of new conditioning we have described in earlier sessions - somatic tools like Hand on the Heart or Progressive Muscle Relaxation or coming into a Power Pose, emotional tools like the self-compassion break or calling on a compassionate friend, in real time or in imagination, using the Wished for Outcome to rewire in retrospect how they might have responded differently. Intra-personal tools like calling on the Wiser Self to listen to the various parts and voices inside that are having different, even contradictory reactions and opinions to the event. Inter-personal tools like reaching out for help, even forgiveness of themselves or others. We can reflect on times of previous competence to access a sense of competence now. Any time they have coped with some acute stressor or distress in the past, what lessons or strengths can they bring forward now. Researchers have found that we don't need to be competent already at what we're trying to cope with now. Any previous competence about anything at all is the seed the brain needs to foster that sense of competence now.

Re-conditioning - De-conditioning for Acute Trauma

So we may help clients cultivate new positive emotional experiences that will put the brakes on their negativity bias and broaden their perspective out again to the larger picture. Whatever they choose, a gratitude practice for people showing up and helping them, a kindness practice for helping others in the same boat. Broaden and build their resources for coping. Listening for and offering reconditioning exercises for any slide

into collapse or “poor me” or the helplessness of “I can’t do this.” Offering Wished for Outcome to change relationship to self and to event. And certainly, when ready, using de-conditioning tools to strengthen the sense of and use of the Wiser Self, the Compassionate Friend, the Higher Power, and belonging to a sense of supportive community.

As the clients use these tools, it’s very important they claim their own efficacy and competency at using these tools. They are learning to cope, and they can see themselves as someone who is coping. Learning to fish as they are learning to cope for a lifetime; claiming themselves as good fishermen.

Attachment Trauma

Attachment trauma or developmental trauma impacts the person when early attachment experiences - neglectful, dismissive, critical, unpredictable - have been less than optimal. Less than secure attachment experiences compromise the full maturation of the pre-frontal cortex, center of executive functioning, the CEO of resilience, leading to insecure attachment patterns and defensive coping styles. People’s coping styles either stayed in rigid neural cement of avoidant attachment - autonomous and independent but avoidant of people and feelings - can deal but not feel, or the chaotic neural swamp of anxious-avoidant style, maybe able to reach out to others for help and be very aware if not overwhelmed by feelings, but not necessarily stable within, not very resilient. Can feel, but not deal.

Attachment trauma makes it much more difficult to deal with any acute trauma because any unresolved implicit defensive patterns will be triggered and the client can be acting out old fears and shames from the past, or old maladaptive coping mechanisms from the past to meet those fears or shames, and can easily go rigid or collapse.

Recovering Functioning of the Pre-Frontal Cortex

We use all the tools we've been exploring to help clients get the full development of their pre-frontal cortex back on track. Co-regulating the reactivity of the body and brain, co-managing emotions and quelling the fear response of the amygdala, attuning and empathizing with the client so they can learn to or recover their capacities to attune to and empathize with themselves, and then with others, help them cultivate their self-awareness and self-reflective skills so they can strengthen their response flexibility; able to once again perceive options and choose wisely.

Richard Schwartz, developer of Internal Family Systems, suggests starting with addressing the inner critic, which could sabotage all of this good work. The inner critic, a voice internalized from way in the past, can still have a prominent place in the client's psyche and have a lot of power in the present moment. When a client is hounded by that inner critic, through our acceptance of them and cultivating their self-

acceptance of themselves, we help them shift their story of self from that shame-base to being an effective agent on their own behalf.

Chronic Developmental Trauma

When there has been chronic developmental trauma, when the client has experienced multiple adverse childhood experiences from early on - physical, psychological, sexual abuse, profound neglect, alcoholism or drug addiction in the home, violence in the home or in the community, then the accumulation of those traumatizing events can lead to disorganized attachment - fragmentation and dissociation because that accumulated trauma really does impact the development and functioning of the brain. The impaired cognitive development and the impaired social-emotional development makes it far more difficult to cope with anything. Trauma begins to accumulate and there can be a downward spiral of not coping, a disastrous derailing of resilience.

Impact of Trauma on Memory

When we can't consciously come to terms with a potentially traumatizing event—by acknowledging, “That happened in the past, but I'm okay now”—then our brain protects us from further overwhelm by isolating the memories of the event in a “trauma capsule” buried in implicit memory, no longer

connected with the brain's conscious processing of the experience or with other memories or learning that could help us cope.

Once a trauma memory has become dissociated and placed into a trauma capsule, any new event can be unconsciously linked with that implicit memory. Sudden braking in a car can trigger implicit memories of an earlier car accident. A banging door can trigger implicit memories of Daddy's coming home drunk. A bounced check can trigger implicit memories of the family running out of money to pay bills.

So our loss of resilience is not so much locked into any particular external event as it is caused by the meaning our brain attributes to that event and our response to that perceived meaning. This encapsulated memory—of body sensations, emotions, beliefs, and meanings—can make us vulnerable to losing our resilience in the face of stress and trauma later. Recovering that resilience involves not avoiding the storms of life but learning to be at peace within ourselves in the midst of those storms. Even responses to trauma that have been deeply buried in our implicit-only memory can be rewired.

Repeated traumas, if left unresolved, can damage the hardware of the brain itself. Traumatizing experiences—a rape or abortion with no one to turn to for help and support afterwards, an emergency leg amputation as a result of a car accident, losing someone you tried to rescue in a flood to the rapid current

flowing downstream—can have a devastating effect on brain functioning.

Trauma floods the brain with the stress hormone cortisol. Cortisol gets us moving quickly to save our lives, but it also kills brain cells in the hippocampus. When we lose too many brain cells in the hippocampus, we can no longer learn from our experience. This damage compromises our ability to recover from the trauma. If repeated trauma happens at the age when the hippocampus is just developing, the floods of cortisol can derail the maturing of the very structure we need to organize our experience into conscious memories that we can learn from later. Damage to the hippocampus can also delay or inhibit the maturation of the prefrontal cortex. Even in these circumstances, however, the neuroplasticity of the brain makes it possible to recover from the damage of repeated trauma.

Other Impacts of Trauma

Lose sense of safety. Lose access to resource in people that ordinarily would help them feel safe. Lose language - scared speechless; can't create narrative; stay in shame-blame-anger.

To push away pain of PTSD flashbacks-nightmares, denial, dissociation. Lose memories, lose safety in body, lose self-awareness, lose feeling fully alive, lose sense of agency.

Trauma is global.

S-11 Trauma Therapy is Body Based

Masterful trauma therapists working with acute, attachment, or chronic developmental trauma have discovered that trauma memories are held in the body and that working with trauma requires working somatically with body-based tools to work through body-based memories. Pioneers like Bessel van der Kolk in *The Body Keeps the Score: The Brain, Mind and Body in Healing Trauma*, Peter Levine in *In an Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness*, Pat Ogden in *Trauma and the Body*, Babette Rothschild in *The Body Remembers* and Robert Scaer in *The Body Bears the Burden*.

These skillful practitioners have opened the door to understanding the efficacy of body-based trauma therapies like Somatic Experiencing, Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, movement practices like yoga and qi gong to help clients release and move through trauma memories.

All of these modalities use a container of awareness and acceptance - like mindful self-compassion - to anchor the somatic tools - breath, touch, movement - that can stabilize the body brain so that tools of the others intelligences can be applied to the healing of trauma. Re-conditioning - the juxtaposition of the felt sense of a previously or potentially traumatizing event with the felt sense of a contradictory positive or healing event that actually allows the body-brain to rewire the neural network

of the previous event, is what allows the client to change their relationship to that event, and to themselves because of the event. That was then, this is now. And claiming the new now.

Trauma Therapy - Shifts in the Field

The work of these somatic-based trauma therapists has helped shift the field of trauma therapy dramatically in the last few decades.

Part of the shift in the field is shifting the definition of trauma from the event itself to a person's response to the event.

When I was in graduate school, learning about post-traumatic stress disorder in the DSM III-R, I was taught, we all were taught, that trauma was considered to be any event that overwhelmed the coping mechanisms of the patient. Capital "T" trauma was events that would overwhelm the coping capacities of *anyone* - being assaulted, losing a home or a family member in a natural disaster, watching a buddy die in combat, crushing a child or a dog under the wheels of our car, rape, imprisonment. Small "t" traumas were events that overwhelmed some people but not others - flying in an airplane, getting a root canal, being stuck in an elevator, failing an exam, being sued, causing a fender bender, witnessing an armed robbery.

We've probably seen for ourselves that different people can respond differently to the same event; one person loses a job and gets derailed in their career for six months; another person loses a job and within two months has found a new career path. Even the same person can experience the same event at different times in their life, a car accident or a health diagnosis, and depending on how resourced they are in their lives at the time, can respond differently, in trauma or as an opportunity, to the same issue.

So the field has shifted: it's whether we can cope or not that determines whether an event is called trauma, not the event itself.

So the work of healing from trauma is very much in the perspective, as we learned in the first session about the neuroscience of resilience, that the focus shifts from the event itself to the person's response to the event, and to their response to themselves because of the event. "How you respond to the issue is the issue." When there has been secure attachment and the person already has developed an internal secure base of resilience, that is the best buffer we have against stress, trauma and psychopathology. As we help our clients heal into earned secure attachment and recover the full functioning of their pre-frontal cortex, the CEO of resilience, they will be able to feel and deal, relate and reflect, and find their way through even the most difficult of traumas.

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 supported 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.

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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.

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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-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

S-157 Q Perez, Alcott, Zinn

How you respond to the issue...is the issue. - Frankie Perez

I am no longer afraid of storms, for I am learning how to sail my ship.

- Louisa May Alcott

You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.

- Jon Kabat-Zinn

Boundin'

S-158 Title