

Region 10 ESC
Summer Dyslexia Institute
July 21-22, 2021

the
Dyslexia
narrative

1

Getting Good At Stress:
Empowering Self to Boost Executive Function, Reduce Anxiety, and Strengthen a Growth Mindset

Presented by Sucheta Kamath, MA, MA, BC-ANCDS, CCC-SLP
July 22, 2021

2

Download the Handout:
exqknow.how/TXREG10

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Cerebral Matters
Private practice in Atlanta

ExQ® is personalized digital curriculum for middle and high school students that directly builds Executive Function skills through games, error analysis and metacognitive lessons.
[Learn more about ExQ
ExQInfiniteKnowHow.com](http://LearnmoreaboutExQ.ExQInfiniteKnowHow.com)

Sucheta Kamath,
Founder and CEO, ExQ®

Full PreFrontal: Exposing the Mysteries of Executive Function is a podcast hosted by Sucheta Kamath.
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Learning Pause
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What ideas are squaring with you?

What ideas are still circling in your head?

What would you like take with you into your practice?

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Thought Experiment

Take a minute and share buzzwords, bulleted definitions, or whatever comes to mind when you read these three words/phrases.

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Executive Function is a set of skills essential to appropriately adjust one's thoughts, emotions and actions in accordance with changing environments and challenging times to achieve personal goals –


Set by self, for self!

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Let's Watch



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Executive Function helps to appropriately adjust one's thoughts, emotions and actions in accordance with the changing environment and challenging times

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Executive Function helps to appropriately adjust one's thoughts, emotions and actions in accordance with the changing environment and challenging times

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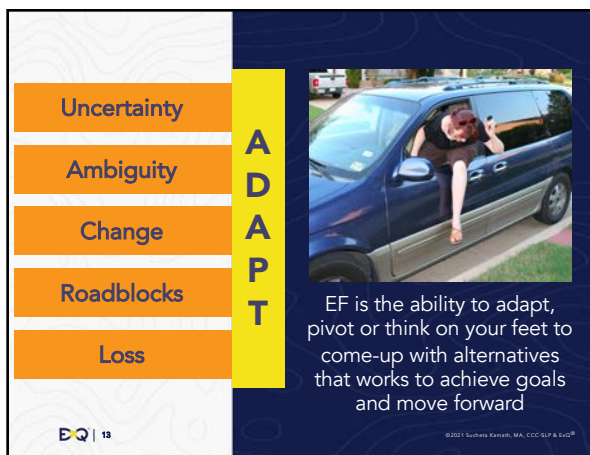
Strong Executive Function skills includes:

- Impulse control
- Long-term planning
- Remembering to remember
- Gratification postponement
- Simulation of the Future
- Critical reasoning & collaborative decision making
- Emotional & social regulation
- Adaptive flexibility and
- Seeing the Big-Picture

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ADAPT

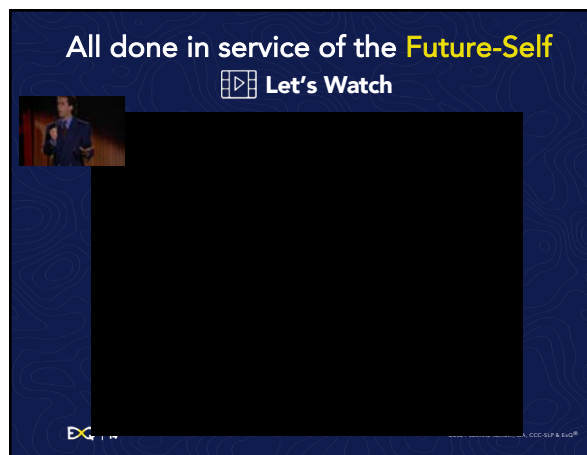
- Uncertainty
- Ambiguity
- Change
- Roadblocks
- Loss

EF is the ability to adapt, pivot or think on your feet to come-up with alternatives that works to achieve goals and move forward

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All done in service of the **Future-Self**

Let's Watch

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Managing Self While Managing Others
The interplay between Our Own Executive Function vs. that of Others

ILLUSTRATION: JOHN KEARSE

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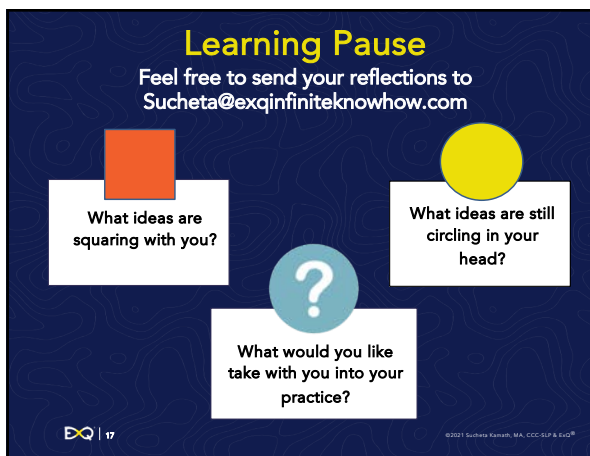


In summary:
Executive Function bridges past experiences with present goals and future plans through processes such as attention, organization, problem solving, mental flexibility and strategic thinking to help manage work, relationships, change, challenge and loss - in life

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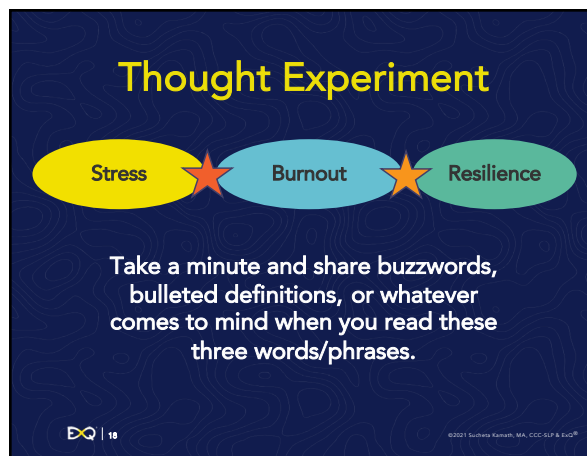
Learning Pause
Feel free to send your reflections to Sucheta@exqinfiniteknowhow.com

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Thought Experiment

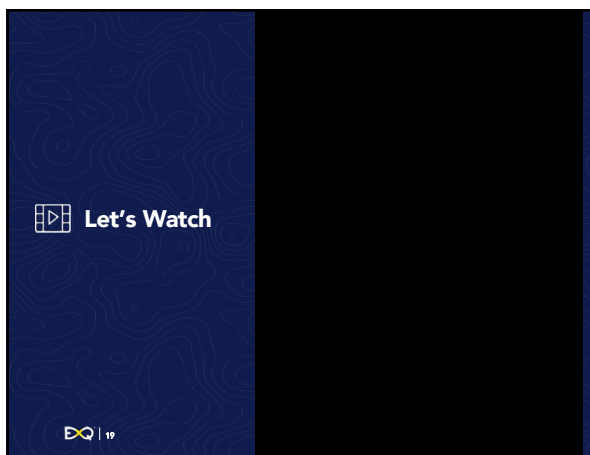
Stress → Burnout → Resilience

Take a minute and share buzzwords, bulleted definitions, or whatever comes to mind when you read these three words/phrases.

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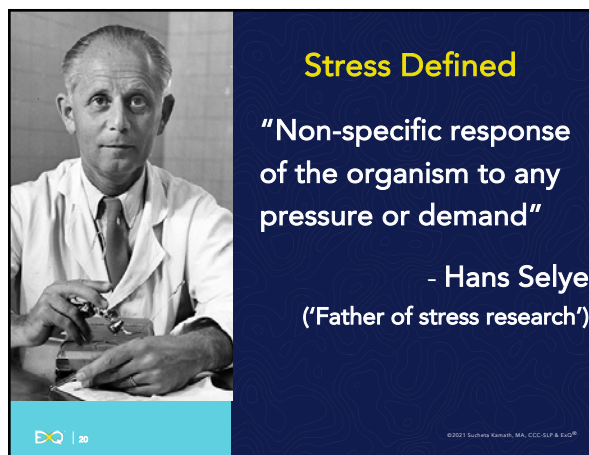
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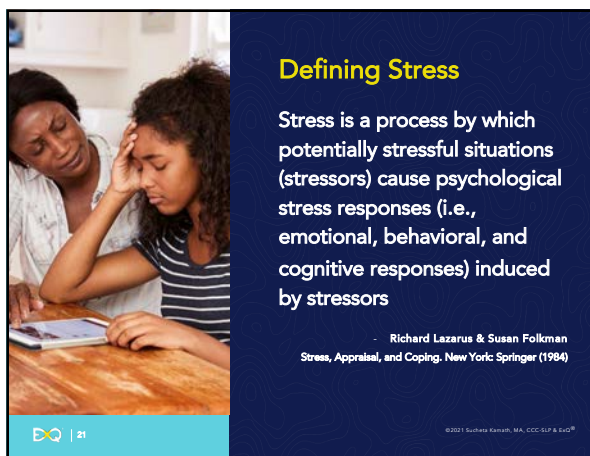
Slide 19 features a dark blue background with a white play button icon and the text "Let's Watch". In the bottom left corner, there is a logo and the number "19".

19



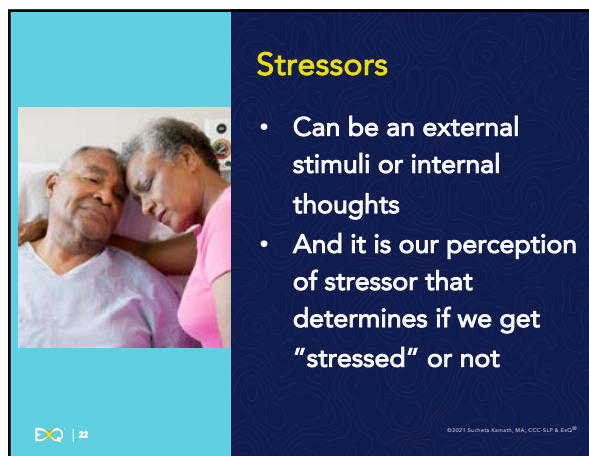
Slide 20 features a black and white photograph of Hans Selye on the left. On the right, the text reads: "Stress Defined", "Non-specific response of the organism to any pressure or demand", and "- Hans Selye ('Father of stress research')". The bottom left corner has a logo and the number "20".

20



Slide 21 features a photograph of a woman looking stressed on the left. On the right, the text reads: "Defining Stress", "Stress is a process by which potentially stressful situations (stressors) cause psychological stress responses (i.e., emotional, behavioral, and cognitive responses) induced by stressors", and "- Richard Lazarus & Susan Folkman Stress, Appraisal, and Coping, New York: Springer (1984)". The bottom left corner has a logo and the number "21".

21



Slide 22 features a photograph of an elderly couple on the left. On the right, the text reads: "Stressors", "Can be an external stimuli or internal thoughts", and "And it is our perception of stressor that determines if we get 'stressed' or not". The bottom left corner has a logo and the number "22".

22



Slide 23 features a yellow header "Major Sources of Stress" and a dark blue background with the following text: "Work-load Conflicts", "Relationships", "Disagreements Illness", "Traffic Loss Uncertainty", and "Money Change". The bottom left corner has a logo and the number "23".

23



Slide 24 features a yellow header "Five Major Sources of Stress" and a dark blue background with the following text: "Work-load Conflicts", "Relationships", "Disagreements Illness", "Traffic Loss Uncertainty", and "Money Change". The bottom left corner has a logo and the number "24".

24




Mechanism of Stress & Stress-Response:

Evolutionary history shows that we needed to survive physical attacks and hence stress was mostly physical!

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Stress Response



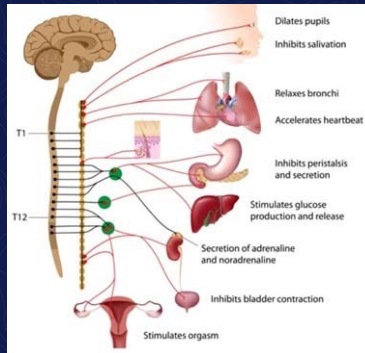
- Sympathetic nervous system kicks into gear
- Same physical response and hormonal secretion as we have done hundreds of thousands of years ago

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Sympathetic Nervous System: Multisystem changes in the body




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Secondary Stress Response:

Slower and longer onset, unconscious and induces "hyper-cortisol state"

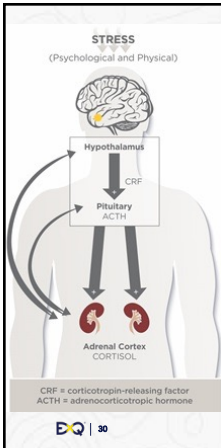


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Also known as Hypothalamic Pituitary Adrenal Axis Response




- Increases heart rate and blood pressure
- Liver releases more glucose to the blood
- Dilation of bronchioles
- Reduced digestive activity and urine output
- Increased fat breakdown and bone turnover
- Increased inflammation
- Increased arousal and focus
- Emotional response to stress

CRF = corticotropin-releasing factor
ACTH = adrenocorticotropic hormone

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"Allostasis"

- 'Allostasis' is the process of maintaining stability (homeostasis) by active means
- It is body's built-in mechanisms to address stress
- The 'allostatic load' means the wear and tear the body and brain undergo to achieve allostasis

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Persistent Stress & Anticipatory Stress Response

- Only humans translate mortgage into stressors equivalent to the approaching lion in the savannah
- Persistence of stress over time depletes the body's resources
- This results in an increased allostatic load and eventually ending in disease or death

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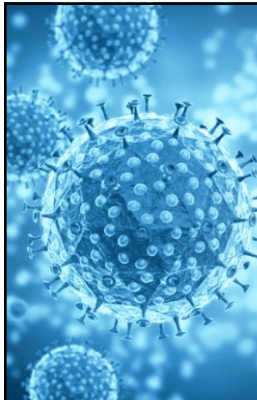


The Impact of Prolonged State of Stress

- I. Immune System
- II. Mood
- III. Pain
- IV. Brain Function

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I. Immune System

- Decreases vaccination response
- Develops resistance to infection,
- Causes apoptosis
- Increases inflammation and rheumatological disease

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II. Mood

- Increased risk of anxiety (GAD)
- Depression
- PTSD
- Sleep disturbances

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III. Pain

- Problems with modulation of pain
- Reduced (stress-induced analgesia) or increased perception of pain levels (stress-induced hyperalgesia)
- Ahmad (2015)

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IV. Brain Function

- Reduced concentration - Vogel & Schwabe (2016)
- Decreased memory and hippocampal density - McEwen et. al. (2016)
- Long-term stimulation of sympathetic nervous system dysregulation leads to anxiety

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When stress becomes anxiety: Impact of anxiety on cognition

Anxiety is shown to disrupt

- Cognitive performance (Maloney et al., 2014)
- Working Memory (Moran, 2016)
- And cognitive impairment can lead to increased anxiety (Petkus et al., 2017)

Source: S

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Summary of Stress as a Human Condition

- Anticipation of an adversity can induce as much stress as actual adversities
- It is our perception of stressor(s) that determines if we get "stressed" or not
- Stress impact all human systems
- Stress impairs mechanisms that can aid in tackling stress



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Learning Pause

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What ideas are still circling in your head?

?

What would you like take with you into your practice?

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Thought Experiment

Modern worker

★

Burnout

★

imbalance

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Modern Life Where Stress Is Inevitable

Natural Consequences of Living A Multifaceted Life



Our Priorities are Spread Over Many Domains

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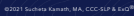
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Stress, Distress and Death Devastating Effects of a Pandemic

- 608,000** Deaths related to COVID-19
- 116,516** Deaths during the World War I
- 58,209** Deaths during the Vietnam War
- 36,516** Deaths during the Korean War

- According to John Hopkins University



43

COVID is a Significant Stressor for Most Americans (Results of Stress In America 2020 Survey)

Nearly 8 in 10 (78%) say the coronavirus pandemic is a significant source of stress in their life

Nearly 7 in 10 (67%) say they have experienced increased stress over the course of the pandemic

Source: American Psychological Association Survey

44

STRESS IN AMERICA Americans have a lot on their plate

- 75%** or more adults report physical or emotional symptoms of stress
- 50%** or so adults say they have laid awake at night because of stress in the prior month
- 60%** or so adults say they could have used more emotional support in the last year



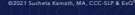
American Institute for research (2020)








45

Work-Life Balance Myth or Reality?

46

Stress & Burnout Intense Psychological Exhaustion And Reduced Productivity








47

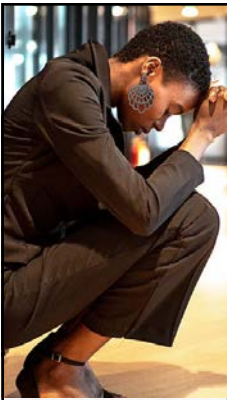
Work, Workplace and Capitalism

- Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do 'people work' of some kind"
- Exhaustion, cynicism, and loss of efficacy marks the "burnout syndrome"

- Jill Lapore

48



Professional & Workplace Burnout

- Involves a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity
- When stretched to the max and strapped without support hardship feels like a unique condition of an individual worker
- Research suggests that many people who experience symptoms of job burnout don't believe their jobs are the main cause

Mayo Clinic
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Contributing Factors For Workplace Burnout

- Lack of control
- Unclear job expectations
- Dysfunctional workplace dynamics
- Extremes of activity
- Lack of social support
- Work-life imbalance

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Rethink Cause of Burnout and a Sense of Agency


- Shift the focus from individual burnout and refocus on "conditions" that create healthier workplaces and lifestyles for all
- Healthier work environments and culture that supports and protects its members safeguards individuals from burnout

Jill Lapore
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What ideas are squaring with you?



What ideas are still circling in your head?



What would you like take with you into your practice?

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Thought Experiment

Growth Mindset

★

Threat appraisal


★

Inoculate

Take a minute and share buzzwords, bulleted definitions, or whatever comes to mind when you read these three words/phrases.

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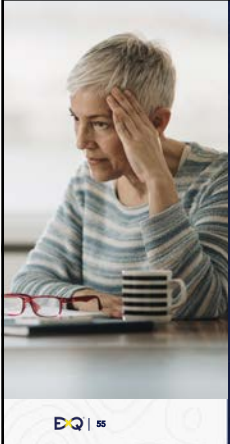


The Upside of Stress

In spite of the ubiquitous nature of stress sometimes, it can be a positive force and lead to positive outcomes

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Stress Is Here To Remind Us That Something Important To Us Is At Stake

- Kelly McGonigal, Ph.D.

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Defining Growth Mindset:

A growth mindset is a human perspective, a particular perspective that we are malleable, that we as people can change, and that our qualities or abilities are malleable or are changeable.

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Beliefs Predict Outcomes

Two Mindsets

"Threat" vs. "Challenge" Appraisal



"Stress-is-Debilitating" Mindset → Threat

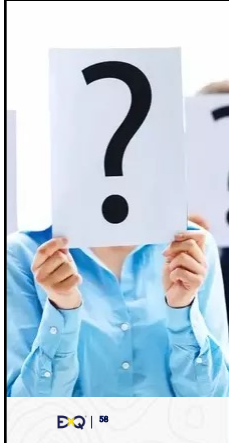
"Stress-is-Enhancing" Mindset → Challenge

- Crum et. al. (2013)

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"Stress-is-Debilitating" Mindset

1. Stress is always HARMFUL
2. Avoid stress at any cost
3. Engage in self-destructive coping behaviors

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"Stress-is-Debilitating" Mindset - Reduces Coping

Stress is ONLY Negative & needs to be Avoided

It always affects us Negatively

We need to do everything to Protect Ourselves from it

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Stress Matters

Toxic States

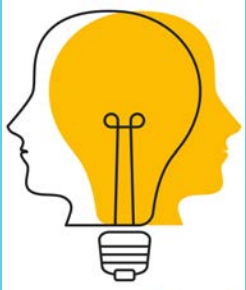
"When stress and anxiety are viewed as toxic states, we may turn to even more destructive behaviors in the attempt to protect ourselves or shelter those we care about."

- Kelly McGonigal, Ph.D.

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Stress as an Activator


- We get stressed when our values are threatened so we can defend them
- We get stressed which gets us to connect with others
- We get stressed so we can learn from the stress-inducing circumstances

- Kelly McGonigal (Book Upside of stress)

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"Stress-is-Enhancing" Mindset - Increases Coping

- Stress need not be Feared or Avoided
- It can help us grow
- Exposure to stress can inoculate us from future stressful situations

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"Stress-is-Enhancing" Mindset: 3 Key Stress Beliefs for Healthier & Happier Disposition

1. Stress is energy to be harnessed
2. It's a signal to look for common humanity and reach out to others for help
3. The capacity to Learn and Grow is within us

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Stress & Growth Mindset:

Research shows that seeing your stressor as a growth opportunity helps you perform better both in stressful laboratory tasks (like public speaking) and in stressful jobs (like sales).

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With Growth Mindset, Moderate Stress Can:

- Help us learn new skills (such as sociability or patience)
- Help us gain confidence in managing stress
- Help reduce or diminish fear of change
- Introduce opportunities to adopt a more positive attitude towards stress
- Helps us perform better both on stressful tasks and in stressful jobs (if, one learns to see if as a growth opportunity)
- Open us up to taking reasonable risks, even if they don't directly reach our goals in relationships and life

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Resilience is a successful adaptation or the absence of a pathological outcome following exposure to stressful or potentially traumatic life events or life circumstances

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Stress & Adversity

Exposure To Adversity Can Be Valuable



“People with a history of some lifetime adversity reported better mental health and well-being outcomes than not only people with a high history of adversity, but also than people with no history of adversity.”
- Mark Seery et al. (2010)


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Learning Pause

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Principles of Stress Management


- Understand stress IS life
- Well-lived life has a special place for stress
- Interrogate larger context of stress at home, at work and in the society to see what's worsening the stress for you and others
- You HAVE the agency to improve your own conditions and seek help when needed

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Stress Is Life



“You must understand the whole of life, not just one little part of it. That is why you must read, that is why you must look at the skies, that is why you must sing and dance, and write poems and suffer and understand, for all that is life.”
- Jiddu Krishnamurti, Philosopher

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Five Evidence-based Strategies

1. Increase Exercise
2. Reduce Stimulants and Modify Diet
3. Meditation
4. Cultivate Growth Mindset
5. Strengthen Executive Function

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Stress Management Strategies: Exercise & Movement

- Consistent 20-30 min 3 x a week physical activity (endorphins)
- Environmental modifications
- Movement snack
- 12 Surya Namaskara



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Movement Snack

Work-arounds for Sitting, Zooming & the Sedentary life



- Walking Desk
- Stepper
- Portable trampoline
- Aerobic stepper
- Simply step out

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Surya Namaskar



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Stress Management Strategies: Reduce Stimulants & Modify Diet

- Coffee, black tea, nicotine etc.
- Sugar and sugar education (inflammatory)
- Ensure each meal contains 50% fruits and vegetables



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Sugar – The silent killer

- Causes unstable blood sugar control/Insulin Resistance
- Increases Risk for Type II
- Increases Body Fat/Obesity
- Causes Leaky Gut
- Increases Risk for Certain Cancers
- Increases Inflammation
- Causes Cell Damage
- Increases dental caries
- Triggers Cardiovascular Health issues
- Negatively affects BRAIN HEALTH



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Stress Management Strategies: Meditation

- Transcendental Meditation (TM)
- Yoga, Pranayam, Tai Chi & Qi Gong (enhances the flow of Chi)
- Multiple Mindfulness Practices
- Self-compassion



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Also known as Benefits of Meditation

- Improved overall mood and mood regulation
- Reduced rumination on negative feeling and negative feelings about self
- Increased grey matter density and cortical thickness (in hippocampus and frontal lobes)
- Increased immune response
- Decrease in inflammatory markers (IL-6 and other cytokines)
- Increase the enzymes Terminal ends of the DNA
- Overall, increased life satisfaction and vitality



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Stress Management Strategies: Cultivate Growth Mindset

- Learn about the 'Plateau of latent potential'
- Control your mental chatter (talk to yourself, talk in 3rd person)
- Learn the art of 'presencing'
- Reassess striving and replace with patience

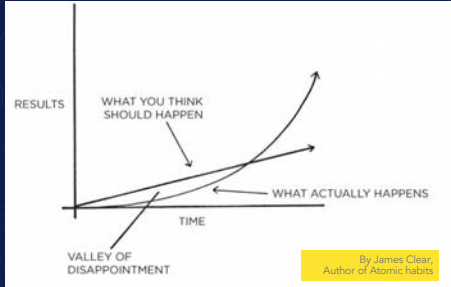


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The Plateau Of Latent Potential
Hard Work, Results & Expectation Management



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Moving Out of the Valley of Disappointment
Handling the Stress of Not Seeing Change (fast enough)

- Canyon of Resolve
- Valley of Vision
- Paradise of Patience

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Presencing
The Art of Bringing Your Authentic Self




"Presence is the state of being attuned to and able to comfortably express our true thoughts, feelings, values and potential."
- Amy Cuddy (Author of Presence)

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Presence
Self-Guided Questions

- What three words best describe you as an individual?
- What is unique about you that leads to your happiest times and best performance?
- Reflect on a specific time—at work or at home – when you were acting in a way that felt "natural" and "right." How can you repeat that behavior today?
- What are your signature strengths and how can you use them?

- Amy Cuddy, Ph.D.

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Pleasantness in patience

Let's Watch



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**Stress Management Strategies:
Executive Function Strategies**

- Magical relationship with the future-self
- Bring Mindshift
- Practice Perspective Taking
- Invoke awe

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Build a Magical Relationship with the Future Self With Three Levels of Change

- Outcome change
- Process change and
- Identity change

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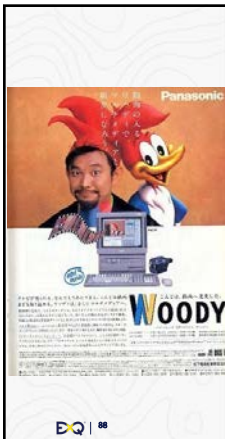
**Bring Mindshift Into the Workplace:
Refrain from Three Cs**

- Reduce Complaining
- Eliminate Comparing and
- Avoid Criticizing

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**Failed Perspective
"Touch" Woody**


- Japanese company Panasonic tries to break into the US market with touch screen feature of PC
- Landed on Woody the Woodpecker as a mascot
- Leads to cross-cultural failure in translation

Global Brand Strategy: Unlocking Brand Potential Across Countries, Cultures
By Sisco Van Gelder

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Practice Self-Distancing

The Batman Effect

- Observe yourself from a distance
- Ask "What would Batman do?"

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Walk in someone else's shoes



- Pause and think what others' needs are
- Summarize "Here's what I got from what you said..."
- Play devil's advocate
- Remember our common humanity

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Multiple Minds **Multiple Perspectives**
▶▶▶ Let's Watch



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Awe: Mansour Omari story



- As a Syrian journalist arrested and imprisoned for documenting the atrocities inflicted by the Assad regime
- Kept in a filthy underground cell
- Helped (82) prisoners write their names on the strips of cloth and then sewed them into the collar/cuff of a single shirt

But went on to write about 30 people

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- Robin Wright, April 2020 (The New Yorker)

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Conclusion (1)

Addressing stress is improving

Conditions of learning and life,

So that life brings vitality and satisfaction!

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Conclusion (2)

There is no stress-free life or stress-free self, just

The Wiser-Self

- who is the same as a compassionate friend or a good inner parent!

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97