

RESILIENCE LAB

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

Resilience, Compassion, and Well-being: Building Strength to Face Medicine's Grand Adaptive Challenge

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Director of the UW Resilience Lab,
Undergraduate Academic Affairs



Three Breaths

1.Attention to Breath

2.Relax Body

3.Ask: What is Important Now?



Medicine as a grand adaptive challenge

“If we define problems by the disparity between values and circumstances, then an adaptive challenge is a particular kind of problem where the gap cannot be closed by the application of current technical know-how or routine behavior.”

- Ronald Heifetz



Defining Technical versus Adaptive Challenges

—



Foundation of wellness

- Scoping Review; 78 articles, 415 measures
- Push for common understanding of well-being:



The UW Resilience Lab

Challenge, risk, and failure are essential to growth and learning

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The greatest learning happens when you push yourself to the edge of what you are capable of doing.

On that edge, you will experience setback, struggle, and failures—all of which provide an opportunity for growth. Learn how to take risks, face challenges in and out of the classroom, and ultimately—*fail forward*.

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Why Study Resilience?

- Researchers started looking at ACEs
 - Adverse childhood experience
- For those who thrived in the face of adversity – what allowed them to beat the odds?

Malleability and Adaptability

—— Resilience coping is learnable!

Neuroplasticity of the Brain



What we think, do, and pay attention to
changes the structure and function on our
brains!

Tracie Jackson,
Louisiana
Justice Institute

Is Resilience a
Trait,
Characteristic,
or Process?

Stop calling me
RESILIENT.
Because every time you say,
“Oh, they’re resilient,”
that means you can do something else to me.
I am not resilient.

*Tracie L. Jackson,
Louisiana Justice Institute*

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RESILIENT.

The Resilience Trajectory

Evolving Conceptualizations of Resilience
Trait (Kirkwood, 2010; Rutter, 2007)



Fixed Internal

Characteristic (Conner Davidson, 2002)



Dynamic internal

Process (Windle, 2011; Hjemdal, 2006)

Dynamic experience of internal and
external assets and resources



The Keys to Resilience

- Cultivating Healthy Attachments and Connections
- Cultivating Positive Emotions
- Cultivating a Sense of Purpose



Cultivate a Positive Lens

Practicing Gratitude

- What are you thankful for in your life?
- Write people thank you letters
- Keep a journal and write in it weekly

Why? Breaks a cycle of rumination on negative thoughts and feelings

Behavioral Practices for Resilience

R – Relationships

E – Exercise

F – Fun; Recreation & Enjoyable Activities

R – Relaxation & Stress Management

E – Eat Well – Nutrition & Diet

S – Sufficient Sleep

H – Helping others

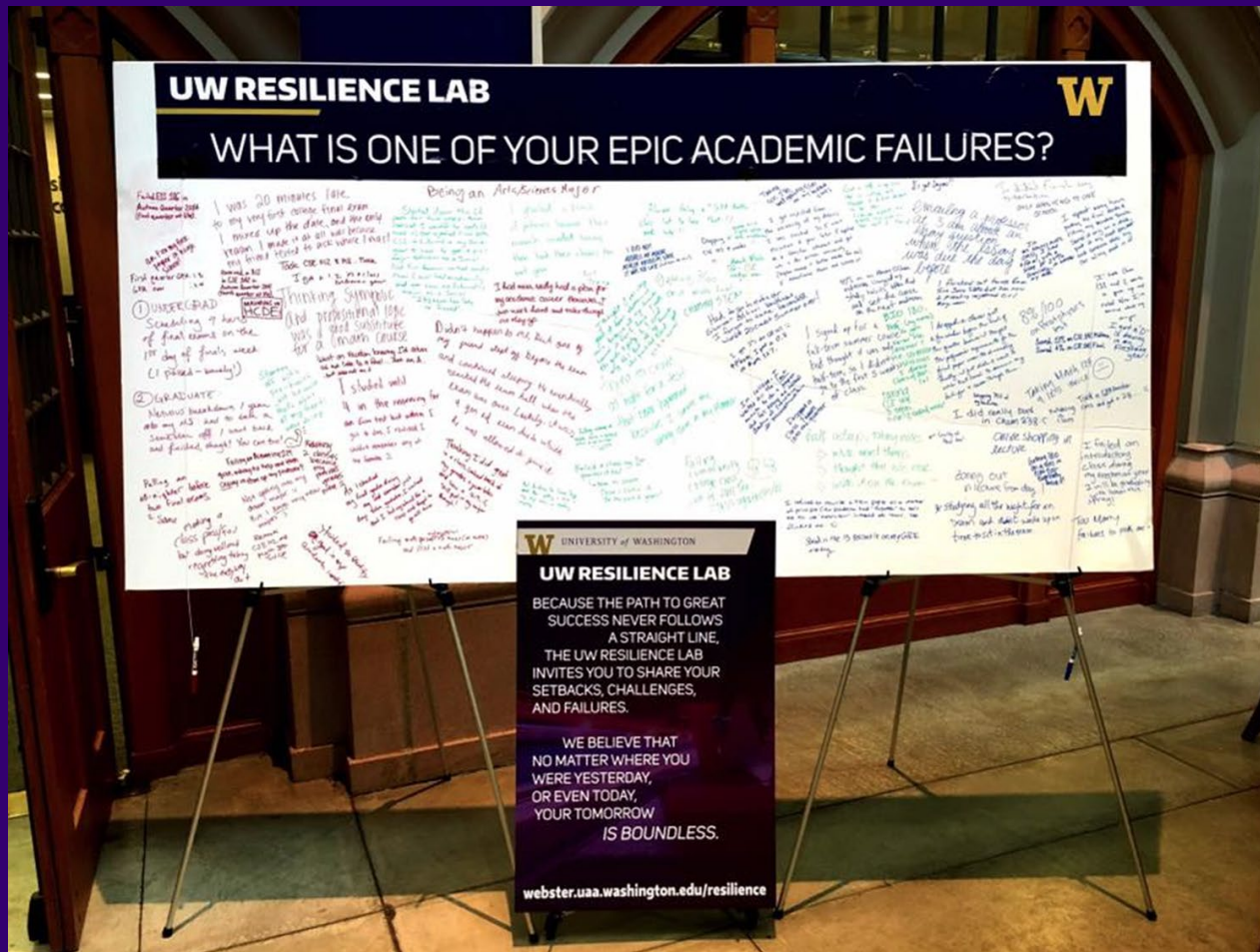
E – Earth – Time in Nature

R – Reason – Sense of Purpose (Religiosity & Spirituality)



Failures and Face plants...

What if we just owned them?



I wrote such a bad essay
in my English 131 class that my professor
used it as an example of
what not to do.

Receiving a
rejection letter 5
minutes after applying
to the job

Did the CSE 142
midterm & final and had
no idea what was
happening

I
clo
se

How do we talk to others?

Fell asleep during
History final
that's OK
babe ♡

Did not pass 142 first time.
- Its okay!

I messed up a
grammar portion a test.

It was so bad, the professor
took pity on me and gave
me a few extra points (even
though it was pretty wrong).

- Foreign Language Student

Keep trying your best! You'll
reach success eventually ~

Resilience...

Chem 142
↳ I got it the 2nd
time though! 😊

Failed a Prelim. Exam
(PhD Student here)
had to retake it after 6
months and aced it!

Failed CSE 142
twice & got into
INFO! Ended up
passing the
3rd time. 😊

I had to withdraw from
Fall 2015. But I came back
winter 2016 & 4.0 my first
UW class.

Had a 4.6 GPA after my
first organic chemistry midterm.
Still recovered as the quarter went
on and eventually became a CLUE
chemistry tutor! ☺

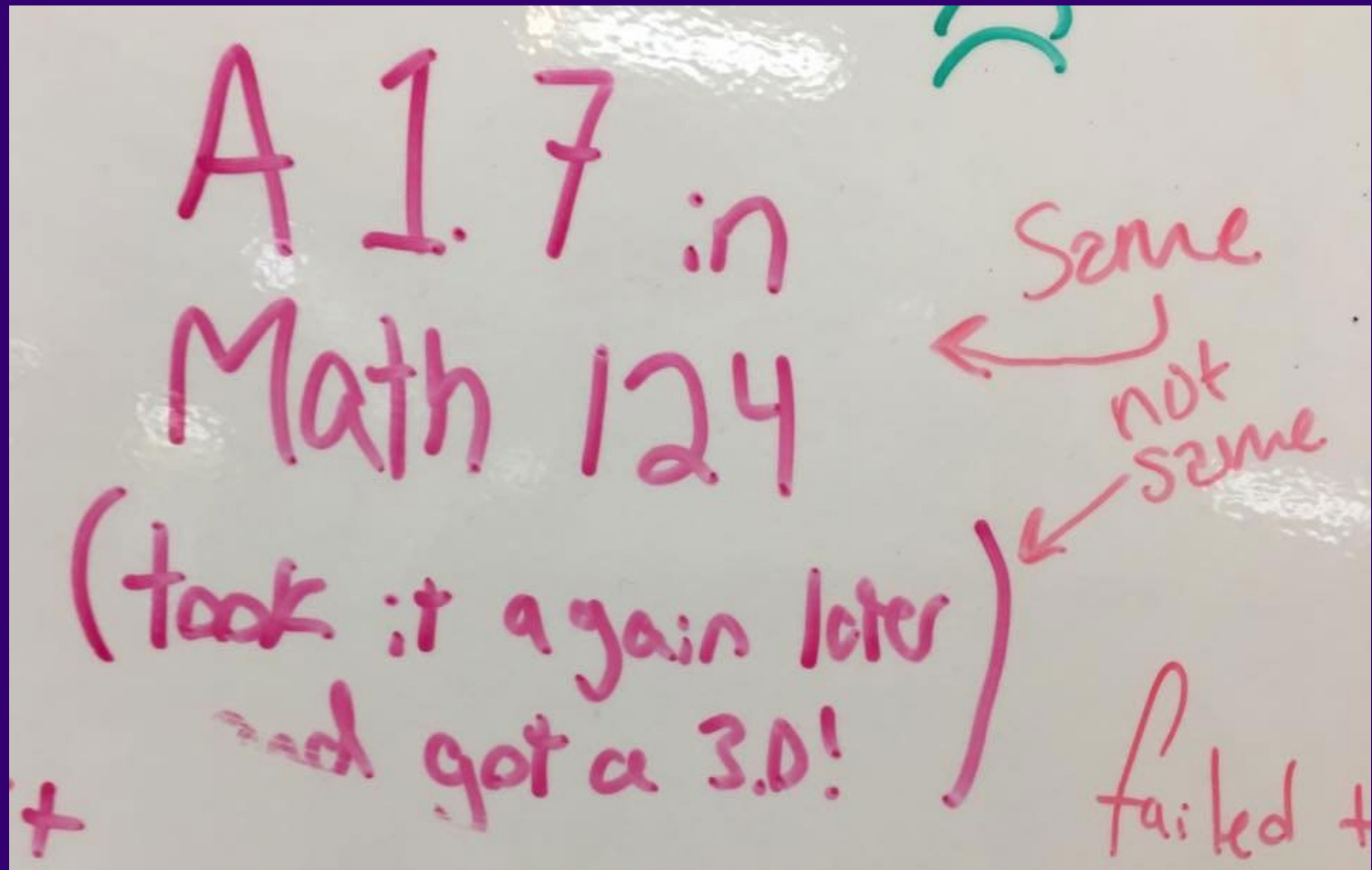
take
note

Cautionary tales...

Turned in my exam
first, professor
congratulated me,
I only answered
2/30 questions.

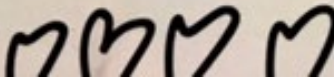

essor
we
even

Humor and Common Humanity

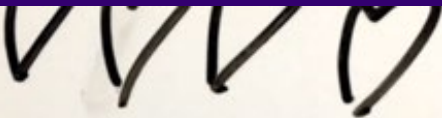


Loneliness and Connection

Before & while coming
out as gay. Nothing has
been more terrifying & stressful
in my life. But to all of you
still handling it I promise you it
got better & it keeps getting better.



Before
knew



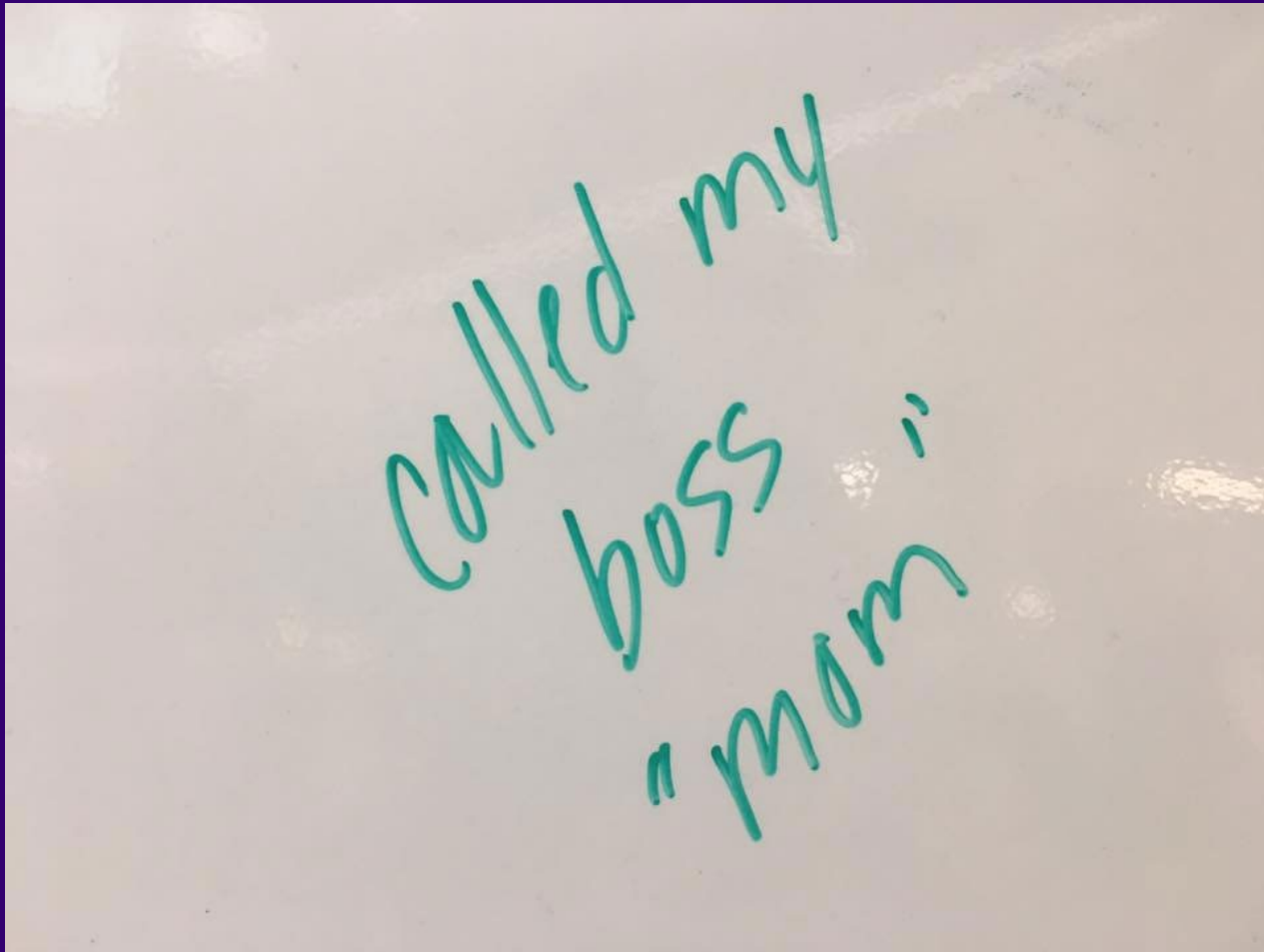
I get you
on that! I
felt the same
way before I
came out as trans

Fall quarter I completely failed a band audition and it blew me away how sad I was. It felt like days and days of being alone and feeling like a total failure.

When I was diagnosed w/ Severe clinical depression & was suicidal. Remember you're never alone!!

NDW.
me too thanks.

The delightful fails...



Tripped on my
own 2 feet after
an interview and
literally face planted
on the floor. Heel broke
and tore up the carpet.
Didn't get the job.

Accidentally messaged a selfie
to my boss while driving with
the caption, "I look so hungover rn."

I caught
on fire in lab

Conversations

- How do you cultivate each of the keys to experiencing resilience?
- What are the behavioral practices for resilience that you are working on improving / doing more of in your life?

The Keys to Resilience

Cultivating Healthy Attachments and Connections

Cultivating Positive Emotions

Cultivating a Sense of Purpose

Behavioral Practices for Resilience

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How do we react to failure?

Our threat defense mechanism still relies on a reptilian brain

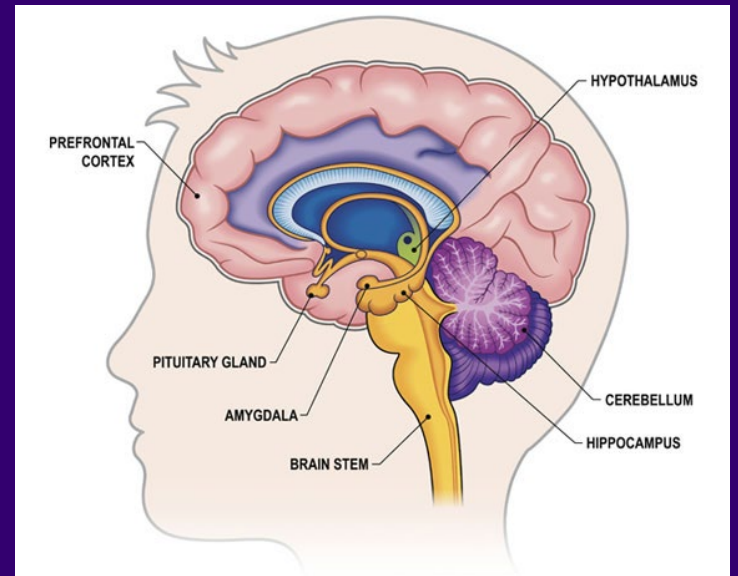
- Cortisol and adrenaline response
- A threat to our self-concept get the same reaction as a lion chase!

Amygdala Hijacking!

Fight: Self-Critique

Flight: Isolate

Freeze: Rumination



Between 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.

-Viktor Frankl

Emotional Intelligence

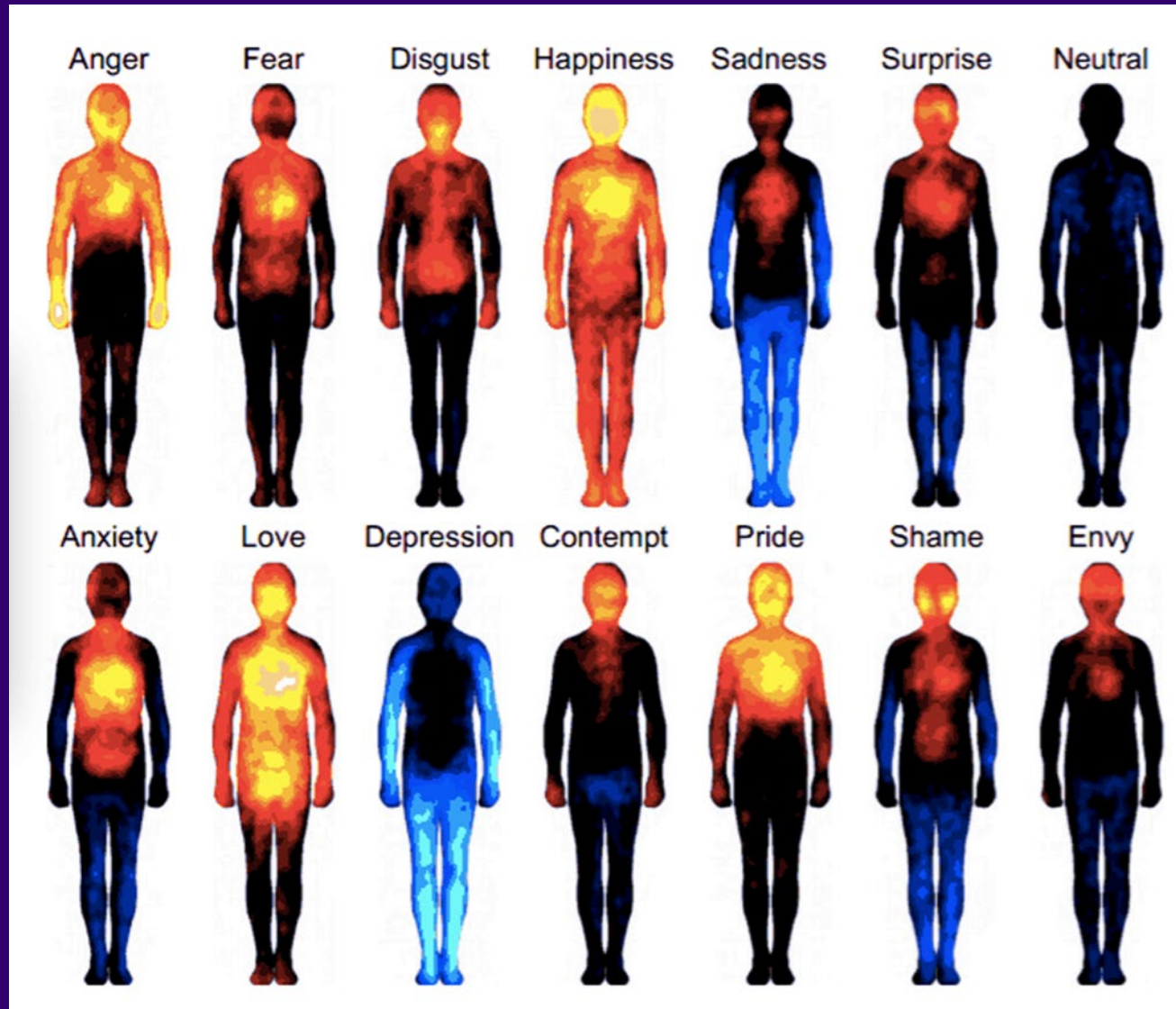
If you don't manage your emotions, they will manage you



Emotions are Information

- Emotions
 - Trigger a physical response, sudden and unexpected
- Feelings
 - Intellectual, private psychological experience
- Mood
 - Prolonged emotional state, defuse, stickiness of recent events
- Dispositional Affect
 - Usual or automatic response, how you move through the world

Emotions & Feelings in the Body



Existential to Experiential

“I am angry”

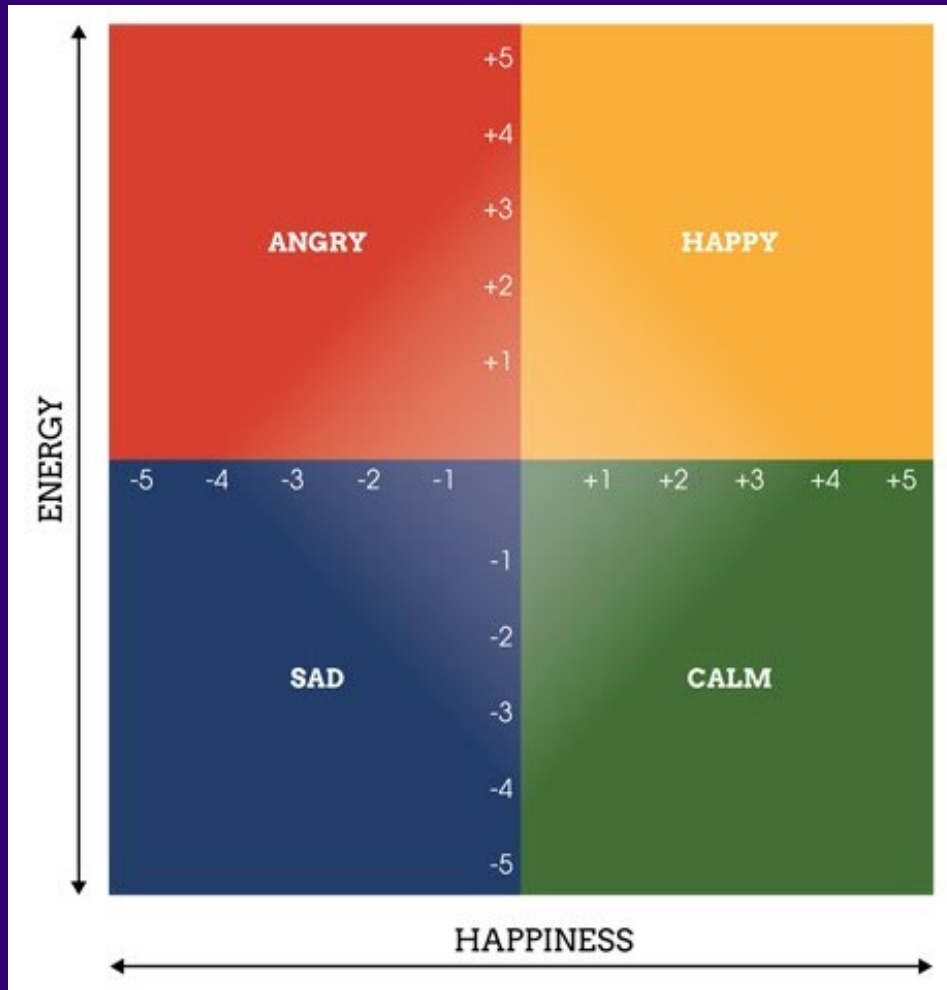
to

“I experience anger in my body”

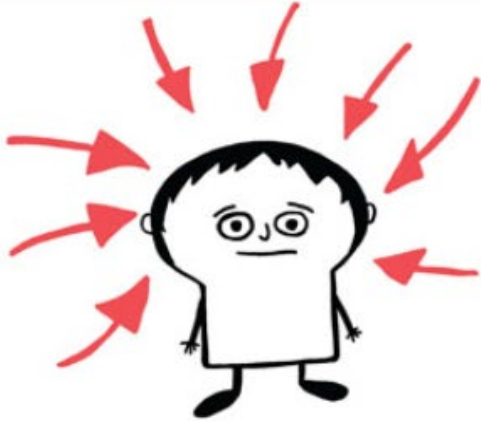
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Mood Meter

Where are you right now?



Emotional Intelligence



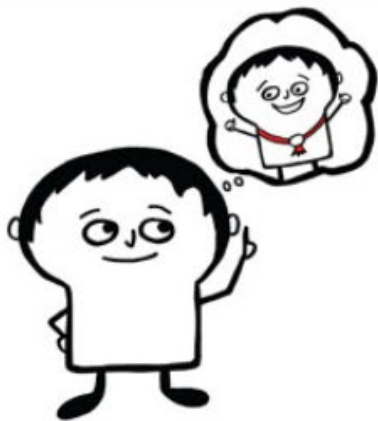
1. Something happens



2. Sense



3. Stop



4. See your best self



5. Strategize

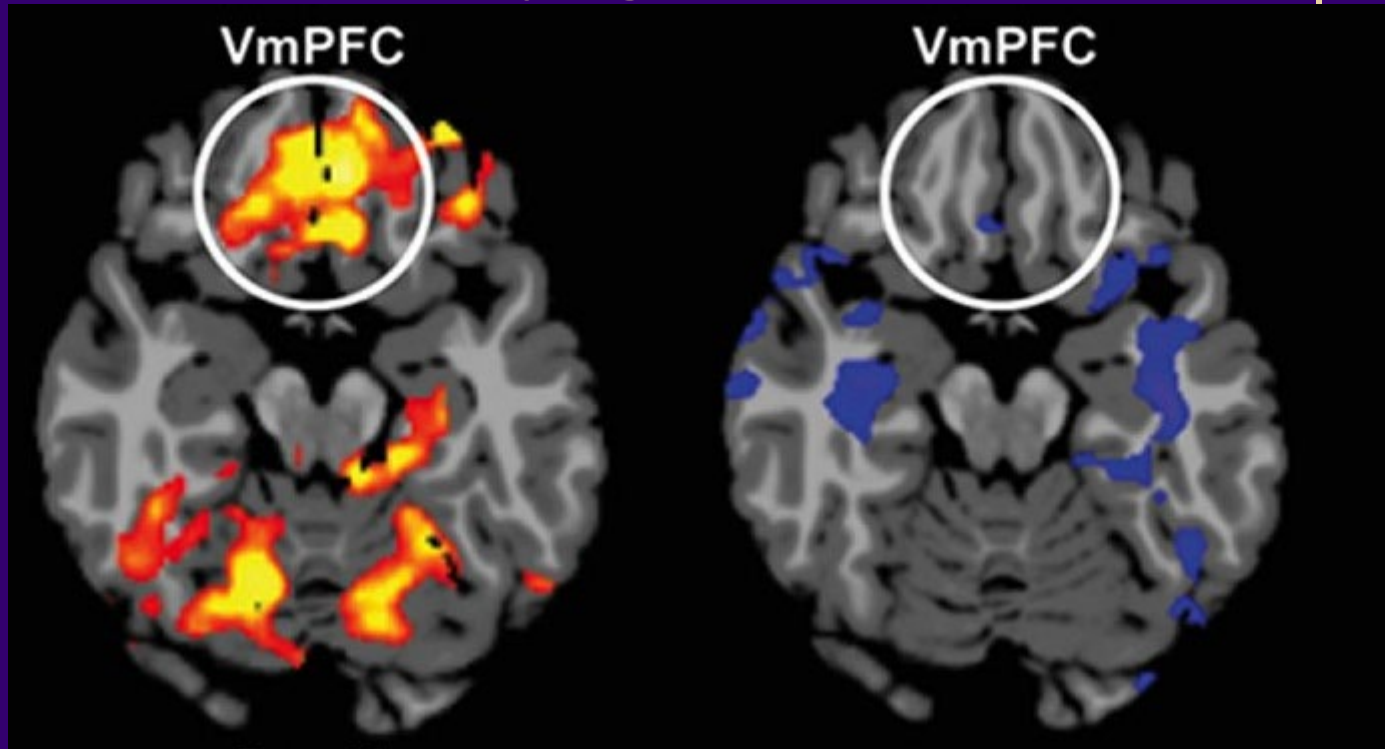


6. Succeed!

Dynamic Brain Changes During Stress

Resilience Coping

Non-Resilience Coping



Emotional regulation, decision making,
risk & fear processing

Changes in the Brain

Dr. Ralf Greenwald

CWU, Psychology, Veteran



- Brain plasticity: Can be good or bad. Bad Plasticity comes from frequently occurring or chronic stress, addiction, long term high cortisol levels = loss of neural branches.
- Good Plasticity comes from acute stress to strengthen your brain and nervous system.
- Stress-Inoculation develops an adaptive stress response to stressors and allows for emotional control during stress = neuroflexibility

Conversations

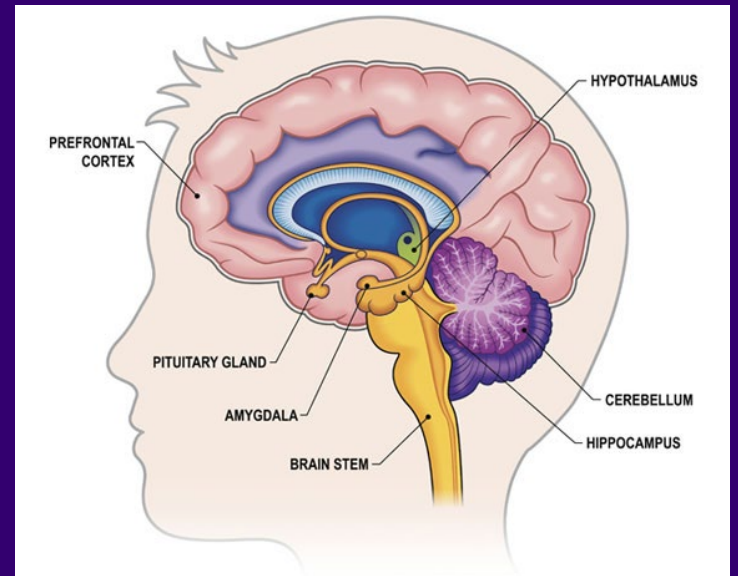
- What does fight, flight, and freeze look like for you?
- What do you feel in your body when you are under stress?
- Are you able to identify the emotions you are experiencing in real-time?

Amygdala Hijacking!

Fight: Self-Critique

Flight: Isolate

Freeze: Rumination



Self-Compassion

Three Main Components (Neff, 2004):

- Self- Kindness
- Common Humanity
- Mindful Awareness
 - Awareness of rather than over identifying with painful thoughts and feelings

Why Self-Compassion?

- Correlates with an increase in accuracy of self-assessment
- Mastery orientation vs. Performance orientation
- Increase in enlistment of Emotion-focused vs. avoidance-orientated coping strategies
- Decreases fear of failure and increases persistence
- Unlike self-esteem, doesn't promote narcissism, judgements, comparisons, need peer approval

Wait a sec, Self-compassion?

Misconceptions

Isn't it self-indulgence, self-pity, laziness?

- In-moment indulgence vs. reflective wisdom and commitment to well-being (guilt vs. wellness)
- Increase ability to handle short term pain for long term gains

But I use my self-critic as motivation!

- Self-compassion is highly correlated with self-improvement motivation (Breines & Chen 2012)
- Power of an inner-ally versus inner-critic

Expressing Compassion

When someone you care about shares a failure or set back, how do you talk to your friend?

What are the words your use, the tone, body language?

- Now, how do you talk to yourself when you experience a failure or setback?
- At your tables, turn to folks around you and share what you noticed
- What did you see?
- About 80% of folks are kinder to others than they are to themselves, about 18% are neutral, and only 2% treat themselves with more kindness

Resilience & Compassion

How can you foster resilience and self-compassion in your team culture?

- 5 positives to 1 negative
- Own your failures and setbacks to normalize, defuse, and move forward
- Awareness of how you talk to self & others
- Anchor yourself in how you have overcome other setbacks & failures in the past

Looking Forward

What do you take away?

- What stands out to you?
- How does this shift how you move through your work?
- What do you hope to share with others?

Micro Practice

Integration of well-being into your life

When you head home today, take a minute to arrive before you walk through the door. Set an intention for how you are showing up.

Thank you

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