

WELL-BEING & SUPPORT

UW SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Exploring Gratitude: Positive Emotions and Expansive Thinking

January 12, 2022

Dr. Anne Browning, Assistant Dean for Well-Being, School of Medicine; Founding Director of the UW Resilience Lab; Senior Atlantic Fellow for Equity in Brain Health at the Global Brain Health Institute, UCSF



Session Three

- **Objectives:** Explore pro-social emotions and their role in our well-being and our ability to think creatively, innovatively, and to stay open to different perspectives.
- **Content:** Practicing gratitude is one of the keys to experiencing resilience and to mitigating risks of burnout. We will discuss multiple ways to practice gratitude as individuals and as a community to develop a culture of well-being. We will also examine the role of psychological safety in establishing trust and a thriving community culture that embraces exploration and risk taking. Explore intentionality of thought and focusing on anticipatory joy.
- **Take Away:** Practices that can be leveraged at the individual and community level to improve a sense of belonging and well-being. Understanding the ways in which we can impact the culture of well-being and how we can shift our thinking and perspective when we are getting stuck ruminating on challenges and setbacks.



Welcome to our 4-part series

- 1) Resilience and Emotional Intelligence
- 2) Compassion, Empathy, and Pursuing Kindness to Ourselves
- 3) Exploring Gratitude: Positive Emotions and Expansive Thinking
- 4) Coping with Uncertainty and the Effects of Chronic and Acute Stress on our Well-Being



Three Centers Check

Take a moment to stop what you are doing, take three breathes, observe what you are you feeling in you body, where are your thoughts, what emotions you are having...

3 centers: Body... Head... Heart...

We are going to practice with Slido to leverage some technology for interaction...



**What is a word to describe
each of your three centers?
Body... Head... Heart...**

Themes for today

- Broaden and Build Theory of Positive Emotions
- Practicing Gratitude
- Psychological Safety
- Anticipatory Joy



Broaden and Build Theory

- Based in Positive Psychology – Barbara Frederickson
 - Premise – both positive and negative emotions need to co-exist
 - Positive emotions help us build resources to cope with negative emotions
- Fostering positive emotions increase psychological resilience, creativity, big-picture thinking, work performance, humor, divergent thinking, meaning in life

What are pro-social positive emotions?

- **Enjoyment:** feeling joy in the moment while doing something
- **Happiness:** a feeling of contentment in the moment
- **Joy:** a stronger feeling of happiness
- **Interest:** feeling drawn to do something or intrigued by something
- **Anticipation:** looking forward to something
- **Gratitude:** feeling grateful for something
- **Serenity:** feeling peaceful, calm, relaxed
- **Love:** feeling affection toward a spouse, child, friend, or even a stranger
- **Optimism:** feeling hopeful about your future
- **Relief:** feeling a sense of calm about some change that happened
- **Affection:** having positive feelings toward someone

What are pro-social positive emotions?

- Hope: looking forward to the future, expecting the best to happen
- Amusement: finding something humorous, enjoyable, or entertaining
- Pride: feeling like you've done a good job
- Awe: being amazed by something (e.g., taking the time to appreciate nature)
- Inspiration: feeling like you have a reason to do something or a goal
- Confidence: feeling proud of yourself, bold, optimistic, or in control
- Surprise: in the positive sense, feeling happy about an unexpected outcome
- Altruism: feeling joy in helping other people
- Admiration: looking at someone and liking something about them
- Enthusiasm: being excited or feeling a rush of positive emotion
- Euphoria: a rush of positive feelings associated with a person, place, or thing

Logic Model for Awe Pathways



Awe

Inspiration, noticing with a sense of wonder

- 1) Take an Awe Walk... 15 minutes
- 2) Watch a performance
- 3) Watch Blue Planet or Nature Show
- 4) Recall – a moment of Awe



Awe

Inspiration, noticing with a sense of wonder

- 1) Take an Awe Walk... 15 minutes
- 2) Watch a performance
- 3) Watch Blue Planet or Nature Show
- 4) Recall – a moment of Awe

Recalling a moment of Awe

- Recall a moment that moved you
 - Witness a selfless act, child's first steps, beauty in nature, incredible performance
- Take two minutes to write
 - With as much detail as you can, what did you notice that made you feel a sense of awe?



What kind of experience did you recall when you thought about experiencing awe?

Practicing Gratitude

- Affirm the good we have received
- Acknowledge the role others play in providing our lives with goodness

Practice:

What have I received?

What have I given to?

Writing:

card, letter, or simple note

Practicing Gratitude

- In life or work, think about a person whose actions you have been grateful for... Something they did for you or others... Big or Small...
- Take 3 minutes (you can finish later), write down a note to them about your gratitude



**Who or what did you find
yourself grateful for as you
wrote?**

Psychological Safety

Built on the Broaden-and-build mode of positive emotions

Risk taking & creativity without the fear of reprimand or harsh critique – most important factor in high performing teams

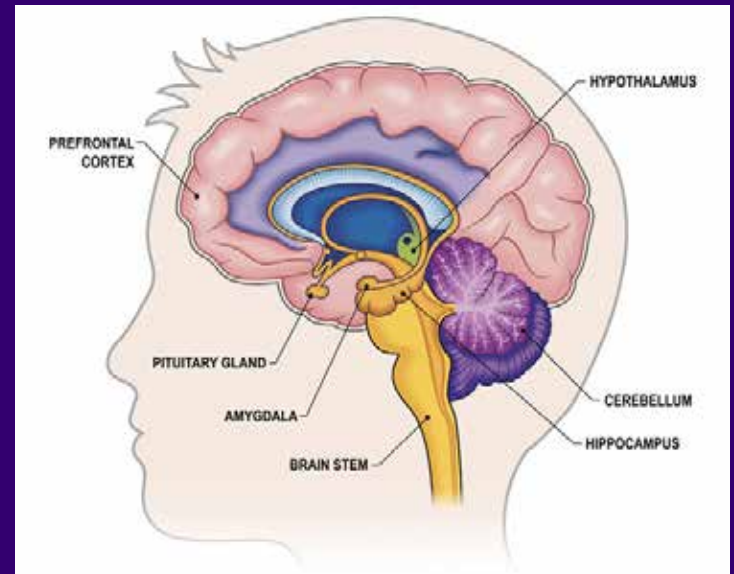
- We become more open-minded, resilient, motivated, and persistent when we feel **safe**. Humor increases, as does solution-finding and divergent thinking — the cognitive process underlying creativity
- When the workplace feels **challenging but not threatening**, teams can sustain the broaden-and-build mode. Oxytocin levels in our brains rise, eliciting trust and trust-making behavior. This is a huge factor in team success, in fast-paced, highly demanding environment, our success hinges on the ability to take risks and be vulnerable in front of peers

Amygdala Hijacking!

Fight: Self-Critique

Flight: Isolate

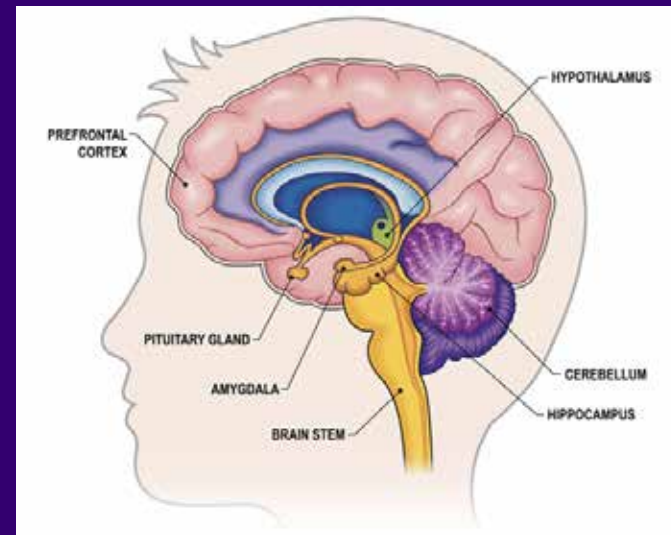
Freeze: Rumination



Challenge of now

Fight, Flight, Freeze – limit our strategic thinking

Negative emotions relate to survival & made it hard to think beyond your current context



Anticipatory Joy

- Fun & Recreation – every two weeks at least
- Challenges – flights, trips, loss...
- Limit to how many things our brain can focus on at once
- Fostering anticipatory joy in a pandemic







What are you looking forward to in the next couple weeks? Yes, even now - even with Omicron...

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?



What do you want to take away from today's session?

① Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

THANK YOU

Coping with Uncertainty and the Effects of Chronic and Acute Stress on our Well-Being
Wednesday, February 9, 2022 from 12-1pm PST by Zoom

Objectives: Look at the impacts of uncertainty on our well-being, especially in a COVID and post-COVID era. Examine the shift in impacts of stress on our well-being through exploring both acute and chronic stressors in our environment. Explore the concept of radical acceptance as developed in dialectical behavioral therapy.

Content: Look at models of post disaster recovery and emotional well-being. Normalize the challenges we have experienced over the last year and will experience in the coming years through validating emotional responses and considering the impacts of anniversary reactions and on-going disruptions. Discuss research on the differences between acute and chronic stress. Explore one's agency or control in times of chronic and acute stress to leverage radical acceptance of the challenging situations we find ourselves in during our careers and lives.

Take Away: Chronic and acute stress impacts our well-being in terms of our mental, physical, and social health. Focusing on the agency and control we have in difficult situations allows us to accept reality, take action where we can, and to stay hopeful for the future.