



# Enhanced Resilience and Well-being in the face of a pandemic

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# What is Resilience?

“The ability to recover from setbacks, adapt well to change, and keep going in the face of adversity.”



SHE STOOD  
IN THE STORM,  
& WHEN THE  
WIND DID NOT  
BLOW HER WAY,  
SHE ADJUSTED  
HER SAILS.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS

# Resilience and Wellness requires taking care of both the mind and the body

- Two parts:
- Part 1: Taking care of the body by learning to “complete the stress cycle”.
- Part 2: Taking care of the mind through the application of specific practices developed by the Stoics.

# The Pandemic: Increased risk of Burnout and Decreased Resilience

- The three components of burnout

- Herbert Freudenberger (1975)

1. *Emotional exhaustion* – the fatigue that comes from caring too much, for too long
2. *Decreased sense of accomplishment*—an unconquerable sense of futility: feeling that nothing you do makes any difference.
3. *Depersonalization*—the depletion of empathy, caring, and compassion

- Emotional exhaustion is most strongly linked to negative impacts on our health, relationships, and work—especially for women

# Emotional Exhaustion: When there's no light at the end of the tunnel

In their book, *BURNOUT: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle*, Nagoski and Nagoski (2019) asked two important questions:

- What is an “emotion”?
  - Emotions involve the release of neurochemicals in the brain in response to a stimulus (a stressor).
  - Emotions are automatic, instantaneous and pervasive
  - Emotions can result in whole-body reactions—often culminating in a stress response (fight, flight, freeze)
- How you do exhaust an emotion?
  - *“Emotions are tunnels. If you go all the way through them, you get to the light at the end.”*
  - *Exhaustion happens when we get stuck in an emotion.”*

# Stress Vs Stressors

- *Stressors*: stimuli that occur outside your body (and are often outside of your control)
- *Stress*: what happens physically and emotionally inside your body in response to stressors— “the stress response”
- *Removing the stressor does not mean the stress response is removed from your body.*
  - *Intense day at work*
  - *Near miss while driving*
  - *An argument with a significant other*

# Stressors will always be a part of life

To be *well* is not to live without stress....  
it is to not be stuck in stress

1. Turn towards the difficult feelings with kindness and compassion
2. Ensure you complete the stress cycle—your health and wellness depends upon it!

# Complete the stress cycle: Activities that signal to your body that you are safe. Nagoski and Nagoski (2019)

1. Physical Activity: ANY movement of your body (Stretch, dance, walk, run, kickbox....)
2. Breathing: Anytime, anyplace...sounds too easy, but LOTS of evidence
3. Positive Social Connections: Stay connected to people who bring you joy
4. Laughter: Belly laughter
5. Affection: the power of the 20 second hug (stay until you feel the relaxation response)
6. A Good Cry: Focus on the physical sensation rather than the story
7. Creative Expressions: Heart in your art

*Make a promise to yourself!*

# Taking care of the mind: Applying the wisdom philosophy of the Stoics

- Founded in Athens, Greece. It's a philosophy about how to live life and live it well.
- The deepest form of happiness can't be dependent upon having (or getting) what you want
- It's more about wanting what you have.
- Specific psychological techniques to help you make this shift

*The Guide to the Good Life and The Stoic Challenge: A philosopher's guide to becoming tougher, calmer and more resilient. By William B Irvine*

# Are you Living the Dream Life?

- Millions of people from around the world would give anything to live your life.
  - They are dreaming of having your job, your salary, your health, your house, your family, your sense of safety and security, your nationality.
  
- YES, You are living the dream life!

# Negative Visualization

- Simple to learn, easy to use, and surprisingly effective!
  1. Think about your life, relationships, and circumstances.
  2. Pick one thing that plays an important role in your life (Spouse, partner, job, children, pet)
  3. Take a few seconds to imagine this part disappearing from your life.
    1. Think of the consequences that this would have for you and the life you're living. Form a mental image of this...fill in some of the details of the story.
    2. OK visualization is over...return to life as usual.

# Negative Visualization

- Negative visualization helps you to remember that your life could almost always be worse than it is.
- If you're living in a small house, don't think about what it would be like to live in a mansion.
  - Think instead about what it would be like to live in a tent, or in a shelter, or with no house at all.
- This will help you appreciate the small house.
- This is not a one-time fix....to be effective, negative visualization needs to be repeated.

# The Last Time Meditation

- For everything you do, there will be a last time that you do it.
  - hug someone you love
  - go grocery shopping
  - brush your teeth
  - clean a bathroom
  - pay your taxes
- Sometimes people know when they are doing something for the last time
- More often, people do things with no awareness that this will be the last time.
- Periodically throughout the day, pause to consider that whatever you are doing, you are doing for the last time—doing the dishes, sweeping the floor, writing an e-mail, hugging your partner, eating chocolate....
- This thought focusses your attention on the experience and helps you to truly savour it!

# The wisdom philosophy of the Stoics

- Reducing the extent to which we take our daily lives for granted increases the likelihood that we experience awe and take delight in our daily lives.
- It is really about growing our gratitude~

Thank you!