

Stress, Resilience and Mindfulness

Savine Stander and Jean Schutte

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You might be wondering why Savine and I are here talking about this

We're not experts

But through recent study we've both touched on these topics

I've looked at stress and mindfulness from a biopsychological perspective and Savine from the perspective of positive psychology

So we've brought these two together in this session and we hope you'll be interested and perhaps want to explore it more for yourself

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Not going to provide a detailed explanation of this figure

Pulled from one of the biopsychology assignments I did at the beginning of my Grad Dip in Psychology

Seems a suitably stressful-looking place to start

What it shows is that the brain and the immune system continuously signal each other via chemical messengers – hormones and neurotransmitters – in an unconscious communication loop

What I learned from this is that stress isn't just 'bad' ; it doesn't just 'make us feel bad' it is doing real damage at a micro-level and this does have long-term effects on our immune system, our health and our quality of life

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Stress sounds like a really bad word and it can be 😊 However Resilience isn't! How do we bounce back" from these difficult experiences. We need to learn to adapt well in the face of adversity somewhat like them! 😊

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The American Psychiatric Association suggests the following recommendations



Surround yourself with family, friends, colleagues - important for that support network to fall back on.

You can't change the fact that highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you respond to these events.

We live in an uncertain world and the only constant is often change.

Avoid blowing the event out of proportion.

Having an optimistic outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life.

Taking care of yourself helps to keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience.

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To reinforce those recommendations, Luthans suggest we build Positive Psychological Capital to help increase our resilience

Hope – being a positive motivational state

Self efficacy – Only last year I was introduced to this word. It means one's confidence in our ability to achieve a specific goal in a specific situation.

Optimism – Seligman talks a realistic construct, optimism reinforces efficacy and hope.

Resilience – is seen as positive way of coping with adversity or distress.

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Neuroscience is increasingly showing that managing our response to stress **in some of the ways Savine has been discussing** is very much mind over matter

So we're not at the mercy of the chemicals pumping around in our bodies

The brain can be trained to control our response to stress

Therefore reducing its negative effects on our immune system

These are just 2 of the documented results of a mindfulness meditation practice

I haven't cited them, but these and lots more are available if you're interested in looking through the research yourself

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When I started studying neuroscience and mindfulness I was interested in



The common ground between science and ancient spiritual practices like meditation

Watched a video interview with an elderly Buddhist monk who was asked for a sound bite about the most important thing people should do to create a peaceful society

Expected him to say giving to others in some way

Instead said that kindness to self or self-compassion was the most important thing – because it meant that each person would be less likely to react from a place of stress

This is harder than it sounds

We might think we're kind people, but we're usually much less kind to ourselves than we are to others

Mindfulness = being, experiencing, not judging (including ourselves)

This is a photo taken on holiday with my husband – this little girl was having maybe her first conscious experience of the sea and she was so immersed in the moment

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As adults we're no longer likely to naturally fall into an experience as a child might

So how do you "do" mindfulness?

Mindfulness meditation sitting still is just one tool

Many types of mindfulness or similar practice – not 'one size fits all'

You can do yoga, walk or even wash dishes mindfully

It's worth spending some time to find the right tool for you

A lot of people find it helpful to choose an everyday activity that allows them to busy their hands but focus on just experiencing that one thing

Ironing a shirt, mowing the lawn, chopping some vegetables

CLOSE: maybe next time you're eating, try out mindful eating again

OR explore other ways of building a mindfulness practice into your life

THANKS

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Jon Kabat-Zinn the father of Mindfulness



He talks to Oprah about mindfulness- its about awareness and not a magic potion ! he has many quotes. The one I really like and I quote “ THE LITTLE THINGS? THE LITTLE MOMENTS ? THEY AREN’T LITTLE!

AUT is hosting the International Conference on Mindfulness – Asia Pacific to be held in Auckland from 9 to 13 February 2019

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Research has shown that Mindfulness been linked to the following At the individual level (employee and manager), mindfulness has been linked to increased job satisfaction, engagement, and performance, and reduced emotional exhaustion and stress.

At the leadership level, mindfulness is associated with enhanced moral awareness and authentic leadership styles.

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Imagine you’re an alien just arrived on earth☺ Examine the raisin like you’ve never seen anything so strange in your entire life. Notice the shape, size, color, how does it ? Hard or soft? Does it have an interesting texture? Close your eyes carefully notice the smell of it with each breath. Do you want to eat it? Is it difficult not to just pop it in your mouth, now in super slow motion move the raisin closer and closer to your mouth perhaps noticing your mouth watering with excitement. ... finally place the raisin in your mouth. Becoming aware of the raisin in your mouth bite lightly – does it squish or crunch? Chew a couple of time and describe the flavour to yourself. Focus on the sensations moment to moment being aware of the sensations as it goes down your stomach. It isn’t always necessary to eat slowly in order to eat with Mindfulness. But it’s helpful at first to slow down, in order to be as mindful as you can. Hope you found the experience exciting !