Resilient Living
STRENGTHENING THE MIND AND SPIRIT

FOP Community Educational Series
Hope and Optimism

Adapted from

The 10 Facets of Highly Resilient People©

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Recap: Best Practices for Emotional Acknowledgement

1. Notice when you start to feel overwhelmed.
2. Take a few deep breaths.
3. Name the emotions that are under the surface of your anxiety.
4. Focus on the emotion itself and where it shows up in your body.
5. Take a deep breath and give yourself permission to feel it on the inside without judgement.
6. Tell yourself something supportive like “It’s ok to have this feeling.” “I am not my emotions and have the power to feel them and let them go.”
7. Take another deep breath and picture the emotion lifting and letting go of its hold on you.
Recap: Best Practices for Ability to Self-Calm

1. Be aware of your stress response and actively work to recover in the moment.
2. Recognize fight, flight or freeze and how it’s impacting on your body.
3. Calm down from big and little stressors.
4. Stay connected to your breath and to yourself to regulate your nervous system.
5. Close the lid to help the instinctive and rational part of the brain connect and communicate.
6. Regulate your nervous system before you try to help regulate others.
7. Remember you cannot prevent stressful things from happening in your life, but you can bring yourself back from stress reactions and do your best to recover in the moment
Recap: Best Practices for Self-care

1. Choose behaviors that are safe, fun and rejuvenating to balance the effects of emotional and physical stressors.
2. Emotional self-care varies greatly from person to person
   - Watching TV, reading a book
   - Talking with friends
   - Drinking a cup of coffee in peace
3. There are 3 key areas of physical self-care: exercise, sleep and nutrition
4. Give yourself permission to do whatever it is you need to do. Create a nurturing relationship with yourself that allows for a sense of caring and warmth.
5. It is impossible to do self-care perfectly. Focus on activities that are accessible for your life.
### Recap: Best Practices for Hardiness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Challenge</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>People who are high in commitment work hard and give their best effort. They have a curiosity about what is happening to them versus feelings of alienation from people or the environment.</strong></td>
<td><strong>People feel that they can influence life events and their surroundings. They have a strong sense that they can make things happen and do not feel like victims of circumstance</strong></td>
<td><strong>People see difficult situations in life as a challenge rather than a disaster. They see these challenges as an opportunity to learn, grow and become a better person.</strong></td>
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Recap: Best Practices for the Ability to Self-Replenish

1. Self-replenishment includes the things you do to **restore your energy and sense of well-being** when life feels draining.

2. Every person is different: strategies for self-replenishment should speak to your interests, values and needs.
   
   Identify a variety of activities that you can do in different situations or environments

3. Positive interactions are an easy way to get more replenishment.
   
   Using positive interactions to bounce back from challenging emotions is a great way to jump start self-calming

4. This choice to fill or deplete our buckets in an important one that profoundly influences our relationships, productivity, health and happiness.
Recap:
Best Practices for Non-judgement and self-supporting thoughts

1. Recognize when you are being overly harsh or critical with yourself and others
2. Change your thought patterns and self-talk to be more positive and growth focused
3. Let go of perfectionism
4. Be aware of your inner critic (judgmental thoughts)
5. To have more control over your inner critic, you must be able to see it as separate from yourself.
6. Work to name your critic and call it out.
7. Understand that these thought patterns were created in the past. You are in control and can make room for more positive and supportive self-talk.
8. Use the “Flip-it” exercise as a strategy to create more supportive self-talk
The Components of Hope

Hope is:

- Willpower – the ability to set goals
- Waypower – the ability to develop smaller action steps or pathways to reach your goals
- Follow-through – the ability to stay flexible, especially when things do not go as planned; it also includes the ability to see barriers and work around them.

- Hopeful people set goals and come up with manageable steps to achieve them.

- Hopeful people are also highly flexible when it comes to how they achieve their goals.
Sample Strategy for Hope

1. Set a goal.

2. Identify activities to that need to occur in order for you achieve that goal.

3. Break down these activities into a few smaller, more attainable steps.

4. Come up with possible barriers to these action steps and commit to thinking about them as challenges or possible indicators for course correction, rather than disasters.
Hope and Optimism

What is the difference between Hope and Optimism?

Optimist may have the goal, but not the plan or motivation to reach their goals.

Hope is the backbone of optimism.

- It is not enough to believe that things will improve.
- You must also be able to see how they can improve and take action steps to make a difference.
What is Optimism?

Being optimistic does not mean you are out of touch with reality. Instead, it means you believe a situation will improve with the right time, resources, effort, or support.

Pessimism is not as protective as you think. It can have a damaging effect on both your health and your relationships.

- Chronic pessimism is associated with depression and premature death
- Pessimism spreads like wildfire across groups of people
- People are more likely to avoid you or not support you if you always have a negative outlook.

On your toughest days, optimism requires you still be kind to others and believe better days will come.
There is a reason optimism does not come easy. Your brain is wired to notice what is unsafe, missing, or going wrong, and it does this as a protective mechanism.

Resilience researcher Dr. Rick Hanson writes in his book *Hardwiring Happiness*, “The brain is like Velcro for negative experiences but Teflon for positive ones.”

The good news is that it is possible to teach your brain to be more positive!
Teaching Optimism

Optimists have positive expectations about the future such as:

- Believing that things will ultimately work out well in the long run
- Believing that in spite of troubles, life is basically good
- Problems can improve over time, especially with the right support and effort

Optimists tend to see problems as solvable. For example:

- There is almost always a way to get a job done.
- Life can be improved through effort.
- Stress is interpreted as a challenge, rather than a catastrophe.
How Optimist View Stress

- Specific Vs. Global Causes: Use specific reasons to explain bad events.
- External Vs. Internal Causes: Bad events are caused by modifiable external influences rather than internal, personal traits.
- Modifiable Vs. Stable Causes: Focus on the things they can change in a bad situation.
- Evidence: Optimist use explanations that can be supported by evidence.
- Alternatives: Optimist look to a variety of answers that may have been likely to influence the situation.
- Implications: Optimist focus on the local implications of bad events where they pinpoint specific mistakes and impact change.
- Usefulness: Optimist entertain the ideas that are most useful to them achieving their desired end results.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Optimist’s Thought Pattern</th>
<th>Pessimist’s Thought Pattern</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific Versus Global Causes</td>
<td>“I should have asked someone else to review my memo before I sent it.”</td>
<td>“I’m a stupid idiot!”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal Versus External Causes</td>
<td>“I need to improve my ability to read customers’ special sensitivities.”</td>
<td>“I’m a stupid idiot!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable Versus Modifiable Causes</td>
<td>“I need to improve my skills so I will be better prepared to make a move when the job market improves.”</td>
<td>“I’ll never get a decent job that uses my special training and skills.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence</td>
<td>Tries to improve the evidence behind their interpretations of events.</td>
<td>Seeks no evidence to support or challenge the statement, “I’m a stupid idiot!”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alternatives</td>
<td>Looks for alternative and equally likely influencing factors.</td>
<td>Latches on to one or few explanatory factors, commonly the most demoralizing ones.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implications</td>
<td>Focuses on specific, modifiable implications.</td>
<td>Focuses on catastrophic implications.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Usefulness</td>
<td>Thought patterns are useful/helpful.</td>
<td>Thought patterns are detrimental.</td>
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Strategies for Challenging Pessimistic Thoughts

• Pick the most notable challenge of your day.

What was your reaction to this challenge? What were your thoughts when this event happened?

How did these thoughts make you feel?

How could you challenge that thought?

Do you notice a shift in your feelings?

• Think of 3 good things that happened to you today.
Gratitude Practice

A gratitude practice is a great way to start re-wiring your brain to be more positive.

Gratitude/Gratitude Practice is the act of being thankful and the desire to seek out and acknowledge the good things in your life. Gratitude is focused on both noticing and showing appreciation for life’s gifts.

• Gratitude is a skill. It takes practice and intention.
• Once you make gratitude a part of your daily routine, you will notice a positive shift in your self-talk and your interactions with others.
• The gifts of gratitude become immeasurable over time.

"We are what we remember. Just as food becomes woven into the body, memory becomes woven into the self."

-Dr. Rick Hanson
Sample Gratitude Practices

- Mobile Phone Apps (Gratitude app pictured right)
- Thirty days of gratitude (example pictured right)
- Keep a gratitude journal
- Get a gratitude partner
  - Share reflections via text, phone, email or in person
- Spend time in nature (focusing on your senses)
- Write a note or letter to someone who has supported you
- Tell someone you appreciate them to their face
- Express gratitude at mealtimes
- Share your rose and thorn of the day
- Practice good manners, including please and thank you
- Create a gratitude jar
- Do family projects to help someone less fortunate
- Use Gratitude stones
- Talk to plants and pets
  - This is a good place to practice if you have trouble expressing gratitude
Your Perception Creates Your Reality

Practices for grounding perception in facts and creating a more positive reality:

1. Start with self-calming: STOP Technique
2. Avoid jumping to conclusions about people and their motives or intentions.
3. If you notice yourself getting defensive, start getting curious instead.
   • Help me understand, tell me more, walk me through...
4. When disagreements or differences in expectations occur, ask yourself, “What really matters here?
5. Do not get too attached to the stories you tell yourself about a given situation.
Creating a Positive Reality

Clear negative files from your brain to make space for a more positive reality.

1. Do not listen to the voice in your head that repeats negative thoughts.

2. Ask yourself, “Does this thought keep me stuck or move me forward? What is your default mode?”

3. Focus on the strengths you have to face the problem and what you can control, even if it is just your attitude or how you treat others.

4. Forgive. It does not mean you have to excuse or accept someone’s bad behavior. It means breaking the hold this person’s behavior has on you.
QUICK COHERENCE TECHNIQUE
The End Goal!

Remember that outside events tend to be less important than what we say to ourselves/how we react when they happen. Our perception creates our reality.

It is not enough to just wish for something. You must be able to define your goals and have a plan to achieve them.
How Do You Practice Hope & Optimism?

- How do you like to set goals?
- When things do not go as planned, what helps you stay flexible?
- When you think of an optimist, what comes to mind? What about a pessimist?
- What are some reasons you find yourself being overly pessimistic about a situation?
Gratitude Exercise

1. What am I thankful for today?

2. What did I enjoy today?

3. What did I do well or contribute today?

4. What made me laugh or smile today?
Perceiving a Problem Exercise

1. What is an ongoing problem in your life or your work?

2. What has been the “default mode” around this problem? In other words, what behaviors, beliefs, or thoughts do you normally have surrounding this problem (e.g., irritation, resentment, apathy)?

3. Why do you think this has been the default mode? In other words, what has been the “payoff” or motivation for viewing or handling the problem this way?

4. What has this default mode cost you (e.g., hope, happiness, health, relationships, peace)?

5. What actions, beliefs, or perceptions can you change or take responsibility for to make room for a new reality for yourself (and others)?