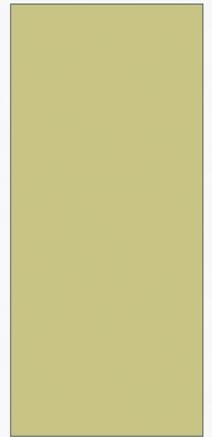


REACH  
THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING  
& OUTSMARTING STRESS

HEATHER SCHWARTZ LMFT



# TONIGHT 8/20/18

- Your brain & negative vs positive thoughts
- Positivity tips
- Positivity in nature
- Defining stress
- Centering
- Awareness – checking in
- mindfulness & recognizing self talk
- Hitting it head on- appraisal theory
- Tips
- Handout

# YOUR BRAIN & NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

- Play along with me for a moment.
- Researchers have long known that negative emotions program your brain to do a specific action. **When that tiger crosses your path, for example, you run. The rest of the world doesn't matter.** You are focused entirely on the tiger, the fear it creates, and how you can get away from it.

- In each case, your brain closes off from the outside world and **focuses on the negative** emotions of fear, anger, and stress — just like it did with the tiger. Negative emotions prevent your brain from seeing the other options and choices that surround you. It's *your survival instinct*.

# POSITIVITY & THE BRAIN

- To test our brains and positivity a research project divided subjects into 5 groups and showed each group different film clips.
- **The first two groups were shown clips that created positive emotions.** Group 1 saw images that created feelings of joy. Group 2 saw images that created feelings of contentment.
- **Group 3 was the control group.** They saw images that were **neutral** and produced no significant emotion.

- The last two groups were shown clips that created **negative emotions**. Group 4 saw images that created feelings of **fear**. Group 5 saw images that created feelings of **anger**.
- Afterward, each participant was asked to imagine themselves in a situation where similar feelings would arise and to write down what they would do. Each participant was handed a piece of paper with 20 blank lines that started with the phrase, “I would like to...”

- Participants who saw images of fear and anger wrote down the fewest responses. Meanwhile, the participants who saw images of joy and contentment, wrote down a **significantly higher** number of actions that they would take, even when compared to the neutral group.

- when you are experiencing positive emotions like joy, contentment, and love, you will see more

## **possibilities in your life.**

- These findings were among the first that proved that positive emotions broaden your sense of possibility and open your mind up to more options.

# CLIENT

# FOCUS ON WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY TO BE ALIVE

- One of the best ways to train your brain to stay positive is to deliberately and repeatedly turn your attention to things that...

## **inspire joy**

- It's a good idea to dedicate a specific notebook to this pursuit, and use it to record 5 such things each morning.

- Try to think of different categories as you do this, such as:
- **interactions that make you happy, elements of the world around you that you find inspiring, and aspects of yourself that make you feel proud and confident.**
- Whenever your thoughts are focused on joy, you'll strengthen the associated neural pathways in your brain and will find more to be joyful about as a result.

**Practice**

- Positive thinking isn't just a soft and fluffy feel-good term. Yes, it's great to simply “be happy,” but those moments of happiness are also critical for opening your mind to explore and **build the skills needed for outsmarting stress and creating stress resilience.**

# LOOK AFTER YOUR BODY

- All of our best research shows that what you eat and drink can have a huge influence on your emotional state, as can your approach to sleep and the exercise. So, if you want to be a better positive thinker, **take an honest critical look at how you treat your body and identify potential areas for improvement.**
- **Diet** is a big factor here—are you getting all the right minerals, vitamins and nutrients? Could you vary your food intake to support better health? There are established links between vitamin deficiencies and issues like depression and anxiety.
- Meanwhile, not regularly getting 8 hours a **sleep** a night increases negative thinking and anger. As you treat the physical parts of you with more care, the mental and emotional parts of you will respond in kind.

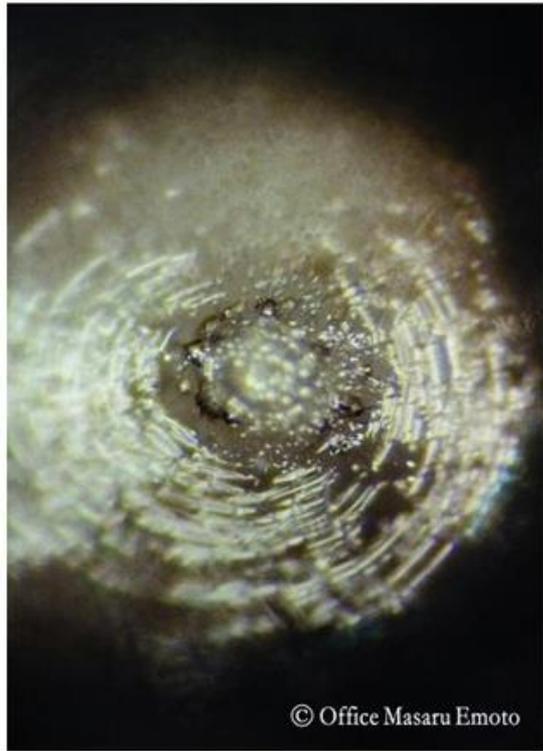
# SET ASIDE SPECIFIC TIME FOR WHAT YOU LOVE

- With all of our work and social commitments, it's easy to say we don't have time for the things we love. However, without making the space in our life for our biggest passions, we easily become despondent and negative.
- **Take an active role in maintaining boundaries that allow you to pursue these important passions ( your flow)**
- try setting aside an hour a day that won't be interrupted by any other obligations. If you have to say no to other commitments to maintain this aspect of your life, then do it!

# FLIP NEGATIVES INTO POSITIVES

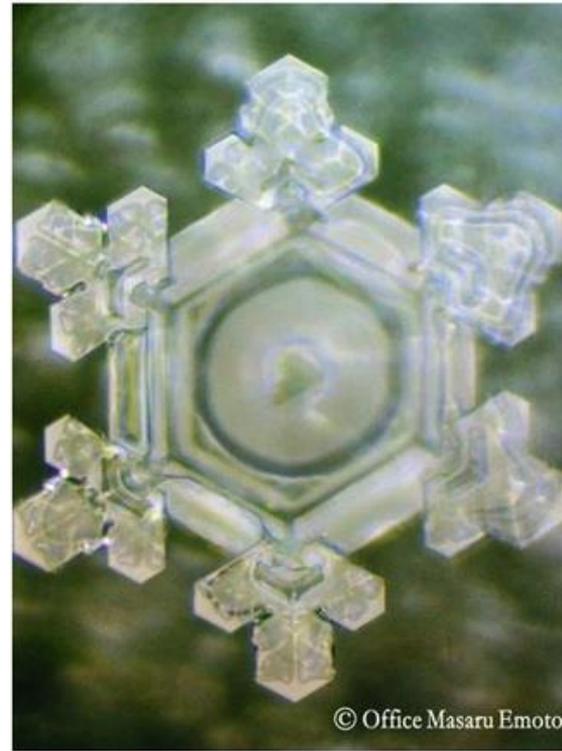
- Finally, with a little effort you can **retrain your brain to automatically see the bright side of any situation—no matter how difficult**. You'll need to do this deliberately at first, consciously challenging yourself to see what's good about a tough experience.
- In addition, try to turn setbacks into opportunities. If you don't get called for a job interview or a second date, ask yourself what you can use the extra time to accomplish. In time, your brain will start doing this automatically

# POSITIVITY IN NATURE



© Office Masaru Emoto

"You Fool"



© Office Masaru Emoto

"Thank You"





"I love you"



"I hate you"



"Ignored"

# OUTSMARTING STRESS



# DEFINITION

- Stress is a **thought**. That's it. No more, no less.
- If that's true, then we have complete control over stress, because it's not something that happens **to us** but something that happens **in us**.

# DEFINING STRESS

- The dictionary's definition of stress
- “bodily or mental tension resulting from factors that tend to alter an existent equilibrium.  
**“thoughts out of balance.”**

- The medical definition of stress is, “the perception of a real or *imagined* threat to your body or your ego.”
- It could be a Bear chasing you or your belief that your spouse is mad at you (even if he or she is not). **Whether it is real or imagined**, when you perceive something as stressful, it creates the **same** response in the body.

- Our “stressful” **RESPONSE**
- Creates a cascade of adrenaline, cortisol, and other stress hormones that flood your system, raising your heart rate, increasing your blood pressure, making your blood more likely to clot, damaging your brain’s memory center, increasing belly fat storage, and generally wreaking havoc on your body.

# COMBAT STRESS RESPONSE CENTERING

- A pausing preparation
- Feet on floor – grounding
- Reduce momentary distractions
- Breathe
- Be still

# AWARENESS

## How Are You Feeling Today?



**Exhausted**



**Confused**



**Ecstatic**



**Guilty**



**Suspicious**



**Angry**



**Hysterical**



**Frustrated**



**Sad**



**Confident**



**Embarrassed**



**Happy**



**Mischievous**



**Disgusted**



**Frightened**

## MINDFULNESS & RECOGNIZING SELF TALK

- Your mind can only hold one thought at a time, so if you force yourself to think a **positive thought**, you can't be thinking a negative thought – and you can start to redesign the infrastructure of the brain."

# WORRY

- Worst form of meditation & guided Imagery

# STRESS LESS SELF TALK AFFIRMATIONS

I feel calm and relaxed. When I am calm and relaxed, I can handle any situation.

I do not stress over the things I cannot change, I embrace them.

I choose to live in the present moment.

I no longer focus on negative things, instead I focus on the positives

NEVER STRESS OUT AGAIN!

# APPRAISAL THEORY

**Stimuli**

**Threat? Challenge? Irrelevant**

**Analysis of available recourses**

**Reappraisal  
Access resources  
Assessment of needs -Create a plan**

# CREATING YOUR STRESS TOOL KIT

# LABEL WHAT YOU'RE TRULY FEELING- IDENTIFY EMOTIONS

- If you're able to articulate your emotions, then that's an incredibly helpful first step to enable you to deal with the situation more easily and effectively. For example, rather than simply saying, 'I'm stressed at work', you might come up with,
- 'I'm disappointed with my career direction' or, 'I'm struggling with my sense of belonging at work'. When people do this, it helps them to be more emotionally agile and become less stuck

## FIND THE GIFT

WHAT'S THE BEACON BEHIND YOUR STRESS? FOR INSTANCE, IF YOU'RE STRUGGLING WITH A SENSE OF BELONGING AT WORK, THAT COULD BE A SIGN THAT YOU WANT TO FEEL MORE LIKE YOU'RE PART OF A COMMUNITY AND THAT'S EVIDENTLY IMPORTANT TO YOU.

# MAKE TINY TWEAKS

- Rather than just abandoning the whole situation, such as leaving a job or relationship, once you identify what's really meaningful for you, you can make small life changes. For example, if you're stressed because you feel you're always running after other people and lacking self-care, you might make a Monday evening date to go to a painting class or see girlfriends – just for you

# TOOL KIT -MAKE IT PERSONAL

When you are designing your stress relief kit, think about what works for you. Close your eyes and think about what makes you calm & happy write those things here:

---

---

---

---

If you're not sure what is life giving to you keep an open mind and try new techniques. This exercise is designed to help know what positive things you can run to instead of things that can be maladaptive like junk food, negative self-talk, excessive shopping, drinking etc....

# A JOURNAL / NOTEBOOK

- Keeping a record of those stressful moments can help you figure out what is so upsetting about a particular situation, so you can come up with a solution that fits. So, keep a small notebook somewhere private (a purse, locked drawer) and when you get flustered, take it out and record:

# A GO TO HOBBY

- Distracting yourself with a beloved hobby is another good way to fend off stress. Crossword puzzles, sudoku, word jumbles, knitting, crocheting, reading.

—

# FAVORITE MUSIC

- choose songs that you personally identify with. Keep them accessible and you can be very close to a melody to put you at ease.

# ATHLETIC SHOES/ WORKOUT BAG

- Physical activity is a great way to bust stress. Anything between 10 and 30 minutes could help you get relief from that heightened stress response.
- Keep a workout bag in your car.

# MEDITATION AND DEEP BREATHING

- slow, deep breathing and concentration are fundamental, no matter which you use.
- "The principle of relaxation is learning how to focus one thing and allow everything else to fade.

# RELAXATION WHEN YOU NEED IT!

- Tools you can do almost anywhere!

# 3-MINUTE RELAXATION MOMENT

1. Find a private room and close the door – at work or at home – and sit in a chair.
2. Either close your eyes or gaze down at the floor. Relax your shoulders and your jaw.
3. Gently place your hands on your belly and bring your breath all the way down so that your hands lift slightly. Breathe out just as slowly.
4. Continue breathing slowly and deeply for about three minutes.
5. Allow your thoughts to come and go – don't try to control them, just witness them without judgment.
6. Slowly come out of your slow, deep breathing by opening your eyes or lifting your gaze.
7. Stand up and stretch your arms up over your head and shake your arms and legs.
8. Now you're ready to get back to work – at your job, being a parent or whatever!

# FIVE FINGER HYPNOSIS

- Touch your thumb to your index finger. As you do, go back to a time when your body felt healthy fatigue, when you had just engaged in an exhilarating physical activity. You might imagine that you had just played tennis, jogged, etc.
- Touch your thumb to your middle finger. As you do, go back to a time when you had a loving experience. It may be sexual, it may be a warm embrace, or an intimate conversation.
- Touch your thumb to your ring finger. As you do, go back to the nicest compliment you have ever received. Try to really appreciate it now. By accepting it, you are showing your high regard for the person who said it. You are really paying him or her a compliment.
- Touch your thumb to your little finger. As you do, go back to the most beautiful place you have ever been. Dwell there for a while.

# PROGRESSIVE RELAXATION