

The American Institute of Stress

CONTENTMENT

Your source for science-based stress management information

Volume 10 Number 1

Spring 2021

Harnessing Hope

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The mission of AIS is to improve the health of the community and the world by setting the standard of excellence of stress management in education, research, clinical care and the workplace. Diverse and inclusive, The American Institute of Stress educates medical practitioners, scientists, health care professionals and the public; conducts research; and provides information, training and techniques to prevent human illness related to stress.

AIS provides a diverse and inclusive environment that fosters intellectual discovery, creates and transmits innovative knowledge, improves human health, and provides leadership to the world on stress related topics.

Your source for science-based stress management information

CONTENTMENT

We value opinions of our readers.

Contentment is a quarterly magazine published in Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter with news and advertising designed with the general public in mind. It appeals to all those interested in the myriad and complex interrelationships between stress and health because technical jargon is avoided and it is easy to understand. *Contentment* magazine is indexed by EBSCO and archived online at [stress.org](https://www.stress.org). Information in this publication is carefully compiled to ensure accuracy.

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The American Institute of Stress is a 501c3 non-profit organization, headquartered in Weatherford, Texas. We serve the global community through both online and in-person programs and classes. The Institute is dedicated to advancing understanding of the role of stress in health and illness, the nature and importance of mind/body relationships and how to use our vast innate potential for self-healing. Our paramount goal at the AIS is to provide a clearinghouse of stress related information to the general public, physicians, health professionals and lay individuals interested in exploring the multitudinous and varied effects of stress on our health and quality of life.

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Editor's Message



It has now been more than a year since our world was turned upside down and the word ‘unprecedented’ started its meteoric rise to popularity. For many, this prolonged uncertainty has made contentment feel even more beyond reach. Fatigued by continually processing the news, the resulting global and personal challenges, and the multitude of emotions they evoke, we need even more focus, intention, support, and tools to find healthy perspectives and practices for seeking contentment. We need HOPE — a feeling of trust that things can get better. This issue delivers inspiration, hard science, and gritty guidance to find your best mindset for not only getting through this pandemic, but emerging stronger and happier.

Jeff Jernigan, PhD, BCPPC, FAIS offers us the perfect starting point: just what is this contentment we seek? In a long overdue article for the magazine bearing this title, Jeff reflects on the beliefs we inherit or acquire about contentment. He then examines the actual biology and psychology of contentment and the role of emotions. With a powerful metaphor of sailing, Dr. Jernigan offers concrete steps to make choices to create the state of contentment.

A new contributor, **Michelle Anne, PCC, DAIS**, combines her training in neuroscience and leadership with her background in eastern contemplative studies in an article nicely outlining steps

to learn to slow down, recognize the thought changes and fears instilled by the chronic stress of the pandemic, calm down, and shift your attention to your intention. She discusses the physiology of invoking the relaxation response, to replace the flight or fight reaction.

Rozina Lakhani, MD, MPH, FAIS, brings her wisdom and expertise to the idea of bouncing back from stress to find joy. Just how do we find resilience during all this change? She shares her Calm, Process, Respond (CPR) formula for moving through the stress with great insights on processing, identifying your personal circle of power and using it to craft better responses.

Charles Grantham, PhD, MSH, FAIS, APF delivers the second half of his 2-part series on Personal Leader Transformation. With so many external pressures in the world, many are finding this a good time to reflect, regroup, and reinvent. His first article (Winter 2020/2021 issue) looked at why, a year into this pandemic world, it's time for intentional transformation and growth. In this issue Dr. Grantham digs into the how — the steps of true transformation and the 10 critical skills needed to make the paradigm shift to craft your journey. This is your guide to a positive metamorphosis.

Kjell Tore Hovik, PsyD, PhD inspires each of us to really go for it — pursue your dreams despite all the swirling chaos and negative forces. He discusses the 4 C's required for resilience

and self-actualization: 1. Curiosity, 2. Compassion, 3. Conceptualization, and 4. Conviction. Then, Dr. Hovik shows you how to practically apply these to move from wanting something to really changing your behavior to get it, humbly using his own desired behavior change as an example.

Jen Butler, MEd, BCC, DAIS

addresses a topic I've come across so often in my years of coaching leaders — the mistakes most women (and some men) don't even know they are making that increase their stress and hold them back in the long run. These are issues that are reinforced by the subtle expectations of our culture, so they manifest insidiously. Jen calls them out and provides strategies to methodically tackle them. This is an article to share to help us all change the trajectory and reduce the burnout.

The next article is a look at some hard-core science underlying how chronic stress is associated with 70–90% of doctors' visits, from skin changes to diabetes to heart disease and more. What is the common thread that unites the disease processes? **Carlos Monteiro** has been researching this for years, inspired by a theory his father-in-law developed in 1972. In fact, the foundations for this were laid by the research of the originator of the stress concept and founder of The American Institute of Stress, Professor Hans Selye. As a physician myself, I have always been amazed by how slowly acceptance of

some new science progresses, while at the same time some of it seems to go at warp speed. Quite often theories get discarded or lost. How exciting it would be to find new ways to understand the mechanisms of stress and its toxicity, so we have more possibilities to intervene. The language of this article may be a little harder to read for some, but well worth it to find hope of figuring out how we can stop the ravages of chronic disease. (Hint for reading: ischemia is lack of blood flow, and a precursor to a heart attack or myocardial infarction.)

*May the wisdom
and science generously
shared by these experts
inspire and direct you to
cut through the chaos
and uncertainty we have
all been experiencing
to find hope and clarity
about how to move
forward toward a
healthier, happier, more
content 2021!*

Cynthia Ackrill, MD, PCC, FAIS
Editor

con·tent·ment, *n*

a state of happiness and satisfaction

from Latin contentus denoting payment of a claim¹



By Jeff Jernigan, PhD, BCPPC, FAIS

Interesting that the definition carries with it the sense of a claim, something to be paid, as if contentment were owed to us.

It certainly is something sought after, and once found, difficult to hold on to! Disconcerting circumstances, disappointed expectations, and frustrated desires all seem to somehow steal our joy at the most inopportune times, evaporating contentment like mist in the dry heat of the desert. Is it us, or the capricious nature of life in this world that seems to conspire against our claim upon happiness and satisfaction? Actually, it is us.

Contentment is both an emotion and a choice. It is both biological and psychological. It is a neurological response to stimuli in the limbic region of our brain which we experience as one of our most fundamental emotions,² and at the same time, a volitional choice we make to be content, or not, in spite of circumstances.³ This is more than a little confusing for me since I grew up learning from experience that happiness and satisfaction, and therefore contentment, were a result, not a choice. Boy was I wrong! It is actually the other way around; psychologically contentment is also a choice and not a result. Here is why this is true.

Emotions, in the sense of mental health, are not just tied to our psychology, but to our biology as well.⁴ It is a two-way street with body impacting

mind and mind impacting body. This is why experts tell us a healthy brain means healthy body and mind. At the same time, we can make decisions that enable us to regulate our emotions. Take anger, for example. It is one of the strongest fundamental emotions we can experience. Yet anger is also a feeling we can choose to manage. There is a well-developed professional specialty, Anger Management, built around this concept of exercising volitional choice in order to manage our anger.⁵ In fact, we can manage all of our emotions in a manner that does not allow them to manage us.

That doesn't mean we shouldn't be free with our emotions. That is not healthy, either. Emotions are part of who we are and fill a very important role in our lives. They help us understand non-verbal communication. No, really! Think about the last time someone was glad to see you, or smiled at you, or frowned at you, or rolled their eyes at something you said. Lots of communication in those looks without a word being spoken, right? If we didn't have emotions, we would not pick up on those social cues.

Emotions also are part of our early warning system that triggers our fight or flight response. Sometimes that sense of caution regarding our conduct or what we are about to say is also part of our emotional early warning system. In fact, our emotions more often keep us out of trouble than get us into trouble.

Contentment is both an emotion and a choice. It is both biological and psychological.



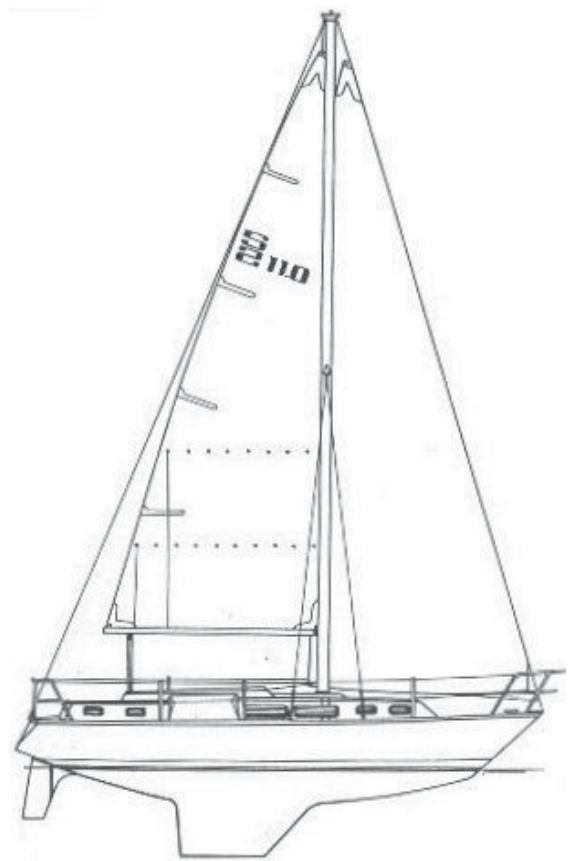
Here is a bigger picture of the biology/psychology integration and how it applies to contentment.⁶

Remember the comment about healthy brain means healthy mind and body? Healthy body involves proper nutrition, sufficient exercise, and the right amount of sleep.⁷ This is the biological side of the equation. The biological impact of not taking care of ourselves physically can include depression, anxiety, stress disorders, gastro-intestinal problems, diabetes, early onset of dementia and a whole host of other unpleasant medical conditions. You can imagine how easily any of these conditions can upset our sense of contentment!

Meaningful relationships, purposeful work, and curiosity that leads to learning new things are the psychological side of healthy contentment. It is easier to understand how relationships and work

can lead to happiness and satisfaction. Learning new things stimulates the replacement and repair of neural pathways damaged by stress or illness.⁸ The biological side of that coin is that sleep, especially the deep cycle of uninterrupted sleep, does the same thing.⁹ So, let's dig a little deeper into how we can make choices when our emotions are screaming at us. Let's go sailing.

The large fin sticking down under the sailboat is called a skeg. Other than the sail, it is the most important thing about a sailboat. The little fin sticking down at the rear of the sailboat is the rudder. The action of the sail and the rudder together steer the sailboat.



Imagine the wind comes up and pushes straight into the sail from the side as pictured. The “wind” is a metaphor for the disconcerting circumstances, disappointed expectations, and frustrated desires that steal away our contentment mentioned in the beginning of this article.

Since water does not compress or move aside easily, and the skeg under the boat makes it difficult for the boat to slide sideways across the water, the boat just leans over under the pressure, sort of like us. When the pressure is too great, the law of physics shifts the direction of the force ninety degrees away toward the front of the boat, and the boat begins to move. If you happen to be standing at the back of the boat, you can grab the rudder and control the direction the boat moves.

Psychologically, we lean under the pressure of life and circumstances as well. In response to pressure, our emotions engage and often pull us in the wrong direction. But we can make a choice in the direction we move, redirecting the emotional energy we are experiencing like a rudder. Regulating our emotions is a lot like sailing. Under pressure we are moved in a direction which we can control if we choose to. This is the part many people are not aware they have control over. Having emotions is natural and healthy. To ignore our emotions won't help, just like ignoring the wind won't help the sailor get past the law of physics.

Emotions are like indicators on the dashboard of your sailboat. They signal something about what is going on below deck that may or may not need attention. A great way to engage your emotions when they surprise you is to ask yourself, "Why do I feel this way?" All behavior has purpose, including our feelings. Understanding why we feel the way we do is a first step in learning to regulate our emotions without trying to control them. As a young man learning to sail, my instructor would often say, "Sail your boat, don't let your boat sail you."

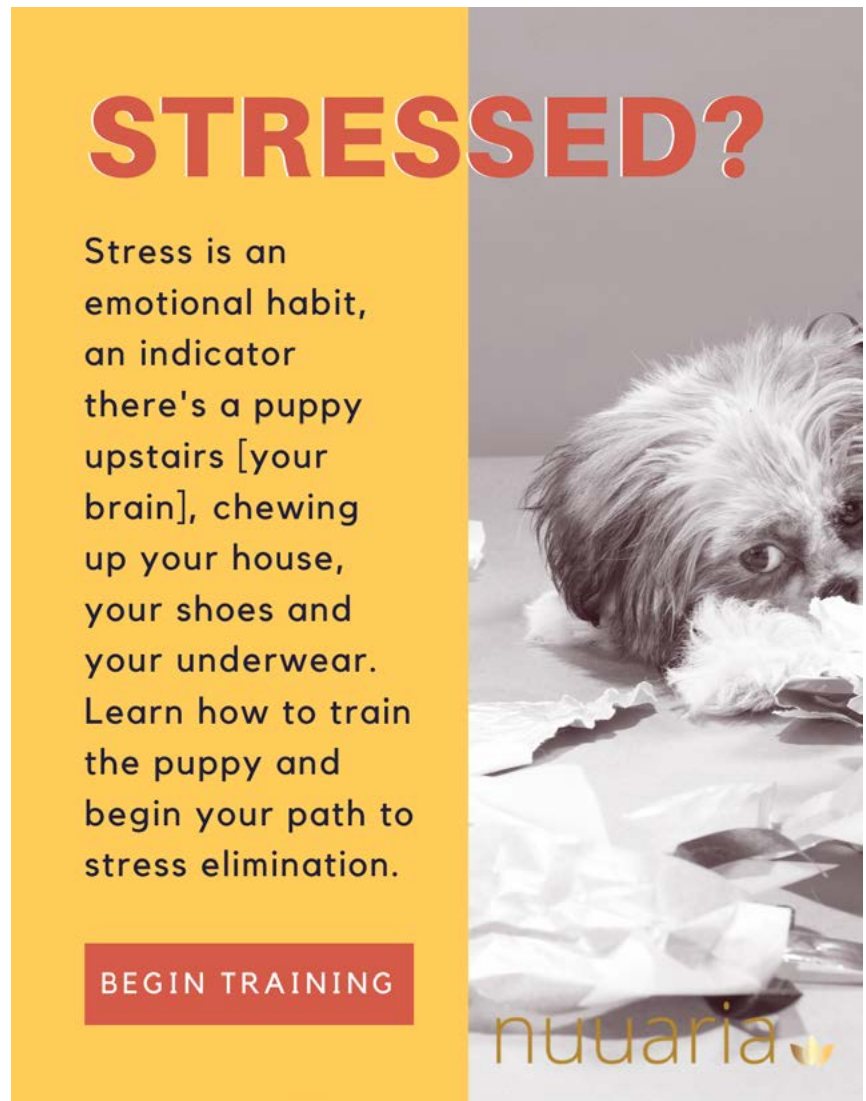
So, you are in good shape physically; you can embrace your emotional self

with maturity most of the time (nobody is perfect); you are engaged in meaningful relationships; and enjoy your work.

Everything is as it should be, and you are happy and satisfied. What do you need to look out for that can upset your sense of contentment? Prolonged uncertainty? Uncertainty brings with it concern, worry, and fear which creates a sense of discontent. What do you do now?

Uncertainty is unavoidable in life. However, too much uncertainty can become overwhelming. Here are some choices... decisions... you can make:

- **Acknowledge, don't avoid.** Be self-aware and acknowledge your discomfort with uncertainty. Identify the source and focus on what are



STRESSED?

Stress is an emotional habit, an indicator there's a puppy upstairs [your brain], chewing up your house, your shoes and your underwear. Learn how to train the puppy and begin your path to stress elimination.

BEGIN TRAINING

nuuaria

facts, not speculation. Release what is entirely out of your control. Be discerning and use common sense to keep worry to a minimum.

- **Choose to respond, not to react.**

Your impulse will be to take action. Give yourself a little recess to take a deep breath and think it through. Confident action is always better than instant reaction to your situation.

- **Reach out, don't hold back.**

Tolerating uncertainty is a prolonged stressor. Give a trusted friend a call, someone you can share your thoughts and feelings with who will not be critical or judgmental. Another way to reach out is to journal your thoughts and feelings. Our thoughts have a way of straightening themselves out when they pass through our fingertips onto our journal.

I am usually pretty even keeled (a sailing metaphor!) and content in spite of circumstances, but not always. Here are my contentment confessions: I am a disabled veteran and not always happy or satisfied with that condition. By education, training, and temperament, I can be a perfectionist at times which can get in the way of my acceptance of circumstances and people. By profession

I am a healer and occasionally need reminding that I cannot help everyone who comes to me for help. You see, like most people, it is ultimately my limitations that become the focus of my discontent.

Living with, and accepting our limitations is key to contentment. Contentment is a state, not a trait, and experiencing contentment is a process, not an event. Commitment to the process of repeatedly making good decisions can keep us in a state of contentment longer and diminish the impact of uncertainty in our lives. As often as you can, choose to be content. Your feelings will eventually follow that lead.

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A lifetime focus on humanitarian service is reflected in Jeff's role as the Chief Executive Officer and co-founder, with his wife Nancy, for the Hidden Value Group, an organization bringing healing, health, and hope to the world in the wake of mass disaster and violence through healthcare, education, and leadership development. They have completed more than 300 projects in 25 countries over the last 27 years. Jeff currently serves as a Subject Matter Expert, Master Teacher, Research Mentor, or Fellow in the following professional organizations: American Association of Suicidology, National Association for Addiction Professionals, The American Institute of Stress, International Association for Continuing Education and Training, American College of Healthcare Executives and the Wellness Council of America.





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SMQ
STRESS MASTERY QUESTIONNAIRE

Leveling Up *in the* Post-Covid Era

*How to hard wire yourself to a positive growth mindset
and get out of the fear-based thinking and being.*

By Michelle Anne, PCC, DAIS

Recently we took the kids, ages 16 and 19, to PF Chang's in Denver for dinner. We arrived to find the restaurant empty with the exception of a few couples dining in what seemed to be a 10,000 open air building. As we approached the hostess stand, I counted 6 couples, and thought we will be able to sit down right away. When we asked for a table. Maureen, the hostess responded, "There is a 20-min wait for a table." I revisited my initial survey of the massive room, in disbelief... okay, I thought, we'll wait.

This is the norm now. The hostess asked us for our phone number explaining, "We need it in case of an outbreak." My 16-year-old daughter automatically responded, "It's time to level up, it's 2021." I laughed and noticed my daughter's reaction was reflective of what I teach. My daughter is aware and respectful of the situation but responsible for her outlook, and how her thoughts affect her outcome. However, the tone and body language of the hostess was fear-based and uncertain, even scared. The chronic stress has taken a significant toll on our brains and our lives overall, but we need to Level Up and take responsibility for our thoughts and our actions!

This experience shed light on the topic for this article. The current Covid pandemic has caused a sort of PTSD that has hardwired our brains, literally diminishing brain structure and function. This has affected our mental, emotional and physical health leaving

many of us unconsciously living in a fear-based mindset. I firmly believe that when we combine eastern philosophy (and tools) with western neuroscience (an understanding of how the brain functions), we have the power to rewire our behaviors, natural tendencies and live a more meaningful, healthy and prosperous life, even in the midst of chronic stress - like a pandemic, loss of a job, or a health concern. I have rewired myself while enduring major obstacles, including overcoming 50+ food allergies. (Now I have none!) I have fostered permanent change in my life, changed my relationship with stress, and I offer this advice on how to begin the process.

The Amazing Brain

The brain possesses approximately 100 billion neurons and is the most complex and powerful organ in our body. But what is even more amazing is that scientists have revealed that we have the ability to rewire this amazing organ in ways that can enhance our happiness, health, and our success. What we understand is that both internal and external experiences have the ability to alter our brain circuitry, changing the tendencies and traits over time. This rewiring that I'm talking about is actually happening whether we know it or not, every minute of the day. The rewiring of our brain circuitry is called neuroplasticity.

Although scientists have shown that there are several different frameworks that positively influence and transform

The current Covid pandemic has caused a sort of PTSD that has hardwired our brains, literally diminishing brain structure and function.

The stress response (Fight, Flight or Freeze) is our body's way, or more specifically our autonomic nervous system's way, of ensuring we actually survive danger.

brain circuitry, I will explore only one in this article: the integration and application of contemplative practice into everyday life (otherwise known as yoga in the East, or mindfulness in the West). Throughout my 10-year immersion with my guru from India, I have explored first-hand the power of thought and the impact it has on our ability to adapt and overcome overwhelming obstacles, shift our perspectives, improve outcomes, and experience indivisible happiness. This is just the tool, for overcoming the unconscious impacts of Covid-related stress.

Studies by scientists world-wide have proven the impact thought has on our mental, emotional and physical state. We can look at the power of a placebo on mental health and positive outlook,¹ the power of focused attention and visualization on performance of Olympic athletes,² or even using an executive coach (a trusted thought partner) on personal and organizational success.³

All these examples illustrate 3 things:

1. Thoughts have power.
2. Thoughts are positive or negative.
3. You create and are responsible for your thoughts.

By understanding how thoughts affect brain function and understanding how changing your thoughts affects your outcome, we come to recognize that taking responsibility for our thoughts is necessary to living a more stable, blissful, and meaningful life.

The tools I will outline have been passed down to me by one of the most revered Saints from India. I have adapted these tools to modern American life and found important interconnects of western science with eastern philosophy. Colorado University Denver researchers have tested and studied the application of these tools for years, repeatedly

finding in many studies that 100% of the participants feel their stress is reduced and that they have tools to mitigate and manage stress after a short 2 day to 8 week program.^{4,5} Some of the outcomes include; leaders leveling up and leading from within, overcoming overwhelming relationship struggles, finding a new fulfilling dream job, flying through a contentious divorce effortlessly, and more. All you need to know, is that you have the ability to change your relationship with stress permanently.

UNDERSTANDING THE BRAIN

Understanding how “your” body responds to stressors is critical to rewiring your brain’s wiring and your relationship with stress.

The Automatic Stress Response

The stress response (Fight, Flight or Freeze) is our body's way, or more specifically our autonomic nervous system's way, of ensuring we actually survive danger. The stress response is universal to all of us and is a very basic instinctual response. Let's put this into perspective: if you see someone break into a car, hear someone scream in pain, or even think fearful thoughts about the possible implications of catching Covid-19, your brain perceives and reacts automatically to these thoughts or inputs.

Here's what happens: when we perceive a threat or when we perceive demands exceed our capacity to handle them (another threat to our survival), the amygdala, a small area in the center of the brain, sends a message to the hypothalamus, the brain's command center. The hypothalamus then triggers the release of hormones that cue the body to defend/survive the threat. This is when the physical symptoms start to kick

in, at approximately around 0.8ms. (It's important to note that the stress response happens prior to any conscious thought!) And the brain's intuitive response happens even faster, at around 0.2ms. The physical effects are unconscious and include; a faster heartbeat (meant to maximize oxygen supply to keep us on alert in danger), increased sweating (believed to make us slippery so predators cannot catch us), tingling in our extremities, etc.

Interestingly, stress affects everyone differently. I may feel on the edge when I sit in the doctor's office waiting for a test result, but my daughter may be unaffected by the same situation. Sally may react strongly to driving in heavy traffic at rush hour but have no reaction to having dinner with her in-laws, and so on. Our stress response is partly determined by our genetic disposition and partly by our experiences. For instance, a first responder, generally speaking, has a quicker reaction to seeing someone hurt or in pain, than say a bank teller.

Now that we understand a few basics of the brain's response to stress, let's learn how to begin changing our relationship with stress. (Note: research shows rewiring happens over time, and is dose based.⁶ Think of this more like a dimmer switch, rather than a light switch.)

LEVELING UP IN 2021

Checklist for Change

Slow Down

By slowing down, we cultivate an awareness of how we are interacting with the world, the people, places and situations in front of us. Slowing down allows us to see our typical, hard-wired (and many times self-destructive) responses. What's interesting is that when we begin slowing down, we notice

that this creates a space (of awareness) in which we begin to feel a physical shift in the body — this is the stimulation of the parasympathetic nervous system, the relaxation response. In this space we recognize that we have a conscious choice of what to do or what feels right. The best thing about slowing down is that it can make the choice of how to respond less emotional, because our body is in a less defensive/fight or flight mode. Over time, this lessens our tendency for automatic, and not necessarily helpful reactions!

As my teacher, Swami Kripalu said, if you want to change your outcome, you need to slow down and recognize what you are doing in the first place that isn't working. The practice of slowing down facilitates this recognition or awareness. We can use the example, if you want to get to New York from Denver, and you are driving west as fast as you can, it will take a long time to get there. If you slow down, you begin to see more clearly (increased clarity is another positive effect) and find an action that is more aligned with what you want to achieve. I think of the stress response as the body's way of letting me know when I am out of integrity with my intention or inner goal. The answer: turn around and go the other way! In order to create a new way of being, first you need to slow down.

Start Now

This sounds simple but is a critical step to rewiring. By choosing to start now, we literally choose to be in alignment (in the midst of chaos or an emotional reaction) by aligning our thoughts and actions with our intention. Remember, repeated thoughts and actions create repeat neural activity. Repeated neural activity creates neural structure. So, in

The breath is a fundamental tool we can use to get into the present moment.

order to create new outcomes, we need to start now and create new thoughts and actions. This creates new neural pathways, and over time has the ability to change your relationship to stress permanently. It took me 2-3 months to see the initial change in my life. I found myself to be less reactive to stressors or my hot buttons, sometimes becoming aware that I had no reaction at all to a family member pushing my button. I found this to be jaw dropping. After 4-10 months I became aware of new tendencies in my thoughts, increased positivity, and lessening food allergies. At approximately 18 months, my relationships with my family had deepened — my kids even commented! And my food allergies were completely gone!

Living in the Covid era has cultivated an ever-increasing tendency

for hyper-vigilance to threats, and over-reaction to even small stimuli. This long-lasting, chronic stress has reduced our resilience, affected our mental, emotional and physical well-being, including our sleep, focus, and vitality. We need to level up, in the midst of stress, rewiring our automatic stress response from an emotional response from our limbic system to a conscious goal-oriented behavior directed by our prefrontal cortex. Again, this strengthens the neural pathways and rewires the brain to understand there is another way: when something stressful happens, you can make a conscious choice toward a goal or your desired intention.

Use the Breath

The breath is a fundamental tool we can use to get into the present



moment. Many times, we don't notice the fact that we are even breathing. Over the years, I have experimented with nuances of using the breath to gain perspective, reduce fear and move to a higher-level consciousness or perspective (which is much more insightful than being in reaction or fear). Here is what I suggest:

- First, just notice the fact that you are breathing. Just simply notice. Don't try to change the breath or hold the breath, just simply notice the chest rising and falling. Watch the breath with 100% of your attention. Allow or give yourself permission to become absorbed in the breath.
- Second, imagine (visualize) the breath coming in, as if you are filling a water bottle from the bottom to the top. The lower belly fills, the mid-chest, and

then upper lungs. With the exhalation, imagine the breath going out and the water bottle emptying from the top to the bottom. Allowing or giving permission to the body to relax or let go with each progressive exhalation. Continue this for 2-3 minutes.

- Third, notice the pause at the top of the inhalation and the bottom of the exhalation before the breath reverses direction. Just notice. Now the breathing pattern is breathing in, pause, breathing out, pause.
- Lastly, notice the unique stillness when the breath is suspended at the top of the inhalation or bottom of the exhalation. Just notice. We are using the breath to stimulate the relaxation response.

Note, the more often we practice using the breath, the more we

dis-identify with the stress or trigger and the quicker we can move from stress into relaxation state. Over time our ability to sustain this relaxation state increases, increasing our resilience, calm, and stability in the face of stress.

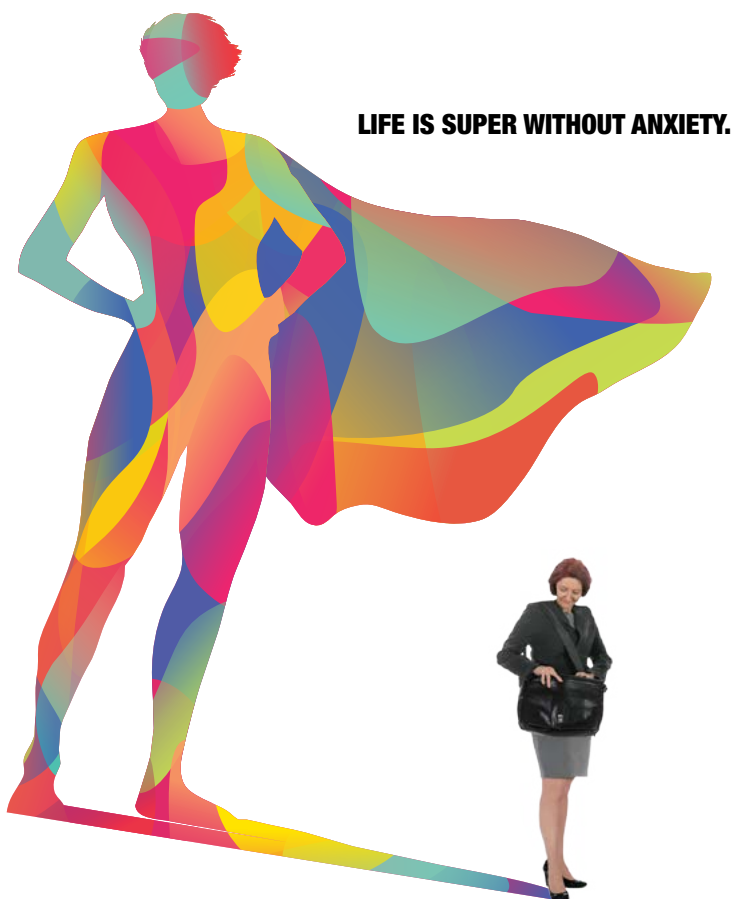
Inward Focus

In a way this tool seems complex, but it's really not. What we are doing with deliberately directing your attention away from thinking and toward feeling. We can piggyback this tool with the breath if you'd like. For example, when breathing in, feel the breath expand the chest, the rib cage expands, feel the sensations of the skin, the muscles stretching with the inhalation. Then feel the body relaxing with each outgoing breath. Allow your body to be consumed with the sensations. The brain is not able to think and feel at the same time.

Notice, that the more absorbed in feeling you are the less thinking is going on. Thus, we are forcing the brain to let go of thought, worry, and tension, and move to the present moment. This has a tremendous power to reset the brain to a calm, relaxed, and stable center. Don't underestimate your ability to change your thoughts with this tool!

Concentration

Another way to describe concentration is focused attention. What I am referring to is focusing your attention on one thing over time, a common definition of meditation. As I mentioned earlier, studies of Olympic athletes show concentration reflecting increased success and higher performance.⁷ Sustaining attention shifts our mental inertia. Concentrating our attention gives us the power to hold a continuous



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nonreactive awareness of whatever arises in our thoughts and that directly affects our experience.

Concentration is correlated with an open-monitoring receptivity to all that occurs in the mind, a non-judgmental state of mind. Cognitive scientists have noticed huge shifts in as short as 3 months of practice.⁸ This is correlated with a drop in reactions and increased immune function. The thoughts in the mind stay calm with this kind of practice! Concentration gives us cognitive control to focus on a specific task and resist distraction (one of the many effects of Covid related stress).

When used over time, these evidence-based tools have a tremendous power to help us rewire our fear-based thinking and actions to a positive growth mindset. Science has proven that when we learn to monitor thoughts without getting swept away, we are more successful, and this improves our overall well-being. Application of these tools into your daily life will introduce a crucial choice point and responsibility. Your thoughts are powerful — either positive or negative — and you are in control of your thoughts.

I invite you to accept this invitation to slow down, increase your awareness, your clarity, and recognize you are in control. When your thoughts have wandered off, apply a tool; don't get swept away. When you are stressed you are good for nothing, when you are relaxed you are good for everything!

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"Throughout my 31-year career as a 3x entrepreneur, I have learned how necessary trust, support and personal growth are when leading and running my advertising, training and leadership development firms. Overcoming overwhelming business and personal challenges has helped me master stress, lead with authenticity and be inclusive (I feel, a building block of innovation and success in today's landscape). I am routinely labeled a thought leader in leadership development, because I introduce refreshingly new approaches to improving performance and bottom-line. My purpose is crystal clear – Teach from experience, model what I teach, and help you to create a sustainable thriving work environment!"



**Bouncing Back;
From Stress To Joy -**
*Learning Resilience
Through Changing Times*

By Rozina Lakhani, MD, MPH

Have you been feeling a lot more anxious, worried, and stressed than usual with the COVID Pandemic? If so, you are not alone.

A recent study found that nearly 8 in 10 adults (78%) say the coronavirus pandemic is a significant source of stress in their life. And, 2 in 3 adults (67%) say they have experienced increased stress over the course of the pandemic.¹

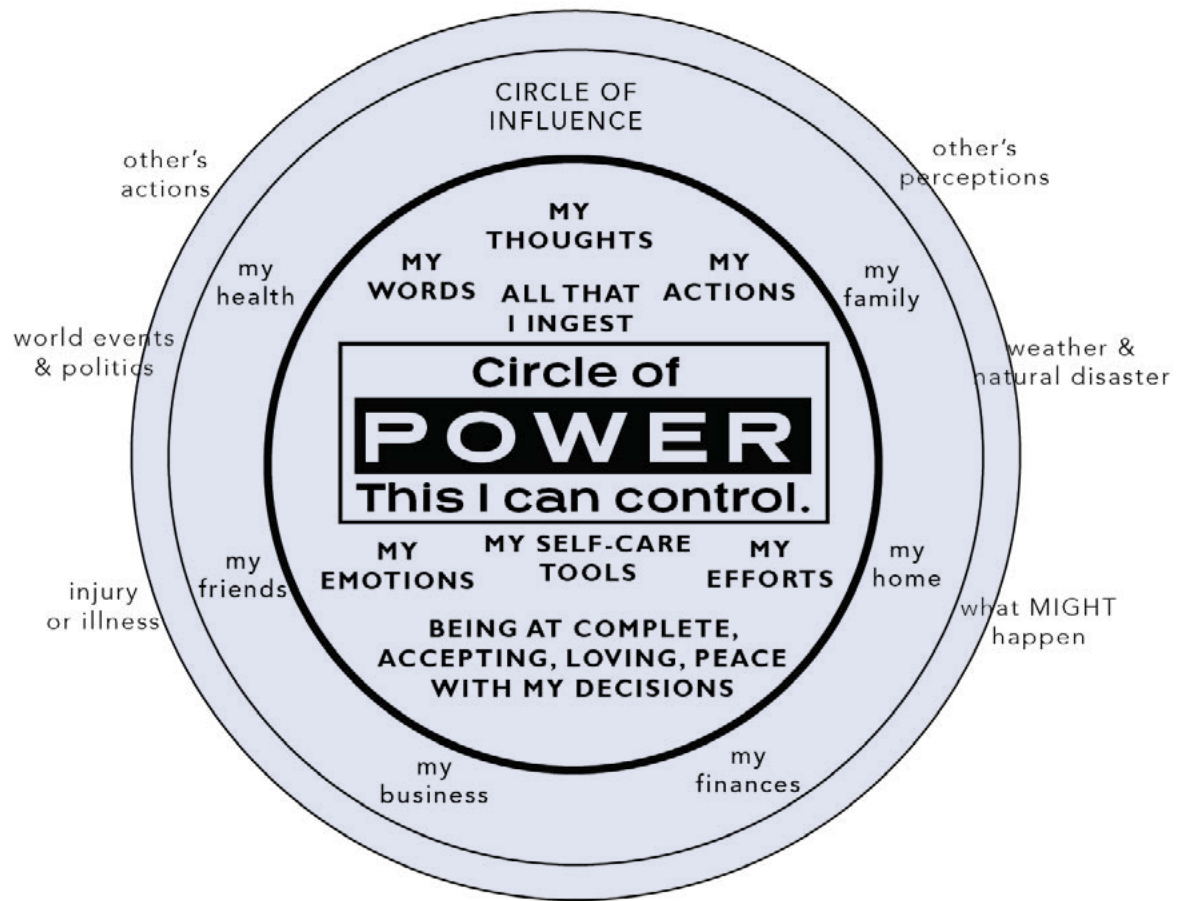
With the changes that we have to make to adapt to the 'new normal' way of living, there is no doubt that we have experienced stress in some way. However, it is essential to note that not everyone copes with stress in the same way. It is vital that you learn how to manage your stress before it manages you and takes a serious toll on your emotional, social, physical, and mental health.

Would you like to learn some of the most powerful tools to build your resilience and thrive through these challenging times? Then read on for tools to go from *Stress to Joy*.

What is stress?

The World Health Organization defines stress as "the reaction people may have when presented with demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope."² So, stress is a reaction, not an illness. However, prolonged stress has severe implications on our health. Both physical and mental.

Loneliness has been found to be a risk factor for early mortality by up to 32%.¹



What is stress resilience?

Stress resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, or threats or significant sources of stress – such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors. (The American Psychological Association definition)³

Over my 20 years of psychiatric practice, I have found that one of the primary causes of most mental illnesses is stress. Many people come for treatment when stress has already developed into an illness such as depression or anxiety. It hurts my heart when they tell me that they have been suffering for a long time but didn't seek help until the stress changed into illness that has affected their functioning drastically. That suffering could be avoided!

Seeing that suffering gives me the passion to share the effective and practi-

cal tools in my various programs. I developed my *Stress to Joy*⁴ program specifically to offer tools for effective stress management. In this article, I'd like to share an abbreviated formula of the program.

Stress To Joy Formula: CPR

CPR is an easy way to remember three steps you can take in any stressful situation.

C- Calm

P- Process

R- Respond

CALM: The first step in dealing with any stressful situation is to calm down your mind and body. Calming your mind will allow you to process what is going on and respond wisely and mindfully.

One powerful way to calm the mind is through mindfulness and meditation. Whenever we face a particular threat, our body automatically generates a stress reaction called the "fight or flight"

response. This reaction is due to the stimulation of our sympathetic nervous system. Continuous stimulation of this system without a break is what causes the damage from stress.

The effect of mindfulness and meditation on the body is the exact opposite. Meditation triggers your body's parasympathetic system. It acts as a break for the sympathetic nervous system. It leads to a relaxation response, which brings you back into a calm state. It helps your body restore itself and prevent the possible damage from sustained stress.

You may think that mindfulness and meditation are only spiritual practices, but did you know that these practices have been extensively researched for their health benefits? You might not know how to get started, but there are many resources, especially apps, out there to guide you and make it easier. Describing it here is beyond the scope of this article, but I have shared a blog/video below in the references that may answer some of your questions and give you practical tools to get started.⁵

PROCESS: Once your mind calms, it can

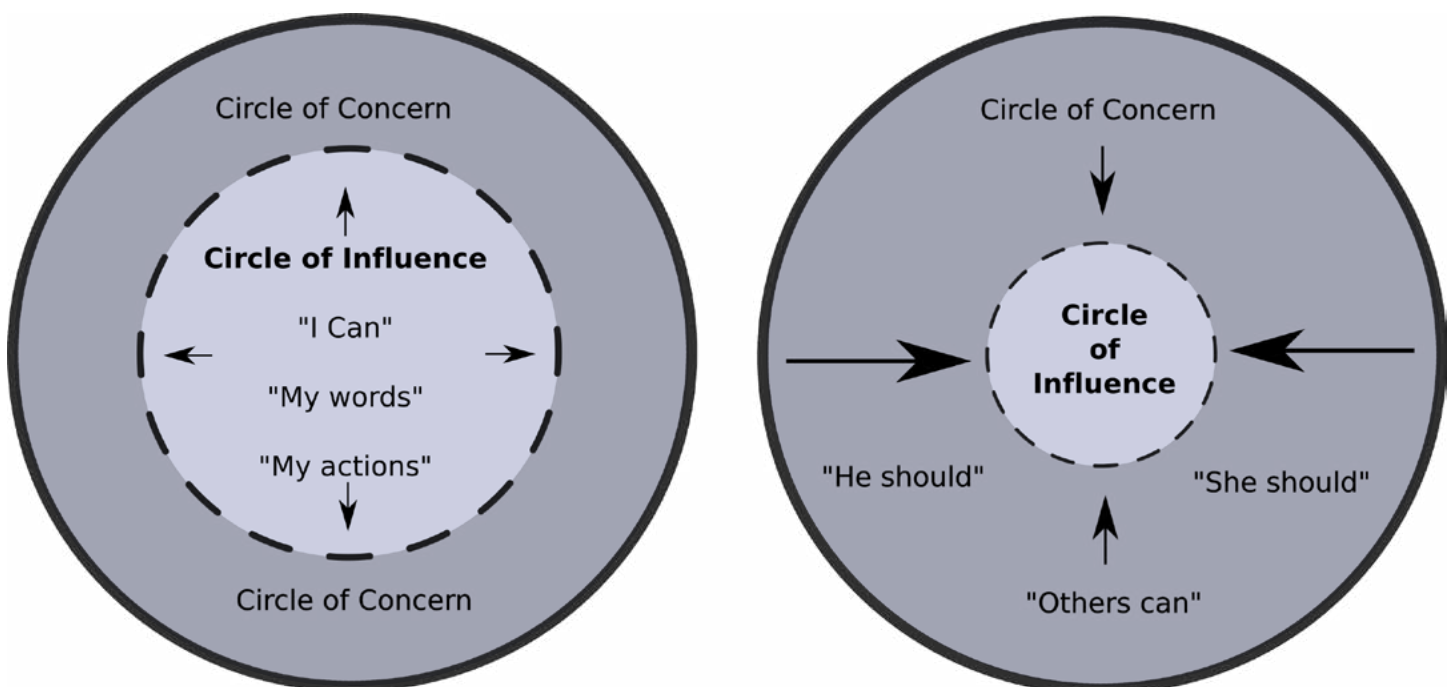
process or think through the situation.

When you train your mind to choose to change your hurtful thoughts to helpful ones deliberately, you feel less stress. One of the most powerful mind-training concepts that helps me, and my patients is the Circle of Power. I have derived it from Stephen Covey's book: *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*.^{2,6} He refers to the Circle of Concern and Circle of Influence.

Consider that everything you really care about is in a big circle: your Circle of Concern. It includes things concerning you. For example, what is happening in the world, what is happening politically, what is happening around you – at work, in school, or at home.

There is a smaller circle within this big circle: your Circle of Influence. This circle includes the things within your influence or control – your words, thoughts, attitude, and actions.

In the space outside your circle of influence, but still inside your circle of concerns, are the things that you really can't do anything about to change. For example, how other people think and behave.



The most important thing to note is that the more you focus on factors outside your inner circle, the smaller your circle of influence gets. And the more you focus on inside your circle, the bigger your Circle of Influence gets. That is why one of my patients called it the circle of power, and I adopted the term.

Now, how is this concept related to stress resilience? People usually spend a lot of their time and energy worrying about the things they cannot control, which causes them to feel stressed. Do you?

Whenever you get a thought that stresses you, ask yourself:

- Is this thought inside my circle of power?
- If yes, focus and act on it. It will increase your influence and joy.
- If no, ask, is there any aspect of this issue that I can do something about? (e.g., following health guidelines to prevent COVID) then choose to act on that.
- If no aspect of this issue is in your influence, then ask, "Is my reaction/anger/frustration helping me or hurting me?"
- If your reaction is only hurting you, then decide, "I choose to shift my focus to issues inside my circle of power. It will expand your circle of influence."

This process will give you authority over your stressful situations and help you shift from a victim to a victor role.

RESPOND: The third and last step is to respond with wisdom. This is the action part of your mental decision. Once you

have the right mindset, you can respond with positive action.

Don't stop at the thought level. Take action, no matter how small. Each small step will empower you. It will give you energy and move you in the right direction. Follow your decision and take action. Then reassess and follow the steps. With each cycle of following the three CPR steps, you will minimize your stress and maximize your joy.

When to Seek Professional Help?

You will often be able to handle the stress yourself. But sometimes, you may need help and there is no shame in that. Many self-help tools from the American Institute of Stress and many passionate professionals are available to you. If you continue to experience symptoms, please seek professional help.

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Dr. Rozina Lakhani is an integrative psychiatrist, a keynote speaker, and a best-selling author. She hosts a weekly live show, 'Happy and Healthy Mind with Dr. Rozina.' In these interviews, thought leaders share their best tips for mental fitness. Her mission is to help more than a million people live a happier and healthier life. She focuses on transforming stress to joy, preventing mental illness, and optimizing mind fitness for success in all life areas. If you would like to join her for these live shows or get information about her programs, including the Stress to Joy book, gratitude journal, or online course, visit www.drrozina.com.

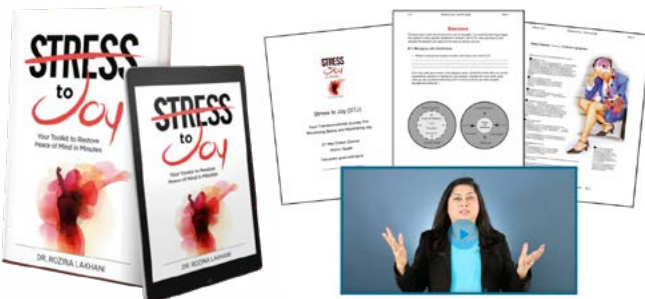



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**CLICK
TO GET
STARTED**





Personal Leader
Transformation in a
Post Trauma World:
Part 2 – The Doing of It.

By Charles Grantham, PhD, MSH, FAIS, APF

Introduction

This is the second and last article in my series of why and how leaders must change to accommodate the post COVID19 pandemic's reality. I think now, over a year into the systemic shock we have all felt, we can see that the pandemic has laid bare several social system fault lines, previously hidden, ignored, or "gaslighted" as an alternative reality.

In the introductory article, I spelled out the 'why' of the needed change and the overall story narrative. Now I turn to the 'how.' Before the mechanics, we need to step back, set a context and a social psychological foundation. Then we can dive into the seven-step process and conclude with some discrete action items you can put into play tomorrow.

Focus - Purpose Embedded in Person with Energy Coherence

How do you get from here to there? Before we start that journey, you need to get ready and aim correctly. The fracture in our everyday work and living routines brought about by the pandemic has a bright side. It has given us time to pause, reflect, and re-orient ourselves. Let's begin with a base assumption about human behavior.

I assume that a person can't effectively be a leader of a transformation until they have made the shift in beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors required to move into the future. So, what will these leaders look like? There are three characteristics:

- Present – in the moment and openly receptive to signals from the environment.

A person who is present is not suffering from delusions of alternative realities that have characterized the social world of the COVID19 pandemic. And those present seek out non-judgmental conversations and collaboration based on a shared sense of purpose.

- Awake – conscious and self-aware. In a nutshell, ego or selfless. Leaders' actions are of a servant nature and in service to ideals larger than themselves.
- Intentional – moving with foresight and action designs. The intention is why we do things; the purpose is the way we do things. This may sound paradoxical at first. But think about it. Having a motivation (the why) without action (the how) leads to inaction, the status quo, frozen in time and space.

To accomplish all these simultaneously, people need energy coherence. That is, there needs to be a dynamic balance of the head, heart, and hand. In the Eastern philosophical traditions, this takes the form of alignment and flow across the chakra centers of grounding, life force, power, compassion, soul, knowledge, and oneness with universal energies. This concept of Chakra energies is a topic in itself, a bit beyond the range of this article. For the curious, there are many excellent resources.

Grounding - What's Shifting?

Earlier I posited that major societal trends were creating a context for significant shifts in how people relate to their work, our beliefs about human nature, and the bedrock from which these beliefs emerge.¹

Leadership transformation is about adopting new belief systems, associated attitudes, and ultimately, evolutionary supportive behaviors in the workplace.

Historians of geopolitics (e.g., cultural context) note that we have two changes, and the synchronicity of these changes are unprecedented in modern history.

There is the 50 year "socio-economic cycle" tied to business cycles and generational experiences that we know as the Great Depression and the rise and fall of the "boomer generation." But there is also an 80 year "institutional cycle" or re-alignment of global power and questioning of political legitimacy – an ending of the USA predominance after WWII.

But what is the social psychology underlying these cycles that mandates a transformation of leadership? The answer, I believe, lies in shifts of power and status. In the fading paradigm, people were the center of emotional qualities – our sense of 'being.' Organizations gave us a sense of purpose and identity. Lastly, technologies begun in the industrial revolution were the tools with which we lived out our intentions.^{2,3}

The developing world is turning this upside down. Technology (personified by social media and artificial intelligence) gives us our sense of being through connect- edness and relatedness with other humans. Organizations become our instruments of action for service to life — affirmation, more fluid and specific. Lastly, people are becoming the fountain of willfulness through awareness and known purpose. Putting it all together, it looks like this:

Pretty heady stuff! However, it still

leaves an unanswered question. How does a person make this cognitive and psychic shift? In the last article, I laid out a seven-step outline of the process a person can journey through to make the transformation – or, more correctly, a metamorphosis.⁴

Process Map – Expanded Sequence

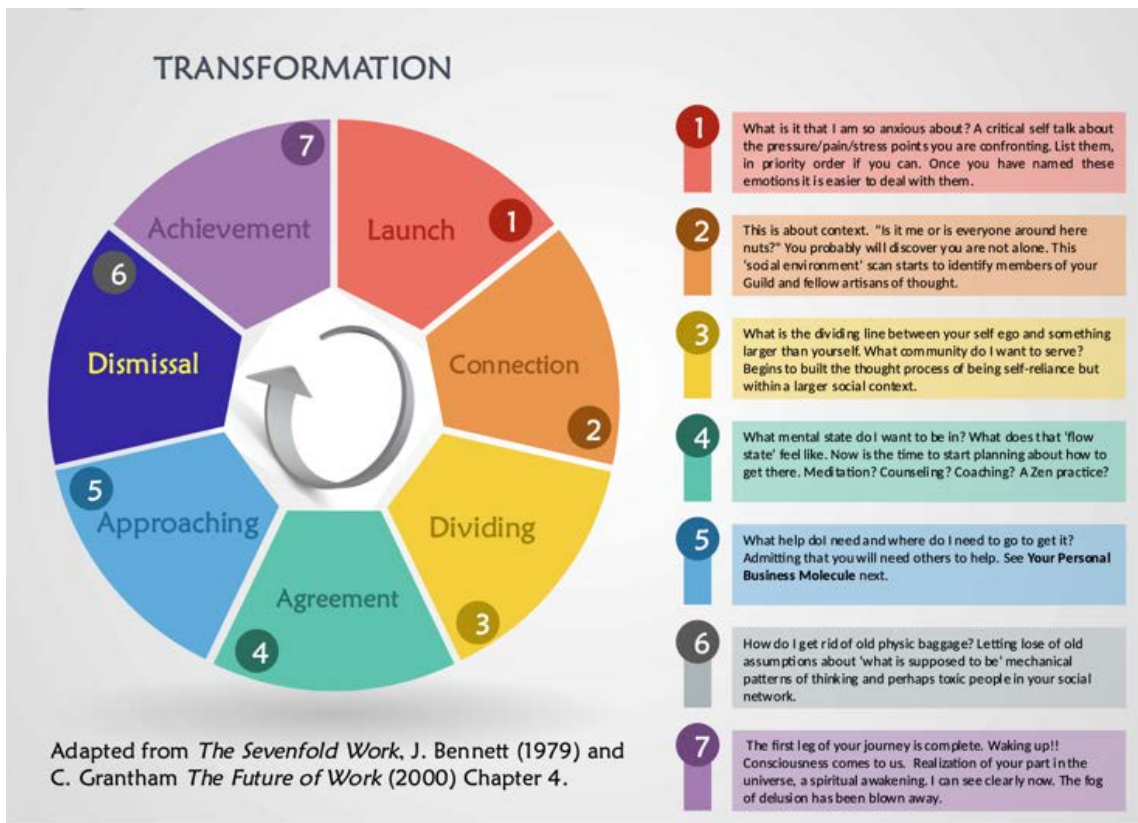
Now for the deep dive into the process. This process follows a storytelling format akin to Joseph Campbell's "Hero's Journey."⁵ I should note that this is a process that I have gone through, so I speak from not only knowledge but direct experience.

It's a circular process that repeats itself with each evolution stage of "awakening." In the interests of brevity, I present here as a picture. Each step follows in order and must be completed before journeying to the next. You might think of it in mathematical terms. For example, before mastering calculus, it is necessary to learn algebra, geometry, and trigonometry.

Each stage centers on a person wholly and profoundly answering a fundamental question. Answering the questions requires mastery of new leadership skills that I will present next. For now, list the questions as a pattern of waypoints along the path.

Launch - What is it that I am so anxious about? A critical self-talk about the

Locus of Control	Old Paradigm	New Paradigm	Quality
Person	Being Emotional	Willfulness	More aware, purposeful and in control
Organization	Willfulness Spiritual	Function	More in service, fluid and specific
Technology	Function Intellectual	Being	More connected and relatedness



pressure/pain/stress points you are confronting. List them in priority order if you can. Once you have named these emotions, it is easier to deal with them.

Connection - This is about context. "Is it me, or is everyone around here nuts?" You probably will discover you are not alone. This 'social environment' scan starts to identify members of your 'guild' and fellow artisans of thought.

Dividing - What is the dividing line between your self-ego and something larger than yourself. "What community do I want to serve?" This question begins to build the thought process of being self-reliant but within a larger social context.

Agreement - What mental state do I want to be in? What does that 'flow state' feel like? Now is the time to start planning how to get there. Meditation? Counseling? Coaching? A Zen practice?

Approaching - What help do I need, and where do I need to go to get it? Admit that you will need others to help.

Dismissal - How do I get rid of old psychic

baggage? Let loose old assumptions about 'what is supposed to be,' mechanical patterns of thinking, and perhaps, toxic people in your social network.

Achievement - The first leg of your journey is complete. Waking up!!

Consciousness comes to us—the realization of your part in the universe, a spiritual awakening. I can see clearly now. The fog of delusion has been blown away.

Now that you have a map and a compass to guide you along the personal leadership transformation journey, what are the things that you need in your mental 'backpack' as resources?

Skills Required - Overview of 10 Critical Skills

After 20+ years of doing leadership development work, I've distilled the required skills down to a set of ten. One could quibble from other academic perspectives that there are 'four,' 'seven,' or even 'twenty-five' skills and competencies. I won't digress into a discussion of validity.

I'm just presenting what I know works effectively.

Further, these ten can be grouped into the three pillars of the new paradigm presented above. They look like this:

Future thinking: The ability to anticipate events in the larger context of your business. The ability to do "what

Balance, flow, and circularity:

Understanding the pattern to the flow of energy (including information). The need for a balance of positive and negative forces and their reconciliation.

Living out leadership: Everyday living out the principles of leadership: integrity of action. Empathy, loyalty, discretion in action.

Willfulness Person	Function Organization	Being Technology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future thinking • Drivers of change • New patterns of action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design Processes • Asking questions • Systems thinking • Balance, Flow and circularity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living out leadership • Spirituality + change • Presence of self

if" scenarios in the three to five-year timeframe.

Drivers of change: Recognition of the multi-disciplinary nature of change. A broad perspective, which includes technology, economics, politics, and cultural aspects, which shape human behavior in both rational and irrational ways.

New patterns of action: An ability to move beyond simple "cause and effect" relationships.

Design processes: An understanding of design as a process that can be consciously applied in changing situations. Knowledge of how to move from a wide array of configurations to a smaller set of options using functionality, cost, and aesthetic filters.

Asking questions: An ability to engage in critical thinking. Knowing what the vital questions to ask as you move up a hierarchy of "unreflective thinker" to "master thinker."

Systems thinking: Seeing the pattern that connects. Systems relationships including feedback, feedforward, attenuation, amplification.

Spirituality and change: An understanding, appreciation, and acceptance of the spiritual aspects of life. Service in the interests of others and a community of which you are a member.

Presence of self: Understanding how others view you in action. Living in the moment. A sense of the dramatic and ability of actions and words to influence others' attitudes and shape their behavior.

Path Forward – Plan your next ten plays.

Now comes the hard part. I've laid out the 'why' of personal leadership transformation previously. In this installment, I've presented a focus for change, a grounding in the forces that are shifting, a seven-step process map, and lastly, a set of ten new skills and competencies required to make the transformation.

Just like every good coach has a 'playbook' of tactics to be employed given a set of circumstances, you need to construct your playbook. What are the next ten explicit actions you will undertake to begin and complete your own "Hero's Journey"?

Everybody's playbook will be different depending on where you are now and where you want to go. I can't give you a complete list. When I guide people through this development process, we construct a bespoke playlist. However, I can offer you two initial plays.

1. Build your purpose statement

Be patient with yourself here. This is difficult language meant to slow you down. This is not an exercise you complete in 15 minutes. You should think about it deeply, walk around with it, write something down, and then go back to it and iterate until you feel comfortable. Ultimately, you want to boil it down to no more than three words. For example, my purpose is Teacher.

TO: (what is the ideal transformation you need to make to live out your purpose?)

IN A WAY THAT: (what is the benefit of this transformation to those you work within living out your purpose?)

SO THAT: (what enables those you interact with to achieve 'their' purpose?)

2. Design and set up a Personal Board of Directors

I think all of us need our own 'Personal Board of Directors.' A place where we can go and seek counsel and get advice or new knowledge to help guide us in our transitions. So, you may ask yourself, "What's the difference between this

and just my friends?" Well, the essential difference is that this is a small group of people, usually 5 to 7, that you have deliberately sought out and brought together to help guide you in periods and times of transition. It's not necessarily based on family, physical community, the workplace, or historic accident.

Now you have a rationale to drive your personal leadership transformation. You also have a familiarity with what to focus on, knowledge of what is shifting in the larger environment, a seven-step process, and an introduction to ten new skills. In summary, I've given you the first two steps in your journey.

Good luck and Godspeed. Oh, one final thought. It really is much more than a transformation; it's a METAMORPHOSIS. There is no going back.

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Dr. Grantham offers a comprehensive curated resource for those experiencing severe stress, "Self-Care First Aid Kit." Contact him at cegrantham@gmail.com for your free copy.





**It's Time for
Your Personal
MOONSHOT!**

By Kjell Tore Hovik, PsyD, PhD

Elon Musk became the richest man on earth and blasted into low-earth orbit with his Space-X; Ruth Bader Ginsburg (RBG) was appointed to the Supreme Court and smashed a chain of entrenched legal precedents; and Greta Thunberg was nominated for the Nobel prize as she jarred everyone's attention to the sorry state of the earth. All three of these accomplishments were achieved in trying and uncertain times – even as we are all struggling just to get through this horrific pandemic.

Amazing? Yes. Impossible? Not really. In my view, they simply followed four basic principles of resiliency in the face of naysayers, pooh-poo-ers, web-trolls, and political hacks: 1. Curiosity, 2. Compassion, 3. Conceptualization, and 4. Conviction.¹ If these three international figures can do something amazing by following a few capital Cs, so can you and I, to make a better day for ourselves, and our friends, and families in the weeks, months, and years ahead.

Resilience and Self-actualization

Resiliency spans a wide theoretical horizon, but one modern take is that it's a force in each of us driving us to seek, among other things, self-actualization.² Self-actualization refers to the drive to fulfill your potential, and it's a force helping us push through challenges and setbacks along the way – to transform and change no matter

the risk.³ Each of us has a unique set of talents and abilities waiting to come out and play. It's up to each of us to heed the call... or not. Most of us don't dare to 'let the dogs out,' either because we are afraid to fail, afraid to succeed, or maybe just afraid of the neighbors. So, we just do what we are told, or do what we think others expect us to do – safe, but not very fun or stimulating. What can we learn from these three successful 'moonshooters' on our way to our own liberating personal moonshot?

Conviction is the Booster Rocket

Let me start from the last C-principle and work to the first. Conviction. Elon was convinced that he could fly to the moon on a shoestring, or at least cheaper than NASA. He wasn't out to make a billion dollars. No. He was out to change how we all get from A to B. RBG was convinced that treating people unequally was a lousy idea. She wasn't out to be appointed to the Supreme Court. No. She was out to right a history of wrongs and ended up changing the way laws were interpreted forevermore. And Greta is convinced we must treat nature the same way we treat relationships, household economies, and bank accounts – put in and take out in equal measure for it to be sustainable. She isn't out to win a fancy prize to collect dust in some cabinet. No. She saw nature on a path to ruin and screamed out, and she is still screaming!

Resiliency spans a wide theoretical horizon, but one modern take is that it's a force in each of us driving us to seek, among other things, self-actualization.

What are you convinced needs changing? It doesn't need to be on a global scale; it can be in your own private life. Convictions are like love – biggies and minis are just as valuable. And just like love, the real thing is not self-serving, but in the service of others for a greater good. There is no political point being made here. My point is that change requires conviction. If you have a conviction to make a positive change in your life to benefit others, then let that be your own personal moonshot project moving forward.

My personal moonshot will be to stop using guilt to try to change others. How many times a day do I slip into the tendency of saying, 'You should have...' 'You shouldn't have...' Working as a clinical psychologist with patients with serious addictions, traumas, thought

disorders, eating disorders, developmental delays, emotional and relational issues, I know that that approach won't change anything. In fact, it will only make things worse by making the person feel miserable about themselves, snuffing out any last vestige of self-worth. Why do I find myself using this nasty approach with my kids? To my youngest: Why don't you ever make your bed in the morning? To my teenager: Why can't you eat breakfast without leaving the kitchen a war zone? To my college student: Why don't you spend more time studying for your exams? These kinds of statements don't change any behaviors – they just hurt. It's a sneaky mind-game trick to try to get my way. I'm convinced that bringing up things in this way and making persons feel bad about themselves is wrong and counterproductive. I've got to



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change this behavior in me. Instead, how about scaffolding in the form of positive encouragement and reinforcement like we learn in psych school?

I've got a strong conviction about something I feel needs to change in my life, now what?

Conceptualization is the Roadmap

Once you've found a change-conviction meaningful to you, your family, your community, or even humankind (remember, whatever the scale, it is all equally precious), what do you do about it? Well, you have to conceptualize it – that is, put a name on it and make it concrete. It has to be simple, straight-forward and make sense. It can't be a silly wish to earn a billion bucks on stocks or winning a prestigious prize. These are things out of our control. We need to focus on real stuff within our control, such as our own thinking, our own actions, our own relationships. It's our inner abilities and talents that are yearning to self-actualize and grow, not our egos. If you don't like writing things down on paper to help you better organize your thoughts, then at least envision a road map in your mind that allows you to see how your positive change-conviction can be put in practice in the real world. The more concrete and specific, the better!

For my part, I'm convinced that I need to be more conscious about the words and phrases I use to communicate to people in my life, so I stop playing the guilt-card. That includes my kids, my partner, my patients, and even the neighbors who let their dog out on my front lawn to do their business every morning. I need to wipe a bunch of messy slates clean and focus on letting

good feelings motivate words and phrases, not guilt. We all need to feel good about ourselves – even the most despicable criminal must find the good qualities in himself or herself to make a change for the better. It's the same for all of us. I think guilt is taking up too much space in most of our minds – space that could be used for better things. In my experience, the people feeling guilty/sorry are not the ones who should be feeling 'guilty' anyway!

Compassion Grants Flexibility

Now you have a conviction that you've conceptualized, putting it into concrete terms on paper or in your head, and you have an idea how to put it into everyday practice. What's next? Well, you need to recruit a solid dose of compassion from deep within you to help you on your journey. Compassion involves the sensitivity to be aware of your surroundings and get a feel of how the surroundings are reacting to you practicing your conviction. This is critical in order to get important feedback on your behavior. But beware: operating only with compassion will likely stop you in your tracks the first time someone says 'boo.' You need to protect your compassion with a certain degree of detachment or distance. By this I mean, be sensitive, caring and empathetic, but don't let those feelings wash in over you and take over. The key to 'detached compassion' is self-confidence. When I have patients in therapy who threaten to take their own lives, I feel with them and to the best of my ability try to help them in their struggle; but I do not let their feelings take control over me and my thinking. I need to be self-confident enough to keep appropriate distance from their self-destructive thoughts.



They are already on a slippery slope; they don't need me to join them there. When they are terrified, I need to have the strength to be their rock with both my feet solidly planted on the ground.

Perhaps it seems unusual to bring up boxing when we're talking about the subject of 'compassion', but Muhammed Ali, the greatest boxer of my generation, had a saying, 'Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee.' That was his strategy to be flexible in pursuit of his conviction. He would bob and duck when his opponent was trying to knock him off balance, and at the same

time he took advantage of every opening to counter with a firm counterpunch (conviction). He was amazing and usually the last man standing!

Elon has had to be open to find the right technology for his projects; RBG had to listen to opposing arguments to know what she was up against; and Greta has had to work with diverse groups willing to help her spread her climate message. The need to be flexible in pursuit of their conviction never stopped any of these ceiling-breakers, and flexibility has been a key strength

in their successes. Their compassion, conviction and self-worth were shielded by a protective moat of detached engagement. In other words, listen, understand, reflect, and float like Ali, but stay loyal to your conviction and don't cede any 'knock-out punches' to anyone.

Curiosity and Mastery

You may ask, what is the spark that gets this force of conviction rolling? The answer is simple: curiosity. All it takes to open up the inner vault of talents and abilities inside you is a tiny spark of curiosity. A tiny 'What if?' can lead to growth and movement becoming a first step, then another, then another. Each step pushing you further – reinforced by a feeling of mastery after each successful step. Remember to expect gale force winds trying to knock you off course but get right back up with the staying power of your conviction and the self-confidence you've earned from earlier successes.

Sadly, some people fill that note of natural-born curiosity with drugs, alcohol, gambling, and even hatred (such as trolling). These ills totally hijack our natural brain processes designed to drive us forward by our curiosity, and each of these devious pursuits have their own twisted reinforcement logic. If you find yourself on an alternative or destructive path, please reach out for help – the earlier the better.

Final Thoughts

My personal moonshot moving forward will be to bring less feelings of guilt and more feelings of positive reinforcement into my small universe. It may sound trivial, but I think it can make a world of difference in the mental health and happiness of the people around me. If I can achieve that, I have achieved all the satisfaction that I need to bring a smile to my face. Inner satisfaction is an order of magnitude more rewarding than any external payoff could ever deliver. It's enough to make my masked and socially distanced little home and workplace high in the mountains in Norway a safe and healthy arena for the people who need my support and protection. Moonshot in progress!

How can you apply the 4 C's to design your next big goal? What are you curious about changing? What will it look like to change this? Design a concrete roadmap. Reflect on what will build your self-confidence to use "detached compassion" and remain flexible to stay on your path. How can you deepen your conviction? Visualize it... go for it. See you on the moon!

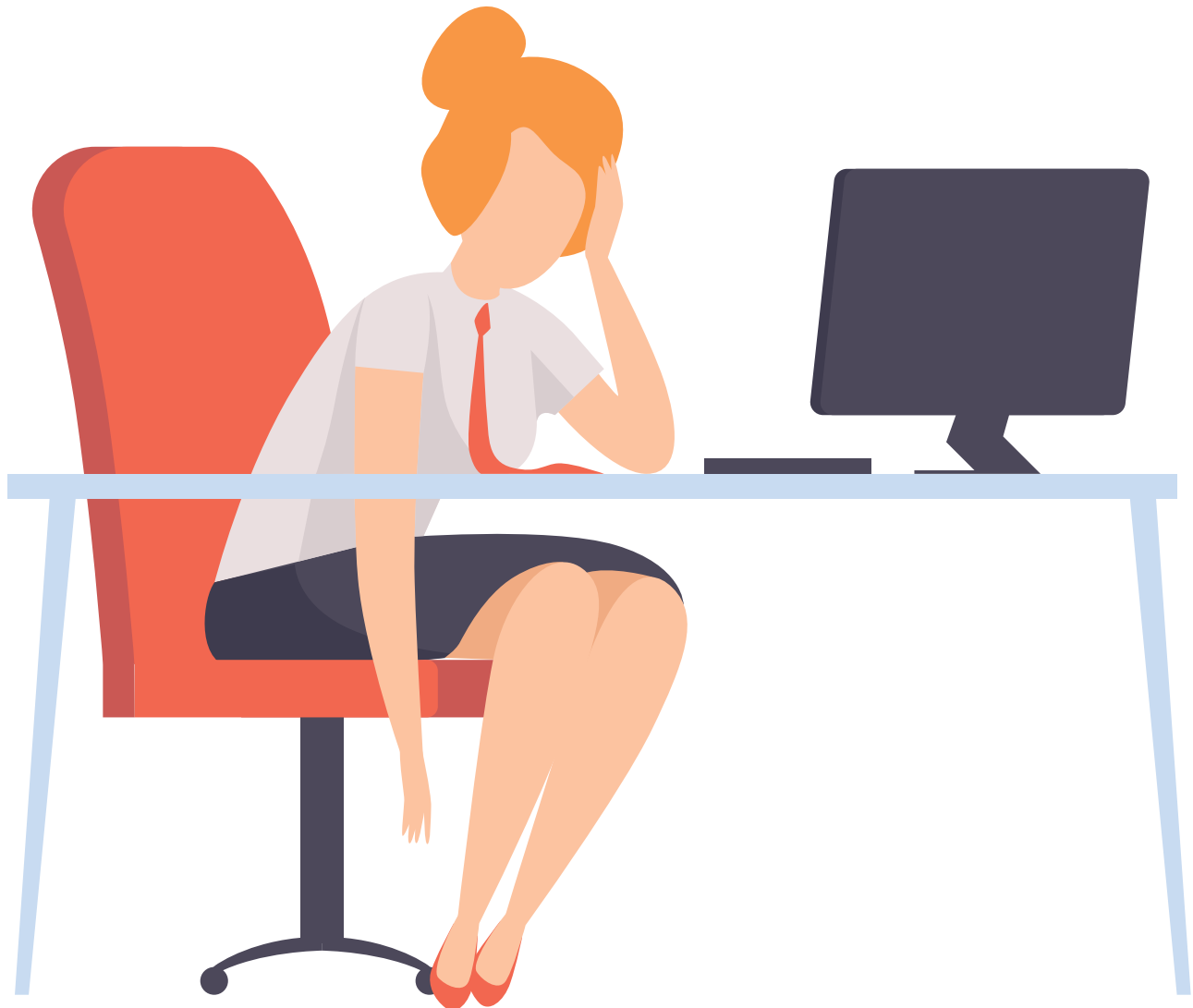
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Three Dangerous Mistakes Women Make That Lead to Burnout



By Jen Butler, MEd, BCC, DAIS

Women from all over the world contact me sharing the struggles of their daily lives. Inevitably, they use these three words to describe how they feel about their life: stress, overwhelm, and burnout. After years of working with female professionals and talking to tens of thousands of women about what specifically stresses them out, I've identified the 3 dangerous mistakes women make that lead to burnout.

Mistake #1: Tolerate

What we tolerate we give permission to. So, the more women bite their tongues with family, friends, staff, vendors, bosses, and colleagues, the more they are consistently giving others permission to continue bad behaviors regardless of how it impacts them, their lives, or stress levels. Women also tolerate their slow, personal and career growth for far too long, desiring efficiency and success, but settling for chaos and flat satisfaction year after year. Massive mistake #1 is that women tolerate way too much for far too long.

Mistake #2: Ignore the Warning Signs

Stress isn't your staff standing in a line outside your office wanting to ask you ridiculous questions, the pile of bills you stuff in a portfolio for the bookkeeper to decide which to pay, or the difficult staff you would rather dismiss than train. Stress

is an internal, biological, physiological, chemical reaction that is part of your autonomic nervous system with clear and identifiable symptoms.

Acute stress (low, stress levels that spur you forward and enhance your awareness) has been shown to have positive effects on your lifestyle, while chronic stress (high-stress levels with a continual release of cortisol over time) can be disastrous. Ignoring the warning signs of chronic stress leads to headaches, dry skin, forgetfulness, fatigue, mood swings, sleepless nights, indifference, depression, and burnout. Consistently women share how they have been feeling for months or years, and it's as if they are reciting from a medical journal on the consequences of stress. Since we can't change what we don't acknowledge, ignoring the warning signs of stress, mistake #2, is the same as sticking their head in the sand and waiting for burnout to take over.

Mistake #3: Going it Alone

There is a cultural attitude with women that is perpetuated and nurtured on social media, at seminars, and in the halls at work. People call it 'empowerment,' but many women interpret it as the need for going it alone and doing everything by themselves. In reality, it's a conglomeration of other women's fears, weaknesses, failures, and judgments that virally and systemically search for the next women with fractures in their confidence and small doubts in their abilities. Sadly, a giant wall is created that does nothing but hold her back

from reaching out to others for support and stagnate her progress to success.

The practice of building a life, career, and/or business to success is a bell curve with a very small number of outliers able to rely solely on skill and a lot of luck, to go about it alone. The majority of women idealize the outliers, spending tens-of-thousands of dollars to attend their workshops, copy their social media feeds, or buy their programs just to become like them, all the while continuing to listen to and conform to the cultural attitude that going about it alone is the standard expectation of a successful woman. This is the most dangerous mistake of all that will keep women stressed and lead them directly into burnout.

What You Can Do Instead

Solutions to each of these mistakes are clear, but not simple nor always

easy to implement. In working with these women, I've found specific steps help methodically undo the damage. You need a strategy and there are lots of resources out there to help. I devised the Get SMaRT™ Stress Management and Resilience Training around these principles. The below steps are in order and focus on specific elements of the stress cycle. Take them in baby-steps or jump in deep. Just move forward with each as your capacity allows and you'll Get SMaRT before you know it.

1. Know your stress: The point of knowing your stress helps you identify the kind and type of stress you are experiencing. Because our bodies don't decipher between good stress (eustress) or bad stress (distress), any stress situation we are put in triggers the stress response process. By that theory, even too much eustress, the

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good stuff, can be damaging to our bodies. Knowing what stresses you out, allows you to create action plans full of appropriate coping methods to combat your unique stress. This is the first line of defense against burnout, stopping it before it even starts.

2. Assess your stress: Becoming aware of your warning signs is the second step to warding off burnout. How does stress show up for you/in you? Until you know the severity of your condition, the level of impact it is having on your body, and exactly what kind of stress you are experiencing, there is no way to make sure you are using the correct coping method. For example, you can't exercise away psychological stress nor sleep away physiological stress. These are the wrong prescriptions for your diagnosis.

There are several ways to assess your stress that provide different insights into the severity of your stress response. The highly valid and reliable Holmes-Rahe Stress Scale gives you a prediction on your risk of injury or illness. Stress self-assessments through AIS, Mayo Clinic, Cleveland Clinic, and the APA allow for online

questionnaires to give you information based on your answers. Or simply asking yourself how stressed you are right now on a scale of 1 to 10, can help guide you to select the right coping methods, how many, and how often you partake in SMaRT coping.

3. Reduce your stress: Step three in the journey is to Reduce Your Stress, which you can't do by going it alone. It takes a network of the right tools, resources, information, and people for you to learn from, share with, problem solve, and lean on. Reducing your stress to stave off burnout is a result of intentional work with strategic implementation of defined coping methods. Start building your network now!

Women who address these dangerous mistakes and implement strategic solutions to counterbalance their effects will ward off burnout and find passion again. There can't be a willy-nilly approach to habit formation. Behavior change is hard! But with a methodical way to Know – Assess – Reduce your stress, you and women around the globe can remain burnout-free forever.

Jen Butler, MEd, BCC, DAIS has been working in the area of Stress Management and Resilience Training (SMaRT) for over 30 years. After experiencing significant trauma in her younger years, Jen discovered the personal need for stress management and transformed her own journey, education, and career into the development of Get SMaRT™ workshops and the SMaRT Club+™ membership portal. Focusing on the 11 essentials to stress management, she speaks to professionals all around the globe on the impact stress has on their lives and businesses.



Jen Butler is the owner, founder, and CEO of JB Partners, a company committed to reducing stress of private-practice owners, small businesses, and large organizations through intuitive and powerful programming, one-to-one coaching, and comprehensive consulting.

While earning two bachelor's degrees - one in Public Health Administration and the other in Educational Psychology - Jen worked in hospitals, private practices, and became a paramedic, learning first-hand the challenges and relentless stress faced by medical professionals. Building on her education and 25-years of experience in learning & development, Jen Butler has worked with entrepreneurs, small business owners, corporate leaders, and executives on how to obtain sustainable profitability with less stress and more fulfillment. Jen is also a Diplomate of The American Institute of Stress. If you would like to learn more about the great programs at JB partners just go to jbpartners.com.



Looking for the Cause and Cure of Diseases

Possible Mechanisms Underlying the Relationship of Stress to Disease

By Carlos ETB Monteiro

For 28 years I have closely followed the research of the Brazilian cardiologist and also my father-in-law, Quintiliano H de Mesquita, on the Myogenic

Theory of Myocardial Infarction which he developed in 1972. In the Myogenic Theory concept, the causal factor is represented by physical exertion or psycho-emotional stress increasing the activity of the heart in the face of fixed or deficient flow in the coronary blood supply, producing regional ischemia or insufficient blood flow. Such ischemia can then lead to myocardial infarction or heart attack.

In his book about the Myogenic Theory,² Dr. Mesquita said that the area of myocardial ischemia experiences a loss of regional contractility and a relaxing of the myofibrils, becoming stagnant,

losing contractility, and thus developing anaerobic metabolism. This results in the deposit of lactate and catabolites and the depletion of energetic phosphate. According to Mesquita, the anaerobic metabolism is a step toward the myocardial infarction and necrosis in a particular region of the heart.

In the 1960's Berthold Kern, a cardiologist from Germany, developed the theory that the low pH value (acidic state) found in the inner layers of the left ventricle would be the cause of infarction. According to his theory the myocardial infarction occurs due to a formation

of excess lactic acid, destroying the cells and resulting in a chain reaction, much like a fire in a forest.³

In 2005, in a 1982 study by David S. Schade,⁴ I read about a paper published by Carl Ferdinand Cori and Gerty Cori in

"Life is a struggle, not against sin, not against the Money Power, not against malicious animal magnetism, but against hydrogen ions."

--H. L. Mencken 1919¹

1929.⁵ They demonstrated the influence of adrenaline on lactic acid production. The couple went on to receive a Nobel Prize in 1947 for their discovery of how glycogen, a derivative of glucose, is broken down and resynthesized in the body.⁶



Carl Ferdinand Cori and Gerty Cori
Nobel Prize in Medicine, 1947



In his article, Schade supported and expanded on the lactic acid theory by supplying the following evidence that catecholamines participate in the development and/or maintenance of lactic acidosis:

1. The common association of stress and lactic acidosis
2. The rise in plasma lactate concentration during adrenaline infusion
3. The precipitation of lactic acidosis by adrenaline intoxication and pheochromocytoma
4. The vasoconstrictor effects of catecholamines leading to tissue anoxia and lactic acid production

In 1964, John R Williamson confirmed the effects of adrenaline infusion on the

increased production of lactate in isolated heart tissue, up to five times the normal production.⁷

For some reason, these findings have not attracted much attention until recently, but I found them intriguing. I began to investigate the importance of stress and resultant lactic acidosis in order to verify a possible causal role for different diseases.

This led to a wide variety of studies, including atherosclerosis, coronary artery calcification, ischemic heart disease, acute myocardial infarction, hypertension, diabetes mellitus, cancer, stroke, Alzheimer's disease, rheumatoid arthritis, and COVID-19. In all of these articles we concluded that autonomic dysfunction + lactic acidosis was the causal origin for the diseases studied.

Recent studies confirmed that increased lactate in the brain may be a signal of cerebral harm in other medical conditions. For example, it was shown that patients with panic disorder consistently build up excess lactate. The authors of this study have suggested that one of the triggers for "spontaneous" panic attacks in patients with panic disorder might be lactic acid accumulating in acid-sensitive fear circuits.⁸ A study published in 2017, suggested that lower pH associated with increased lactate levels is not a mere artefact, but rather implicated in the underlying pathophysiology of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.^{9,10} Also, cerebrospinal fluid lactate is associated with multiple sclerosis disease progression.¹¹

Other diseases affected by autonomic dysfunction, such as Parkinson's disease, should be better studied to investigate the possible risk of increased lactate production in the body.¹² There is also evidence that a dysregulated autonomic nervous system is common in patients

with sepsis and is an early marker of organ dysfunction. Elevated serum lactate levels are common in sepsis.^{13,14}

Additional findings from our research:

1. In 1856, Benjamin Ward Richardson was the first to find that lactic acidosis might lead to diseases like arthritis and rheumatism.¹⁵ Richardson said in his paper:

“The first inference deducible from the experiments, according to my reading of them, is, that lactic acid has the power, when existing in an animal body in excess, of producing a class of symptoms attaching themselves mainly to the fibro serous textures, and which, regarded in all points of view, are essentially the symptoms of acute rheumatic inflammation.”

2. In a study from 1913, Oswald Loeb [16] was the first to link lactic acidosis to atherosclerosis.¹⁶ In his experiments he demonstrated that injecting lactic acid to rabbits and dogs, resulted in atherosclerotic lesions in these animals. In his study he also mentioned a similar hypothesis for diabetes, that follows:

“Let us remember that when we inject adrenaline and nicotine causes the most serious disturbances on the part of the animals blood pressure and breathing show, even temporarily, reactions with convulsions, so the assumption is not of that hard to indicate that it is a production or a less destruction of lactic acid. It is well known that rabbits react to adrenaline intake with glycosuria, it would not be impossible that with, simultaneous hyperglycemia, the build-up to sugar is disturbed and a greater build-up of lactic acid and thereby aldehyde formation would be given. We can also make a similar hypothesis for diabetes, in which as is well known, arteriosclerosis occurs frequently. Remarkable is still that even those researchers who

investigate arterial changes seen occurring with abnormal diet, report glycosuria and severe metabolic disorders.”

3. Otto Warburg and colleagues, in a study from 1926, observed that cancer cells were characterized by accelerated glycolysis and excessive lactate formation.¹⁷ According to Warburg, many tumors depend heavily on glucose for their metabolic demands and ferment it to lactate. His concept was later called the Warburg effect. Warburg was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1931 for his discovery of the nature and mode of action of the respiratory enzyme. His findings opened up new ways in the fields of cellular metabolism and cellular respiration. He has shown, among other things, that cancerous cells can live and develop, even in the absence of oxygen.
4. In his 1916 book, George Washington Criles wrote the following point of view about acidosis and the human body.¹⁸

“The establishment in the body of so powerful a group of organs and mechanisms for the elimination of the acid by-products of energy transformation show how vitally necessary is the maintenance of the normal slight alkaline reaction of the body. This indicates that acidosis is a factor in many diseases – acute and chronic – and that the centers in the medulla are stimulated by acidosis. While the higher centers are depressed; it suggests an explanation of the phenomena of anesthesia, and that the ultimate cause of death is usually acidosis.”

Conclusion

The studies and concepts described in the present article provide strong evidence that autonomic dysfunction and its influence on lactic

Recent studies confirmed that increased lactate in the brain may be a signal of cerebral harm in other medical conditions.

acid production are both causal factors for countless diseases. In our view, the adoption of this concept will open new horizons for the research of novel drugs, or the use of old drugs, that could offer the right solution to fight these causal factors. In this way it would bring alternative treatments that might lead to the cure or, at least, more adequate solutions for both prevention and management of many diseases.

Special note:

Dr Paul J Rosch, former Chairman of the Board at the American Institute of Stress, deceased on February 26, 2020, was a remarkable researcher, well-known and respected for his scientific integrity. One of the greatest mentors and inspirators I had in medical science. He gave me support and help to some of my ideas. Paul, as a member of the scientific committee of the International Conference of Advanced Cardiac Sciences, (The King of Organs Conference), invited me as one of their speakers in the events held in 2012 and 2019 in the Saudi Arabia Kingdom. Paul has been my co-author in two recent published studies.

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