

FIND YOUR PEACE



Your guide to creating a life of
mindfulness and stress resilience



Week 5: Resilience

Resilience is your emotional immune system. It resists the "infection" of constant bad news to prevent an influenza of your mind.

To build your emotional immune system, you must first reject the arresting negativity that media rain down on you 24/7 in order to keep their ratings up. Next, realize what is right in front of you: mutual respect and daily kindness exists all around us. It is so common, in fact, that we don't even notice it.

The ratio of good things around you to bad things is like 10,000 to 1. How many vehicles slow down to make it easier for an adjacent car to merge, versus some driver being a butthead? How many airline passengers are willing to help an elderly seat-mate with their luggage versus the one who may blow them off? How many people purposefully do not silence their phones during a movie?

Even though kindness is actually the rule rather than the exception, it goes unnoticed like a background hum that becomes "white noise". You don't even hear it, even though it is all around you. Noticing the everyday kindness when it happens builds your emotional immune system for you.

So bring the positive side of humanity to a conscious level. Think of it like your umbrella, your shield, or your emotional flu shot.

ASSESS YOURSELF

How healthy is your emotional immune system?

Look around at the people in your life and start to notice things such as their ability to stay calm when stressful events or tensions arise – particularly when the negativity is sustained over a long period of time. As you notice the reactions of these people around you, you are looking for two things:

1. Whether their immediate reaction is measured or whether it is reactive.
2. Whether that event or tension sticks with them in the long term.

Once you see their reactions as a reference point, take an honest look at yourself by comparison. Your emotional immune system is healthier when your immediate reactions are measured, and when you are able to keep chronic stressors from getting you down in the long term. Being aware of the health of your emotions is the first step in building your overall resilience.



MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

Two ways to practice “de-centering”

In the rapid pace of our lives, reminding ourselves to decenter and take a mental step back from our internal reactions is a lot to ask. Life normally moves too quickly to have much time to reflect.

So don't expect to be able to do this on the fly, especially at first. But if this practice is hard to do, how can you expect to get better at it?

There are two ways to approach your decentering training.

1. Take 15 minutes in the mornings to yourself. Use this time as a meditation to remind yourself to pull your mind back from your feelings, and assess them dispassionately from a distance. This morning practice not only trains your mind to decenter so you'll be better at it through your day, but it also acts as a meditation to set your overall stress levels lower.

2. The other way to practice is during the course of your day. This doesn't have to take much time at all. Basically do what you did in the morning, but for only 3 – 5 minutes. Consider these as mini-meditations on decentering. The advantage of this form of decentering meditation is that you can apply it specific cases, like when something happened to push your buttons and make you react. Pull those events back up in your mind, and use it as practical training for decentering.

The more you practice, the better you become. Set a structure for yourself in the morning and during your work day to train your mind and brain in this critical skill.



Decentering changes your inner responses

"Decentering" is a concept of cognitive psychology which should be an ultimate goal for you. The idea is that you become aware of your inner thoughts and reactions as if from a distance. This can be a transformative practice when it becomes not just what you do but who you are.

Recall the last session where we talked about your ability to choose your own reaction. In other words, you were working to control your external reactions to events in the world. Decentering takes this one step deeper by working to control your internal reactions.

This distinction is very important to understand. Let's say someone drives aggressively and you have an immediate feeling of frustration or anger. Your external response is how you react to that event – yelling, pounding on your steering wheel,

etc. This is separate from the internal response which is the original feeling that you reacted to in the first place.

Getting control over those reactions is far easier than getting control over the emotions that triggered them. But that is your ultimate goal, and this can be so fundamental and transformative in your life.

View feelings, when they arise, as if you are looking at them from a distance. Think about that sense of hurt, anger, or frustration, but not as something attached to you. Doing this robs it of its power, makes it far easier for you to choose to react consciously. It also decreases the chances of it happening again.

When you get good at decentering, you will have become more immune to the daily life stressors that rob you of your peace.

