

# Stress, Trauma, and Resiliency

A 3-PART SERIES

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## 1. Gratitude:

What am I grateful for in my life?



## 2. Optimism:

What am I looking forward to?

2

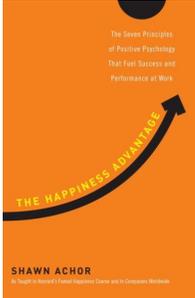


### Why does gratitude, optimism, positivity, and hope matter?

- Empowers during times of stress
- Releases dopamine
- Instills a sense of control

Yeager et al 2014; Dweck, 2009

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### When placed in a positive state, mood, or emotion the brain is up to 31% more efficient compared to a neutral mood.

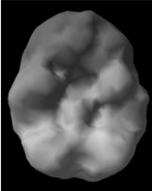
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### Super Extra Bonus Question

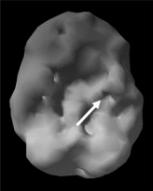


What did this image teach us about the power of gratitude?

Grateful 1



Hateful 2



Notice low left temporal lobe activity

Source: Amen Clinics.com

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✓ practice **GRATITUDE**  
 (...that's #2 on the list!)

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And there's even more evidence:

- Expressing gratitude via letters produces mental health benefits (Wong & Brown, 2017).
- Focusing on gratitude stimulates the hypothalamus (which helps to regulate stress) and the ventral tegmental (part of the brain's reward and pleasure system).
- Grateful people are physically healthier and sleep better (Emmons & McCullough, 2003).
- Demonstrating gratitude reduces aggression (DeWall, 2011).

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**1. Gratitude:**

- In what ways are you "rich"?
- What is something cool, interesting, or strange that you learned recently?
- What small "luxury" do you appreciate? (ex: heated seats, hot showers, park near your house, George Foreman grill)

**2. Optimism:**

- What is something fun you get to do this week?
- What cues do you look for that it will be a good day?
- Who/What recently "made your day"?

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SOMETHING IN NATURE	A PERSON	SOMETHING I CAN SEE	A HOBBY	SOMETHING I ONLY DO AT THE HOLIDAYS
A FAVORITE FOOD				A GIFT I'VE BEEN GIVEN
A TALENT	SOMETHING ABOUT MY HEALTH OR BODY		SOMETHING I'VE DONE TO HELP OTHERS	
SOMETHING THAT MAKES MY LIFE EASIER	SOMETHING THAT KEEPS ME SAFE	A HAPPY MEMORY	A POSSESSION	

<https://sharonmartincounseling.com/>  
Want more ideas? Web search – "gratitude prompts for kids"

**30 Gratitude Journal Prompts**  
©2017 Sharon Martin, LCSW

1. What's something that you're looking forward to?
2. What's a simple pleasure that you're grateful for?
3. What's something that you're grateful to have today that you didn't have a year ago?
4. Write about a happy memory.
5. Write about someone you're sure that you're grateful for.
6. What's something about your body or health that you're grateful for?
7. Open the door or window and look outside. What's something you're grateful for outside?
8. What's an accomplishment you're proud of?
9. What's a possession that makes your life easier?
10. Open your phone or photo album and find a photo that you like. Why are you grateful for this photo? What are you grateful for in the photo?
11. What have you been given that you're grateful for?
12. What's something or someone that makes you feel safe?
13. What artist, author, or musician are you grateful for?
14. What do you like about your job?
15. How are you able to help others?
16. What public service or organization are you grateful for (i.e. the library or the department)?
17. What food(s) are you grateful for?
18. What piece of clothing or furniture are you grateful for?
19. Write about a friend that you're grateful for.
20. Write about a teacher or mentor that you're grateful for.

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- What is Stress & Why Resilience Matters
- Building our own resilience\*
- Next Steps

**AGENDA**

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**THE B?G QUESTION**

*How do we support students who have experienced trauma and stressors and still maintain a focus on classroom instruction?*

Hint: We build resiliency through specific strategies designed to provide equitable solutions. Trauma and stress are the problems; resiliency is the solution!

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Awareness is good. It's necessary. But I can be aware without taking action.

Action is necessary for results. I can't act until I'm aware.

But in order to get the results we are looking for, I need to take action that is most likely to produce those desired results.

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**Be on the look out...**

**What is going in your "cart"?**

**Why?** The ideas we'll discuss are powerful and make a huge difference for your success and student success. Be on the look out for strategies, concepts, and ideas that you'll commit to trying right away.

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Stress and Resiliency - a 10,000 foot view



A few good reminders before we look at methods to develop, refine, and practice personal resilience.

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 **Chronic Stress Effects... T or F?**

1. Chronic stress accelerates aging. (Wikgren, et al, 2011)
2. Being in close contact with stressed people increases your stress levels (Bains, 2018)
3. Stress impairs self control (Maier, et al, 2015)
4. Stress impairs memory (Yuen et al, 2012)
5. The hippocampus (the part of the brain that processes memory) is smaller in those with chronic stress (Kim, et al, 2015)

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**3** Important Definitions:

**Stress** – a physiological response to a perception of a lack of control

**Resiliency** - the ability to cope, persist in the face of adversity; the capacity to “bounce back”.

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Stress is the **physiological response** to a **perception** of a **lack of control** over an adverse situation or person

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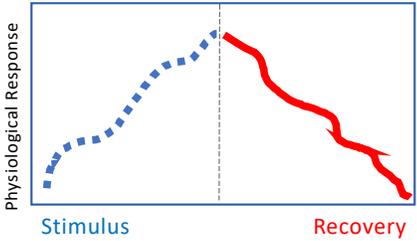
✓ **stress** (on/off) is healthy for us.

✓ **distress** (chronic) is toxic to our brain and body



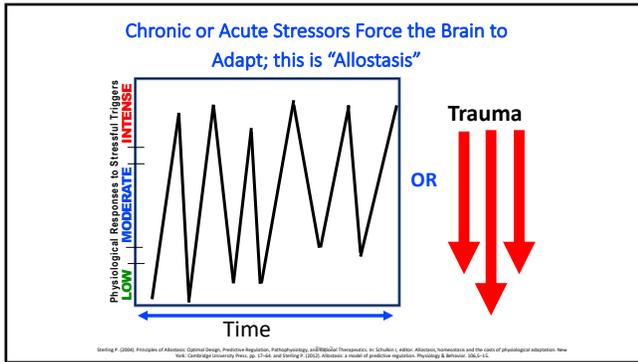

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**Homeostasis**  
Healthy Brain Response to an Everyday Stressor

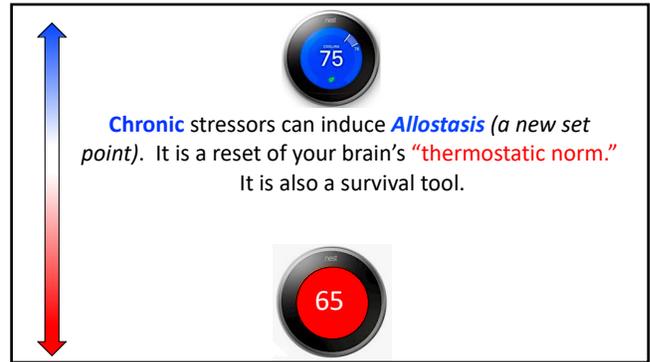


McEwen, B. & Wingfield, J. C. (2003). What is a stress? Integrating homeostasis, allostasis and stress. *Physiology and Behavior*, 79(2), 105-111.

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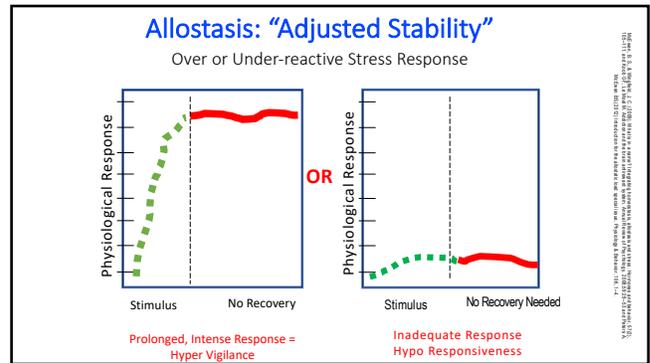


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**Allostasis is Your Brain's Adjusted New "Set Point" for Survival**

**Allostasis** occurs when impactful experiences tell your brain to either  
1) get more control or 2) quit caring.

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Is stress contagious?  
You bet it is!

Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016 Stress contagion in the classroom? The link between classroom teacher burnout and morning cortisol in elementary school students

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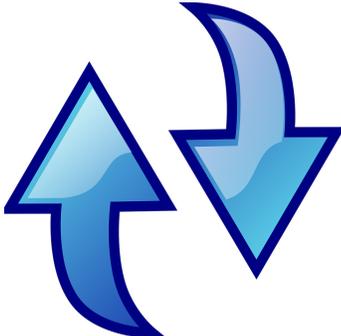
Why is change so hard?

Chronic stress and burnout inhibits change and often leads to apathy.

**Stress Meter**  
Panic Attack!  
Anxiety  
Stressed  
Coping  
Relaxed

Neal, D. T., Wood, W., & Drolet, A. (2013). How do people adhere to goals when willpower is low? The profits (and pitfalls) of strong habits. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 104(6), 959-975.

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**Remember – stress is our perception of a lack of control.**

When our stress levels go up, we need to increase control. Increase control and our stress levels go down.

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*What is Resilience?*

Words and concepts most commonly associated with resilience include: **persistence**, the ability to “**bounce back**” after a setback, and the ability to **cope during times of adversity**. At its most basic, resilience is made up of those **mindsets/beliefs/internal values** we possess along with a **set of specific strategies** we employ during the tough times.



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- ✓ Resiliency matters because the job is stressful!
- ✓ Resiliency consists of **2 things**:
  - ✓ **How we think**: mindsets, attitudes, beliefs, values (what goes on inside our heads)
  - ✓ **What we do**: actions, strategies, coping mechanisms (what we do when times are tough)
- ✓ To be the best educator we can be, we need to foster, practice, and refine our own resiliency.



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**MIP**

(Most Important Point)



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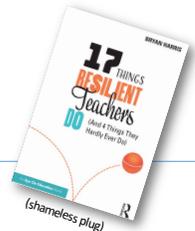
17 Things Resilient Teachers Do

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take Care of Their Health</li> <li>✓ Practice Gratitude</li> <li>• Practice Reframing</li> <li>• Understand the Power of “No”</li> <li>• Manage their Emotions</li> <li>• Know Their Triggers</li> <li>• Practice In-The-Moment Stress Relievers</li> <li>• Develop a Professional Support Network</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a Life Outside the Classroom</li> <li>• Get Themselves Organized</li> <li>• Focus on What they Can Control</li> <li>• Know How to Receive Feedback</li> <li>• Advocate for Themselves</li> <li>• Create and Track Goals</li> <li>• Unplug</li> <li>• Laugh and Have Fun with Their Students</li> <li>• Help Students Build Resiliency</li> </ul>
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(and 4 things they hardly ever do)

- ✓ Hardly Ever Beat Themselves Up Over Past Mistakes
- ✓ Hardly Ever Spend Much Time Complaining
- ✓ Hardly Ever Freak Out about Change
- ✓ Hardly Ever Shy Away from Conflict



(shameless plug)

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**Why?** Because the job is stressful. *This is especially important during times when kids challenge us the most.* This is perhaps the most important message of the day – **take care of yourself.** It's not selfish to take care of yourself. Now, tweet that and preach it to whoever will listen. It's the truth.

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### Where might we start?

*(In other words, if I do these things, I'm off to a great start!)*

- ✓ Practice Gratitude
- ✓ Practice Reframing

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✓ practice reframing

Reframing is the process of “re-thinking” the situation in front of us. It’s about our internal dialogue and how we speak to ourselves.

“Reframing is at the heart of resilience” says Dr. Steven Wolin. Resilience is not about ignoring or downplaying the challenges in front of us (or the past traumas we are overcoming), it’s about looking at them differently.

Reframing is especially important as we strive to meet the needs of students who may have behavioral and/or learning difficulties.

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### Good News About Stress

Reframing is about how we think about the challenges in front of us.

**RESEARCH:** Those who led low-stress lives and those who led high-stress lives (but didn’t think the stress was bad for them) had almost identical mortality rates.

Imagine 3 people...

**Conclusion:** Attitudes and belief systems about the stress appear to be more significant than the actual stressors themselves. By changing your thoughts about stress, you can change your body’s response to this stress.

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✓ practice reframing

Reframing is an example of positive self talk. Reframing is about choosing to look at a situation from a different POV.

- Go from “have to” to “get to”
- Repeat - “Nothing lasts forever” or “This too shall pass”

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✓ practice reframing

Sometimes I have to be reminded of my own strengths and assets. Psychologist Edith Grotberg, Ph.D., says to think along these lines:

- ✓ I have... (external supports)
- ✓ I am... (inner strengths)
- ✓ I can... (interpersonal & problem solving skills)

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**Let's camp here for a minute...**



Think about a student you have worked with (currently or in the past)

**What strengths do they have?**

As a super-extra bonus idea - share this list with the student and their family. Tell the child all the good you see in them. Tell the parents as well. The simple act of identifying and communicating those strengths will do wonders for both teacher and student.



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Pejorative Label	Positive Reframe
Stubborn	Determined
Rebellious	Independent
Resistant	Cautious
Manipulative	Good at getting needs met
Attention-Seeking	Good at caring for self
Rude	Ability to effect people
Unmotivated	Good at protecting self
Profane	Expressive

Source: Adapted from Applestein, 2017

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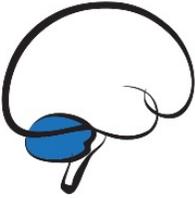
Let's call it a day.



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**Super-Extra Bonus Ideas**  
**(at no extra cost!)**

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Early childhood stress resulted in a smaller cerebellum.

The C is responsible for (among other things):

- Acquiring new physical skills
- Coordinating movement
- Regulating stress
- Memory
- Attention

Walsh et al, 2014

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# Poverty is a significant source of stress.



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✓ low SES children are exposed to:

- 1) more stressors,
- 2) more intense stressors,
- 3) longer lasting stressors, and
- 4) have fewer coping skills than their higher SES counterparts.

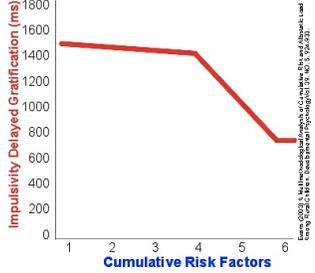


Evans, G.W., Kim P. (2007) Childhood poverty and health: cumulative risk exposure and stress dysregulation.

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### Cumulative Risk Factors: More Stress = More Impulsivity

The greater number of risk factors, the harder it is to delay gratification. Chronic or acute stress shortens the time horizon.



Cumulative Risk Factors	Impulsivity Delayed Gratification (ms)
1	~1500
2	~1450
3	~1400
4	~1350
5	~800
6	~700

© 2008 by the American Psychological Association, 0893-3200/08/\$12.00 DOI: 10.1037/a0012726

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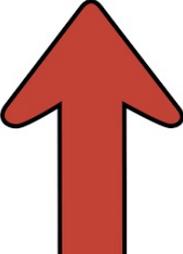


- Early life stress decreases the ability to experience enthusiasm and pleasure.
- Neglected or abused kids are twice as likely to experience depression later in life.
- Why? Neglect and abuse affects the brain's reward processing (reduced activity in the ventral striatum)

Biological Psychiatry, Hanson Et al, 2015

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Jessica Minahan  
The Behavior Code



- When anxiety increases, it impacts short term and working memory.
- Also impacts efficiency.
- We can lose 13-20 IQ points when under stress.
- Some ideas:
  - Provide Cognitive Distractions - instead of down time or nothing to do...because some kids just ruminate even more... give students something cognitive to focus on like Sudoku, mad libs, puzzles, etc

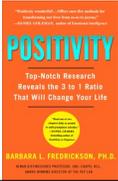
Strategy 21

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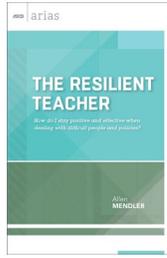


**Positivity Ratio**  
What does it take to “flourish”?

**3:1**  
**Positive**  
**to Negative**



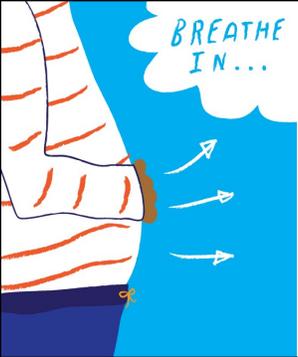
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✓ **Make a list of those things that went right on any given day.**



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**Breathing deeply:**

- Influences the vagus nerve and the parasympathetic system which can result in a sense of calm
- Help students to learn to breathe in order to self regulate
- 2-3 times per day



<https://www.breatheforchange.com/>

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☐ Help students create a “Personal Balance Sheet” that outlines their strengths/assets and their constraints. Categories include physical, mental, behavioral, support systems, networks, interests, and passions. Find out more at [www.dennistrittin.com](http://www.dennistrittin.com)

☐ Create a “Three Good Things” notebook. Use 1-2x/week to record and describe positive things happening in their life.

**2 great resources**




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**Souers and Hall, 2018**  
**5 Fundamental Truths**

1. Trauma is real.
2. Trauma is prevalent. It is more common than we want to admit.
3. Trauma is toxic to the brain.
4. Educators need to be prepared to support students who have experienced trauma, even if we don’t exactly know who they are. (Or what exactly they have experienced).
5. Children are resilient and within positive learning environments they can grow, learn, and succeed.

*Another great resource*

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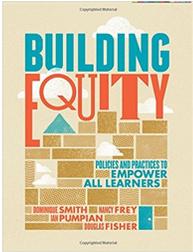
✓ **4 things that have a greater impact on happiness than money**

- Control over what you are doing
- Progress in what you are pursuing
- Connections to other people
- Having a purpose and meaning



**Nobel Laureate**  
**Daniel Kahneman**

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### ASK THE QUESTION DIFFERENTLY

Teachers often ask, *"Given what I know about Andrew, what can I expect him/her to be able to do?"*

That's a fine question, but let's dig deeper.  
A more powerful question might be,

*"Given what Andrew has experienced, what should he expect of his teachers?"*

- Trauma "compromises" performance. It masks ability.
- Andrew should expect his school community to take action because they know the profound effects of trauma and stress.

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### Validate Feelings

Validation is the act of recognizing and affirming the feelings or perspective of another person. It's acknowledging that these thoughts and feelings are true for that person. It's a very simple, astoundingly fast way to make progress in a conversation: It eases tension, builds trust, and gets you and the other person to a solution more quickly.

[www.cultofpedagogy.com](http://www.cultofpedagogy.com)



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### Validate Feelings

*"I get it. You are mad. Everyone gets mad at times. That's normal. Let's try this..."* Platt, 2019

✓ If someone says they are angry, use the word "angry". Don't say, "I see you are frustrated." Why? You want to validate their perspective, regardless if you believe the perspective to be accurate. **Validation and truth are not the same thing.**



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