When faced with the vicissitudes of life, one’s mind remains unshaken, sorrowless, stainless, secure.

This is the greatest welfare.

Sutta Nipata 2.271
Resilient:
Cultivating an Unshakable Core of Calm, Strength, and Happiness

Spirit Rock Meditation Center, May 5, 2019

Rick Hanson, Ph.D.
Wellspring Institute for Neuroscience and Contemplative Wisdom
www.RickHanson.net
The Inner Resources Of Resilient Well-Being
Resilience is the capacity to recover from adversity and pursue your goals despite challenges. It helps you survive the worst day of your life and thrive every day of your life.
To have lasting well-being in a changing world, we’ve got to be resilient.

To be resilient, we’ve got to have inner resources.
Some Inner Resources

Wisdom, Concentration, Virtue
Compassion, Kindness, Love
Emotional Intelligence
Gratitude, Satisfaction, Happiness
Interpersonal Skills
Patience, Determination, Grit
And of course mindfulness, which helps us develop and use our inner resources.
The harder a person’s life, the more challenges one has, the less the outer world is helping – the more important it is to develop inner resources.
Key Resources for Today

Cultivation

Calm

Contentment

Confidence
Cultivating Inner Resources
Join us for **Cultivating Inner Strength - Monastic Daylong [Dana - No Fee Day]**

with Ayya Anandabodhi
and Ayya Santacitta

on

**Sunday, July 8**

from 9:30 am - 5 pm.

(Photo by Ed Ritger)
Think not lightly of good, saying, “It will not come to me.”

Drop by drop is the water pot filled.

Likewise, the wise one, Gathering it little by little, Fills oneself with good.

Dhammapada 9.122
The majority of our inner resources are acquired, through emotional, somatic, social, and motivational learning – which is fundamentally hopeful.
And Which Means Changing the Brain
For the Better
Inner resources are acquired in two stages:

- Encoding
- Activation
- State
- Consolidation
- Installation
- Trait
Neurons that fire together,

wire together.
Mechanisms of Neuroplasticity

- (De)Sensitizing existing synapses
- Building new synapses
- Altered gene expression
- Building and integrating new neurons
- Altered ongoing activity in a region
- Altered connectivity among regions
- Altered neurochemical activity
- Information from hippocampus to cortex
- Modulation by stress hormones, cytokines
- Slow wave and REM sleep
We become more **compassionate** by repeatedly installing experiences of compassion.

We become more **grateful** by repeatedly installing experiences of gratitude.

We become more **mindful** by repeatedly installing experiences of mindfulness.
But – experiencing doesn’t equal learning.

Activation **without installation**
may be pleasant,
but no trait resources are acquired.

What fraction of our beneficial mental states lead to **lasting** changes in neural structure or function?
Four Learning Curves

- Decline
- No growth
Four Learning Curves

- **①** Decline
- **②** No growth
- **③** Linear growth
Four Learning Curves

1. Decline
2. No growth
3. Linear growth
4. Exponential growth; learning how to learn

Mental Resources

Time
What can you do to steepen your growth curve?
Learning is the strength of strengths, since it’s the one we use to grow the rest of them. Knowing how to learn the things that are important to you could be the greatest strength of all.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notice</th>
<th>Create</th>
<th>Create</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Something beneficial</td>
<td>Gratitude, gladness</td>
<td>Compassion, kindness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each of the above:
Have the experience. Enrich it. Absorb it.
HEAL: Turning States into Traits

Activation
1. Have a beneficial experience

Installation
2. Enrich the experience
3. Absorb the experience
4. Link positive and negative material (Optional)
Have a Beneficial Experience
Enrich It
Absorb It
Link Positive & Negative Material
Have It, Enjoy It
Keep a green bough in your heart, and a singing bird will come.

Lao Tzu
Craving and Suffering
Four Ennobling Truths

There is suffering.

As craving increases, so does suffering.

As craving decreases, so does suffering.

There is an eight-part path that embodies and leads to the ending of craving.
If craving causes suffering, what causes craving?
Craving is embodied.

It arises in relationship to an animal’s needs – including a complicated animal like us.

So, what do we need?
Our Three Fundamental Needs

Safety

Satisfaction

Connection
Meeting Our Three Fundamental Needs

Safety
Avoiding harms
(threat response)

Satisfaction
Approaching rewards
(goal pursuit)

Connection
Attaching to others
(social engagement)
The Evolving Brain

Cortex
("primate/human")

Subcortex
("mammalian")

Brainstem
("reptilian")

Cerebellum
When Needs **Don’t** Feel Sufficiently Met

When we feel **unsafe** – disturbed by **threat** – the Avoiding system goes Reactive, with a sense of **fear**.

When we feel **dissatisfied** – disturbed by **loss** – the Approaching system goes Reactive, with a sense of **frustration**.

When we feel **disconnected** – disturbed by **rejection** – the Attaching system goes Reactive, with a sense of **heartache**.
When Needs **Do** Feel Sufficiently Met

- **Safe** enough – the Avoiding system goes Responsive, with a sense of **peace**.
- **Satisfied** enough – the Approaching system goes Responsive, with a sense of **contentment**.
- **Connected** enough – the Attaching system goes Responsive, with a sense of **love**.
People commonly experience an underlying sense of deficit and disturbance that produces the “craving” – broadly defined – which causes suffering and harm.

**Internalizing** experiences of needs met builds up a sense of fullness and balance – so we can meet the next moment and its challenges feeling already strong, happy, compassionate, and at peace.
Self-Compassion

• Bring to mind beings who care about you . . . Focus on feeling cared about. . . Use HEAL to take in this experience.

• Bring to mind beings for whom you have compassion . . . Receive the sense of compassion into yourself . . . Know what compassion feels like.

• Be aware of your own burdens, stresses, and suffering – and bring compassion to yourself . . . Get a sense of caring, warmth, support, compassion sinking deeply into you.
Growing Key Resources
## Matching Resources to Needs

### Safety
- See actual threats
- See resources
- Grit, fortitude
- Feel protected
- Alright right now
- Relaxation
- Calm

### Satisfaction
- Gratitude
- Gladness
- Feel successful
- Healthy pleasures
- Impulse control
- Aspiration
- Enthusiasm

### Connection
- Empathy
- Compassion
- Kindness
- Wide circle of “us”
- Assertiveness
- Self-worth
- Confidence

### Peace

### Contentment

### Love
Pet the Lizard
Feed the Mouse
Hug the Monkey
Resources for Safety
Calming the Visceral Core

• A brief explanation of heartrate variability

• Relax.

• Gently lengthen exhalations . . . As long as or longer than inhalations . . . Then letting breathing be soft and natural.

• Bring attention into the chest and area of the heart.

• Be aware of heartfelt feelings . . . Perhaps love flowing in and flowing out in rhythm with the breath.
Feeling Alright Right Now

- Aware of the body going on being . . . Enough air to breathe . . . The heart beating fine . . . Basically alright . . . Now

- You may not have been basically alright in the past and you may not be basically alright in the future . . . But now you are OK . . . Still basically OK . . . Now

- Letting go of unnecessary anxiety, guarding, bracing

- Reassurance, relief, calming is sinking into you . . . Still basically alright . . . Now
Resources for Satisfaction
Gratitude and Gladness

• Bring to mind some of the things you have received and are thankful for . . . Good fortune, the kindness of others, the gift of life . . . The universe itself . . . Letting gratitude sink into you and spread inside you.

• Bring to mind some of the things you are glad about . . . Happy times with friends, challenges put behind you, recent successes, good things happening for others . . . Letting gladness sink into you and spread inside you.
Enoughness Already

• Focus on the sense of having received so much already . . .

• Get a sense of the fullness in the present moment . . . So much texture, so many sensations, sights, thoughts, feelings . . . Almost overwhelming, why seek anything more . . .

• Find a contentment in the moment as it is, moment after moment . . . Not wishing it to be different than it is . . . Drivenness and grasping and discontent falling away . . . Already satisfied.
Resources for Connection
Feeling of Worth

• It is natural and important to feel that you have worth as a person – which does not mean arrogance or ego.

You develop this sense of worth through:

– Others including, appreciating, liking, and loving you
– You respecting yourself

Take in experiences of being:

– Capable, skillful, talented, helpful
– Included, wanted, sought out
– Appreciated, acknowledged, respected
– Liked, befriended, supported
– Loved, cherished, special
A Confident Heart

• Feeling caring . . . And cared about.

• Stepping back and seeing yourself objectively . . . Recognizing your capabilities . . . Your good intentions . . . What you have been through and dealt with and overcome.

• Finding the respect for yourself that you would have for a person just like you . . . Letting go of needing to prove yourself or impress anyone . . . Recognizing your decency and efforts . . . Your good heart . . .
Fullness and Balance
As they grow an unshakable core of peace, contentment, and love, people become less vulnerable to the classic manipulations of fear and anger, greed and possessiveness, and “us” against “them” conflicts. Which has big implications for our world.
Coming Home

Peace

Contentment

Love
References
Suggested Books

See RickHanson.net for other good books.

Selected References - 1

See www.RickHanson.net/key-papers/ for other suggested readings.


Suggested References - 2


Suggested References - 5


