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
Hardwiring Happiness:
Turning Passing Experiences into Lasting Inner Strength and Peace

3rd Annual Congress:
Spaces of Thought and Action in Psychology
May 29, 2015

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WiseBrain.org    RickHanson.net
Foundations
Resources in Your Mind

- Understandings
- Capabilities
- Positive emotions
- Attitudes
- Motivations
- Virtues
INNER STRENGTHS ARE BUILT FROM BRAIN STRUCTURE
How do you get these inner strengths into your brain?
Learning – changing neural structure and function – has two stages:

From **short-term** memory buffers to **long-term** storage

From **state** to **trait**

From **activation** to **installation**.
Neurons that fire together, wire together.
You become more compassionate by installing experiences of compassion.

You become more grateful by installing experiences of gratitude.

You become more mindful by installing experiences of mindfulness.
Unfortunately, we’re good at activation but bad at installation.
Meanwhile, painful, harmful experiences are being rapidly converted into neural structure.
Velcro for Bad, Teflon for Good

The negativity bias
We can use the mind

To change the brain

To change the mind for the better

To benefit ourselves and other beings.
Taking in the Good
Learning to Take in the Good
Let’s Try It

- **Notice** something beneficial already present in awareness.
  - Have the experience.
  - Enrich it.
  - Absorb it.

- **Create** the experience of compassion.
  - Have the experience.
  - Enrich it.
  - Absorb it.
Have a Good Experience
Elements of Experience

- **Thought** – belief; perspective; expectation; image; memory; idea

- **Perception** – sensation (e.g., relaxation, vitality); sight; sound; taste; smell

- **Emotion** – feeling; mood

- **Desire** – want; wish; hope; value; drive; motivation; purpose; dream; passion; determination

- **Action** – behavior; posture; knowing how to
The Two Ways To Have a Beneficial Experience

Notice one you are already having.
- In the foreground of awareness
- In the background

Create one.
How to Create A Beneficial Experience

Look for good facts in:

1. Immediate situation
2. Current or recent events
3. Stable conditions
4. Your character
5. The past
6. The future
7. Bad situations
8. The lives of others
9. Your imagination
10. Care about others
11. Directly evoke a beneficial experience
12. Produce good facts
13. Share about good facts with others
Turning a Good Fact Into a Good Experience

- Bring awareness to your body.
- Soften and open yourself.
- Be a little active in your mind, recognizing aspects of the good fact that naturally elicit an experience.
- Imagine how another person might naturally feel in response to the good fact.
- Have kindness for yourself, encouraging yourself to have a beneficial experience.
How to Enrich an Experience

- Duration
- Intensity
- Multimodality
- Novelty
- Salience
Absorb It
How to Absorb an Experience

- **Enriching** makes the experience more powerful. **Absorbing** makes memory systems more receptive by priming and sensitizing them.

- Intend and sense the experience is sinking into you.
  - Imagery – Water into a sponge; golden dust sifting down; a jewel into the treasure chest of the heart
  - Sensation – Warm soothing balm

- Giving over to the experience; letting it change you

- Letting go of resisting, grasping, clinging: “craving”
Link Positive and Negative Material
Conditions for the Link Step

- Divided awareness; holding two things at once

- Not hijacked by negative; if so, drop negative

- Positive material is more prominent in awareness.
Degree of Engagement with Negative

- The idea of the negative material
- A felt sense of the negative material
- The positive material goes into the negative material (e.g., soothing balm, filling up hollow places, connecting with younger layers).

→ Throughout, the positive material remains more prominent in awareness.
The Tip of the Root

For the fourth step of TIG, try to get at the youngest, most vulnerable layer of painful material.

The “tip of the root” is commonly in childhood. In general, the brain is most responsive to negative experiences in early childhood.

Prerequisites
- Understanding the need to get at younger layers
- Compassion and support for the inner child
- Capacity to “presence” young material without flooding
HEAL Yourself

H ave a positive experience.

E nrich it.

A bsorb it.

L ink positive and negative material.
Have It, Enjoy It
It’s Good to Take in the Good

- Development of specific inner strengths
- Implicit benefits
- Sensitizes brain to the positive
- Creates positive cycles
Keep a green bough in your heart, and a singing bird will come.

Lao Tsu
Pick a partner and choose an A and a B (A’s go first). Then you’ll take turns, with one partner mainly speaking while the other person listens, exploring this question:

What are some of the good facts in your life these days?

→ As the listener, find a genuine happiness at these good things in the life of your partner.
Using Positive Neuroplasticity
With Others
The Four Ways to Offer a Method

- Doing it implicitly
- Teaching it and then leaving it up to the person
- Doing it explicitly with the person
- Asking the person to do it on his or her own
Using HEAL in Trainings

- Take five minutes to explain its rationale and teach it explicitly.

- In the flow, occasionally encourage enriching and absorbing, using natural language.

- Tell people they can use HEAL outside of class to deepen internalization of what they’re learning.

- Don’t use HEAL when it’s inappropriate (e.g., radically choiceless awareness, highly self-critical about any kind of performance).
Key Resource Experiences
Needs Met by Three Systems

Safety – Avoiding harms

Satisfaction – Approaching rewards

Connection – Attaching to others
Some Types of Resource Experiences

Avoiding Harms
- Feeling basically alright right now
- Feeling protected, strong, safe, at peace
- The sense that awareness itself is untroubled

Approaching Rewards
- Feeling basically full, the enoughness in this moment as it is
- Feeling pleasured, glad, grateful, satisfied
- Therapeutic, spiritual, or existential realizations

Attaching to Others
- Feeling basically connected
- Feeling included, seen, liked, appreciated, loved
- Feeling compassionate, kind, generous, loving
Self-Compassion

- Compassion is the wish beings not suffer, with warm-hearted concern. Compassion is sincere even if we can’t make things better.

- Self-compassion simply applies this to oneself.

- To encourage self-compassion:
  - Get the sense of being cared about.
  - Bring to mind beings you care about. Find compassion for them.
  - Shift the compassion to yourself.
“Anthem”

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That’s how the light gets in
That’s how the light gets in

Leonard Cohen
RESOURCES FOR AVOIDING HARMs

Challenge
Weakness
Helplessness
Freezing, immobilization
Inflated threats
Alarm
Tension
Worry, fear
Irritation, anger

Resource
Strength
Agency
Action, venting
Accurate appraisal
Protection, calming
Relaxation
Feeling alright now, making a plan
Big picture, peace
## RESOURCES FOR APPROACHING REWARDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Resource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What I don’t have</td>
<td>What I do have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarcity</td>
<td>Enoughness, fullness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disappointed, sad</td>
<td>Gratitude, gladness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration, failure</td>
<td>Accomplishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bored, numb</td>
<td>Pleasure, excitement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grief</td>
<td>Loved and loving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving up</td>
<td>Aspire, lived by good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drivenness</td>
<td>Already satisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# RESOURCES FOR ATTACHING TO OTHERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Resource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Left out, excluded</td>
<td>Belonging, wanted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequacy, shame</td>
<td>Appreciated, respected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignored, unseen</td>
<td>Receiving empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lonely</td>
<td>Friendship, caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to others <strong>and oneself</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resentment</td>
<td>Recognize it hurts <strong>you</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envy, jealousy</td>
<td>Self-compassion, take</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>action, good will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling stifled</td>
<td>Skillful assertiveness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Peace

Contentment

Love
Suggested Books

See www.RickHanson.net for other great books.

Key Papers - 1

See www.RickHanson.net for other scientific papers.


Key Papers - 2


- Hanson, R. 2008. Seven facts about the brain that incline the mind to joy. In *Measuring the immeasurable: The scientific case for spirituality*. Sounds True.
Key Papers - 3


Key Papers - 4


Where to Find Rick Hanson Online

**Hardwiring Happiness: The New Brain Science of Contentment, Calm, and Confidence**

www.rickhanson.net/hardwiringhappiness

Personal website: www.rickhanson.net

Wellspring Institute: www.wisebrain.org

youtube.com/drrhanson  facebook.com/rickhansonphd
Stärken Sie Ihr Selbstvertrauen und finden Sie inneren Frieden.


In Selbstgesteuerte Neuroplastizität stellt uns der bekannte Neuropsychologe Rick Hanson die praktischen Übungen und Meditationen vor, die es uns ermöglichen, das Glückspotential unseres Gehirns voll und ganz zu entfalten.