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
Resilient Well-Being:
Growing an Unshakable Core
Of Inner Strength, Love, and Peace

Heart-Mind 2018

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Resilience and 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.

Resilience is necessary for lasting well-being in a changing world.
Remarkably, internalizing experiences of well-being promotes resilience.

Resilience and well-being feed each other in a wonderful upward spiral.
Mental Resources Are What Make Us Resilient
Shaping the Course of a Life

Challenges

Vulnerabilities

Resources
Location of Resources

World

Body

Mind
Some Mental Resources

- Sense of Meaning, Purpose
- Strong Relationships
- Clear Understanding
- Well-Being
- Social and Emotional Skills
- Resilience
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.
The majority of our mental resources are acquired, through emotional, somatic, social, and motivational learning.
Which Means Changing the Brain For the Better
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
Meditation experience is associated with increased cortical thickness.

How to Develop Mental Resources
Neurons that fire together, wire together.
Mental resources are acquired in two stages:

- Encoding ➔ Consolidation
- Activation ➔ Installation
- State ➔ Trait
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.
Experiencing doesn’t equal learning.

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

What fraction of your beneficial experiences ever become neural structure?
The Negativity Bias
Velcro for Bad, Teflon for Good

The negativity bias
The Negativity Bias

As the nervous system evolved, avoiding “sticks” was usually more consequential than getting “carrots.”

1. So we scan for bad news,
2. Over-focus on it,
3. Over-react to it,
4. Turn it quickly into (implicit) memory,
5. Sensitize the brain to the negative, and
6. Create vicious cycles with others.
The Negativity Bias
How to Grow That Unshakable Core
Turning States into Traits: HEAL

Activation

1. **Have** a beneficial experience

Installation

2. **Enrich** the experience
3. **Absorb** the experience
4. **Link** positive and negative material (Optional)
Have It, Enjoy It
Keep a green bough in your heart, and a singing bird will come.

Lao Tzu
Growing Key Strengths
Meeting Our Three Fundamental Needs

- **safety**
  - Avoiding harms
- **satisfaction**
  - Approaching rewards
- **connection**
  - Attaching to others
People commonly experience an underlying sense of deficit and disturbance that creates the “craving” – broadly defined – which causes suffering and harm.

**Internalizing** experiences of needs met builds up a sense of fullness and balance – so we meet the next moment and its challenges feeling already strong, happy, compassionate, and at peace.
Pet the Lizard
Feed the Mouse
Hug the Monkey
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
Thank You
New Book from Rick Hanson, Ph.D.

Grow an Unshakable Core of Resilient Well-Being

Learn how to develop key inner strengths to stay calm, confident, and happy no matter what life throws at you.

ORDER YOUR COPY NOW AT RESILIENTHAPPINESS.NET
References
See RickHanson.net for other good books.

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


• Dudai, Y. (2004). The neurobiology of consolidations, or, how stable is the engram?. Annu. Rev. Psychol., 55, 51-86.


Suggested References - 3


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Supplemental Materials
Four Ways to Use HEAL with Others

• Doing it implicitly
• Teaching it and leaving it up to people
• Doing it explicitly with people
• Asking people to do it on their own
HEAL in Classes and Trainings

- Take a few minutes to explain it and teach it.
- In the flow, encourage Enriching and Absorbing, using natural language.
- Encourage people to use HEAL on their own.
- Do HEAL on regular occasions (e.g., at end of a therapy session, at end of mindfulness practice)
Implicit HEAL in Therapy

- Creating space for beneficial experiences
- Drawing attention to beneficial facts
- Encouraging positive experience of beneficial fact
- Drawing attention to key aspects of an experience
- Slowing the client down; not moving on
- Modeling taking in the good oneself
Explicit HEAL in Therapy

• Teach the method
  – Background helps about brain, negativity bias.
  – Emphasize facts and mild beneficial experiences.
  – Surface blocks and work through them.
  – Explain the idea of “risking the dreaded experience,” noticing the (usually) good results, and taking them in.
Explicit HEAL in Therapy

• Do HEAL with client(s) during a session
  – Reinforcing key resource states and traits
  – Linking rewards to desired thoughts or actions
  – When learning from therapy has worked well
  – When realistic views of self and world come true
  – Good qualities in client
  – New insights
Explicit HEAL in Therapy

- Encourage HEAL between sessions
  - Naming occasions
  - Identifying key beneficial facts and experiences
HEAL and Trauma

• **General considerations:**
  – People vary in their resources and their traumas.
  – Often the major action is with “failed protectors.”
  – Respect “yellow lights” and the client’s pace.

• The first three steps of HEAL are generally safe. Use them to build resources for tackling the trauma directly.

• Use the Link step to address peripheral features and themes of the trauma.

• With care, use Link to get at the heart of the trauma.
In Couples, Benefits of HEAL

• “Installs” key resources that support interactions (e.g., self-soothing, recognition of good intentions)
• Dampens vicious cycles
• Helps partner feel seen, credited for efforts
• Increases the sense of the good that is present
• Reduces clinginess, pursuing, or reproach that the other person withdraws from
Using HEAL with a Couple

• **Basic steps (often informal):**
  – Attention to a good fact
  – Evoking and sustaining a good experience
  – Managing blocks
  – Awareness of the impact on one’s partner
  – Debriefing, often from both partners

• **Pitfalls to avoid:**
  – Seeming to side with one person
  – Unwittingly helping a person overlook real issues
  – Letting the other partner pile on
Uses for Children

- Registering curricular skills and other resources
- Motivation for learning; associating rewards
- Seeing the good in the world, others, and oneself – and in the past, present, and future
- Seeing life as opportunity
- Feeling like an active learner
- Developing child-specific inner strengths
Adaptations for Children

• Kids gain from HEAL – particularly mistreated, anxious, spirited/ADHD, or LD children

• Style:
  – Be matter of fact: this is mental/neural literacy
  – A little brain talk goes a long way
  – Be motivating: name benefits; “be the boss of your own mind”
  – Down to earth, naturalistic
  – Scaffold based on executive functions, motivation, and need for autonomy
  – Be brief, concrete
Occasions for HEAL with Kids

• Explicit training in positive neuroplasticity
• Natural rhythms in the day (e.g., start of class, after a lesson or recess, end of day)
• When working with an individual child
• When dealing with classroom issues