



RETHINKING STRESS:



Transforming the Stress of Daily Hassles, Adversity, and Job Burnout into Health and High Performance

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Stressed?

Daily Hassles
Demands
Deadlines
Disappointments
Conflicts
Irritations






▶ Social psychology researchers estimate:

30 stress events per day

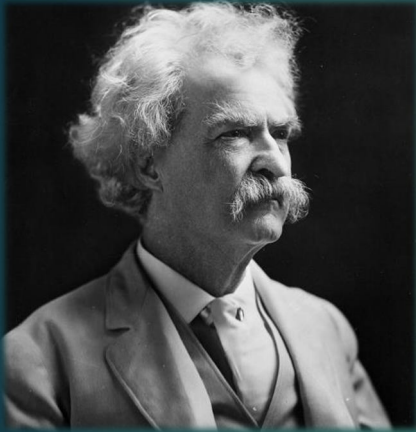
▶ Stress-response habits predict:

Mood, health, relationships, productivity

What is your current relationship with stress ?




Identify one of the more stressful things you are facing. In what ways have you responded to it?



"I'm an old man now,
and I have known a great many problems
in my life...

...most of which never happened."

— Mark Twain



What is Stress?

Stressors – anything that may knock us out of balance

Stress-responses – what our body and mind does to try to establish balance

Stress levels – daily hassles to life-altering tragedy

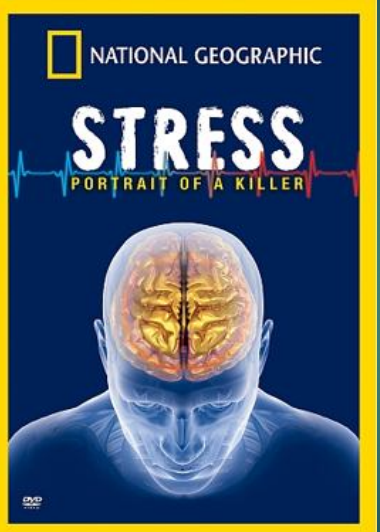
Physiology

Effects of Chronic Stress

- ▶ Increased pain, inflammation
- ▶ Immune system compromise
- ▶ Insomnia
- ▶ Slowed tissue, cell recovery
- ▶ Cardiovascular disease
- ▶ Metabolic syndrome
- ▶ Chronic fatigue
- ▶ Anxiety, depression
- ▶ Stress-related disease

60-80% of doctor visits have stress component!






Stress is Toxic!!

Fight/Flight/Freeze


Autonomic Nervous System

Sympathetic
(ON switch)



Fight-Flight-Freeze

Parasympathetic
(OFF switch)



Recovery

▶ Adrenalin, Cortisol	▶ DHEA, Oxytocin, BDNF
▶ Activating hormones	▶ Recovery hormones
▶ Increased HR, BP, RR	▶ Normalizes HR, BP, RR
▶ Threat response	▶ Goal focused
▶ Heightened environ. focus	▶ PFC engaged thinking
▶ Stops unneeded functions	▶ Immune response ↑
▶ Quick, reactive behavior	▶ Neuroplasticity

What about Good Stress?




Bungee jumping stimulates the fight-or-flight stress response, along with feel good chemicals!


Human Resilience

"A person's ability to:

- ▶ Absorb high levels of disruptive change and adversity,
- ▶ Bounce back, and even excel
- ▶ In times of change and uncertainty,
- ▶ Without acting in dysfunctional ways."

Resilience Quiz:
What skill would you like to work on?






**"It's not what happens to you that matters
...but what you do with it"** —Dr. Hans Selye

Poor Coping: Stress Avoidance

- ▶ Stress generation cycle
- ▶ Avoidance is costly!
 - ▶ Depression
 - ▶ Conflicts
 - ▶ Poor outcomes (job burnout, poor performance)
 - ▶ Decreased health and longevity



There are 2 Basic Responses to Stress...

- 1. Those who **avoid** stress and stay stuck!
- 2. Those who learn to embrace stress... learn from it... and **use it as fuel** to thrive during hard times.



How do I tend to avoid stress?

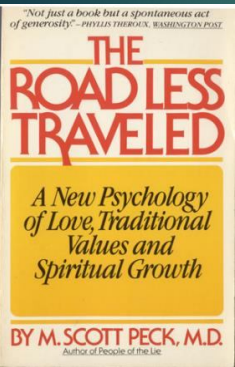
Everyone can build resilience!

Everyone Faces Adversity...

Change
Trauma
Loss
Pain



Our **mindset** toward adversity is the critical factor to resilience and thriving



"Life is difficult...."

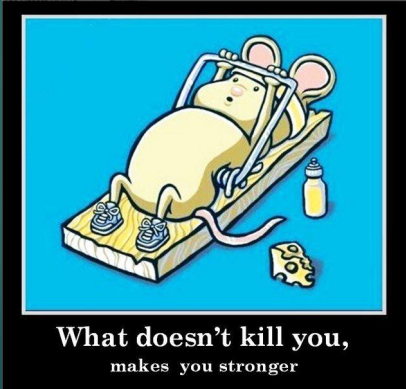
*Once we truly know that life is difficult-
once we truly understand and accept it-
then life is no longer difficult..."*

— M. Scott Peck

Stress Inoculation Research

Hardiness = **"The courage to grow from stress"**

Salvador Maddi Bell Telephone de-regulation – 1980's



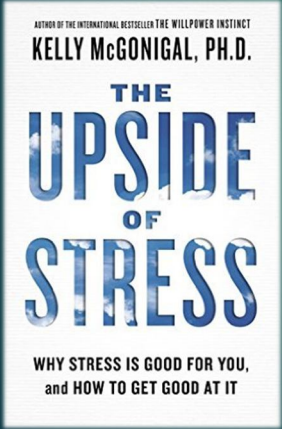
Stress Redefined...

"Stress is what arises when something we care about is at stake"

-Kelly McGonigal, PhD

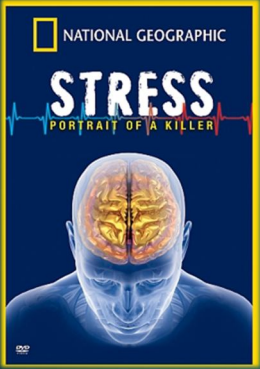
Think about a recent stress. What did you care about that was at stake?

Scientific Shift: Is There a Positive Side to Stress?



Mindset: Embrace or Avoid Stress

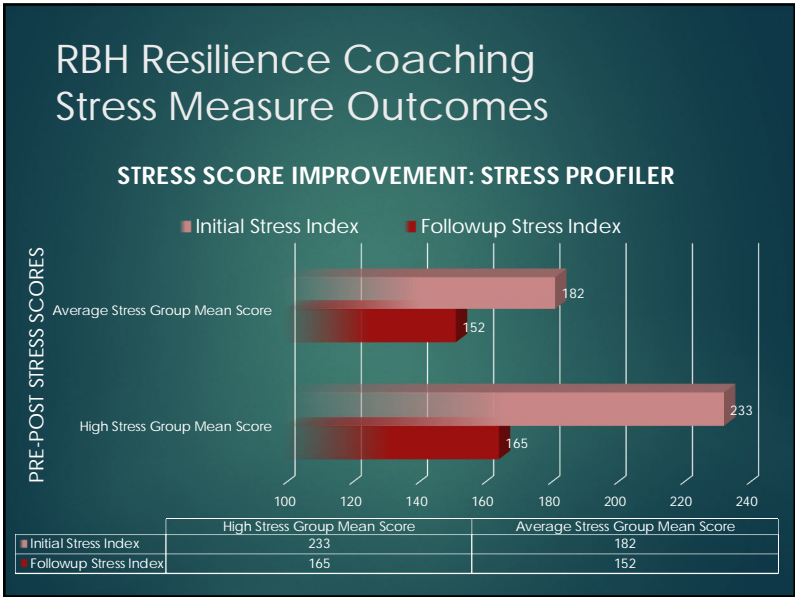
- Growth index: ratio of DHEA to cortisol
- ▶ DHEA – “neurosteroid” counters cortisol
 - ▶ Dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA)
 - ▶ DHEA helps brain grow stronger from stressful experiences
 - ▶ High cortisol ratio – explanation for poor health stress research results
 - ▶ Heart disease, neurodegeneration, immune system impairment
 - ▶ Increased DHEA ratio to cortisol
 - ▶ Enhances focus, performance, problem solving and productivity
 - ▶ Improves long term health outcomes – reduces depression, anxiety
 - ▶ Multiple studies, e.g. GPAs, GREs, academic persistence, military training, job interviews, grades, PTSD



Yes, stress can be toxic...
But, stress can also:
Be **Fuel** !

Motivation
Energy

- ▶ Improve performance
- ▶ Learn from adversity
- ▶ Keep me connected
- ▶ Help avoid danger
- ▶ Protect self or others
- ▶ Focus on goals
- ▶ Live a meaningful life



Stress Response Mindsets:
Alternatives to Fight/Flight/Freeze



Fight/Flight = Threat

Or, use stress as signal to:

1. Rise to challenge
2. Connect
3. Learn/Grow



Mindset Shifting
“Arousal
Re-Appraisal”

Fight/Flight:

- ▶ Threat response
- ▶ Anger, fear, anxiety
- ▶ Adrenalin, cortisol
- ▶ Important for life threatening events
- ▶ Sensitize to future threats

Challenge Response:

- ▶ Opportunity response
- ▶ Interest, excitement, adventure, goal
- ▶ DHEA, oxytocin, dopamine
- ▶ Physiological arousal is purposeful
- ▶ Focused on efficacy

How the Stress Response Helps **Rise to the Challenge:** McGonigal (2015)

1. Focuses your attention
2. Heightens your senses
3. Increases motivation
4. Mobilizes energy



Think about a time you have turned stress
into a challenge....

Protect & Connect



How the Stress Response **Helps Connect with Others** McGonigal (2015)

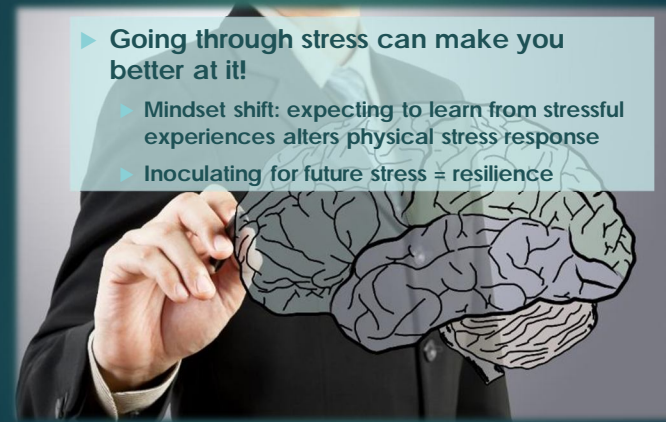
- ▶ Encourages social connection
- ▶ Enhances social cognition
- ▶ Dampens fear and increases courage



Think about times your stress has moved you to connect....

Stress Recovery: Stuck or Learning Resilience ?

- ▶ Going through stress can make you better at it!
- ▶ Mindset shift: expecting to learn from stressful experiences alters physical stress response
- ▶ Inoculating for future stress = resilience

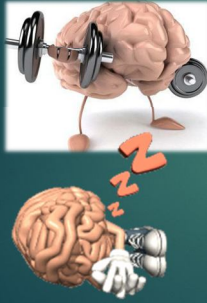


Neuro-steroids activated

Enhances performance and productivity

Improves health outcomes – reduces depression, anxiety, illness

Recovers negative effects of stress hormones on brain and heart



How could your stress help you learn, grow, and live meaningfully?

A meaningful life
... is a stressful life

Living daily by
ones values
and purpose



3 Steps to a 'Stress-is-Enhancing' Mindset:

Step 1:

- Acknowledge Stress

Step 2:

- Welcome Stress

Step 3:

- Utilize Stress



What is My Stress Language Under Pressure?

"I'm overwhelmed"

"It's too much"

"I can't stand it"

"I've been through this before"

“It will get better”

"I'll find a way

What is My Negative Stress Language Under Pressure?

Think about examples of statements that go through your mind when you're stressed.

Examples:

- "This is too much";
- "I'm stressed out";
- "Why do I always do this?";
- "I'm overwhelmed";
- "I'm such a #@%!).

What thoughts or expressions are your stress language?

Performing Under Pressure Mindset Just Calm Down??... or "I can do this"

- "Stress as Enhancing" mindset studies:
1. Social stress test
 - ▶ Improved performance
 - ▶ Even those with social anxiety disorder!
 2. Job burnout
 - ▶ Mid-career teachers, doctors
 - ▶ Attitude toward stress on job – protects from burnout



Mindset – Daily Hassles are Driving Me Crazy!

- ▶ VA Normative Aging Study 1989 – 2005
- ▶ Men reporting most daily hassles
 - ▶ 3 times more likely to have died by 2010 than those who reported the fewest hassles
- ▶ Difference between groups – attitude toward stress
- ▶ Those who died reported being bothered much more by their daily stress!



Helping Others Protects Against New Stress-Related Disease

Volunteering "vaccinates" for stress-related disease


Non-Volunteers: Major stressful life events increase rate of new serious health diagnoses

Volunteers: Stressful life events had no effect on new stress-related health diagnoses



U Buffalo 2013 3-year Study, 1000 adults

Daily Mindset Shift:
Change the Channel !!



Know you have the capacity to change the current mindset channel

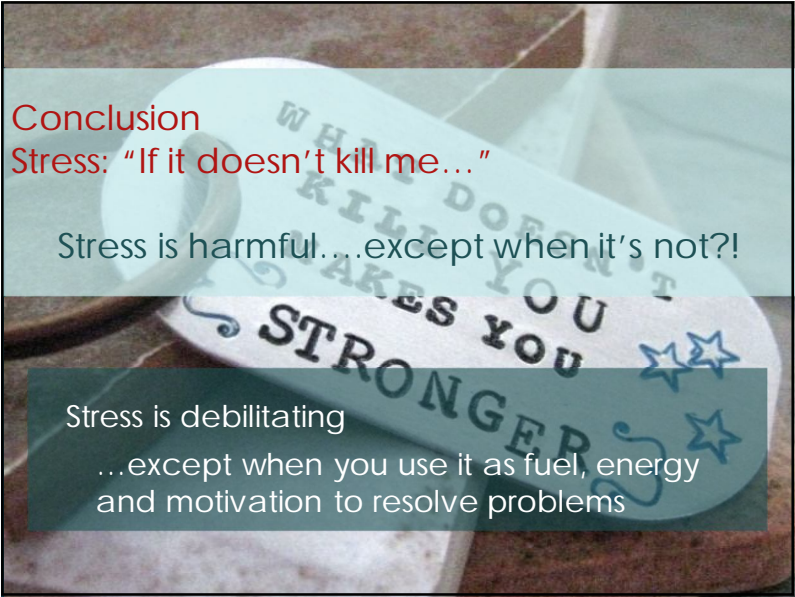
Choose to face today's problems as challenges

Use stress as fuel to act

Conclusion
Stress: "If it doesn't kill me..."

Stress is harmful...except when it's not?!

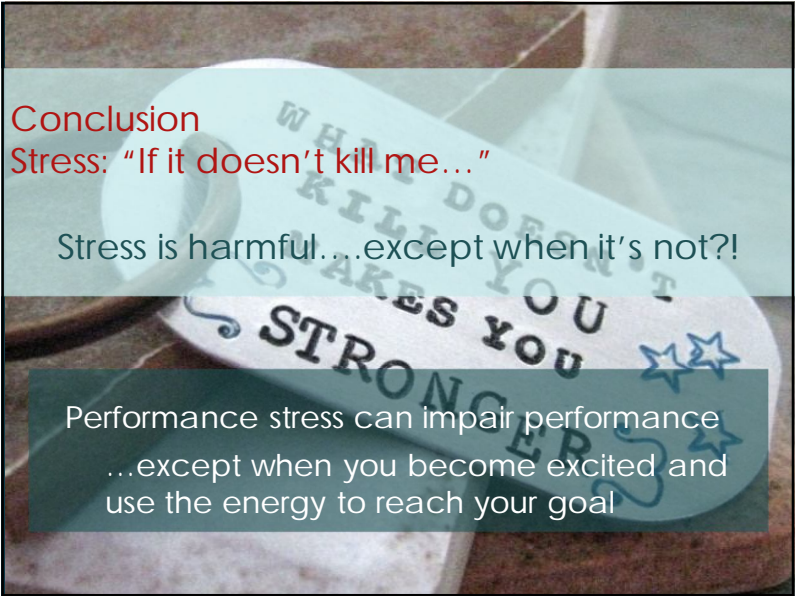
Stress is debilitating
...except when you use it as fuel, energy and motivation to resolve problems



Conclusion
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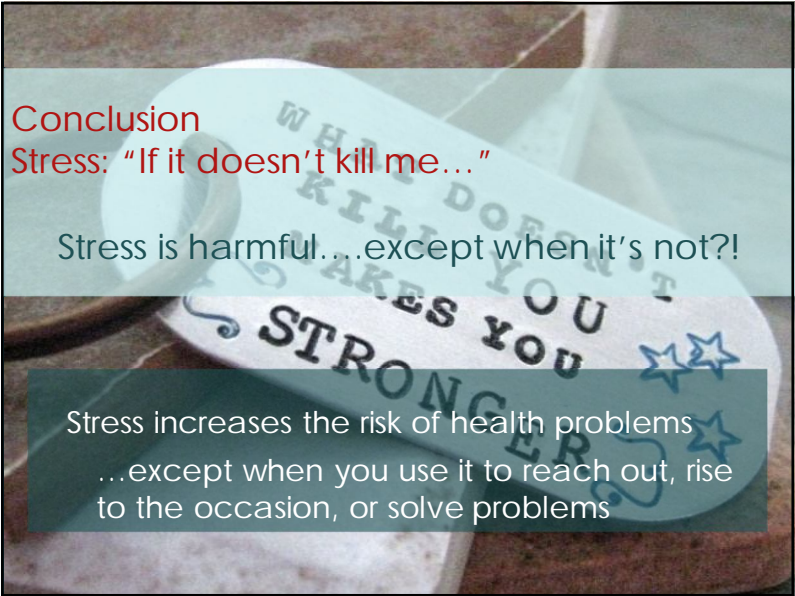
Performance stress can impair performance
...except when you become excited and use the energy to reach your goal

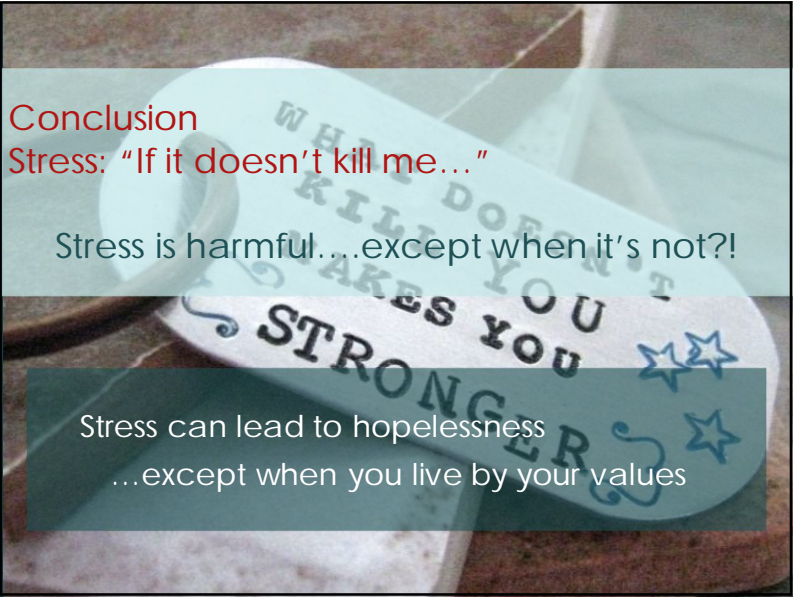


Conclusion
Stress: "If it doesn't kill me..."

Stress is harmful...except when it's not?!

Stress increases the risk of health problems
...except when you use it to reach out, rise to the occasion, or solve problems

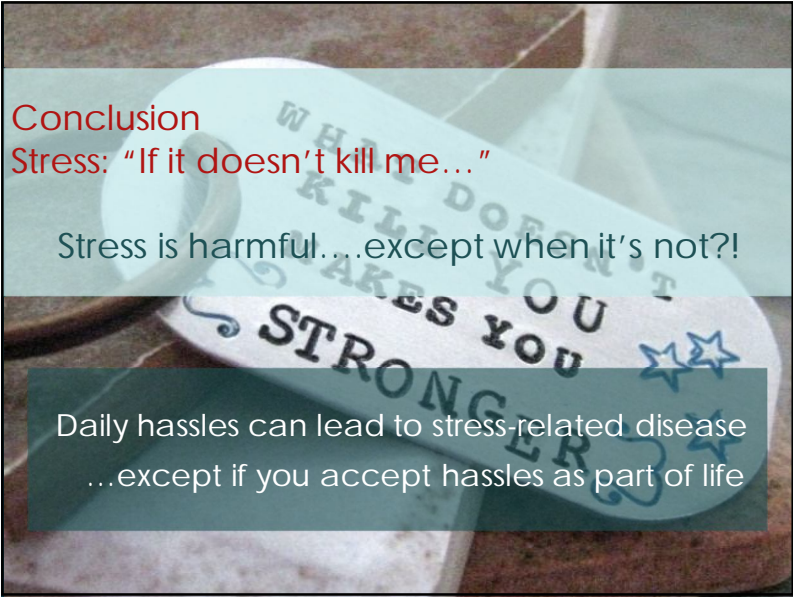




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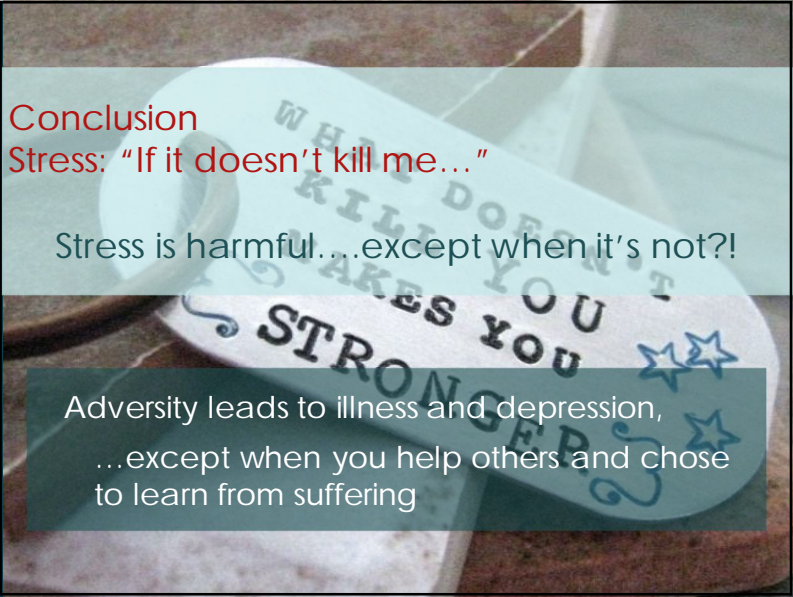
Stress can lead to hopelessness
...except when you live by your values



Conclusion
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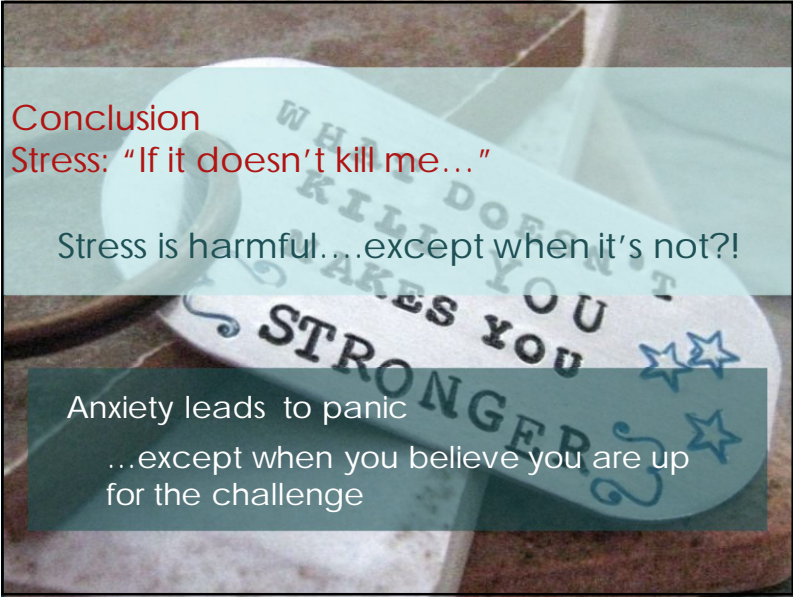
Daily hassles can lead to stress-related disease
...except if you accept hassles as part of life



Conclusion
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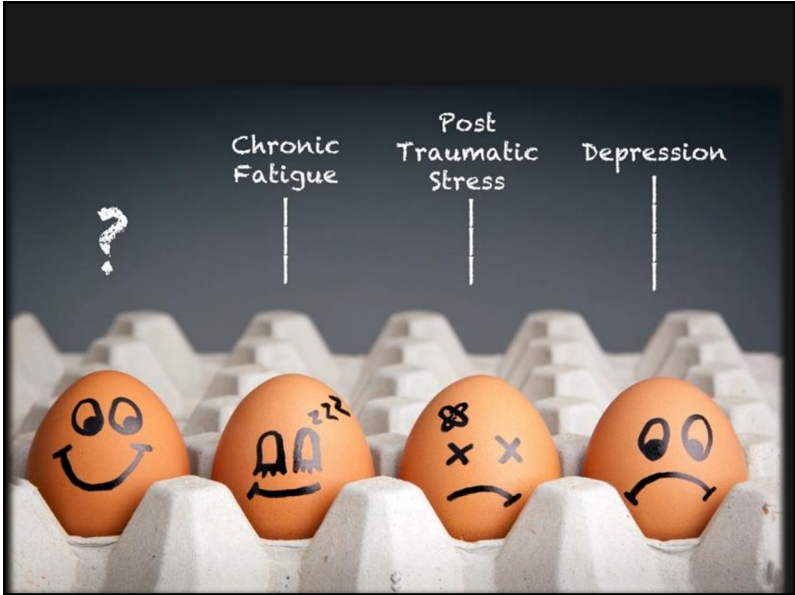
Adversity leads to illness and depression,
...except when you help others and chose
to learn from suffering




Conclusion
Stress: "If it doesn't kill me..."

Stress is harmful...except when it's not?!

Anxiety leads to panic
...except when you believe you are up
for the challenge



Personal
Action Plan...



How will I
handle my
daily 30+ ?

Re-Think Stress

3 Steps to a
'Stress-is-Enhancing' Mindset:

Step 1:

• Acknowledge Stress

Step 2:

• Welcome Stress

Step 3:

• Utilize Stress

TIME TO RETHINK STRESS:

Are you ready to....

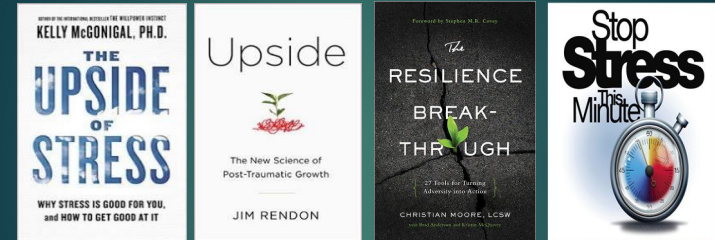
- ▶ Try shifting your Mindset when Stressed?
- ▶ See stress as an opportunity to rise to a challenge, connect, and learn!?

Integrated Behavioral Health

 **living smart**
resilience coaching



For Further Reading



1. The Upside of Stress: Why Stress is Good for You and How to Get Good at It by Kelly McGonigal, Avery, NY, 2015.
2. Upside: The New Science of Post-Traumatic Growth by Jim Rendon, Touchstone, NY, 2015.
3. The Resilience Breakthrough: 27 Tools for Turning Adversity Into Action by Christian Moore, Brad Anderson, and Kristin McQuivey, GreenLeaf, Austin 2014.
4. Stop Stress This Minute by James Porter, WELCOA, Omaha, NE, 2012.