

PIERRE ZIMMERMAN ARTICLES – ARCHIVE 2015 through 2022:

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: How Do I Develop Resilience? 12/1/22

Resilience is the ability to face life's challenges, small or seemingly overwhelming, surprising or habitual. With it we can experience what we might label victories, and when we lack resilience, we might end up having setbacks. Some people recover quickly from adversity; others become crippled by it.

The capacities to bounce back, integrate our experiences and then move on are innate and possible, yet difficult. To be resilient requires qualities like awareness, reflection, flexibility, stability, and adaptability. We can use the five universal elements to illustrate these important themes:

- The earth element of stability and firmness
- The water element of fluidity
- The fire element of adjustable temperatures
- The air element of mobility
- The space element of boundlessness

Impermanence is real and not just a thought. Everything is changing in our internal and external life constantly. Once we come to terms with it, our responses to change give us numerous probabilities of what can occur and unlimited opportunities to respond. We need to face whatever creates suffering and discomfort; this is called coping. Thoughts and feelings cannot destroy us. We need to pause and stay calm, letting what needs to emerge surface, which in turn will bring clarity as to the beneficial choices we can make.

PZ/12/1/22

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: Magic Moments - 11/01/22

Inner conflicts are usually linked to rumination about the past and anxious anticipation of the future, therefore being tormented by hope and fear. Magic moments happen when we are not hiding in the bubble of self-centeredness to protect ourselves. One purpose of meditation is to break this bubble and let mental constructs vanish in the open space of freedom.

When we look at a full moon on a fall night, experience a moment of grace or magic with friends by the seaside, or meditate together, the burden of inner conflict is lifted. What we experience is a sense of calm and an enhanced sense of interdependence, rather than fragmenting reality into solid, autonomous entities. We discover a respite from mental toxins.

What we practice grows and new qualities such as wisdom and inner freedom develop. Meditation leads not just to a few moments of grace, but to lasting stages of well-being that we may call genuine happiness. They are very satisfying states, because the feelings of insecurity gradually give way to deep confidence, and we have the ability to use our skills to deal with the ups and downs of life, intense emotions, and unexpected situations in a much more optimal way.

Equanimity, which is not indifference, will spare us being swayed back and forth like high waves of the ocean by strong winds of blame and praise, gain and loss, comfort and discomfort. We discover how to relate to the depth of inner contentment, and the waves on the surface will not appear as threatening as before. Not perpetuating mental fabrications, obsessive narratives or linear thinking. This allows us to rest in the state of clear freshness of the present moment.

Open presence is a state of clear and pure awareness in which the mind is like a vivid, transparent sky, thoughts continuously undoing themselves as they arise, like birds crossing the vast expanse without leaving any trace. There is no grasping or repeating the same experience, because you have already been there. This brings great peace.

PZ/11/01/22

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: The Illusion of Separateness - 10/1/22

We may have the illusion of separateness, believing that we are isolated from many people, and more than likely have been taught by our parents, teachers, peers and society in general the consensus view and importance of a separate self. The problem is that this construct of a solo self may have a sad sense of meaninglessness and disconnect for so many in our culture.

We share interconnectedness by breathing the same air, sharing the same water, living in the same ecosphere and inhabiting this same planet as it spins through space. In most wisdom traditions and religions throughout the world, compassion is considered one of the highest values that enhances well-being in both individuals and communities. It is the way we sense the suffering in another sentient being and figure out ways to decrease or reduce it.

- Interconnectedness requires empathy which has five aspects:
- Emotional resonance (feeling another's feelings),
- Perspective taking (seeing through another's eyes),
- Cognitive understanding (imagining the mental experiences of another and their meaning),
- Empathic concern (motivation and gateway for compassion), and
- Sympathetic joy.

We need to place empathy with altruistic love, otherwise empathic resonance alone will lead to distress. These two qualities reinforce our courage and give us resources to deal with the suffering of others in a constructive way. Empathy without compassion is like an electric water pump without water. It will overheat and shut down. With the water of love and compassion it will cool down empathic distress, counteract emotional exhaustion and reduce burnout. Resilience is necessary, without it, a potential downside to being tuned in to others will usually have us over identify with suffering and lead to shutting down. This is called empathic resonance fatigue.

When we are aware where our attention goes, neural firing flows, and neural connection grows. Kindness and compassion then help us strengthen these body/mind connections and create traits of kind intentions, a way of being, not just mind/heart states that come and go. A trait is a propensity or way of behaving that happens without effort or major planning and with practice becomes stronger, integrated and enduring.

When we are connected to others, finding ways of being of service in our world, beyond our private brain or skin defined self, is a time tested path towards a meaningful life. We are more alive when we embrace the reality of our interconnectedness.

PZ/10/1/22

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: Presence - 9/1/22

Presence is bringing ourselves fully into to the present moment with another person or persons, on many levels: physically, emotionally, cognitively, relationally and spiritually. Four major qualities are necessary: embodiment, process orientation, intentionality, and being in relationship.

Presence is embodied. It lives from the neck down, which helps us to be grounded and centered within ourselves. There is a sense of immersion in the details of the moment. There is a realm of spaciousness and expansion, along with a background feeling that everything is ok. We have the intention of being compassionately with and for another, in service of healing.

Presence is a process in which we are receptive and open, free of agenda, expressing ourselves verbally and non-verbally. We are inwardly attuned, extending a feeling of resonance, being guided in that moment of being together.

Presence is intentional, and it takes commitment to cultivate this quality, to engage that experience of presence within oneself, when we walk in the room with someone, holding that intention and bringing it in.

Presence is relational, it is not just within oneself, it lives between us. It involves a meeting between people that is deeper than each individual and allows an access to a larger experience of connection and consciousness, which is ultimately where healing is derived from.

There is a bi-directional communication when we calm our body, our brain, and mind, and come into alignment. We need to regulate our emotions, goals, and ideas in order to relate and to regulate. That essence of presence is how we are with people, not what we do with them, but how we are in relationship.

Remember: "That which we pay attention to and practice, grows stronger."

PZ/9/1/22

From the Desk of Pierre Zimmerman: Optimal Balance for Happiness - 8/1/22

The way to achieve genuine happiness is to apply effective means to balance the heart and mind in order to succeed in achieving a deep state of sanity and discovering a sense of inner wellbeing, which persists when alone or with others, active or at rest, and doesn't require any external stimulation. Genuine contentment arises from the depths of a mind that is calm, clear, and open and being present in the world without being thrown into emotional disequilibrium. The route to wellbeing requires four kinds of mental balance: conative, attentional, cognitive and emotional. We will look at three kinds of imbalance in each domain: deficit, hyperactivity, and dysfunction.

CONATIVE BALANCE

Conation refers to the faculties of desire and volition, the mental process that activates and/or directs behavior and action. Imbalances in that domain are ways our desires and intentions lead us away from psychological flourishing and often into distress. A deficit occurs when we experience a loss of desire for happiness and its causes with a lack of imagination or stagnant complacency. Hyperactivity is present when we fixate on obsessive desires that obscure the reality of the present, being caught up in fantasies of the future, blind to the needs and desires of others. Dysfunction occurs when we desire things that are not conducive to others' or our own wellbeing or genuine happiness. Daily meditation as a discipline requires motivation and continuous practice.

ATTENTIONAL BALANCE

Attentional balance, including the development of sustained, voluntary attention, is a crucial feature of mental health and optimal performance in any kind of meaningful activity. Deficit in this domain is characterized by the inability to focus on a desired object, the mind becoming withdrawn and disengaged. Attentional hyperactivity occurs when the mind is excessively aroused, resulting in compulsive distraction and fragmentation. Attention becomes dysfunctional when we focus on things which are not conducive to our own or others' wellbeing. Meditation quiescence has three qualities: relaxation, stability, and vividness for attentional training. The metaphor of trees with the roots of relaxation penetrating deep into fertile soil, the trunk of stability becoming thick and strong and the branches and foliage of vividness forming a lush, verdant canopy, support the three qualities.

COGNITIVE BALANCE

Cognitive balance occurs when one views the world without the imbalances of conceptual projection, omission, or distortion. Deficit is characterized by the failure to perceive what is present in our five fields of sensory experience and in our minds, being out of touch with what is occurring around us and within us. Hyperactivity sets in when we conflate our conceptual projections with actual experience. We fail to distinguish between perceived realities and our superimposed assumptions and fantasies. Cognitive dysfunction occurs when we misapprehend reality in our ability to interpret what's happening in the moment. The primary intervention or antidote is to cultivate mindfulness.

EMOTIONAL BALANCE

Emotional balance is a natural outcome of the first three balances. Emotional deficit has the symptom of emotional deadness and a sense of cold indifference towards others. Hyperactivity is characterized by excessive or obsessive experience of elation and depression, hope and fear, adulation and contempt, craving and hostility. Dysfunction occurs when our emotional responses are inappropriate to the circumstances, such as delighting in others' misfortunes or resenting their successes. The meditative practices to cultivate the Four Immeasurables (qualities of loving kindness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity) support the heart/mind to remain calm and open for a vast potential of mental health flourishing.

Pz/8/1/22

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: Empathy, Compassion and Altruism - 7/1/22

The word empathy is a translation from the German word *Einfühlung*, which refers to “the ability to feel the other from within.” Empathy can be set off by an affective perception of feeling for a person with whom we enter into resonance, or by cognitive imagination evoked by the other person’s experience. Emotional resonance usually precedes cognitive resonance and depends on the intensity of our emotions as to whether we can really respond – or become reactive instead.

True empathic concern consists of becoming aware of another’s needs and then feeling a sincere desire to come to his or her aid. It doesn’t involve pity, which is egocentric or condescending, or for that matter emotional contagion, which results in distress or empathy fatigue because we confuse our feelings with that of the other.

Compassion is the capacity to use our heart to relieve the suffering of another and all the possibilities to accomplish this. It includes the realization that ignorance is the fundamental cause of suffering and gives rise to an array of mental obscurations, lack of love, meaning, confidence and absence of a clear compass. Motivation for taking actions for release of suffering counts more than their outcome or results. Compassion doesn’t exclude anything possible to prevent the other from continuing to harm or break the circle of hatred.

Altruism is the motivational state that has the ultimate goal of increasing another’s welfare. It is a willingness to lead a life devoted to the well-being of others without the need of ulterior motive. Valuing others and being concerned about their situation are essential. Buddhism defines it as the wish that all beings find happiness and the causes of happiness. In this context, happiness is not just a temporary state of well-being, but a way of being that includes wisdom, inner freedom and strength, as well as an accurate view of reality.

Altruistic love and compassion add joy when perceiving the happiness and good qualities of others as well as impartiality. Rejoicing means that we don’t want others’ qualities and happiness to diminish, but instead to increase and persist. This serves as an antidote to competitiveness, jealousy and envy, and is a remedy for depression or despairing views. Impartiality or equanimity doesn’t depend either on our personal attachments or the way others behave towards us. Altruistic love requires courage; fear and insecurity are major obstacles to altruism. We need to develop an inner strength that makes us confident in our inner resources, which help us face the constantly changing circumstances of our lives.

Pz/7/1/22

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: Interconnectedness - 6/1/22

Interdependence is not the easiest idea to grasp, yet it allows us to develop a wider perspective and less attachment to destructive emotions. There is nothing wrong or unusual about anger, for instance, but it can become dangerous when we are consumed by it for hours, sometimes years. We always want to reduce it as best and quickly as we can. Interdependence is not just a concept. It can reduce suffering caused by destructive emotions, because it is an explanation of the law of nature — including ecology, for instance.

Our future depends on global well-being. Knowing this, we can reduce narrow-mindedness, which often breeds attachment and hatred. The whole world is heavily interconnected and interdependent today, partially through the digital world, enhancing accessibility. All things are dependent on one another, and with time, we can gradually kindle a fire that starts with a spark, which creates light, but can also turn into a wildfire!

Emptiness doesn't mean nothingness. When we realize nothing is solid, edges soften because everything is intertwined and therefore there are fewer physical boundaries during times of spiritual lucidity. Reality is often a mere mental projection, whereas wisdom implies clear vision when we understand emptiness, which is to say that things are devoid of individual inherent existence. Nothing can exist independently on its own. Interdependence, rather than independence, defines our lives and everything around us. These linkages maybe difficult to see but they are real: people, animals, thoughts, emotions, and objects are empty. Anything and everything comes into existence because of a complex web of causes, conditions and relationships.

Any interest of yours or mine is inextricably connected and involves our well-being. Compassion becomes reinforced, because when something good happens to others, we will also benefit — if not immediately, then eventually. Anyone can achieve genuine happiness by focusing on the fundamental precepts of compassion and wisdom, which are often referred to as the two wings of a bird, allowing it to fly. A person with wisdom and no compassion is like a lonely hermit vegetating in the mountains or a cave, a compassionate person without wisdom is nothing more than a likable fool!

PZ/6/1/22

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: Developing Resilience - 5/1/22

How Do I Develop Resilience? Resilience is the ability to face life's challenges, small or seemingly overwhelming, surprising or habitual. With it we can experience what we might label victories, and when we lack resilience, we might end up having setbacks. Some people recover quickly from adversity; others become crippled by it.

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PZ/5/1/22

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: Engaged Environmental Healing – 4/1/22

Solving environmental problems almost always requires some understanding of ecological principles, called “systems thinking,” knowing that all events and beings are interdependent and mutually co-create each other. The universe is a dynamic scale of activities, with every action affecting and generating others in turn. The work for us becoming ecological change agents entails: being with suffering, cultivating systems thinking, reducing harm, and generating peace as possible tasks.

We can observe cause and effect in any system such as: in your family, within your workplace, in your backyard. We develop systems-thinking through looking at patterns and deciphering feedback loops that reflect the dominant shaping forces. Too much heat and the dog seeks shade, too much cold and the cat finds a warm car hood to sleep on. We can see that systems are shaped by regulating patterns that maintain stability, and self-organizing patterns, which we learn from in order to evolve. These give the system the ability to adapt.

We take the path of not causing harm. This central principle informs all other ethical commitments that arise with a broadly felt connection to other beings. Reducing suffering might mean changing harvest methods, for example, or it could mean providing protection for species close to extinction. Many might choose other ethical practices, eating produce that is locally organically grown, choosing fair trade products, using wind and/or solar energy, which cause little harm to the environment.

Bringing about peace means that we use ways to find solutions between different parties and point of views. Bridge builders play an active role, engaging conflict, but not taking sides, and strengthening weak relationships in the human and ecological web. We can bring in a healer role to our neighborhood, helping conflicting parties understand each other’s positions and finding a better solution at hand. It requests from us compassionate acts toward all parties, bearing witness without accusations, having clear and stabilized intentions and reporting facts without condemnation. This can be done!

PZ/4/1/22

**Hearing the crickets at night
I vow with all beings
to find my place in the harmony crickets enjoy with the stars.**

—Robert Aitken

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: Happiness is an Inside Job – 3/1/22

We often get disappointed when we don't get what we want or lose something of value, because we carry within our minds certain "psychic irritants," sources of suffering triggered by events or our thoughts. Then we try to stop the pain by changing the world around us. It is as if we would cover the whole earth with leather, so that we could walk more comfortably, instead of wearing sandals. We don't want to let misery blindside us.

Happiness requires practicing mindfulness, a way of training oneself to become aware of things as they really are, a gradual, direct training in how to end dissatisfaction. We rarely want to think about things not going well: tragedy, grief, physical pain, melancholy, loneliness, resentment, the nagging feeling that there could be something better. We think that happiness depends on things unfolding a certain way, but there is something else: a happiness not dependent on conditions. We can find a way out of suffering by confronting the roots of resistance and craving with a strong determination to overcome harmful habits.

Happiness is beyond just the fleeting enjoyments of pleasurable experiences, which are fine, in moderation. Possessions, social approval, the love of friends and family, and a wealth of pleasurable experiences ought to make people happy. What we think should make people happy are in fact often the source of misery, because they never last, and the more we have, the greater the possibility for unhappiness, the lowest form of happiness, depending on conditions being right.

Higher sources of happiness come from generosity, letting go of psychic irritants such as hatred, attachment, jealousy, pride, and confusion, often labeled delusion. Nipping them in the bud allows the mind to become unobstructed, joyful, bright and clear. Our load in life becomes lighter when we disentangle ourselves from years of destructive self-defeating attitudes and behavior.

PZ/3/1/22

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: Healthy Communities – 2/1/22

Connection is an important aspect of well-being. Within healthy communities we seek refuge from instability, from ignorance, and we discover that no matter who we are, no matter what we have done, we can find sane belonging.

We all want to form and maintain lasting, positive and impactful interpersonal relationships in order to thrive and grow. It has been demonstrated that when people feel lonely, their brain circuits light up in the same regions that register physical pain. In a mindful culture, a shared perspective surrounds us, in terms of what we think, believe, feel and do. In this culture we discern what is fair, true, useful and ethical. To thrive it must become a seed that can grow in the soil of this particular time and place, particularly when there is divisiveness.

Cultures are fed by small acts of communication, gestures of kindness, transparency, collaboration and statements of inclusion. We can intentionally nurture attitudes, values, practices and goals that benefit each member. At the same time, dissent or tension keeps a community healthy because we don't want to cultivate "group think," a dangerous notion for an exclusive and righteous membership. Reflection and inquiry help us to understand how things are actually happening, rather than how we would like them to happen. It is a call to inquire into what has gone unseen and unrecognized.

Compromises are always required and constant feedback voiced. Maybe we need to take a moment to show the community a mirror, which symbolizes how the mind reflects all phenomena and, at the same time, how all phenomena are a mirror of the mind. Feedback is a way for communities to hold up their mirror. It is an act of courage to look into the mirror, because we are afraid of what we might see, some people will say there is something wrong with the mirror itself, yet, this is the only way to recognize what needs to be improved or changed. This is how we maintain a sense of humility and curiosity.

Critical thinking and discernment are forged bonds based on a collective vision rather than a doctrine, far-fetched theories or delusional dreams. Compassion is the medium in which deep and meaningful relationships with others can grow and flourish, protect us from falling into judgment and cultivate tolerance with patience.

PZ/2/1/22

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: Intense Groundlessness - 1/1/22

We begin another year, another winter with news about Covid and its variants, knowing we are only going to be free of it when the last few protect themselves from the invisible virus for the benefit of all. Most of us, most of the time, go through life wanting to have freedom and at the same time, we have a tight grip on whatever we experience. Groundlessness creates discomfort and the fear of possibly having the rug pulled out from under us.

How do we manage to relax with no stability under our feet? It is as if a person were to run after flickering fireflies at night. As this person becomes consumed by the desire to catch them, he loses sight of the ground he was standing on, falling over a deep cliff. By chance on the way down into an abyss he is able to catch a thick branch and hold on to it for dear life for what seems to be a very, very long time. There is nothing under his feet, no foreground or background in his mind to provide safety. And just as he is going to let go, unable to hold on any longer, the moon appears from behind the clouds. There and then he realizes that he was only a couple of feet above solid ground. In that moment, he is free to let go.

We can feel at ease in our bodies by trusting that we are held by something larger than ourselves, experiencing profound surrender into a benevolent field with awareness, the constant ground of being in the midst of impermanence. We try to avoid groundlessness at any cost. The paradox is that when we attune to our inner knowing, we can experience deep relaxation by trusting in life's small or unfamiliar moving moments and expect we will find firm footing. Letting go can often feel like a free fall when attuning to being fully alive, not knowing outcomes and letting go of resistance. Yet, we might experience fluidity and freedom, develop new relationships, find new connections, while trusting new revelations and deep wisdom for the sake of all.

PZ/1/1/22

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: The Sheer Act of Being - 12/1/21

Spirituality is the exploration of the nature of being. What is it to be? Is it being still? We are not trying to be still, nor is it an instruction to do something. It is something you can be aware of and notice. It is difficult to be if we don't have a place where human beings are still in any recognizable way, we are certainly a noisy species.

Everyone we meet falls into a category of what we call being. It is not defined by our occupation, what religion we adhere to, what family history we belong to or our hopes for the future. There is something more immediate that we meet when we are meeting a being. We often discount that because it is not conceptual. It is not about our work, our interests, what we like or dislike, what they do or do not do for us.

A baby is a full complement of being, even before it can speak, although it doesn't yet have a voice. Once we start talking and learn language, we become mesmerized by what we say. For adults, any conscious moment is being. We are not necessarily being taught that, instead we pay attention to the following queries: Am I talented or not? Am I good looking? What is my vocation? Etc. Being is freedom. It is not being this or that, not liking this or that. It is an astounding act of existence, being conscious, being aware, in the moment.

Meditation is the art of being, being still. Nothing is required to be, like good or bad, right or wrong. Those thoughts are part of life, but they don't define "being." It is awakening, not being on autopilot or asleep at the wheel, unconscious. We are not lost in the conceptual mind or emotional body. Notice how easy it is to define what it is not! It is the foundational nature of what we are, one with everything. The direct experience of being is clarity, a profound sense of "all is well," in other words, bliss.

PZ/12/1/21

**FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: UNCONDITIONAL PRESENCE,
Becoming Fluid Like Water – 11/1/21**

Most of us live in a state of continuous contraction and constricted awareness that forms a nucleus of avoidance, attachment, or both. Often, we develop an identity and view of ourselves and the world based on rejecting experiences we don't like, or grasping onto others that are attractive to us. In order to hold on to this identity, we develop stories about the way we are or what reality is; stories which in essence are just mental interpretations of our experience, a way of organizing our beliefs and opinions, but not the experience itself. One story tends to reinforce another story, which creates an increasing distortion of reality.

How do we move from constriction and partial views of reality? One way is to engage in being present with our experience, with what is, in the moment. We call that beginner's mind. Unfortunately we have become experts at being ourselves, and in the process, losing our ability to be open in a fresh, open-minded fashion. The totality of our present experiencing is much larger and richer than anything we can know or describe about it at any given moment.

This meditative tradition through most of the different lineages always presented the great discovery of pure awareness and un-fabricated knowing, clear and fluid like water. We are immersed in this sea of pure awareness, but our busy mind is constantly hopping from one thought island to another thought island, rarely resting. Here we learn to become more comfortable with the space between one breath and the next, so that we can merge with the fresh edge of the moment and relax our body-mind.

PZ/11/1/21

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: Equanimity – 9/1/21

Given the political, racial, and economic divides these days, cultivating equanimity is called for more than ever. Using the four immeasurables and the image of the sun, we can think of equanimity as the full moon reflecting the light of the sun in a vast cloudless night sky. For compassion it is the sun setting, meeting the darkness of suffering with tenderness and care. Sympathetic joy carries the image of the sunrise, brightening everything in its path, moving upward with inspiration and freshness, while loving kindness is the sun at noon, bright and strong, shining on everyone.

The cooler quality of the moon reflecting the sun doesn't signify a lack of caring, in fact, it balances the other three aspects of love, so that we don't burn out in expressing the other aspects of love to others. It keeps us grounded, centered, and resourced. Equanimity means impartiality, tolerance, letting go. It is the capacity to see the full picture, accept inclusiveness and perceive a situation in its entirety without bias. We can stand firm without taking sides, see a given circumstance from all angles and cultivate spaciousness.

Thich Nhat Hanh used to have this simple meditation exercise: "Breathing in, I dwell in the present moment; breathing out, I know this is a wonderful moment." This meditation doesn't ignore or deny the suffering in our world, it is not indifference. It is the ability to hold pain and terror as well as great love and wisdom. It is coolness in a world that is only getting hotter. The climate surely reflects this. The question is: how do we see from all sides and include them in our hearts? Seeing ourselves as beloved, not victims, we are in opposition to no one. Our only enemies are delusion, craving, ignorance and hatred.

With equanimity, we know how not to make things worse when suffering arises, we can choose not to add to suffering by resisting, suppressing or judging it. Instead we can open to our own or someone else's suffering, knowing it is part of life. Experiencing peace, we give no fear in the process and are given in return ample freedom.

PZ/9/1/21

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: Kindness & Compassion for the Self and Others – 8/1/21

Our capacity for empathy, lovingkindness, compassion and altruistic behavior is inborn, rather than acquired through socialization or cultural exposure. Compassion is what makes an empathic response manifest in kindness. However, it takes awareness and practice to change reactive habits and develop it into an active force in our lives.

Compassion brings purpose to our lives and a sense of feeling useful. It reduces stress and releases oxytocin, which is associated with reduced levels of inflammation in our cardiovascular system, interestingly enough, related to matters of the heart! It also strengthens the tone of the longest cranial vagus nerve, which is the marker of our overall state of health.

Cultivating lovingkindness for one self and self-compassion is not self-absorption, self-pity, self-esteem or self-gratification. It is self-caring by being mindful, which is the ability to hold all kinds of experiences in awareness within the context of a shared human experience rather than judging them. Self-compassion is needed in order to effectively be present for others suffering and assist them in bringing relief.

Compassion contributes to better relationships and strengthens the connections with loved ones and getting rid of loneliness, one of the most painful forms of suffering in our culture. This in turn strengthens our immune system. We can promote kindness in a defended world that sponsors and prides itself through autonomy, selfies, superficial interactions and greed, in pursuit of power, and laughs at compassionate action. Not only can we repay people who are kind to us, we need to spread random acts of kindness to others as an organizing principle in our society.

PZ/8/1/21

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: Presence – 7/1/21

Presence is moment to moment awareness and attunement with oneself and others. We are relational beings, our brains are wired as such, and healthy present-centered relationships are necessary for wellbeing. Injuries and suffering happen in all kinds of relationships, and so do a lot of repairs to these connections with intention. Being present means that we are committed to bringing ourselves fully in the moment with others, with compassion, on multiple levels: physically, emotionally, cognitively and spiritually.

Presence is embodied, meaning it lives from the neck down. We need to be centered with ourselves and have a sense of immersion with another person, in all the details, within that moment. When we are grounded and immersed, there is a larger sense of spaciousness and expansion within the connection. We summon the intention to be compassionately with and for another. These four qualities: grounding, immersion, expansion and demonstrating compassion with another are essential.

Presence is a process of being open and receptive, inwardly attuned. It is intentional and relational, meaning it lives between two beings and is deeper than each individual, allowing for a profound connection and consciousness field. Our prosody in voice is really important, as are our facial features, with direct and softened eye gaze. We approach the other with kindness and acceptance.

This creates a right brain to right brain communication. There is an inter-brain synchronicity linkage, like jazz musicians playing improv music together, their mirror and motor neurons as well as brainwaves start to connect with each other. We need to regulate to relate, relate to regulate, the essence of presence being not what we do, but how we are, in the specific relationship at any given moment.

PZ/7/1/21

We present a recent “Unfixed Podcast” with Pierre Zimmerman: 6/5/21

[Pierre Zimmerman](#) recently made a recording with “Unfixed Podcast” featuring [Dylan](#), a writer and naturopathic and Chinese medicine doctor, who was diagnosed with ALS, a terminal disease, in 2017. Read more about their discussion of suffering and grace, and listen to the complete [Episode 10 conversation](#).

Together, the two discuss the transformative growth and meaning they found when they learned to let go and embrace their circumstances. We often go through life thinking two things: that our identity is tied to our bodies and that death and illness are negative experiences to fear. Sometimes the greatest lessons in life come from the greatest hardships. It's our choice whether we're open to receiving the beauty that blooms from pain.

This show is part of a suite of resources provided by the nonprofit, [Beyond My Battle](#).

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: Dimensions of Well-Being – 6/1/21

Let's look at the dimensions of wellbeing from the point of view of qualities of mind and heart that can be trained in as essential skills. Wellbeing is complex, has many factors that contribute to it with contemplative experiential activities, a convergence of science and subjective elements in different communities. There are four major dimensions that define wellbeing: awareness, connection, insight and purpose.

Awareness stands for being conscious, the ability to regulate our attention, and we have access to it anytime, building on meta-awareness. We cultivate being aware not just during meditation practice but during our waking hours.

Connection is in essence how we build and maintain relationships. We demonstrate an intention to be with others. We have appreciation for being part of a community, not necessarily of like persons, sharing norms, practicing gratitude and cultivating compassion.

Insight allows us to gain more awareness, discern what is wholesome or not, develop a range of related ideas, and understand inter-connectedness. We inquire how phenomena of sensations, thoughts, and emotions are understood and sustained, which brings us wisdom.

Purpose is vital for our psychological, cognitive, conative and emotional wellbeing. It is a way for us to orient ourselves and espouse our values and intentions, and best stay connected to experience as we embody them.

These four dimensions are skills that we train with and apply in life. In indigenous communities, connection and a sense of belonging come first, and there is more focus on ecosystems. In the educational realm, it might be purpose that takes priority. In mindfulness groups, awareness and insight take precedence. All four dimensions are included in any context.

The healthy emotional life of a being is characterized by contentment, joy within, flexibility, very little "stickiness," creativity, being deeply responsive, and having a capacity for connection. There is an interest in figuring out common ground, developing listening and curiosity, while favoring dialogues and building bridges in order to be part of organic networks.

PZ/6/1/21

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: Inner Knowing – 5/1/21

We discover ourselves through connection with others, and when this is absent, we become a stranger to ourselves. The experience of emotional resonance is familiar to almost everyone, because mirror neurons allow us to know in a visceral, first-hand way to feel others and empathize with them.

We are able to sense the internal state of our body; this is called interoception. We can also feel what others are feeling with a high degree of accuracy and discern someone else's emotional experience within our own body. This suggests that the strict demarcation between self and others is delusional and that separate individuality is mistaken. The boundaries of 'you' and 'me' become permeable and the notion of a wholly separate self dissolves.

There are deep levels of mutual attunement, intimacy, resonance and inter-connectedness when a feeling of coherence emerges. It happens when we are in touch with our inner knowing, sense of values, ethical stance, efficacy, purpose and self-worth. These come together and evoke a feeling of wholeness that arises from the body and mind.

Often this felt sense of wholeness involves the area of the heart and belly and allows us to use our intuition. What thought divides, the heart unites, and when attention hones in upon the heart area, there is the experience of coming home. Once the mind knows its limits, it can rest in the fullness of the heart.

When we practice meditation or contemplative training, it sharpens and sustains our attention, enhances wellbeing, and leads to more empathic emotional responses to the suffering of others. It is linked with pro-social emotional behavior and important physiological markers of health. From the belly and felt sense we move to the heart with loving kindness and from there to the mind's clarity and wisdom, all aligned in the ground of being.

PZ/5/1/21

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: On Meditation - 4/1/21

The main point of meditation is to get to know ourselves: our mind, our behavior, our ground of being. We think we know ourselves, but actually we often don't, because everything around us changes constantly and hopefully we do too.

We often say we meditate "on something." We practice mindfulness meditation to experience a state of being, called the ground of being, from which we pay attention to every thought and action, prior, during, and post meditation.

This leads to us becoming more refined, and with it comes gentleness. We pay attention to pain and pleasure, developing empathy and friendship for the self. From there we are able to understand and resonate with the suffering of others. We become kinder and drop into basic goodness and wholesomeness of self. We begin to gain trust in ourselves and the world. A view of the path or journey emerges, and we do things for ourselves and others which give us universal genuineness.

The phenomenal world is no longer seen as an obstacle and is appreciated. We transmute aggression, ignorance and craving into a state of wisdom by simply observing them, without being hijacked by them or acting out, letting these states subside. We gather wisdom when we are free from ego and anxiety, a state of mind and heart that need not be cultivated and which cannot be lost.

PZ/4/1/21

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: Loosening the Grip of our Limiting Core Beliefs - 3/1/21

Our core beliefs are often based on our earliest and potent fears, lodged in our brain from early childhood on. They are based on strong assumptions, conclusions and conditioned survival skills that have little to do with the present moment. While they served a purpose in the past, our brains are designed to anticipate the future, and past memories of endangerment are stuck in the long-term memory part of the hippocampus.

If it happened before, most likely it is bound to happen again, we presume. A few failures can still instill feelings of helplessness, deficiencies, humiliation and shame. Most of our core beliefs are reinforced by past hurt and fear, and strangely enough, dearly holding on to them. "I am not good enough," is maybe the most common belief from which stems self-devaluation, self-degradation and rejection. The greater the degree of early life trauma or consistent stress, the more likelihood there will be of deeply entrenched fear-based beliefs and a tendency to isolate.

Deprivation, poverty, racial and gender biases, abuse, and condemnations affect us, and even though they are rooted in the past, they feel current and true. The Buddha said, "with our thoughts we fabricate the world." When people pull away, our sense of rejection will confirm our belief. When we believe that nobody likes us, we will behave in ways that broadcast our insecurities. If we have a tendency to believe that others will attack or criticize us, we will more than likely become defensive or aggressive.

Using our attention and awareness, we are able to disconfirm these beliefs and ask ourselves, "Is this really true?" When we note fear thoughts, we can create some space between ourselves and our beliefs and realize that the underlying beliefs are real but not true! They are appearances, interpretations of reality that entrap us. Taking refuge in the present moment, dropping into the felt sense of our body's experience, we are able to use our aliveness, intelligence and compassion to see the downside of the beliefs and narratives of unworthiness and "badness" that we tell ourselves.

PZ/3/1/21

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: KARMA – 2/1/21

Every action has a cause and result in terms of the mind, not just in terms of external circumstances. Everything that exists is the result of cause and effect. Karma is not destiny, nor a life sentence. People lack understanding when they say “It is my karma,” confusing responsibility with control. The former doesn’t mean taking responsibility. We need to recognize whether our behavior is nurturing the clarity of mind or contributing to ignorance and confusion.

What activities impede our quest towards awakening? There are ten non-virtuous activities associated with body, speech and mind. Killing, stealing and sexual misconduct are associated with the body. Lying, divisive speech, harsh words and gossip are non-virtuous types of speech. The three non-virtuous activities of the mind are the inability to rejoice in others happiness or success, the wish to harm, and wrong views, such as dismissing the law of cause and effect.

These are the activities that incline a mind towards awakening, with virtuous activities: using the body to perform acts of generosity, including protecting others, engaging in pleasing speech that promotes equanimity and harmony, and holding views that support one’s wellbeing and that of others.

With an acceptance of karma, taking responsibility exposes a learning tool, not a scale for measuring reward and punishment. We know that all phenomena are naturally interdependent; all activities have positive, negative or neutral aspects. Practicing with karma shifts how we understand our everyday behavior with family, friends, at home and in the workplace. The possibilities of what we have done and what we can do, become infinite. Even though we remain subject to causes and conditions, the immeasurable advantage of our human existence is that they do not define us. Anything is possible when we know we are already a buddha.

PZ/2/1/21

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: Seeing the World and Ourselves through an Ethical Lens – 1/1/21

A care-based, ethical path involves connectedness and meaning, which engenders presence and authenticity. Connectedness is being in relationship with other sentient beings. Meaning is the awareness of being alive and understanding the depth of living ethically. This means we have to know what is beneficial or not and have a common notion of what causes harm.

We can foster a care-based, ethical path through empathy, feeling the suffering of others, by using discernment and not becoming hyper or hypo-aroused. We cultivate moral sensitivity by filtering out what action is most appropriate with a motivation geared towards making the most beneficial decisions and inflicting the least amount of harm. When taking an action that is not consistent with our ethical values, we experience moral distress and deep disconnect.

Three tenets can support us in espousing our “North Star” when facing conflicting principles: One is to practice beginner’s mind, not having fixed or solid ideas and beliefs that might separate us from others. Next, we bear witness to the situation, not becoming demoralized about the reality of the moment, just observing the situation at hand without judgment. Finally, when attentional and intentional stability and clarity arise, we cultivate compassion for anyone or any situation overwhelmed by suffering.

To be committed to authentic relationships we practice transparency. First, we are transparent to ourselves, no longer being ruled by our emotions, preferences and conditioning. We don’t need to espouse our narratives. Instead, we stay with what is meaningful to us, cutting out unnecessary thoughts, speech and behavior. Then, we can let the world be transparent to us, by releasing ideas, opinions and judgments, and letting go of our biases. Lastly, we can be transparent to the world, not hiding behind roles, identities, our persona or history, being undefended and invested in connecting with others.

When we operate from the heart and mind, strong back and soft front, there is no lack or excess in expression of speech and meaning, nor any compelling reason to deceive oneself or anyone else. Adopting ethical coherence, we welcome everything, push nothing away, bring our whole self to whatever experience we face, and find a place of peace in the middle of adversity and felicity.

PZ/1/1/21

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: Stress, Friend or Foe? 9/12/20

We live in times of continuous stress in our personal and professional lives — time conflicts, imbalance between “doing and being,” exposed to too much information, multitasking and less connected to others than ever. Why are some people more resistant to stress than others? How can we become more resilient?

The answer has to do with our attitude and perceptions as to whether we accept stress or suppress it, see it as a challenge or a threat. Some amount of stress helps body and mind. Blood vessels dilate and remain more relaxed, the heart pumps more blood, which releases more oxygen to the brain for clarity and processing thoughts, emotions and feelings. Our cells stay active and young and the adrenals and cortisol levels go back to a normal baseline. However, prolonged stress is dangerous for health and homeostasis. The metaphor of a hunter’s bow can be helpful. If we pull the bow taut and overstrain it, resilience is lost and the bow breaks. So do our bodies and minds when they are under stress, eventually leading to “dis-eases” or illness.

Minimal or occasional stressors motivate us, stimulate growth and help us develop balance. Our attitude is what determines our ability to integrate them. Circumstances are always neutral. Most stress is created by our mind, which monitors and regulates the flow of energy and information we create or are exposed to. What is needed for us to respond in a healthy way?

Relaxation exercises, meditation, embodied awareness movement and yoga, beneficial communication skills, cultivating loving kindness and compassion for oneself and others are essential for us to flourish. Exercising the muscles of the mind and heart of compassion are necessary, because the body and the mind are one.

PZ/9/12/20

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: Reflect and Refresh – 3/8/17

We call ourselves human beings, but we might as well say we are human *doings*. Most of our time is spent in work projects, relationship management, and related details. Reflection allows us to explore and discern which thoughts and actions will contribute to the services that make any system flourish. Reflection provides a platform to redirect the focus needed for interventions to turn things around for the well-being of the individuals and the company with which they are associated.

Meditation, a focus on emotional intelligence and mindful practices in the workplace, can create more balance between doing and being. Reflective awareness maintains integrity, commitment and alignment with the goals of the organization. Social competencies determine how we manage relationships, leverage diversity, influence and build a web of relationships, become change catalysts and enhance cooperation and team building.

About fifteen years ago as the executive director of a specialty hospital, I would invite staff to honor a minute of silence before starting meetings. At first people reacted to having their mental models challenged, but over time people were able to re-set their breath in a natural rhythm and their bodies and minds into a state of regulated functioning: calm abiding. It gave them time to reflect, to bring awareness to their emotions and figure out how to proceed with the agenda items in a manner that provided more stability, flexibility, curiosity and coherence. Meetings became attractive and rewarding!

Reflection is important for understanding ourselves and others. It enhances efficiency and because of this, outcomes are more productive. Victor Frankl, who survived many atrocities in concentration camps, was once asked how he was able to integrate all he witnessed. This was his response: “Between every stimulus and response there is a pause and in that pause lies freedom.” The pause is the refresh. We even have a bio-pause between every in-breath and out-breath. Frankl figured out in the midst of exceptionally extreme conditions and an unsafe environment how to resource himself.

We all need, in our daily busy lives, to call on ways that allow us to recharge our batteries and observe the world from a different perspective. These can include reflection, physical exercise, playtime, hobbies, artistic endeavors and volunteer activities. It is paused time that allows us to move beyond ourselves and embrace passionate activities for not only ourselves, but also everyone’s benefit around us.

Kids are given a “time out” when they cannot stop unwholesome behavior or don’t know when to rest or move on to the next moment. We as adults need to choose and determine a “down time” to replenish ourselves and become more resilient. Self-care keeps us healthy and activates loving kindness for ourselves and non-referential compassion for others.

PZ/3/8/17

**FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: The Four Immeasurables or Gateless Gates –
8/17/16**

I want to share with you four intentions that are part of lay Buddhist practice to better be connected with others and share our deepest humanity. During the summer we tend to gather and visit friends, families and acquaintances and these intentions always come in handy in small or large groups.

Loving kindness is love with no strings attached or any particular agenda, just the pure, innocent wish for others and oneself to be content.

Compassion is the highest spiritual ideal of wishing other sentient beings to be free from suffering. The Tibetan word for compassion means “king of hearts.”

Sympathetic joy is experiencing happiness for someone else’s contentment, well-being, successes and good fortune.

Equanimity is staying calm and centered, no matter what life throws at us; pleasure and pain, success and failure, praise and blame, fame and disrepute. It lets us relate in a deep way with friends, relatives and strangers.

Each of the four immeasurable has an opposite:
For loving kindness it is ill will or harmful intent,
For compassion it is cruelty,
For sympathetic joy it is envy or jealousy, and
For equanimity it is greed, aversion, prejudice.

Setting these four intentions sustains our energy and purpose to live in alignment with our best aspirations and wishes for ourselves and others. May it be so!

PZ/8/17/16

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: Empathy, Compassion and Altruism – 5/12/16

The word empathy is a translation from the German word *Einfühlung*, which refers to “the ability to feel the other from within.” Empathy can be set off by an affective perception of feeling for a person with whom we enter into resonance or by cognitive imagination evoked by the other person’s experience. Emotional resonance usually precedes cognitive resonance and depends on the intensity of our emotions as to whether we can really respond or become reactive instead.

True empathic concern consists of becoming aware of another’s needs and then feeling a sincere desire to come to his or her aid. It doesn’t involve pity, which is egocentric or condescending, or for that matter emotional contagion, which results in distress or empathy fatigue because we confuse our feelings with that of the other.

Compassion is the capacity to use our heart to relieve the suffering of another and all the possibilities to accomplish this. It includes the realization that ignorance is the fundamental cause of suffering and gives rise to an array of mental obscurations, lack of love, meaning, confidence and absence of a clear compass. Motivation for taking actions for release of suffering counts more than their outcome or results. Compassion doesn’t exclude anything possible to prevent the other from continuing to harm or break the circle of hatred.

Altruism is the motivational state that has the ultimate goal of increasing another’s welfare. It is a willingness to lead a life devoted to the well-being of others without the need of ulterior motive. Valuing others and being concerned about their situation are essential. Buddhism defines it as the wish that all beings find happiness and the causes of happiness. In this context, happiness is not just a temporary state of well-being, but a way of being that includes, wisdom, inner freedom and strength, as well as an accurate view of reality.

Altruistic love and compassion add joy when perceiving the happiness and good qualities of others as well as impartiality. Rejoicing means that we don’t want others’ qualities and happiness to diminish, but instead to increase and persist. This serves as an antidote to competitiveness, jealousy and envy and is a remedy for depression or despairing views. Impartiality or equanimity doesn’t depend either on our personal attachments or the way others behave towards us. Altruistic love requires courage; fear and insecurity are major obstacles to altruism. We need to develop an inner strength that makes us confident in our inner resources, which help us face the constantly changing circumstances of our lives.

PZ/5/12/16

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: Let's Choose Love – 2/16/16

February usually reminds us of cold days and nights, school vacations to warm faraway places for some, stuffy noses and red cheeks for those who stay here, and Valentine's Day celebrations with roses and delicious chocolate. This winter season so far has missed the mark for whiteouts in our area bringing joy to some and disappointment to others. This might change by the end of February, as the weather is just as unpredictable as everything else: the economy, gas prices, job security, health narratives and romantic love. Beacons of certainty are hard to come by.

No matter what change affects us in the short run or long run, how we relate to it always gives us the option to look at things with an open mind and heart. So I say let's choose love, reigniting the embers of the smoldering fire within us, being kind to ourselves, loving others with all their differences and diversity.

We are hard wired to be kind, and we long for connection and intimate affection. We are born with a strong biological predisposition for caring. Positive emotions like love, joy and playfulness are beneficial to our health and strengthen our immune system because our well-being depends on our inner happiness, not just on external things. Our usual menu of worries, frustrations, hopes and fears keep us focused on petty concerns. Selflessness, kind wishes and altruistic acts, large or small are antidotes to loneliness. When we offer non-biased compassion and realize our shared humanity, we too benefit from feeling love and contentment.

PZ/2/16/16

**FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: Finding Peace of Mind
in Challenging Times – 1/5/16**

In the face of hate, ignorance and cruelty we can build stronger communities of service and compassion with small acts of kindness toward each other, realizing how precious this rare life of ours is. We can see the gifts and skills of people, rather than their shortcomings; experience more spaciousness in our views of others; let go of solid opinions and sense the inherent goodness that lies at the heart of our diverse circles of being. We can give fearlessness by eliminating our habitual, unwholesome thoughts and planting seeds of kindness, looking upon others with soft eyes and suspending hateful narratives and judgments.

A Native American grandfather was talking to his grandson about how he felt about the tragedy of September 11th. He said, "I feel as I have two wolves fighting in my heart. One wolf is vengeful, angry and violent. The other is loving, forgiving, compassionate." The grandson asked him, "Which wolf will win the fight in your heart?" Grandfather responded: "The one I feed."

Wishing you all a New Year filled with peace and loving kindness, Pierre

PZ/1/5/16

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: On Gifting -12/3/15

To privately delight in your own way during this month of gifting, try offering the *free* gifts of patience, presence (without multi-tasking), unconditional love (by dropping agendas) and spending time in the community of family and friends, as well as people in need.

My gift to you is this beautiful Buddhist story:

INDRA'S NET

Indra, king of the gods, once asked his royal architect to create an appropriate monument to his greatness. The architect created an immense net that extended through space and time. At each point of the net that the threads crossed, a priceless jewel was placed. The jewels were infinite in number.

If we were to arbitrarily select one of the jewels for inspection and look at it closely, we would discover that it is polished. Every surface reflects all the other jewels, infinite in number, in the net. Not only that, but each of the jewels reflected in this one jewel is also reflecting all the other jewels, so that the process of reflection is infinite.

Indra's Net is the infinitely repeated interrelationship among all the phenomena of the universe. As every jewel is intimately related with all other jewels, a change in one jewel means another change, however slight, in every other jewel. This is the story of interdependence.

Happy holidays to all! Pierre

PZ/12/3/15

FROM THE DESK OF PIERRE ZIMMERMAN: Developing & Practicing Resilience -1/13/15

Resilience is the ability to face life's challenges, small or seemingly overwhelming, surprising or habitual. With it we can experience what we might label victories, and when we lack resilience, we might end up having meltdowns or setbacks. Some people recover quickly from adversity; others become crippled by it, and some spiral into deep depression. As we approach the end of another year, it is the perfect time to reflect on this subject.

The capacities to bounce back, resurface, and integrate our experiences and then move on are innate and possible, yet difficult. To be resilient requires of us several qualities such as awareness, pausing to reflect, flexibility, stability, and adaptability. We can use the five elements that are part of our bodies and the larger universe to illustrate these important themes:

The earth element of stability and firmness,
The water element of fluidity,
The fire element of adjustable temperatures,
The air element of mobility, and
The space element of boundlessness.

Impermanence is real and not just a thought, everything is changing in our internal and external life constantly. Once we come to terms with it, our responses to change give us numerous probabilities of what can occur and unlimited opportunities to respond to them. We have neuroplasticity in the brain, which has the capacity to rewire itself and grow numerous connections, new pathways and circuits. Activating resilience means choosing experiences that will cause neurons to fire and wire together, creating new patterns in the brain and new attitudes in our mental and emotional world.

We need to face whatever creates suffering and discomfort; it is necessary and it's called coping. Thoughts and feelings cannot destroy us; they may weaken our outlook slightly, and that is, only if we let them. We need to pause and stay calm, letting what needs to emerge surface, which in turn will bring clarity as to the beneficial choices we can make.

This doesn't indicate that we are unfeeling or emotionally walled off, but neither are we getting drawn into an abyss. Mindfulness of the breath and cognitive reappraising of any distressing event helps us to reframe adversity in such a way that it is not perceived as extreme. Rather than viewing an event as a mistake, experiencing shame, guilt, or inadequacy, we can look at it as an anomaly that could happen to anyone and thereby challenging the accuracy of our thoughts. The most important thing to realize is that a thought, feeling or sensation is not the totality of who we are in any given moment.

We can use the following three-part contemplation to resource ourselves and retrain the wiring of our brain. (From Rick Hanson, PhD)

1) I am safe

- 2) I am well resourced, I have what I need or I can ask for what I need
- 3) I am connected, I am not alone

This three-part exercise helps us become more resilient. By repeating this contemplation a few times each day, it enhances our capabilities to retrain our nervous system and go back to a homeostatic and more balanced baseline. Cultivating empathy for oneself and others is a great antidote for recovery from distress or emotional dis-regulation. These new choices will bring us healthier connections and new resourcefulness which will support us in feeling more competent and give us renewed courage to face what is, rather than avoid it.

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PZ/1/13/15