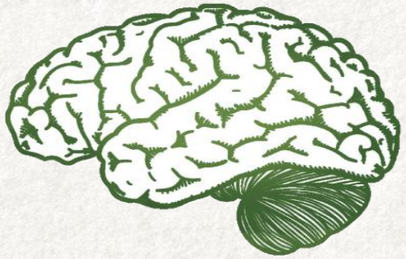
Using Mindfulness To Manage Stress & Grow Resilience



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Making Things Better

Out in the world

In the body

In the mind:

How are you practicing with that?

What are you learning and growing?

Stressors

Stressors Challenge Our Needs

Safety: contamination, disease, death

Satisfaction: losses, roadblocks, pains

Connection: separation, conflict, isolation

. . . Worsened by

Unpredictability, lack of control

Relentless pace, less respite and recovery

Fatigue, accumulated wear and tear

. . . and 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.

Velcro for Bad, Teflon for Good

What can we do?

Mindfulness Buffers Stressors

Mindfulness
is sustained present-moment awareness of your inner and outer world.

It is aided by steady attention, acceptance, and compassion.

Along with it could be moral purpose, skillful efforts, insight, and growth.

Mindfulness of Breathing

As an experiment, see if you can remain steadily mindful of sensations of breathing in your chest.

Let sounds, thoughts, etc. pass through awareness while you remain focused on sensations.

As we finish, be aware of one or more things that helped you stay mindful.

With mindfulness,
we can **be with** difficult experiences
without resisting them or
getting swept away by them.

Mindfulness for Health Professionals

Some representative findings:

- Improved patient care due to greater self-monitoring (Epstein et al., 2008)
- Reduced depression and anxiety; increased empathy (Shapiro et al., 1998)
- Decreased burnout by reducing emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Cohen-Katz et al., 2005)
- Improved quality of life by reducing stress and increasing self-compassion (Shapiro et al., 2005)

Becoming More Mindful

Take a mindful minute (or more) daily.

Slow it down.

Return to the present.

Step back from reactions.

See the big picture.

Enjoy being mindful.

Mindfulness Can Help Build Resilience

Resilience
is the psychological 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.

Personal resilience is the result
of multiple inner resources,
such as grit, gratitude, and compassion.

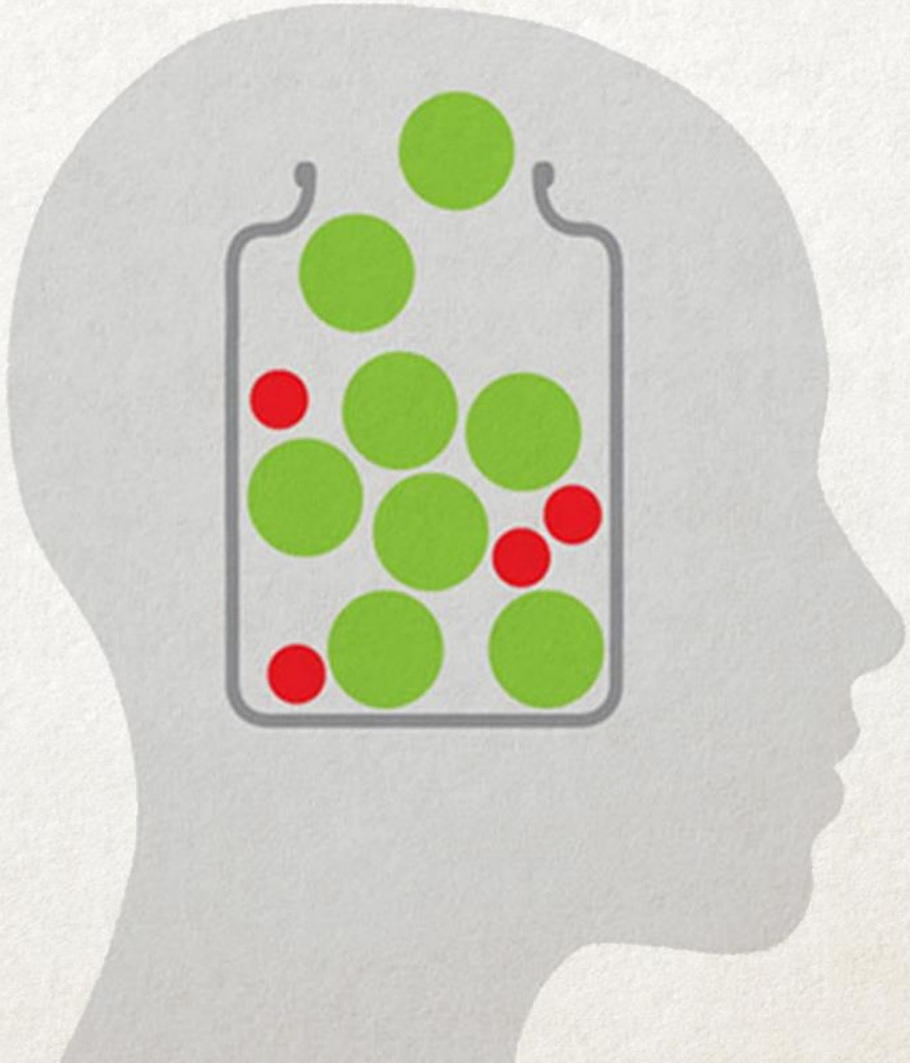
As challenges increase,
so must our resources.

The majority
of our inner resources
are acquired,

through social, emotional, somatic,
motivational, attitudinal, and cognitive
learning –

which is fundamentally hopeful.

And Which Means Changing the Brain For the Better



Learning proceeds in two stages:

Encoding	›	Consolidation
Activation	›	Installation
State	›	Trait

Key Mechanisms of Neuroplasticity

(De)Sensitizing existing synapses

Building new synapses

Building and integrating new neurons

Altered gene expression

Altered activity in a region

Altered connectivity among regions

Changes in neurochemical activity (e.g., dopamine)

Changes in neurotrophic factors (e.g., BDNF)

Modulation by stress hormones, cytokines

Information transfer from hippocampus to cortex

Slow wave and REM sleep


Neurons that fire together,
wire together.

We develop greater **grit** by repeatedly installing experiences of determination, patience, fortitude, etc.

We develop greater **gratitude** by repeatedly installing experiences of thankfulness, etc.

We develop greater **compassion** by repeatedly installing experiences of empathy and kindness.

Experiencing alone is not learning!

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

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

With **mindfulness**,
you can sustain embodied attention
to the beneficial experiences
that are the seeds of positive traits,

and help them take root
in your brain and thus your mind.

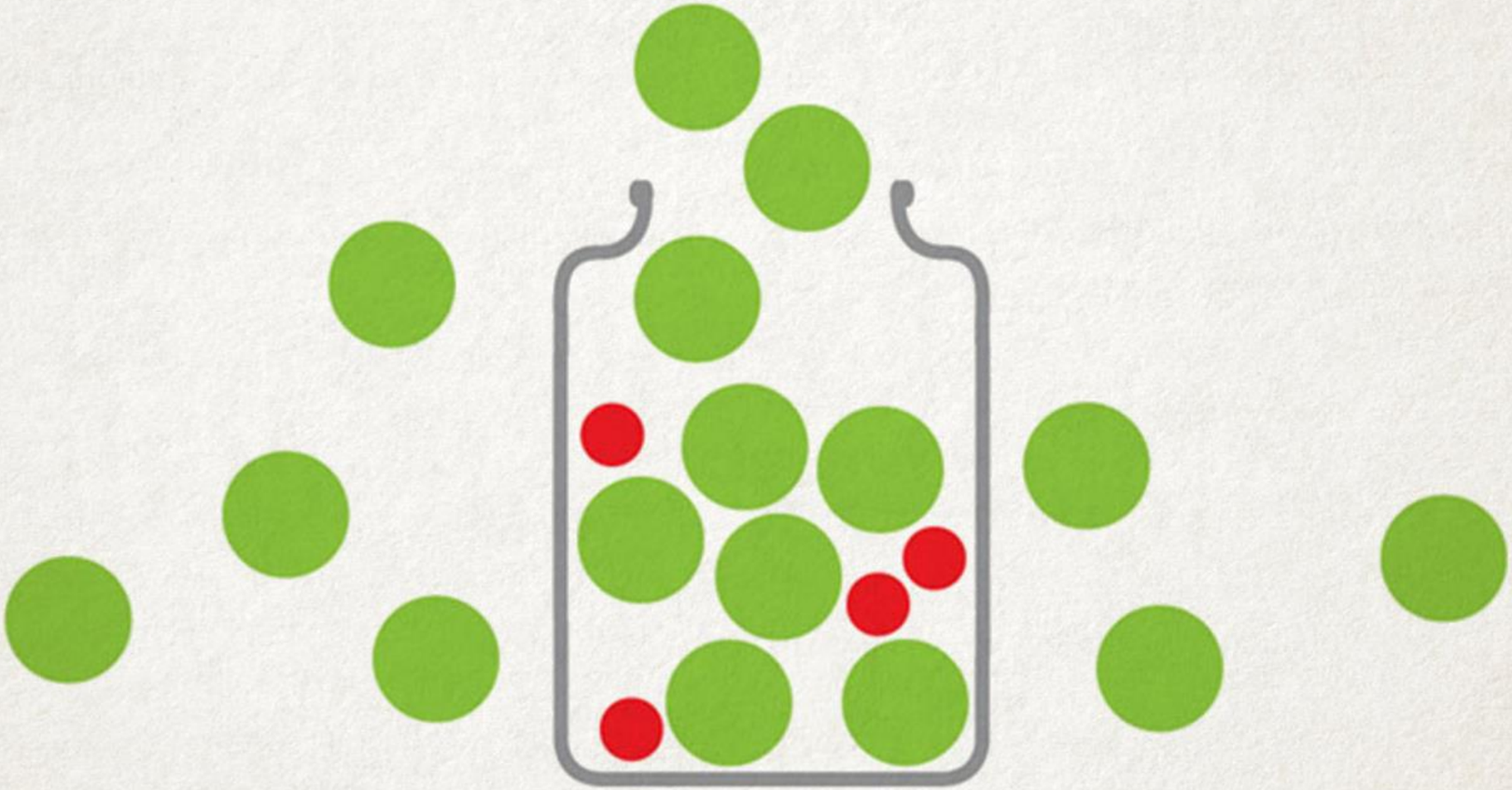
Turning States into Traits: HEAL

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

Three Breaths

Breathing while feeling your chest as a whole

- Calming, grounding, noticing you're alright right now

Breathing while feeling caring

- With compassion for suffering

Breathing while feeling cared about

- With gratitude for others

Growing Inner Strengths

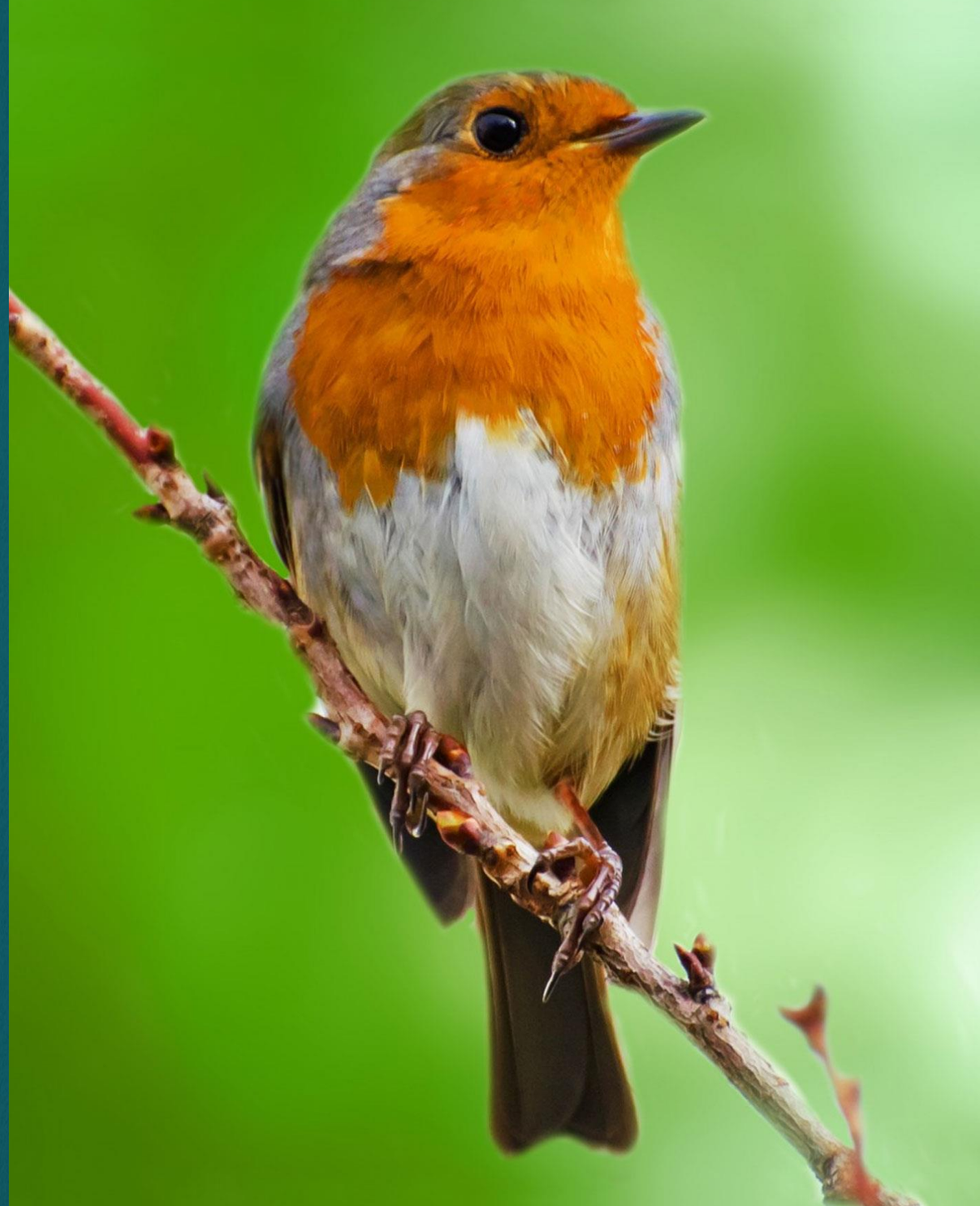
Take in the good many times a day.

Identify one or two key strengths you'd like to grow; look for daily opportunities to experience them; take in those experiences.

At least a few minutes each day, come home to a basic authentic sense of peacefulness, contentment, and love.

Keep a green bough
in your heart,
and a singing bird
will come.

Lao Tzu



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See RickHanson.net for other good books.

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

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