

Strategies for Being Your Best Possible SELF

Unlocking the Power of Healthy Emotion Regulation to Help our Kids, Ourselves, and our Society Thrive

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How are you feeling?

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How Educators Felt in 2018

N = 6000
Educators from around the USA

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How Educators Feel Right Now

N = 5000
Webinar Participants
March 23-24

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HOW WE FEEL IS Out of Balance

Our educators (and students) are now spending 80% of their days in the RED & BLUE.

While the goal CANNOT be to in the YELLOW and GREEN all of the time, especially with our current circumstances, we need greater balance!

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We're Not Regulating Very Well!

Do these look familiar?


- Ruminating
- Worrying
- Avoiding
- Denying
- Suppressing
- Blaming
- Obsessing
- Procrastination
- Losing our temper
- Eating poorly
- Not exercising
- Problems sleeping
- Excessive drinking +
- And so on

Where might you have learned these strategies?

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Unhelpful Strategies...

<p>Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are often learned early from people who didn't have SEL training! • ...require little effort • ...happen outside of awareness • ...provide immediate relief • Hence, the reason why we develop bad habits! 	<p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are harmful to self & others • ...do not to solve the problem • ...negatively impact relationships • ...derail us from achieving goals • ...decrease health & well-being
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Vision Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence

To use the power of emotions to create a healthier and more equitable, innovative, and compassionate society



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Emotions Matter




- Attention, memory, and learning
- Decision making
- Relationship quality
- Physical and mental health
- Performance and creativity



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Emotion Scientist vs. Emotion Judge

<p>An Emotion Scientist...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepts <i>all</i> emotions as information • Sees emotions as ephemeral • Is open, curious, and reflective • Is in learner mode (investigates) • Wants to get "granular" • Has a "growth mindset" 	<p>An Emotion Judge...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views emotions as "error" and weak • Sees emotions as "permanent" • Is critical, closed, and ignores emotion • Is in knower mode (makes attributions) • Clumps emotions as good or bad • Has a "fixed mindset"
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Healthy Emotion Regulation




The "thoughts" and "actions" we use to prevent, reduce, initiate, maintain, or enhance emotions in order to promote well-being, build positive relationships, make sound decisions, and attain goals



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Managing Anxiety & Stress

- **Stress factors**
 - *Unpredictable, Uncontrollable, Sustained* (like how we feel about COVID-19)
- **Types of Stress**
 - *Eustress* – Positive stress. Pressure to perform. Flow
 - *Acute distress* – Can be an everyday stressor like running late for a meeting, or a sudden, unexpected event like witnessing an accident
 - *Chronic or toxic stress* – When stressors are ever-present and impact functioning (e.g., physical or emotional abuse/neglect).



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What are the Strategies?

<p>PHYSIOLOGICAL REGULATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindful breathing <p>SELF-CARE (Strong Immune System)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sleep, nutrition, exercise <p>POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling connected, positive attachments, spirituality <p>MANAGING YOUR THOUGHTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance, gratitude, positive self-talk, including self- and other-compassion, reappraisal, & problem-solving 	<p>MANAGING YOUR LIFE SMARTLY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modifying and selecting situations to prevent unwanted emotions • Having routines and daily goals <p>DOING THINGS YOU ENJOY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hobbies, entertainment, play, taking a walk in nature <p>FORGIVENESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We all mess up. People who forgive have greater well-being!
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Mindful Breathing

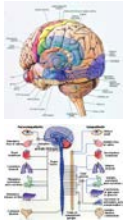
<p>MISCONCEPTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindful breathing is used only to regulate difficult emotions or prolong pleasant experiences. • When we do mindful breathing, we have to take deep belly breaths. 	<p>CLARIFICATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindfulness cultivates deeper awareness of all our experiences. • When breath mindfully, we breathe normally as we watch it.
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Honestly, how often do you just pause and breathe?

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Mindful Breathing

- Breathing mostly occurs automatically without attention
- When voluntary control overtakes metabolic breathing, the brain area in charge shifts from the brain stem (medulla/pons) to the motor cortex
- This helps us to activate PNS and inhibit SNS; improves respiratory and cardiovascular function
- The impact: greater focus & attention, less chatter, better immune function, decreases in hypertension, asthma, ANS imbalances, and mental health problems



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Mindful Breathing

Let's Do it Together!

- Check your posture
- Let your eyes close or look down
- Attend to the breath, naturally
- Put a gentle smile on your face
- Observe without judgment
- Options:
 - Count breaths
 - Repeat a Phrase (in, out; deep, slow; calm, ease; smile; release)
 - Focus on an image

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Nutrition

Stay Hydrated

- Drink water! Dehydration causes headaches, fatigue, difficulty with concentration, tension, anxiety, and negative mood.
- Limit caffeine and alcohol intake!

Avoid processed foods if possible

- When stressed, we are more likely to turn to high-fat, high-sugar foods.
- Take your vitamins!

Avoid getting hangry!

- Glucose is the *only* fuel used by brain. The bloodstream must deliver a steady supply of it (brain can't store it). Eating carbs is the only way to get glucose. It also can improve memory within an hour!

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Sleep

Healthy sleep includes both duration (8 or so hrs.) and quality

- Poor sleep = poor restoration = poor functioning
- Try no devices 1-hour before sleep (and put phone in a separate room!)
- It helps to do some light stretching or take a shower/bath before bed

Inadequate or excessive sleep increases:

- Anxious symptoms, fatigue, depressive symptoms

People with unhealthy sleep patterns are:

- More hostile, tense, and have less stable moods

Disturbed sleep disrupts cognitive functions

- If someone is unable to use their full cognitive capacity, it becomes difficult to use healthy strategies (especially the cognitive ones!)

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Exercise

Prevalence of obesity is around 40% & affects about 100 million of US adults. Obesity affects 1 in 5 children and adolescents

Physical exercise has been shown to...

- Decrease anxiety, stress, and depression; raise self-esteem
- Increase concentration and attentiveness

During exercise, our brain produces endorphins, which help you to relax and get that "runner's high" in one study:

- 50% of participants engaged in an aerobic exercise; others did business as usual. All participants were then exposed to a stressor. Exercise condition reported significantly less negative emotions

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Positive Relationships

We all have basic needs to be seen, heard, and met

- The mere presence of a caring adult reduces the effects of stress and helps to reduce negative emotions.
- But we need to be mindful that we are now forced to be in relationship with family members – a new social contract! (Build a Family Charter!)
- Yet in our schools:
 - Just 50% of teachers say they have strong relationships with their students
 - And only 34% of students say they have strong relationships with their teachers
- We all need an "Uncle Marvin"! Who's yours? For whom are you an Uncle Marvin?

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Self-Talk

- About 40% of our well-being has to do with our outlook on life
- Negative self-talk starts early, often by others who define our reality for us
- You can change the conversation you have in your head about yourself and the world around you
- It takes time and it may feel uncomfortable or awkward to talk to yourself in positive ways
- We can't just say, "stop thinking that way!"



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Managing Stress (unsuccessfully)

- **With COVID_19 we have the dangerous trio: it's unpredictable, uncontrollable, and it feels like it's going to last forever**
 - Consider Eckhardt Tolle quote, "you can't cope with the future"
- **Chronic stress = sense danger around the clock and irrational behavior**
 - Spraying people, gargling with Clorox; panic buying of toilet paper
 - Saying mean or hurtful things
- **And there is another problem: our brains lie to us - especially when we are uninformed**
 - When we don't have accurate information, our brain makes things up
 - Turbulence example: focus on things we can control.

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Managing Stress

Positive Self-Talk: Saying encouraging words in your head about yourself & the world around you. It helps to refer to yourself in the 3rd person.

From..."I'm going to lose it."

To..."Marc, you're the feelings master. You can get through this."

Positive Reappraisal: Looking at the situation through a different lens/putting a different spin on it.

From..."There's no way to protect myself."

To..."Marc, you're practicing physical distancing and taking every precaution."

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Managing Life Smartly

- **Be a preventionist not an interventionist!**
- **We can take actions that make it more or less likely we'll end up in a situation that might give use to anxiety.**
- **Here are some tips!**
 - Don't surround yourself with people who make you anxious!
 - Do surround yourself with people who are calming
 - Don't check social media or watch the news all day
 - Do stay informed.

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Managing Life Smartly


- **Routines create certainty!**
- **Consistency in wake up time, meals, exercise, work schedule, play time, etc. helps.**
- **When we have too much time on our hands, our brains have time to make up stories!**
 - *I'm not used to working at home. I was spending time in the kitchen (eating, watching TV, distracted). Quickly, I realized I needed a "quiet work space" or I'd go nuts.*
 - *What about you? How can you create a better routine?*



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Do Things You Enjoy!

- **We don't give ourselves permission to have fun. We think if I work all of the time or "problem solve," I'll find the solution.**
- **That's another lie. The opposite is true. Our creative ideas come when we give ourselves freedom.**
 - If available, take a walk, try a new exercise routine. Shake-up your routine (sing!).
 - Consider one thing you could look forward to doing this weekend. Make the plan.
 - Write a gratitude letter to someone who inspired you & send it! Journal recently?
 - Do something creative: try a new recipe, take out a pen and paper and just draw.
 - Watch a new show (in moderation), read a new book (better!), listen to a new podcast
 - Start a new photo album.
 - Find creative ways to connect with friends and family.
 - Find ways to offer help to your community. Givers are happier than takers!



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Make a Commitment


- **Think about the strategies we discussed.**
- **Which ones resonate with you the most?**
 - Mindful breathing, self-care, relationship-building, managing your thoughts, managing daily life, doing things you enjoy...
- **Commit to one thing you'll try today and this weekend.**
- **Be your Best 'SEL'f and really commit to it. You owe it to yourself and your loved ones.**




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Let's Put It All Together!

- Give yourself & others the permission to feel *all* emotions
- Emotion regulation isn't about not feeling, it's about accepting all feelings & using them wisely.
- Strive to become an emotion scientist, not an emotion judge
- Remember, we are all in this together. Physical distance does not mean psychological distance. Be an Uncle Marvin for someone.
- Appreciate that developing emotion regulation skills can be harder than learning traditional "hard" skills. It's life's work
- Be open to apologizing, forgiving, and repairing – and seeking help if necessary.
- Don't give up! Your health and your children's health depend on it!



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"Emotion Scientist Blog"
Free Articles, & Research Papers
marcbrackett.com



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Between stimulus and response there is space.
In that space is our power to choose our response.
In our response lies our growth and our freedom.
- Viktor Frankl

THANK YOU!



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