



# No More Study Stress: Emotional Resilience 101

Potential Plus Big Family Weekend, 27<sup>th</sup> October 2013

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## Outline of the Workshop

- What is study stress? Definition and Origins
- Times and signs of high study stress
- Usual ways of tackling stress
- What amplifies / reduces stress
- Where stress *really* comes from?
- Creating an ideal learning environment
- Foundations of emotional resilience
  - What is resilience
  - Discipline and resilience
  - How to spot resilience in your child
- Methods & techniques for building emotional resilience
- Resources and contact



## Who we are



- Potential Plus Members since 2011
- Parents of 9½ y.o. daughter, Aliyah
- Dr Shoshana Garfield
  - PhD in Psychology
  - Contracted to revamp our school's wellbeing policy
  - Attachment theory specialist
  - Expertise in psychological trauma recovery and happy relationships



## Questions:

What is Study Stress? Where does it comes from?



## Study stress: definition and origins

- *Stress* - a state of mental or emotional strain or tension *resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances.*
- Where is it *considered* to come from:
  - Too much homework / exam or test revision
  - Comparison with others
  - Expectations on a child performance (by parents / teachers or child him/herself)



### Question:

When do your child(ren) experience study stress most? What are the visible signs of study stress?



## Times and signs of high study stress

- Most study stress comes before / during:
  - Tests /Exams
  - Deadlines / Assessments
  - Auditions
  - Changing schools / teachers / acceleration
  - Fitting homework in otherwise busy life
- Signs of high study stress
  - Anxiety /depression
  - Poor appetite
  - Sleep difficulties
  - Short temper / mood swings / aggression
  - Isolation / lack of social interest
  - Psycho-somatic symptoms (e.g. eczema, headaches)



## Exercise (in groups)

1. How do you do stress in your family? (e.g. get anxious, have sleep problems )
2. How do you help your children reduce study stress?



## Summary: usual ways of tackling study stress

- Behavioural
  - Taking rest breaks (reading, walking, TV, tea)
  - Doing physical exercise (jogging, playfighting, yoga)
  - Changing study activities
  - Power naps
- Emotional / mental
  - Reframing (“take it as practice”, “it’s not a big deal if you don’t pass”)
  - Listen / give empathy
- Seeking external help (e.g. school counsellor)



## How schools help with study stress

- What does your school do?
  - School counsellor
  - Study culture (intensity of study, break frequency)
  - Concept of failure / success



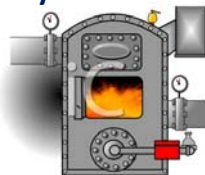
## What amplifies study stress?

- Parents / teachers prioritising achievement over emotional wellbeing (ever so innocently)
- Peer pressure
- Children's beliefs (internalising teachers / parents beliefs)
- Concept of failure / taking low performance personally



## Where Study Stress REALLY comes from?

Study Pressure



Anxious Thinking



- Thought is a very powerful instrument, but if we don't notice how it works, it can also do great harm... *David Bohm*



## Thinking that generates study stress

- **Meaning** we give to events / circumstance
  - Prioritising academic achievement over fulfilled childhood (and life overall)
  - Anticipating low performance and imagining the worst possible outcome
  - Thinking that happiness necessitates getting good education and a good job
  - Thinking that the outcome of study impacts our psychological wellbeing



## What reduces study stress?

- **General strategies:**
  - Planning the study work
  - Having (and providing) adequate resources
  - Clear boundaries (deadlines, study / rest balance )
- Supportive family / learning environment
- Supportive school environment
- **Emotional resilience**



## Ideal learning environment

- Physical
  - Tidy, free from noise and light pollution, ergonomic
- Mental
  - Adequate learning resources, help from parents, **leisure time**
- Emotional
  - “Ok to make mistakes”, resilient, supportive
- Social
  - Culture of learning in the family, separate from entertainment
- Spiritual
  - Beliefs about the purpose of learning and its meaning



## Leisure time vs Time fillers

- Quality leisure /rest time – truly resting, reconnecting with inner peace
  - E.g. walking, napping, reading, meal times
- Time fillers – if you don't feel rested after
  - E.g. computer games, TV
- Why is leisure time important?





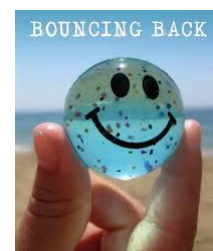
### Question:

What do you do well to create an ideal learning environment? What might you do to improve it?



### What is Resilience?

- “Bouncing back” from emotional distress
  - Taking responsibility for one’s emotions (lack of drama)
  - Knowing one can DO something about or bear one’s emotional state
  - Ability to remain focused under pressure (e.g. In test conditions)
  - Safety net of a deep sense of ‘OK-ness’ no matter what
  - **The capacity to manage strong feelings and impulses**
- Resilience involves behaviours, thoughts, and actions that can be learned and developed.
- Emotional pain is unavoidable – life is a contact sport. In fact, **Building resilience is likely to involve considerable emotional distress.** *(So is not building resilience!!!)*



## The Foundations of Resilience

- If 'bouncing back' is possible, and the past doesn't change, then it is our relationship with the past that changes
- The nature of thought is that we experience/feel our thinking about what happens, not what happens. **We NEVER experience what happens directly, not even with physical pain.**
- Who is doing the thinking anyway?
- Constant tension:
  - Ego-based thinking, the personal, the story
  - There is an **Inner Wisdom** that is constant and unchanging, and **CANNOT** be destroyed or hurt, no matter what



## Discipline and Resilience

- Reliance is a critical component of discipline
- Discipline is a critical component of achievement in whatever way that is defined for/by your child(ren)
- Discipline: (The Path of Mastery – *George Leonard*)
  - Doing what is right, no matter what – integrity
  - Working towards a higher, non-instant goal, despite temptations to put it aside – higher purpose



## How To Spot Resilience In Your Child

- Minimal temper tantrums (a few minutes tops, even seconds)
- Respond philosophically to their own troubles
- Minimal or no anxiety before tests/exams
- 'Call you out' compassionately when you are not resilient
- Stable performance in competitive environments
- Ability to remain calm whilst: doing tasks that challenge them, they are not good at, make mistakes
- Capacity to listen to reason



## Costs of NOT Building Resilience

- Underperformance in tests/school/IQ Evals
  - Not being seen as gifted in school
  - Dropping out of university
- Developing neurological/psychological disorders, e.g. OCD, depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation
- Afraid to take risks/make mistakes
- Withdrawal from, reduced intimacy in, or obsessive about personal and family relationships
- Inability to successfully perform in a competitive workplace
- Unfulfilling / unstable personal relationships



## Methods of Building Resilience 1

- Demonstrate it – be resilient yourself
- Through parenting –
  - Shepherd them through issues of resilience as they arise
  - Develop a world view that supports resiliency
  - Show examples of resilience in media and books (age appropriate!) (e.g. slavery, WW II) and discuss what makes them resilient
- Get your child into therapy (let someone else teach it, and provided the practitioner knows what they are doing!!!)



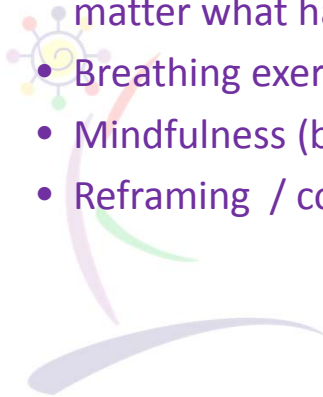
## Methods of Building Resilience 2

- Learn yourself and teach your child techniques to release challenging emotions – anxiety, distress, anger, sadness
- DAILY practice – small to big. Everyday life has PLENTY of challenges!
- Get your kid(s) school(s) to develop a well-being policy, include in their weekly curriculum



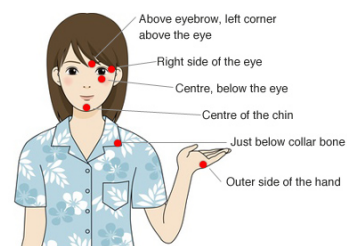
## Techniques for developing resilience and releasing study stress

- **Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT)**
- **Inner Wisdom paradigm** (“You’re OK no matter what happens”)
- Breathing exercises
- Mindfulness (building awareness)
- Reframing / cognitive-behavioural tricks

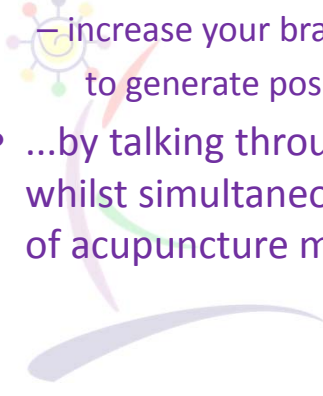


## What is EFT?

- A process that allows you to...
  - release emotional blocks
  - handle unpleasant emotions
  - increase your brain/body capacity to generate positive emotion



- ...by talking through an experience / feeling whilst simultaneously tapping on end-points of acupuncture meridians



## What is Inner Wisdom?

- DEEP sense of peace
- Inspiration, intuition
- What many call wellbeing
- Detachment from outcome – being OK with whatever happens
- Responsibility for one's feelings and actions
  - Awareness of the nature and role of thought



## How can you connect to your Inner Wisdom?

- Meditation
- Prayer
- Walks
- Physical exercise / activity
- Shower
- *Discipline/capacity to step back from troubled emotions and to recognise you are getting flooded by your feeling*
  - *Knowing you are getting overwhelmed by your thoughts*





## Inner Wisdom Model



Level of Individual Psychology, of the Personal, of the Story -  
Who we THINK we are,  
who we fear we are

**Inner Wisdom  
(Who we REALLY are)**

Question:  
How can you incorporate the Inner  
Wisdom paradigm in helping your  
child reduce their stress?



## Resources

- Videos
  - <http://wellbeingforschools.com/freevideos> - Shoshana's previous Potential Plus presentations on Emotional Intelligence, Parenting, dealing with Bullying, and Happy families.
- EFT -Take a course!
  - [www.aamet.org](http://www.aamet.org) - UK's main associative body for EFT
  - [www.garythink.com](http://www.garythink.com) – free resources from the founder of EFT
  - [www.eft-universe.com](http://www.eft-universe.com) – LOADS of videos
  - [www.eftfree.net](http://www.eftfree.net) – free manual, LOADS of resources
  - Helena Fone – *EFT for Dummies*
  - Dawson Church – *Genie in Your Genes*
- Inner Wisdom
  - “Clarity” by Jamie Smart – a good introduction to Inner Wisdom paradigm
  - You Can Be Happy No Matter What – R Carlson
  - Parenting From the Heart – J Pransky



## Contact

- [www.shoshanagarfield.com](http://www.shoshanagarfield.com)  
[www.unlimitedemotionalfreedom.com](http://www.unlimitedemotionalfreedom.com)  
 – EFT Training DVDs and other support
- You Tube channel  
<http://www.youtube.com/user/HowToLetGo/videos>  
 (over 100 free videos)
- To arrange a consultation, or a speaking or teaching engagement:
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