

RESILIENCE TRAINING: SPECIAL FORCES IMPLICATIONS FOR SPORT COACHES AND THEIR ATHLETES IN AN OLYMPIC YEAR CAMPAIGN



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DISCLAIMER

For Political Correctiveness and Context Distorters:

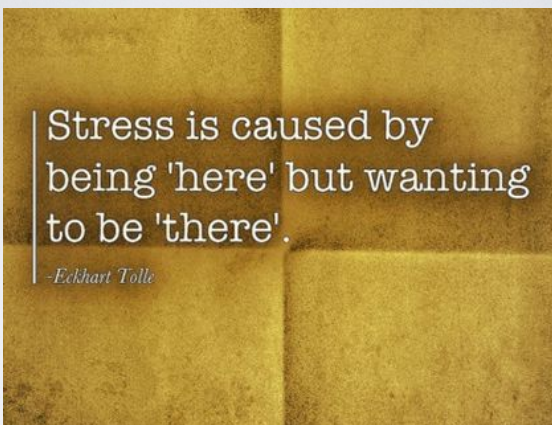
I greatly respect our military members, their missions and sacrifices.

I do not imply sport is on any level equal to war.

I try to utilize best practices of those who encounter unique stressors.



AWARENESS, DISCUSSIONS AND REFERRAL



WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST STAGE?

- Conference Champs
- Nationals
- Sr or Jr Champs
- Olympic Trials
- Olympic or World Championships



OLYMPIC CAMPAIGN OBSTACLES

- Sociological Importance and Myths
- Peers
- Family
- Sponsors
- Agents
- Federations
- Media
- Support Staff
- Environmental
- Travel
- Competition Designs



RESILIENCE TRAINING ASSORTED THOUGHTS AND CONCEPTS OF CURRENT TRENDS

The following is a synopsis and consolidation of current work being done by U.S. Military researchers who are working to aid our troops, especially Special Forces groups doing multiple tours of duty in very dangerous confines.



THE RESOURCE

Three authors collaborated on a noteworthy paper found in the journal "American Psychologist", January 2011. The title of the work is "Master Resilience Training in the U.S. Army". The contributors are Karen J. Reivich, Martin Seligman and Sharon McBride.



THE ORIGINAL PAPER

Master Resilience Training in the U.S. Army

Karen J. Reivich and Martin E. P. Seligman Sharon McBride

The U.S. Army Master Resilience Trainer (MRT) course, which provides face-to-face resilience training, is one of the foundational pillars of the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program. The 10-day MRT course is the foundation for training resilience skills to sergeants and for teaching sergeants how to teach these skills to their soldiers. The curriculum is based on materials developed by the University of Pennsylvania, the Penn Resilience Program (PRP), and other empirically validated work in the field of positive psychology. This "train the trainer model" is the main vehicle for the dissemination of MRT concepts to the entire force.



WHERE IT STANDS

Current troop education matters in this area of interest centre around three foundational areas.

The first leg is termed **preparation components** which essentially teach the **fundamentals of resilience**.

The second leg is described as **sustainment components** and it covers the **deployment cycle** of the troops.

The last leg is referred to as **enhancement component** which hones in on **personal and professional skills** that maximize individual performance.



MY EXPERIENCES AND OVERVIEWS



KEY SUPPORT FACTORS

- Huge **accountability systems** both top down and horizontally.
- **Debrief** driven process, layers and timing critical.
- **Action points** defined and monitored.
- **Multiple sources** of input and support.



WORKING DEFINITION

Resilience training is defined by this group as "a set of processes that enables good outcomes in spite of serious threats".



Expansion of Concept:

The authors further define this work “as the ability to persist in the face of challenges and to bounce back from adversity”.

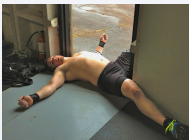


CURRENT MINDSET BY MANY



WHAT MENTAL RESILIENCE IS NOT ABOUT!

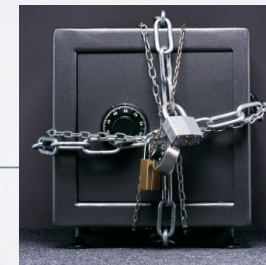
- Boot camp training schemes. All Olympic finalists and Coaches work and train hard, why do so many fail?
- Gut wrenching training sessions and endless hours of work, many athletes/coaches do this paradigm, why do so many fail?
- “Team building” sessions or pop psych slogans
- Meditation on mountain tops
- Navel gazing



PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Protective factors that contribute to resiliency include:

Optimism
Effective Problem Solving
Faith
Sense of Meaning
Self Efficacy



PROTECTIVE FACTORS, PG. 2

flexibility
impulse control
empathy
close relationships



ADDITIONAL RESEARCH DONE IN THE RELATED AREAS OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

additional metrics explored:

emotional awareness

general self regulation

signature strengths

cultivating gratitude

active constructive responding



ALBERT ELLIS, OLD NEWS

ADVERSITY, BELIEFS AND CONSEQUENCES

Beliefs about events drive one's emotions and behaviors.



PERCEPTION FACTORS



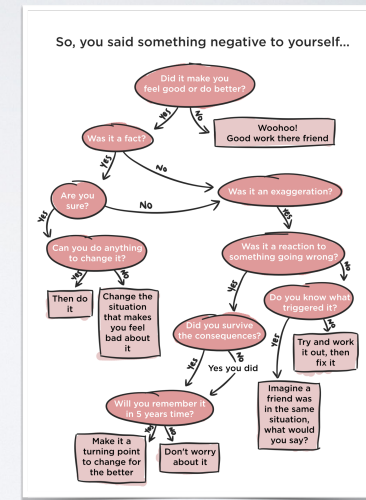
EXPLANATORY STYLE, ELLIS

- How do we explain both negative and positive experiences in our lives?



SELF TALK

Do you keep a self talk log?



THE NAYSAYERS

PESSIMISTS ATTRIBUTE CAUSES OF "NEGATIVE EVENTS" TO **PERMANENT, UNCONTROLLABLE AND PERVASIVE FACTORS.**



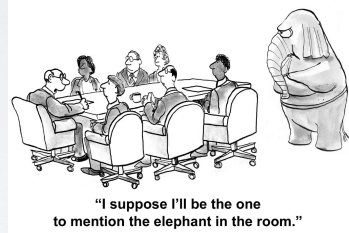
THE "CAN DOERS"

Optimists tend to attribute the causes of "negative events" to **temporary, changeable and specific factors.**



THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

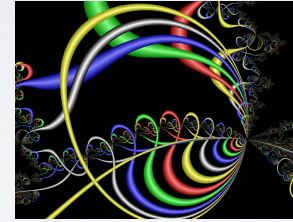
- Post traumatic stress disorders
- Delayed stress syndrome
- Adjustment syndrome
- Depression
- Anxiety/panic disorders
- Conduct disorders



THEME LOOPS

Adversity>beliefs>consequences>emotion>behaviors

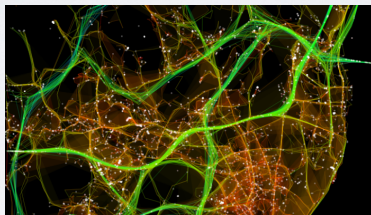
Accurate causal beliefs>identify true causes of fear>identify distractions>identify negative emotion



******Inaccurate thoughts** can be generated solely by explanatory style!

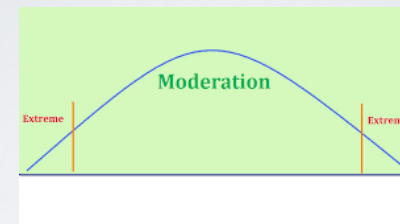
TEACHING AND PEDAGOGICAL CONCEPTS

Self-awareness- identifying one's **thoughts, emotions and behaviors**;



*******identify patterns** in each that are **counterproductive.**

Self-regulation- the ability to **regulate** *impulses, thinking, emotions, and behaviors* to **achieve goals** as well as the **willingness and ability to express emotions.**



Many can do the first part, the second is often the landmine.

Optimism- noticing the **goodness** *in self and others*; identifying **what is controllable**, remaining **wedded to reality** and “**challenging counterproductive beliefs**”.



Mental agility- thinking **flexibly** and **accurately**, using sound **perspective taking** and **willingness to try new strategies**.



Character strengths- identifying the “**top strengths**” in **oneself and others**, relying on one’s strengths to **overcome challenges** and **meet goals** and **cultivating a strength approach** in one’s squad or unit.



Connection- building strong relationships through **positive and effective communication**, **showing empathy**, willingness to *ask for help* and willingness to *offer help*.



BUILDING MENTAL TOUGHNESS

ABC model

A= activating event

B= beliefs

C= consequences of thoughts

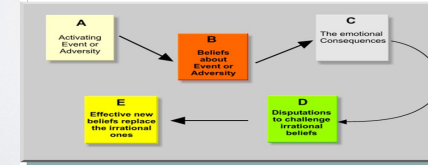


CRITICAL STEP

One must identify thoughts that are triggered by certain **activating events**. This can range from components **in training** to specific occurrences **during competition**.

Ellis' ABC

- **Activating events:** Seeing a large dog
- **Beliefs about those events:** Dogs bite
- **Consequences: feelings and actions:** Panic



ACTIVATING EVENTS

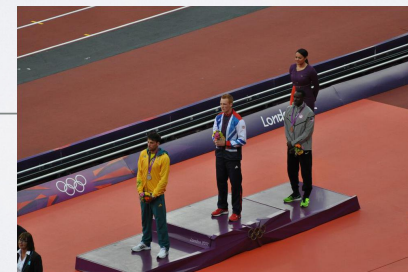
It is very important to realize that not only **professional** but **personal** activating events must be explored.



The goal here is to separate the activating events from what you **say to yourself** in the heat of the moment and the **emotions/behaviors these thoughts generate**.

PODIUM FINDINGS

In my experience, athletes who can identify **problematic self talk** and **remedy the moment** are the ones who consistently find themselves on the podium.



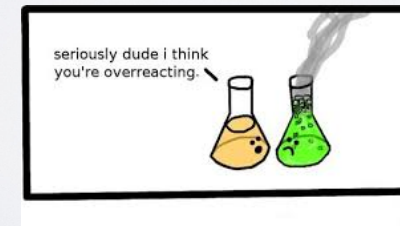
EXPLANATORY STYLE

Explanatory styles and other **patterns of thinking** can either **increase** *technical efficiencies, output and mental health measures* or **diminish** them; there is no middle ground here.



“Thinking Traps”

Thinking traps often include **jumping to conclusions on scant, logical evidence**. A common example of this is **over generalization** and judging one’s personal worth, motivation and or ability on the basis of a **single episode**.



ICEBERGS, DEEPLY HELD BELIEFS

Can these icebergs drive out-of-proportion emotions which in turn switch on faulty reactions in the field of play?

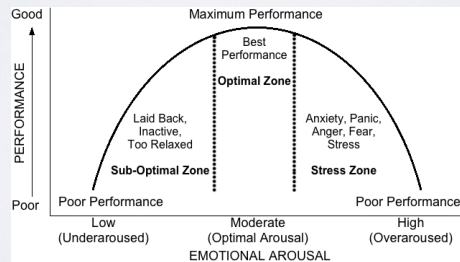


ICEBERGS

- Is this iceberg **still meaningful** to you today?
- Is this iceberg **accurate** in the given situation?
- Is this iceberg overly **rigid**?
- Is this iceberg truly **useful** in the moment of fire?

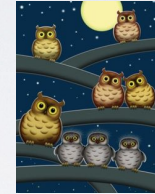
Energy Management

There are many proven methods for **managing energy and arousal levels**. The problem is **practice**. As with any other component of training and meet management skills, it must be done **systematically and regularly**.



PROBLEM SOLVING

Great athletes/coaches enjoy **mental puzzles**. It is what separates them from the average.



We spend a great deal of our day dealing with problems and solutions, both **long term and immediate**.

****Beware of Conformational Bias!**

CATASTROPHIC THINKING

We all fall victim to this loop at various stages of our careers and lives. It can be a fatal trait if left unabated. It is defined as ruminating about irrational worst-case outcomes.



BATTLING CATASTROPHIC THOUGHT TRAINS

Capture the catastrophic thoughts, generate a **best case possibility** to ponder and then **identify most likely outcomes**.

Once outcomes are stated or locked in, one should then develop **coping strategies for each scenario**.

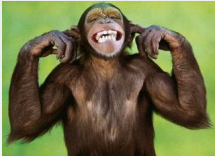


Contingency planning (positive) must be a practiced skill.

Catastrophic planning is a virus easily caught and feeds itself sub-consciously.

ANTIDOTES TO MENTAL CHATTER

Strategies based on evidence, optimism and perspective.



The triad they attack are **minimizing, rationalizing and denial.**

FEAR is often an acronym for false evidence appearing real

CHALLENGING COUNTER PRODUCTIVE THOUGHTS IN ACTION

Challenging counterproductive thoughts is **not about replacing** every negative thought with a positive one.

Rather, it is a **STOP GAP** technique that enables one to focus on right now and not put oneself or others at greater risk because of distracting thoughts.

The theme of negative thoughts almost always is related to **Iceberg beliefs** so yes, we need to dissect them but not in the heat of battle.



Cultivating Gratitude

The research on gratitude indicates that individuals who habitually acknowledge and express gratitude derive health benefits, sleep benefits and relationship benefits.

BE GENEROUS
WITH GRATITUDE,
FOR IT IS
CONTAGIOUS.

Identifying Character Strengths

Loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage



By knowing the strengths of others, you develop contingency plans without even realizing it.

STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS

In my experience, **catastrophic failures** at Olympic Games are almost always rooted in relationship issues.



There appear to be three key skill sets that are needed to be **consistently bold and effective** when involved in ongoing relationships

They include; **active constructive responding, praise** and **effective communication styles**.

RELATIONSHIP RESPONSES

There are four styles of relationship responding—**active constructive** (authentic, enthusiastic support), **passive constructive** (understated support), **passive destructive** (ignoring or partial acknowledgement of the event), and **active destructive** (pointing out negative aspects of the event).



PRAISE

Praise can be a fine art form in this day of haste and facade living.



Learning to emphasize a praise concept that **points out a specific strategy, effort or skill that contributed to a good outcome** as opposed to more general praise like the one size fits all “nice job!”

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH YOURSELF AND OTHERS

Identifying and working to **understand the situation**

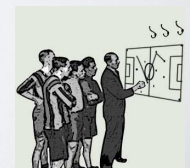
Move towards an **acceptable change**

Listing benefits to the situation and the relationship when the **change is implemented**

Describing the situation **objectively** and **accurately**

Expressing concerns

Asking the other person for his or her **perspective**



SUSTAINING MR SKILL SETS

In Special Forces training a lot of time and work is spent on MRT for **pre-deployment** and **post-deployment** situations. In sport, I think we can transfer these to **pre-meet** and **post-meet** scenarios.

Knowing what to expect in terms of **psychological demands and reactions** during the **entire competition** is critical. Good **contingency plans** involve all possible outcomes and occurrences.

Those who fail to review in depth and from all angles limit performance.



ENHANCED MRT COMPONENTS

- Mental Skills Foundations
- Building Confidence
- Goal Setting and Process Procedures
- Attentional Control: Focus Grids
- Energy Management
- Imagery



key mental resiliency metrics, commonalities among 12 organizations world wide

1. ABC-Adversity, Beliefs and Consequences
2. Thinking traps
3. Icebergs
4. Energy management
5. Problem solving
6. "Put it in perspective"
7. Real time resilience
8. Identifying strengths in self and others
9. Using strengths in challenges
10. Assertive communication
11. Active constructive responding and praise
12. "Hunt the good stuff"

