Keeping Calm in the COVID-19 Crisis: Tapping into the Neurobiology of Stress

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LOVE YOUR WORK. LOVE YOUR LIFE.
PART 1: UNDERSTAND STRESS AND CALM IN THE WORLD OF COVID-19 THROUGH A NEUROSCIENCE LENS

PART 2: PRACTICE 5-8 MINDFULNESS-BASED NEUROSCIENCE TOOLS TO FOSTER CALM AND REDUCE STRESS DURING THIS TIME

PART 3: THINK ABOUT HOW TO USE THE TOOLS IN YOUR DAILY WORK AND HOME LIFE DURING THE NEXT FEW WEEKS
How can I make the most of this experience?

- What’s new or interesting?
- How does this apply to my life and work?
- What’s relevant in a pandemic?
<table>
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<th>TOOL TO GET TO RESPONSIVE MODE</th>
<th>HOW TO DO IT</th>
<th>WHEN TO USE IT</th>
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Calming Practice #1

Oxygenate Your Brain &
Be Here Now
3 Deep Breaths
Understanding the Neurobiology of Stress
Laura’s go-to experts on neurobiology and neuropsychology

- Bessel Van Der Kolk, M.D
- Stephen Porges, Ph.D
- Deb Dana, LCSW
- Dr. Rick Hanson, Ph.D.
- Daniel Siegel, M.D.
- Linda Graham, MFT
- Richard Schwartz, Ph.D.
- Tracey Shors, Ph.D.
3 Operating Systems of the Brain

cortex/primate

subcortex/mammalian

brainstem/reptilian
Responsible for Meeting 3 Human Needs

cortex/connection

subcortex/satisfaction

brainstem/safety
Each of the 3 operating systems has the same 2 settings:

RESPONSIVE

REACTIVE
**Regulated State:**

- **When you feel:** Safe, Satisfied, Connected
- **You operate in:** Responsive Mode
- **Regulated State:** Calm/“Flow” State

**Dysregulated State:**

- **When you feel:** Unsafe/Afraid, Dissatisfied, Disconnected
- **You operate in:** Reactive Mode
- **Dysregulated State:** Arrest/Vigilence, Flight/Fight, Freeze, Fold/Collapse
REGULATED STATE:
“FLOW” STATE
YOU OPERATE IN:
RESPONSIVE MODE
WHEN YOU FEEL:
SAFE
SATISFIED
CONNECTED

What word(s) do you use to describe your “flow state?”
REGULATED STATE: “FLOW” STATE

WHEN YOU FEEL:
- SAFE
- SATISFIED
- CONNECTED

YOU OPERATE IN:
RESPONSIVE MODE

“In the zone”
- Calm
- Centered/Grounded
- Fearless
- Unshakable/Unstoppable
- In “Self” Energy
What are synonyms for s/s/c?

Safety=
Satisfaction=
Connection=
<table>
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<th>Human Need</th>
<th>When I have it, I feel:</th>
<th>When I don’t have it, I feel:</th>
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<td>Safety</td>
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*Adapted from concepts presented in Rick Hanson’s Book [Hardwiring Happiness](https://www.hardwiringhappiness.com), 2013*
Synonyms for s/s/c:

Safety=I feel at **peace**

Satisfaction=I feel **joy**

Connection=I feel **love & belonging**
What are synonyms for the opposite?

Unsafe=
Dissatisfied=
Disconnected=
What are synonyms for the opposite?

Unsafe = I feel **scared**

Dissatisfied = I feel **unhappy**

Disconnected = I feel **alone**

Pandemic

COVID-19

Corona-virus
Which state are your community, clients, co-workers, family, and world in right now (at least some of the time)?

Not connected!

Not satisfied!

Not safe!
What happens when the nervous system detects danger?

What examples of dysregulation are you observing in yourself and others during this pandemic?

DYSREGULATED STATE:

- **ARREST/VIGILANCE**
- **FLIGHT/FIGHT**
- **FREEZE**
- **FOLD/COLLAPSE**

"I am on guard: my safety/satisfaction/connection is at risk"

"I must fight or flee to survive"

"If I am not sure what to do, I act like a deer in headlights"

“If all else fails, I withdraw and give up”
2 Pandemic-Specific Tools to Help You Come Back to Calm When You Feel Reactive
Calming Practice #2

Neuro-hack your vagus nerve:
5 Long Exhales
Calming Practice #3

Transcend “Existential Anxiety”
Feel Your Aliveness:
Heart Hug
Understanding How Keeping Calm Helps Us to Function Better During a Pandemic
How is this pandemic adding to your work stress/home stress and increasing your reactive mode?
I'm holding up just fine

How is everyone else doing?
I have started coloring to manage my stress and anxiety.
Ben

3-16-20

homed School

It is not going good. My mom is getting stressed out. My mom is really getting confused. We took a break so my mom can figure this stuff out, and I'm telling you, it is not going good.
Many parents are just about to discover the teacher was not the problem. 🏫_relations_math_😂
Kinda starting to understand why pets try to run out of the house when the front door opens.
Calming Practice #4

Being Real with What’s Real
Pause and Notice
How to be more productive when you work:

In which mode is our cognitive functioning optimized?

BLUE ZONE  RED ZONE
Stress/Reactive State

Cognitive functioning

- perceiving
- thinking
- remembering
- problem solving
- decision making
- speaking
In which mode is it most difficult to regulate our emotions and responses?
Reactive State

Emotional Regulation

ABLE TO:
--access and maintain CALM
--manage emotions
--cope in healthy ways
--express a range of emotions in ways that create safety connection with others
--observe emotions and get perspective
--control behavior, reactions, urges
Which mode is optimal for handling a crisis?

Cognitive Functioning

Ability to adapt in the moment to the current situation

I AM CALM & HANDLING THIS CRISIS AS BEST AS I CAN
3 Pandemic-Specific Tools to Help You Keep Calm and Carry On at Work and Home

Yah, right! Good luck with that.
GOAL:
1) Know that my emotions are normal
2) Feel that I’m ok right now
3) Notice red zone emotions and
4) Help move red zone to blue zone
5) Then take action

How do I do that?
Calming Practice #5

Talk to Your Concerns
“Right Here, Right Now”
Reflect on Your Resilience: “What am I doing right?”
Calming Practice #7

What Kind of Help Would Be Helpful?
Accessing help when you need help staying in blue zone:

- Private therapists (psychologytoday.com)
- Resilience coaching or other forms of professional/life coaching
- On-line support groups (AA, Al-anon, Nar-anon, CoDA, etc.)
- Religious/spiritual guidance
- Friends and family
- Pets and trees
- Regular sleep + exercise + healthy diet
Questions and Thank You for all you are doing for yourself and others in this time!
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