


**THE MENTALLY STRONG EDUCATOR
(OR STUDENT!)
STRATEGIES FOR FACING CHALLENGES WITH
GRIT, STEADINESS, AND A CAN-DO ATTITUDE**

Iowa Organization for Student Success
November 2, 2023: 9:45 am – 11 am
Brenda Clark Hamilton, MA Ed.



1


**GRATITUDE:
ALWAYS A GREAT PLACE TO START...**



**Please tell one thing
that you are thankful for this morning!**

2

**THE MENTALLY STRONG EDUCATOR
(OR STUDENT!)**

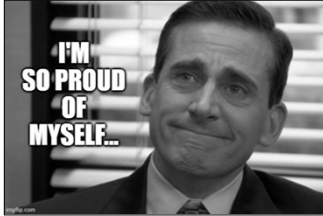


**STRATEGIES FOR
FACING CHALLENGES
WITH GRIT, STEADINESS,
AND A CAN-DO ATTITUDE**

3

MENTAL STRENGTH...

"I've faced difficult times before. I can handle whatever is thrown my way, with wisdom, creativity, common sense, and a can-do attitude."



4

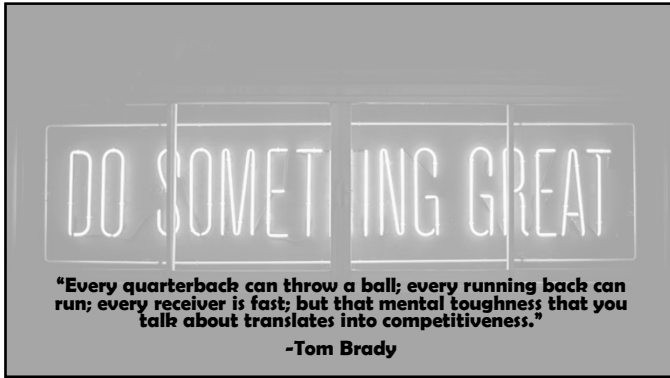
DO SOMETHING GREAT

"Mental toughness is to physical as four is to one."
-Bobby Knight

5

Go up and never stop

6



7



8

FIVE STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING MENTAL STRENGTH

1. Tweak your mind for daily strength.
2. Be aware of what lens you are wearing.
3. Create your own identity.
4. Recognize the power within you to create a 'new normal' at work or home.
5. Live and work with Mojo!

9

**STRATEGY 1:
TWEAK YOUR MIND FOR DAILY STRENGTH.**

The Harvard Business School Professor's **Don't Stop Believin'** Challenge



10

"Standing in front of a group of peers, students belted out the Journey song 'Don't Stop Believin' into a microphone. A voice recognition program on the Nintendo Wii automatically scored their performance on an accuracy scale from 1 to 100 percent, assessing volume, pitch, and note duration. They would earn a bonus for high scores."

- What advice would you give?
- Before the performances, researchers randomly assigned students:
 - *Control group (no coaching/instructions)*
 - *"I am anxious" group*
 - *"I am excited" group*
- Would it impact their scores?



11

- Control group:
69% accuracy
- *I Am Anxious* group:
53% accuracy
- *I Am Excited* group:
80% accuracy

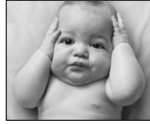
(Study by Harvard Business School's Alison Wood Brooks, in Adam Grant's *Originals: How Non-Conformists Move the World*)



12

REALIZE THAT SMALL TWEAKS IN THE WAY YOU THINK ABOUT THINGS CAN MAKE A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE.

- Researchers showed one of two, three-minute videos to 380 managers from the United Bank of Switzerland
- The 1st group's video: The negative effects of stress (e.g., stress-related health issues; negative impact on organs)
- The 2nd group's video: The positive effects of stress (e.g., can boost memory; can help the body recover from injury)



(Shawn Achor and Yale researchers Ali Crum and Peter Salovey, as reported in *Before Happiness: The Five Hidden Keys to Achieving Success, Spreading Happiness, and Sustaining Positive Change*)

13

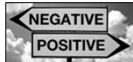
"The results of our study were highly significant. Those who had watched the video highlighting the enhancing rather than debilitating effects of stress reported a 23 percent drop in physical symptoms associated with distress (such as headaches, backaches, fatigue). What's more, on a scale of 1 to 4, productivity assessment moved from 1.9 to 2.6—nearly a 30 percent increase."

(Achor, in *Before Happiness*)



14

LITTLE TWEAKS CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE DURING STRESSFUL TIMES...



- This is going to be a disaster.
- I'll never get this paperwork done.
- I'll never get caught up on all of these emails.
- I'll never learn this new computer system.
- My life is over.
- I'm totally screwed.



- I/We can get through this.
- This is not my 1st rodeo.
- I am smart, tough, and capable.
- I've survived hard things before.
- When the going gets tough, I dig in and get stronger.
- I am a powerful Iowa Student Success Professional...
Don't even try to mess with me!



15

A DAILY, POSITIVE TWEAK TO IMPROVE MOOD & ENERGY—SAY ARG!

- **A**nticipate
- **R**ecollect
- **G**ratITUDE

(Eric Barker)



16

**STRATEGY 2:
BE AWARE OF WHAT
LENS YOU ARE WEARING.**

- October 3, 1987
- Each of us has a lens through which we view everything that happens each day.
- Each of us has certain comfortable, familiar pairs...that we wear most often.

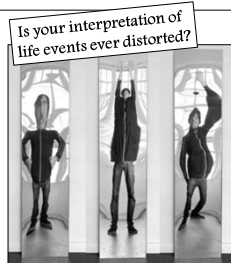


17

• The problem is that many of the lenses we wear do not give us an accurate view of reality.

• Many times, we put on these lenses due to happenings in our life: *1997-98 in the Hamilton family*

• The "Every Time That Phone Rings It's Bad News" Lens



18

OH, THE LENSES THAT WE WEAR...

- The Failure Lens: "I messed up, again. I can never get anything right."
- The Guilt-Ridden Lens: "I must've done something wrong."
- The Victim Lens: "The world is out to get me."
- The "Nothing Goes Right in My Life" Lens
- The "No one Appreciates Me" Lens
- The "All the People I Work With Are Messed Up" Lens

Which lenses are comfortable and familiar to you?



19

These lenses certainly impact how we view and interact with the world.

A traveler came upon an old farmer hoeing in his field beside the road. Eager to rest his feet, the wanderer hailed the countryman, who seemed happy to straighten his back and talk for a moment.

"What sort of people live in the next town?" asked the stranger.

"Well, what were the people like where you came from?" replied the farmer.

"Sorry to say, they were a bad lot. Troublemakers all, and lazy too. The most selfish people in the world; not a one of them to be trusted. I'm happy to be leaving the scoundrels."

"Is that so?" replied the old farmer.
"Well, I'm afraid that you'll find the same sort in the next town."

Disappointed, the traveler trudged on his way,
and the farmer returned to his work.



20

Some time later another stranger, coming from the same direction, hailed the farmer, and they stopped to talk.

"What sort of people live in the next town?" he asked.

"Well," replied the farmer. "What were the people like where you came from?"

"Honest to gosh," said the traveler. "They were the best people in the world. Hard working, honest, and friendly as can be. I'm sorry to be leaving them."

"Fear not," said the farmer.

"My suspicion strongly tells me that you'll find the same sort in the next town."

(<http://www.plitt.edu/~dash/traveltales.html#twotravelersandfarmer>)



21

WHAT LENS WILL YOU CHOOSE TO WEAR EACH DAY?

- A lens that focuses on all the negative aspects of your job, coworkers, and work/home lives?
- Or a lens that looks for the good in yourself, others, work and life?
- **Shawn Achor:**
We each train our brain on what to get 'stuck' on.
(That's why ARG is a great daily practice!)



22

STRATEGY 3: CREATE YOUR OWN IDENTITY.

"I am not a cat"

234th Judicial District Court
Recording of this hearing or live stream is prohibited.
Violation may constitute contempt of court and result in a fine of up to \$500 and a jail term of up to 180 days.

304th Judicial District Court

Jerry L. Phillips

304th Judicial District Court

304th Judicial District Court

zoom

23

What are your two words?

Four Key Identities:


- Remembered
- Reflected
- Programmed
- Created

(Goldsmith, Mojo)



24

- Ask, *“Who do I want to be?”*
- List five words/traits that you want to live out in your daily life...and review it often!



25

**STRATEGY 4:
RECOGNIZE THE POWER WITHIN YOU TO CREATE
A ‘NEW NORMAL’ AT WORK OR HOME.**


- The cat raised in a show horse barn...





26

The people around us influence what feels ‘normal’ to us:

- *Be careful about what starts to feel ‘normal’!*
- *Who are the people that you spend the most time with, by choice?*
- *Be the one—by leading from where you are—to ‘create a new normal’ in your family, community, or work unit.*







27

STRATEGY 5: LIVE AND WORK WITH MOJO!

- The *Life Can Be Annoying Quiz!*
- “Sounds like life to me.”
- Reality:

*People are drawn to
be around happy people.*
(Damas & Silvers-Damas, *Happiness: Unlocking The Mysteries
of Psychological Health*)



Please be aware of the energy
you bring into this space.

28

MOJO vs. NOJO

(Marshall Goldsmith, *Mojo: How To Get It, How To Keep It, How To Get It Back If You Lose It*)

- ✓ Take responsibility
- ✓ Move forward
- ✓ Run the extra mile
- ✓ Love doing it
- ✓ Appreciate opportunities
- ✓ Make the best of it
- ✓ Inspirational
- ✓ Grateful
- ✓ Curious
- ✓ Caring
- ✓ Zest for life
- ✓ Awake

- ✓ Play the victim
- ✓ March in place
- ✓ Satisfied with the minimum
- ✓ Feel obligated to do it
- ✓ Tolerate requirements
- ✓ Endure it
- ✓ Painful to be around
- ✓ Resentful
- ✓ Uninterested
- ✓ Indifferent
- ✓ Zombie-like
- ✓ Asleep



29

**Recognize when
you are getting
grumpy and ask,
“What do I need?”**



30

**THE MENTALLY STRONG EDUCATOR
(OR STUDENT!)**

What is one
point that will
stick with you
from this session?



31

CLOSING QUESTION...

“Can you live with
not knowing?”

September 27, 2005



32



- ☛ 515.295.2379
- ☛ frcoffee@ncn.net
- ☛ 214 Robinson Drive,
Algona, IA 50511

www.BrendaClarkHamilton.com

www.facebook.com/BrendaClarkHamilton

LinkedIn: Brenda Clark Hamilton

33
