

REALTIME CAPTIONING ON THIS SCREEN

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LeANN M. HIBLER, CERTIFIED REALTIME CAPTIONER (CRC)

JOLIET, ILLINOIS.

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>> ERIC RIKLIN: Can people hear me? Cool.

\* resiliency/motivation by Eric Riklin \*.

>> ERIC RIKLIN: Hi, everyone. My name is Eric Riklin. I am from Fordham University. I'm a doctoral student there.

I did a lot of work with children, adolescents, and young adults that have chronic medical illnesses -- we try to work on interventions and adult programs to improve their quality of life and their well-being.

I also worked at Massachusetts's General Hospital with Ana-Maria Vranceanu. We did a lot of work recently on training and stress management training for adults, adolescents and patients with neurofibromatosis, and different medical conditions.

Professionally, I have a lot of experience working with stress management techniques and teaching individuals skills to improve lifestyle behaviors and overcome childhood medical conditions that may be stressful.

I also have personal experience because I was born with craniofacial condition called Crouzon syndrome where at birth, the mid-portion of my face grew differently than others. I had 25 surgeries up until the age of 22. So my condition has really necessitated a lifetime of challenges and a lot of hardships along the way.

However, I have been able to use a lot of the skills I will be talking about today to overcome some of these challenges and just move forward and not let the condition define me. Let me start by saying I know everybody is different and everybody has their own qualities and things like that.

A lot of things I talk about might not necessarily apply to you, but I am hoping that some of the skills that you learn today or hear about today, you might be able to take with you and try to adapt to whatever best fits your own needs.

We're going to go through some of them today but before I do that, I will tell my story, where I came from and kind of what I did to move forward.

As I said, I had about 25 surgeries throughout my early childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. I grew up basically in the hospital. I use to say the hospital was kind of like my third home. As soon I was born, I spent 30 days in the ICU and had surgery after surgery. Throughout it all, I was blessed because I had a lot of family to support me. A lot of family. And so I was really happy to have that. I was really blessed. But I also realized I had some natural qualities that allowed me to take advantage of doctor visits, not let hospital visits slow me down, and bounce back after surgeries.

These qualities allowed me to be a normal kid and to try to be happy as much as possible. Growing up, I tried to do my best to not let my condition define me and do what I thought I wanted to do as a child. Even though the doctors told me not to swim, I went swimming. Maybe not the best decision but, so far, I'm still standing.

I practiced sports. Even though I had bandages and scars, I did as much as I could to live a life I wanted. I even practiced my golf swing while in recovery. A little bit to the left there. I did what I could to really just have a life that I wanted. I tried to make friends. I went to Disneyland. I met Goofy. I went to multiple places. Really just trying to have a childhood that I loved and what I wanted. And not what my condition wanted.

So, although my childhood was great at times, there were definitely tough times as surgeries picked up, as I had more scarring, and really, each after surgery I had a different face. It was about getting accustomed to that and I know a lot of folks here today go through different surgeries and have to really regain our identity, have doctors visits, people tell you different things going on. Trying to just take it all in stride.

This all definitely took its toll after a while. It was harder to really overcome certain things. I became angry. I had -- I had down periods, really sad. I shut down a lot. I'm sure a lot of us have had those times as well. Really had difficult things come up and not have the ability to bounce back.

But like I said, life is a roller coaster. We have our ups, you have your downs. This time was a down for me. However, I was able to remind myself of the skills I had cultivated and maintained over the years to bounce back and have a childhood that I wanted.

I like to say that I had a pretty happy childhood and did as much as I wanted and really tried to use the skills I had and skills I was taught along the way to really not let my condition

define me as I said.

So as I grew up, I had people kept telling me, Eric, you are so resilient. I'm like I don't know what that word means, but okay.

As I have done more studying and have grown up and become a bit more mature I like to think, I learned what those skills were and I learned how to cultivate them and maintain them to create a better life.

Some of the skills we'll talk about today, and the skills I thought combined to help me, were social support, the use of mindfulness and relaxation techniques which we'll talk about today, a lot of thinking positively and cognitive restructuring, and finding purpose or meaning in life. I really like this quote because it is true. Right? You can Google whatever you want but really apply meaning of life to yourself. What drives you and really take advantage of that.

So all these aspects came together to create this resiliency trait I like to call it. For me it allowed me to cultivate the skills, maintain them over time and really have the life I was hoping to live and I wanted. I was able to do a lot of things. Was able to go hiking, rock climbing, maintain a good group of friends, help those and give back to others who have conditions like myself, and find a wonderful partner who has been really supportive over the last couple years.

And during this time of my life, I can really just do what worked best for me and use these skills and not let anything take advantage of me or let my condition run me because usually -- you should live yourself and the life you want to live.

So, yeah, these skills and this story is -- everybody is different. And everybody has their own experiences and some of the things I talk about may not necessarily apply to you and some skills may not be as helpful for you. But we're going to go through a lot of different skills today

and I'm hoping that some of them might stick.

We'll talk about how you can actually incorporate some of these into our lives. Because I can ramble on about the skills but the hard part is integrating them. We will go over strategies so that you can bring these to the table for yourself.

First, I will talk about what is resiliency, because I have said it a lot of times and a lot of you may not know what it is and it is important we're all on the same page. Then, I'll talk about the benefits of it, so why we study resiliency and why we want to become more resilient.

Next, strategies to become more resilient. There are stress management skills and lifestyle modification skills. And, finally, how we can implement this all into your lives and maintain them and cultivate them over time.

So, to start, what is resiliency?

I really like this quote because it defines what it means to be resilient. It is "when you bend with the wind but don't break in the storm."

Growing up with conditions or being a parent of a child with a medical condition you have to deal with a lot. You have doctor visits. People tell you what to do. Financial stressors. Stressors in the relationship with other people. Stress with your family. And things just keep coming and just keep coming.

The point of being resilient is no matter what is thrown at you, you keep bending but don't break. You don't let those challenges or stressors overcome you and you don't let them run over you. Bend as far as you can and come back. You are like a boxer in the 12th round. You keep getting knocked down and hit but you keep getting up and ready to fight and keep going. That's what it is to be resilient. It's the ability to bounce back when faced with difficulties. A lot of people go through difficulties, whether you have a medical condition or not, the point is to not

let those take over and use skills to maintain that.

I like this image because it also, in my mind, defines resiliency. There is going to be a lot of cracks. A lot of things along the way. A lot of things may be falling apart around you, but if you can find the beauty and cultivate it and maintain, it is going to grow and it is going to become something that makes everything around you look even better. Because that is what you work with. That's the best for you. And it is really just finding that inner beauty, using it, maintaining it, and owning it.

Like I said, there are a lot of different definitions of resiliency. We like this one, "the ability to overcome adversity and maintain healthy physical and emotional functioning." Again, I'll talk about this in a little bit, but when you are resilient your physical functioning improves, you have better immune system functioning, and generally you are just less immune to certain illnesses and things like that. Your emotional well-being is better too. You have better well-being, better quality of life, and higher self-esteem.

What we used to think about resiliency was that it was a stable trait, that once you have it, you have it, you cannot lose it. If you don't have it, you cannot get it.

But we know that's not true now. We know that we can actually learn how to become resilient and you really can enhance certain factors that are associated with resiliency to become more stable over time. It waxes and wanes and it is on a spectrum. It is not dichotomous, you can't either have it or not. Everybody has it, you use skills to maintain it and let it grow.

These are some of the factors we will talk about today that we know are associated with resiliency: Adaptive behaviors, problem solving, optimism, positive social functioning, and coping that elicits positive emotions.

Now these are the ones we know. I'm sure there are plenty out there that haven't been

researched that could also be associated with resiliency. So really, it's just about picking and choosing the best factors that are associated with you and using them.

For example, if you're not feeling optimistic one day, try using your social support network. If you have trouble maintaining or adopting certain behaviors, try problem solving. You can mix and match. You don't have to use all of them, as long as you choose one and go with it, that increases your ability to become resilient and you are better able to overcome. I mentioned this a couple slides earlier, but I thought we would go through it again. Resiliency improves well-being, mental and physical health. We know being more resilient, you are less susceptible to pain, your ability to cope with pain is higher, and mental health is better, including better self-esteem and you have a happier outlook on life.

We have done studies in Boston on stress management training for those with neurofibromatosis, and we know there are certain symptoms that most people have that allows – you to become more resilient, you adjust better to the symptoms. You adjust better to uncertainty because nobody knows what you are going to go through in the future and nobody knows what is going to happen to you. It is just a matter of being able to overcome that. And again improved health and happiness overall.

I like this, screaming out in the wind and saying, yeah, world!

I'll talk about this briefly but I want to talk about the medical aspect of it and how resiliency with neurofibromatosis go together.

We are all familiar with neurofibromatosis. Rare diseases. 3 different types. NF2, NF1, and vestibular nerves.

And not everyone has all of this. Disfigurement, pain, hearing loss/deafness, palsy. Now there are certain biomedical treatments like surgeries and drugs. It is great medically and it

is great helping with certain biomedical factors. But we know some treatments don't actually influence some of the other symptoms that are more psychological and emotional: Quality of life. Social isolation. And depression.

That's why I like to talk about this biopsychosocial model which is basically this framework that combine biological factors, psychological factors and social factors.

I like the bottom quote, "the medical support keeps me alive but it is the psychological and social support that enable me to live."

So the reason why we think about these different factors is because this explains why some people can overcome their medical conditions better than others. Because there are certain psychological factors like depression, anxiety and stress that some people can deal with better or have a little bit more of or less of. This is similar to social factors since some people have larger families, more or less social support, better jobs, more friends... things like that.

It is really important to take this holistic approach and look at biological, psychological and social factors to better understand how to treat medical conditions.

Alright, enough with the research. Now for why you are all here; the actual skills we'll talk about today.

First, I thought we would talk about some of the stress management skills that you can use to become more resilient.

As I mentioned, resiliency can be taught. There are 3 main categories of resiliency skills that we like to teach and that can be cultivated over time: Relaxation response skills, stress/symptom appraisal coping skills, and positive psychology skills. We'll talk about each one of these a little bit. Then at the end I thought I would go over some examples of how to do some of these. If you have questions along the way, feel free to let me know. We will go over each



one.

Don't let this whole diagram overwhelm you. The main reason why I like to talk about this, how many people heard about stress response?

How many people have heard of the fight or flight response?

Fight and flight response is the same thing as the stress response. For those of you who don't know, the fight or flight response, or the stress response, is this evolutionary response that our bodies go through physiologically when we feel like there is a stressor coming along. Back in the day, when we were all cave men and cave women, we had stressors like saber tooth tigers, animals coming at us and we had to get our bodies ready to fight or flee.

I don't know about you guys, we don't see tigers running around the streets but we have similar stressors. For example, running to catch the bus or having certain deadlines we need to get done.

When we have these stressors, your body still goes through the same response it did millions of years ago when we had tigers. You get agitated -- how many of you when you know you have a bus to catch you feel that urge to run after it and catch the bus? Anyone experience that? Yeah.

Or when you have a deadline, you notice you are more motivated. You feel like you really got to get going. That's your body going into the stress response.

It happens involuntarily and it is very unconscious but it happens no matter what the stressor is. When you are in that stress response, look at the bottom, oxygen consumption, blood pressure, and heart rate go up.

When you have a lot of stressors over time it takes its toll on your body and your body goes through wear and tear and makes you more susceptible to illnesses. When you have a

condition it is hard to recover because you are going through these stresses. I want to also mention that because it is involuntary, it doesn't just happen when it is real stressors, it happens when there are fake stressors as well.

For example, if your anxious to do well on an exam, or your kid is, and they don't know what the outcome is going to be, that's not a real stressor. Your anxiety is fully real and you are fully stressed out, but there is really no basis as to why you are stressed if you don't know how you are going to do. Yet your body still goes through the same stress response reactions. So you are still going through this. And people go through this on a daily basis without knowing it because it is so unconscious.

The way we combat that is through the relaxation response. The relaxation response is the physiological opposite of the stress response.

We're going to talk about ways to elicit it, but really what happens is your heart rate goes down, blood pressure goes down, and oxygen consumption goes down. It's the exact opposite and makes you better able to fight off illnesses. Better able to come back after stress. And become more adaptive.

As I mentioned, we will go through some of these skills a little quicker. I'm happy to go through them more in-depth at the end. If you have questions, feel free to let me know.

There are different ways we can elicit relaxation response.

One of the ways is through breathing exercises. I don't mean breathing like (fast breathing) because that's not helpful. And actually that stresses you out more. When I say responses, I mean deep and slow breaths, not rapid short breaths.

What I like to show people is diaphragmatic breathing or belly breathing. So what I tell people to do, feel free to do this with me if you want, put a hand on your chest and hand on your

stomach. When you take a nice deep breath in, you want to make sure that your hand on your stomach is going out further than the hand on your chest.

What you notice is, your body actually relaxes faster. You breathe less heavily. And your reaction to stress goes down.

If you do it the other way, what you are doing is more with your chest. That's okay, too, but it is not as helpful. You are using more energy because your chest is going in and out and you are using more heart rate.

It is better to use belly breathing and that's how you become more relaxed and elicit this response.

We will talk about this in a little bit, but I always recommend trying to do as much belly breathing as you can throughout the day. It truly relaxes you even if you take mini breaks throughout the day. Remind yourself to stop and take a breath. No matter what you are doing. It is tremendously helpful.

So different stuff -- I'm going off my slide.

Some different strategies I like to do to help you remember to do that. Sometimes I tell people put reminders on their phone. I have people put little dings on their phone that says take a breath.

One person I taught, he would put this weird string around his finger and he would -- whenever he looked down, or when somebody say "why do you have a string on your finger?" He's like, time to take that breath, and he would take the breath. Whatever works -- breathe. Whatever works best for you as long as you do it multiple times a day.

The recommended amount is 20 or 30 deep breaths throughout the day. You can start with less, 10 to 15, it's a lot harder than you think. If you can somehow integrate that into your

life, it will really help.

Other things are guided meditations. Many different types of these. There is imagery. Body scans. There are a lot of things on YouTube you can look up. I'm going to show you that you can use these and really incorporate these into your life.

I know a lot of people say, I tried meditation. Didn't work for me. I couldn't get focused. I couldn't sit still. And that's okay. Because nobody is an expert at meditating. Even the Dalai Lama had bad days. I have been practicing meditation since I was 6 years old. Not consistently I had ups and downs.

But I still meditate now and I have days where I'm sitting for 10 minutes and I cannot even sit still. My mind wonders. I go, "wow, I cannot do this."

The point is to just sit. Point is just be there for 10 minutes, and whatever happens that's okay. If your mind is thinking about what you need to make for dinner, or what I missed at work or what your friend said to you, that's okay. The point is non-judgmental awareness. The point is to sit there for 10 to 15 minutes, 5 minutes if you want to start smaller, and be okay with your thoughts and be okay with yourself.

Then as you go forward, you are training your mind, because remember your mind is a muscle that needs strengthening, you are training it to be more relaxed.

As long as you get this meaning and figure it out -- fit this in, we'll talk about it, that's okay, all that matters is to accept it.

And single pointed meditation. Similar. Not guided. Focus on certain target. Like your breath, image, or word.

These apps are also helpful. Insight timer which is free. They have wonderful -- millions -- maybe not millions. Thousands of free meditations that are guided. Headspace is not free but

it is great for beginners because it has awesome cartoons. I love cartoons. They allow you -- teaches you more about the science.

And calm is a good one that people use.

So those are the relaxation response techniques. Now I want to talk about stress appraisal and coping. This is really how you deal with your stress and how you view your stress.

So there are physical, cognitive, behavioral, and emotional factors that all intertwine. Let's say when you have pain, all these interact and affect you tremendously. If you have pain, as a lot of us go through, especially with neurofibromatosis and different conditions like that, depending on how you think about it, it is going to affect you.

If you think, this is not fair. This is going to get worse. This is not fair. This isn't going to get better. It will affect your behaviors. You will not want to go out. You will feel too sick. Not going out with friends or at work. This leads to emotions. Anxious, sad, angry. And this makes your pain increase.

The point is think about it in a different way, a more adaptive way, so that way your pain goes down.

Instead of thinking this is not fair, you think, this happened before. I know I came through this. It is going to get better. This will change your behavior. I'm not going to let my condition or my pain define me. I'm going to go back out. I'm going to see my friends. I'm going to do my work. Makes your mood better. And you can tolerate the pain.

The phrase I always love is, if you change the way you see things, the things you see will change.

How you think about things changes how you perceive them. When you think about things differently, your body changes with that as well. We all know about -- most of us know

about this mind/body connection. If you think positively, if you think you can do something, your body will think you can do it as well.

So how do you do this? And I know it is easy to say, oh, just change your thoughts. Right? No big deal. I have a thousand thoughts every day.

These are skills and questions I tell people that help you ask yourself questions about your questions to see if they are real or not.

For example, is this thought true? Am I really not going to get better? Am I really going to have stress my whole life? Probably not.

If you keep asking yourself these thoughts you start to realize some of these thoughts, they don't hold true or they don't have evidence behind them. It is a lot of just restructuring and reframing to allow yourself to think about what you are thinking, stop yourself, and then really change how you realize that what you are thinking may not be too accurate.

There are a bunch of other ones. What would I tell a friend? You have different way to think about this. Being too tough on myself?

This is just an example of how using this adaptive coping, so you lose your job, it is the worst thing ever. I'm never going to go get a job. I'm going to go broke and die alone. Probably not going to happen. That's a little bit what we call catastrophizing.

But if you switch it: with more free time I can do some self-exploration and find a job. It will help you tremendously. You will overcome it and you won't take this lost job to heart and you won't let it take over you.

So similar to this is positive psychology. It combines acceptance, positivity, empathy, appreciation. Enhance your growth.

Integrate life to find meaning. Positivity using humor. Optimism in certain things.

Think, oh, man, I'm I never have a good job. I'm not going to try. Think of a good joke or humor to incorporate, that's good. Empathy toward yourself. Be kind to yourself and kind to others. And also gratitude and be appreciative of what you have gone through, what you are doing, and what you have done.

We'll talk about gratitude in a little bit, but all these combined helps make you feel more positive.

All these things we talked about the relaxation methods, stress appraisal and coping, and positive psychology all combine to help you achieve this relaxation response, decrease your activity and increase your connectedness to others and yourself which leads to greater resiliency and leads to all these wonderful factors. Improved psychological functioning and emotional functioning, and changes in genomics. If you practice resiliency you are turning on and off certain genes. When we elicit relaxation response, turn on and off certain genes which can help you fight infections and makes you less prone to illness.

It is always in your mind. Your body is also in your genetics.

So now I want to talk a little bit more about behavior modification,.

Smoking. Substance abuse. Diet. Physical activity. Sleep. How many of us in this room have some trouble with one of these? Most of us, right? Not always easy to change. Because it is so easy to just grab the chips and not exercise and think the other way.

What we know is changing these life factors is huge. Because if we kick these lifestyle factors that are associated with maladaptive behaviors, we become more susceptible -- our risk for cancer, cardiovascular disease and stroke increase if we don't change our behavior.

If you are more sedentary, not eating well, trouble sleeping, this increases your risk for a lot of these diseases.

However, if you change some of these lifestyle factors, what we know is it decreases inflammation, and wear and tear on the body. Improve life span. Focus on what is within your control and not what is outside your control. Focus on well-being and physical functioning.

Now I'm going to talk about how you change these because like I said, easy enough for me to stand up here and list off a bunch of skills to you but it is really up to you guys, it is much harder to actually go through and change them on your own.

What we like to present are SMART goals. SMART goals are ways in which you pick one SMART goal, make it your own, and it allows you to change some of these lifestyle behaviors. SMART stands for specific, measurable, acceptable, realistic, and time frame. So we'll go through each one.

Specific. What you want to do is when you choose a goal you want to make sure it is specific as possible. So "I want to get healthy" is very general and it is very hard to maintain that and get yourself accountable for it.

If you say I want to get an exercise plan, that's a specific goal. And you know when you are achieving it. Say I want to exercise can be anything. I want to run. I want to lift more weights. I want to walk up and down the stairs. But if you have something that's more specific like I want a plan, that is better. We'll talk a little bit more specific on the next slide.

Really when you are creating these goals, you want to think about these five -- 6 Ws. Who, what, where, when, why, and which? These ones. Right?

And so when you actually have the goal, you want to make sure that you can answer all these questions when you are thinking about how you are going to achieve it.

The next is measurable. This makes it even more specific because it provides a metric at which to evaluate whether your goal has been accepted.



Say I want to exercise more, exercise plan, that's great but it is not specific -- it is specific but not measurable.

If you say I want to walk 30 minutes 3 times a week, that's measurable. The reason why we make it measurable is so we can measure success.

Say I want to exercise more, have an exercise plan, you won't know if you are doing it or not. You will say you want to exercise more but you are not sure if you are achieving it. You know for this goal, if you walk 30 minutes, 3 times a week, you achieve that goal and it helps you feel better about yourself because it is little things and know you are doing well and allows you to move forward.

Then it should be attainable. It should balance challenge and current resources, knowledge and skills to achieve the goal. You want to not have larger goals that are not attainable and might be broken into smaller goals. Lose 50 pounds throughout the year. Maybe do it more monthly and say I want to exercise better. You want to go to the gym. Maybe a little bit more manageable and chop it down.

This sets you up for series of continued successes. We have multiple successes throughout the week, it helps you be more motivated and feel better about yourself because you are succeeding and realize this goal is attainable, and allows you to move forward.

It should also be realistic. If you have a goal that's "I want to walk outside for 30 minutes every day" and it is the middle of December in Chicago and really snowy outside from what I hear, that's probably not going -- it is not going to be easy to do. Especially for those with mobility issues or if you don't have access to being outside for an amount of time. You want to do something more realistic.

For example, "I will take the stairs to the third floor of my office instead of taking the

elevator." That's attainable because you know you probably work most days you will be there, and it is realistic because this is something you can do whether it is rain or shine. It depends on your mobility, but you can generally go up a couple flights of stairs hopefully. If not, doing something that allows you to be able to do it with whatever conditions or limitations.

Lastly, it must be time limited. As I mentioned, larger goals should be broken down into smaller ones. So that way you can find time to know when you are supposed to achieve it. I want to lose 50 pounds. Again, that's not very specific. It is not -- it is measurable to a certain extent. It may not be realistic. If you say I want to lose an average of 1 pound per week for 3 months. That's a time limited goal, it is measurable, it is specific, it is generally pretty realistic depending on who you are, and it is attainable.

Again, just really keep yourself accountable. Make sure it is realistic that something you can attain. It is measurable. It is specific.

Other ways we like to show people how to do this is really by tracking it and logging it. There are a lot of app-based -- lot of apps on your phone. If you have a smart phone, certain apps you can do, myfitnesspal. Notes to write down. Other specific apps.

There is also an iWatch or FitBit to help you keep track of these things. This is a screen shot from one of the apps.

Even if you don't have this technology, there are still ways in which you can keep track. A checklist. Maybe a calendar. Physical calendar on your wall, whatever it may be, that helps. It does wonders. Using pen and paper, the old school way. Using documents on your computer. Whatever it is, you want to keep track of it so you can keep yourself accountable for it and you know how well you are doing over time.

If you don't keep yourself accountable, don't keep track, it is easy to fall off, not keep

track of it, and lose track, and you are not going to reach your goal.

How to start. One thing I always say is to start with one goal. Or pick one skill that is the most important thing to you. Let's say it's losing weight. If it -- whether it is losing weight. Diet. Activity. Better sleep. Cut out substances. Whatever it may be. It can be something related to work. It can be friends. If you want to make a new friend a week. Once a month. Go out on a date. Whatever it may be. It doesn't necessarily -- these goals, these SMART goals are good for almost anything. We just like to do it for the behavior changes because it is a good way to start and a lot of people generally have these and they want to change their life.

You want to know what the most important thing is to you and set a SMART goal. It has to be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-limbed.

Pick another skill after you achieve this one, or when you made a new habit. If you haven't made that happen, then tweak the goal. Try to change it to fit whatever you realize isn't working well. Notice the barriers. Be aware of the barriers and then just change it based on that. Once you do that, pick another.

Then you just keep going until you have attained a bunch of skills. But there are certain things to help you along the way that you should be mindful of. You want to be flexible. You know forming new habits are hard. Sometimes it might take days, it might take weeks. Even months for certain things. That's okay. Everybody goes at their own pace. It is just to be aware and mindful and okay that it might take time and it is not overnight change.

You want to be aware. Be mindful when you do get small successes. Appreciate it. Be yourself in that moment and love yourself for doing that. Because that's not easy either. Just doing a small goal every day, that's huge, because that's something different than what you are doing the week before when you are doing nothing. Be aware, things are always changing,

always occurring, and allow yourself to give credit for that.

Just know that you can do it. Because everybody has these skills. Everybody is able to set these goals. It is just a matter of sticking with it. Picking what works for you and tweaking it and modifying it.

So I'm going to go through some simple resiliency skills.

A lot of the other stuff we talked about, the relaxation methods, stress and cognitive restructuring, behavior modifications, those take a little longer to achieve, and they get to be hard. Those things you can all do and you can definitely move forward with it. But these are things you can incorporate now and take a little bit out of your day to do without much training.

The first is gratitude.

I talked about this a little earlier when mentioning positive psychology. What it is, take 5 minutes every day think of three things that made you feel positive, made you feel good about yourself, made you feel grateful about yourself.

The point of this is really to focus on the positives of your life, with the intention of finding the positive meaning in life.

It can be anything from thanking people that helped you. Noticing positive things around you. If you had lunch that day. If you don't always have lunch, but you brought lunch today, go outside and sit outside for lunch and think to yourself "that was awesome."

Do it any time of day. I recommend doing it at the end of the day so you can recap your day. It's a good way to unwind.

Think of 3 things that made you feel good or good about yourself. Maybe I made a new friend, I got out of bed this morning, I did really well on this assignment and I got a good grade. My neighbor told me I looked good today. Anything that made you feel good, really sit in that

and just take 5 minutes to appreciate it.

When I say these examples, I don't mean, "oh, yeah, my friend told me I looked good today, that's great." That's not gratitude. That's remembering what you did during the day and recapping.

When I say sit there for 5 minutes, remember -- and even if you want you, can close your eyes which is great -- Remember what it felt like to really get told that you looked good that day. Remember what it was like for you whether you were walking down the street and your friend said, "hey, I like that dress, I like that hat you look great." You generally feel a certain feeling when that happens. You feel appreciation. You feel good. You feel thankful. You feel happy. You feel attractive. All these things are the things that you have to take advantage of and you want to sit with them and remember what it felt like. Because you basically reliving it and reliving that experience and that allows you to really, fully appreciate it.

These are called daily appreciations. After you do those for a little while, there is something I like to call News and Goods. News and Goods are things that happen during your day that allows you to appreciate good things that happen, both new things and good things.

Also there is Goods and Bads. That takes a little bit of working up to, but what that is, you think about bad thing that happened in your day, but you try to find meaning in it. Again, it is really about finding the positive. Finding the meaning of the good things that happen to you that day, and really appreciating it and owning it.

Next we'll talk about cognitive awareness. Really paying attention to your thoughts but not too much. So there is a nice balance. I'm sure a lot of you heard the whole snowball effect in our minds: "oh, my God, I didn't do well on the test, I am going to fail." We talked about it before. We won't get a job leads to dying alone. Maybe not that extreme, but still, all your

thoughts are flooding in and it's hard to really get yourself out of that, because when you go down that slope, it is a slippery slope and you keep going down.

Be aware of your thoughts and don't let it come through. Yeah, I didn't do well on the test. That's okay. Move on with my day.

Again, easier said than done, but the more you become aware of your thoughts the more you realize what you are thinking, the easier it is to be aware of them and change them.

So I like this cartoon, "I see. Have you tried worrying about it?"

(Laughter.)

It is clearly not the best strategy. But it is something to be aware of. Be aware if you worry about certain things a lot. It is not going to be super helpful if you are constantly thinking about these or worrying about these things.

There is emotional awareness. Pay attention to the ebbs and flows of your emotions. Notice it. Name it. And let it be. It is very easy to get stuck in depressed mood, down mood, anxious mood, sadness, and confusion, whatever you are feeling. The point is to notice it, be aware of it. And try to get yourself out of it, just let it pass and say, okay, "I'm feeling stressed now. This is okay. Let's move forward."

And what it does is, the more you pay attention to your emotions, the more you get to notice others. The more you realize how stressed you are, the more you notice physical reactions to stress. Maybe you become tense. Maybe you grind your teeth. Maybe your neck has some pain. Whatever it is, when you start to notice it and realize when you are in that stress response, it is easier to get yourself out.

I mentioned this a couple times because I learned from it. But paying attention to your breath. Using apps like Insight Timer, Headspace and Calm. Taking 5 minutes each day and

make sure that you are sitting with your thoughts and try to practice them. Meditation. Whatever it may be. Breathe. Just daily breathing like we talked about. Any of these are helpful. And as this quote says, it is really just about being aware of the breath. No internal dialogue. Just simply pay attention. Listening. Not being judgmental. And just empty your mind and let whatever happen happens.

Just sitting there and letting yourself be in that moment even if you have a busy thought, even if you have what they call a bad meditation, you can have a bad meditation. Because while you are sitting that's a bad meditation. Just be aware of that. If you feel it is difficult, that's okay. Stop. Be aware that you stopped. Be happy that you stopped. Say okay, maybe tomorrow it will be better. Tomorrow will be good. I don't like saying better or worse, I say tomorrow will be different.

Social support. This is huge. I had mentioned I was very grateful to have family that was supportive. I feel that was – it got me through a lot of difficult times.

So if you have friends, family members, coworkers, communities, this is a great place to be because you have a bunch of people going through similar situations. These symposiums are wonderful because you meet like-minded people and you hold each other accountable.

For those of you who are parents and your children are having some of these troubles and difficulties, what I like to say is model these behaviors. Do these goals with them. Sit down, make a goal, work, keep track with them and talk about them with your kids. Because if they see you are making the effort to do it, they are going to do it as well because you are probably their hero. They want to look up to you, they want to be just like you. If you do these things with them, talk about it and discuss it, and trust me, you'll do wonders and they'll be more likely to do it with you.

It is finding those people that support you. You have difficulties, like problems getting rid of negative thoughts or emotions, talk to people about it. I cannot talk about how important social support is.

Lastly is intention. That's developing sense of purpose and meaning. It is being engaged in activities. Finding passions. Really thinking about what you love to do and doing it. Whether it is dancing. Whether it is watching certain shows -- listening to music. Whether it is art. Whether it is film. Whatever it may be, sports. Engaging in it. Doing as much as you can. And really just absorbing yourself in it because when you find something you love to do, it puts you in better mood and you feel better.

And work toward getting better. If you do SMART goals and you have a purpose and have something to work towards or goals, it gives you so much motivation. Makes you feel a lot better because you know that this is something you can do. Something you want. And really grab it by the horns and go for it.

Then also, as I mentioned, developing positive attitude toward challenges. Find that meaning. Find that purpose. Find that positivity and really be able to develop it over time.

So in conclusion, we all can learn to become more resilient in coping, and these can really help us with our stress, our medical symptoms, whatever they may be, all the challenges that we face on a daily basis whether you have an issue, you don't, going to doctor visit, going through stressful situation, surgeries, procedures, whatever it is, how you deal with some annoying representative on the phone and they really stress you out because they are not listening to you. You pay the bill but they are not saying you -- whatever it may be, we can all become resilient of that. Just a matter of being aware of it.

Because you can teach yourself these skills that we talked about. The brain is malleable.



It is a muscle. You need to teach it you can change it. You can strengthen it. Once you do, it is the most powerful muscle in the body. It allows you to really overcome some of these things.

Like I said, if you change the way you see things, the things you see will change. It will put you in a totally different perspective.

As I mentioned, this will help us improve our health, our well-being. These genetic changes in terms of turning on and off genes, is called neuroplasticity. You do this by practicing and engaging in the strategies, stress management skills, and the lifestyle changes or behavior modifications.

So, again, just start, pick one goal, make it a habit, tweak it if you need to, change it, add another one. Just find what works best for you, really own it, and move forward. And then once you do that, pick another one and just keep going with the cycle. I don't know if you'll ever run out of things to change, but at least you will feel happy about the things you have changed. Think about what you have in life.

So this is my shameless plug. This is a study that we are doing at Mass General Hospital in Boston, or at least Anna Maria is. What we do here is a lot of the things we talked about with SMART goals, relaxation training, things like that. These are the groups that will help you learn it. The study uses video conferencing, so even though it is based out of Boston, you can still go to the groups online and log in and stuff like that.

Their information at the bottom. Ana-Maria, the main investigator, and Sophia is one of the coordinators on the study. Feel free to ask questions.

If you feel you are having difficulty doing it yourself, or want to learn a skill or try a different method, this is okay as well.

So I like to end my talks with a quote.

For those of you who don't know Carl Jung, he's a psychologist. He followed Freud and then formed his own school of psychology.

He said, "I am not what happened to me. I am what I choose to become."

Now that is a very powerful statement. Because a lot of things happen to us. We get thrown down many, many times. The point is, you have to get back up.

What happened to you, yes, it is a part of you. My individual condition made me into so much of what I am today. In a lot of ways I'm thankful I had it because I wouldn't be -- I wouldn't get to talk to all of you wonderful people. It helped me find meaning and purpose. Yet I don't let it define me.

It is not what happened to you, it is how you think about what happened to you. It is really about what you want to become. If you use some of these skills that we talked about today, you can really change that. Use these skills to get to be what you want to be, what you need to be, and what you really deserve to be and that's really the best you can do for yourself. Thank you for that.

(Applause.)

>> DIANA HABERKAMP: Did anybody have maybe one question? Somebody has a question.

If not, Eric will be here through lunch. We really encourage everybody to continue talking with the representatives, there will be questions outside, and talk to the presenters, keep that going.

I guess we are going to move on.