Stress Management and Emotional Resilience: Challenging the Myth of Perfectionism by embracing the philosophy of Unconditional Self Acceptance

Improving Student Mental Health Outcomes

Mary Ward House Conference Centre,

Tavistock Place, London, WC1H 9SN

12.20-12.40pm. Thursday, 16th May, 2019.

John Perry, MA, MA, MA, MSc, FHEA jwp@soton.ac.uk

3 Approaches to Stress Management & Resilience

Stressors (or Stimulus)

Signs of Strain (or Response)

Transactional (or Intervening)

THE A-B-C MODEL

A Activating Event

B Belief System

C Emotional Consequence

0----------Scale of Awfulness----------100

"The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another". William James

"Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom." Viktor Frankl

Feel Better by Minding your Language!

Internally recite statements about **yourself**, each of which contains a ***'Should' 'Ought'*** or ***'Must'.*** For example:

'I ***should*** call my parents more'.

'I ***ought*** to exercise more'.

'I ***must*** pass my exams/achieve my promotion'.

Now, pay attention to the feelings that arise in you as you recite each statement. (These typically include guilt, feeling a failure, anxiety, etc.)

Now, for each statement, substitute ***'Prefer'***, ***'Like'*** or ***'Want'*** for ***'Should'***, ***'Ought'*** or ***'Must'***. For example:

'I ***want*** to call my parents more'.

'I would ***prefer*** to exercise more'.

I would ***like*** to pass my exams/achieve my promotion'.

Now, pay attention to the feelings that arise in you as you recite each statement. (These have typically softened considerably from the feelings evoked by the 'Should', 'Ought' and 'Must' statements).

Imposter Syndrome

Close your eyes and picture yourself as a new born infant, lying in a cot

Close your eyes and picture yourself as a new born infant, lying in a cot. And as you look at yourself as a new-born child lying contentedly in your cot, get a really strong sense that you are fundamentally OK…that you are fine, just as you are…that you are totally unique and that this uniqueness gives you innate worth and value….And sense also, that you don't need to come top in any assessments in order to be OK…you just are OK…And that you don't need to win any awards in order to be OK…you just are OK….And you don't need to be a size zero or to have a super-toned body and a six-pack in order to be OK…You just are OK…Just as trees come in all shapes and sizes, and there is no correct way to be a tree, so it is with people, and therefore, so it is with you…You were born OK…You were born worthwhile…You were born with innate worth and value….And these are not qualities that you have to earn…they are qualities that you are born with….and since no-one will ever perform surgery on you to take these qualities away, they are qualities you will carry with you always…regardless of how much you earn or how many friends you have on Facebook….You will always be a work-in-progress, never the finished article – since that would require that no further improvement were possible, and there will always be room for improvement…self-improvement is a journey, not a destination and you will therefore never be perfect…but you will always be fundamentally OK, fundamentally worthwhile; you will always have innate worth and value….And be aware also, that since all of us are always works in progress, never the finished article, our imperfections add value, they do not take it away. If every person were perfect, then every individual would be replaceable by anybody else…but we are not….our imperfections are what make us indispensable….irreplaceable. For we are all imperfect in our own ways…no one is universally gifted…our imperfections are what make us unique….Just as in a mosaic, every piece of stone is imperfect…incomplete…and yet each piece is the only piece that can make its unique contribution to the total mosaic…In the same way, you are the only person who can fill the 'you-shaped' hole in the mosaic of humanity…As the far from perfect Leonard Cohen once wrote, ***'There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in….'*** So celebrate your imperfections, accept yourself unconditionally as a work in progress, yet always, fundamentally worthwhile, fundamentally OK, and absolutely fine, just as you are…