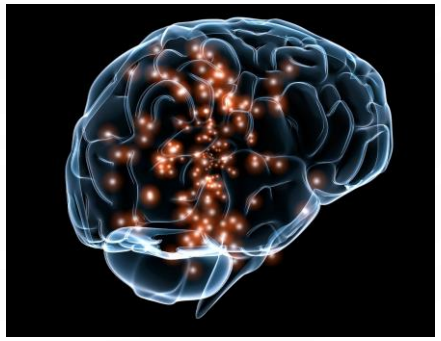
BUILDING & MAINTAINING RESILIENCE WORKING IN TRAUMA SETTINGS

FIRST, UNDERSTANDING OUR STRESS REACTIONS

- Our brains have very active fear centres that developed to keep us alive
- Fight fright flight is wired in to help us detect a threat and get away from it
- All animals have this, and when the fear centre gets fired into fight, fright, freeze we get a full on physiological response that ups our heart rate pumps cortisol through out system along with adrenalin and other hypertensive drugs to help us deal with the threat



IN THE WILD AND IN OTHER ANIMALS

- This usually lasts 3 minutes. You either survived it or you didn't
- But in humans, because we have bigger cortexes we alone turn our fear centres on by worrying about things that haven't happened yet and keep them on after the threat is over by ruminating.
- Because "the thought is the same as the activity to brain"
- So we have turned a 3 minute response into potentially a 3 year response

AND THAT HAS SERIOUS HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- That is why all the advice you have received in previous seminars and government advice about exercise, diet, sleep and personal health care is so important and is a critical part of staying well.

BUT WE ALSO HAVE TO MANAGE OUR MINDS AND LEARN HOW TO TURN OUR FEAR CENTRES OFF

- So first I will give some mental repositioning approaches and then some practical tips especially for working from home but that actually apply everywhere.

CRISIS THEORY

- The Chinese symbols for the word crisis are the symbol for danger and the symbol for opportunity
- So the best way to safely navigate a crisis is to first minimise the danger for the client and yourself. Safety first, then planning

THEN FIND THE OPPORTUNITIES AND TURN THEM UP

- ✓ There is always an opportunity in a crisis
- ✓ Learning how to work differently
- ✓ Using new technologies
- ✓ Learning about yourself and others
- ✓ Seeking opportunities to work collboratively

YOUR BRAIN LOVES TO LEARN & THE MORE IT DOES THE CALMER & SMARTER YOU BECOME

- The neuroscience is clear that when we stretch our selves a little to do something new or even try some new food or activity your brain pumps out myelin to help strengthen you existing synaptic connections and make new ones. It literally grows your brain power.
- So you not only have a new skill, you get better at your day job.

CULTIVATE YOUR OWN BRAIN BY

- Doing every day things differently each day: use a different hand to brush your teeth, try a new yoga move, eat a new food, learn another platform on your computer, learn a language, try a new dance move, anyone have any other ideas?

THIS ALL MEANS EMBRACING CHANGE

- Dr Dan Siegel a leading US psychiatrist has reconfigured all the mental illnesses as being either rigidity or chaos which he depicts as the banks of river.
- Wellbeing is in the river, literally “going with the flow”.

THAT MEANS PERFECTIONISTS WILL STRUGGLE

- Now is the time to ditch your perfectionism and embrace what Tal Ben Shahar from Harvard calls Optimialism which is 80% all of the time without killing yourself.
- You will find an online version of his book, seriously **read it** and do the program.
- You won't believe how much energy you free up and how much more efficient you become.

DEVELOPING A MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

- Will help greatly here.
- The brain science is clear, learning to focus your attention is great for your brain, your physical and mental health.
- It also is a great tool to help with Vicarious Trauma and taking your mind off distressing intrusions.

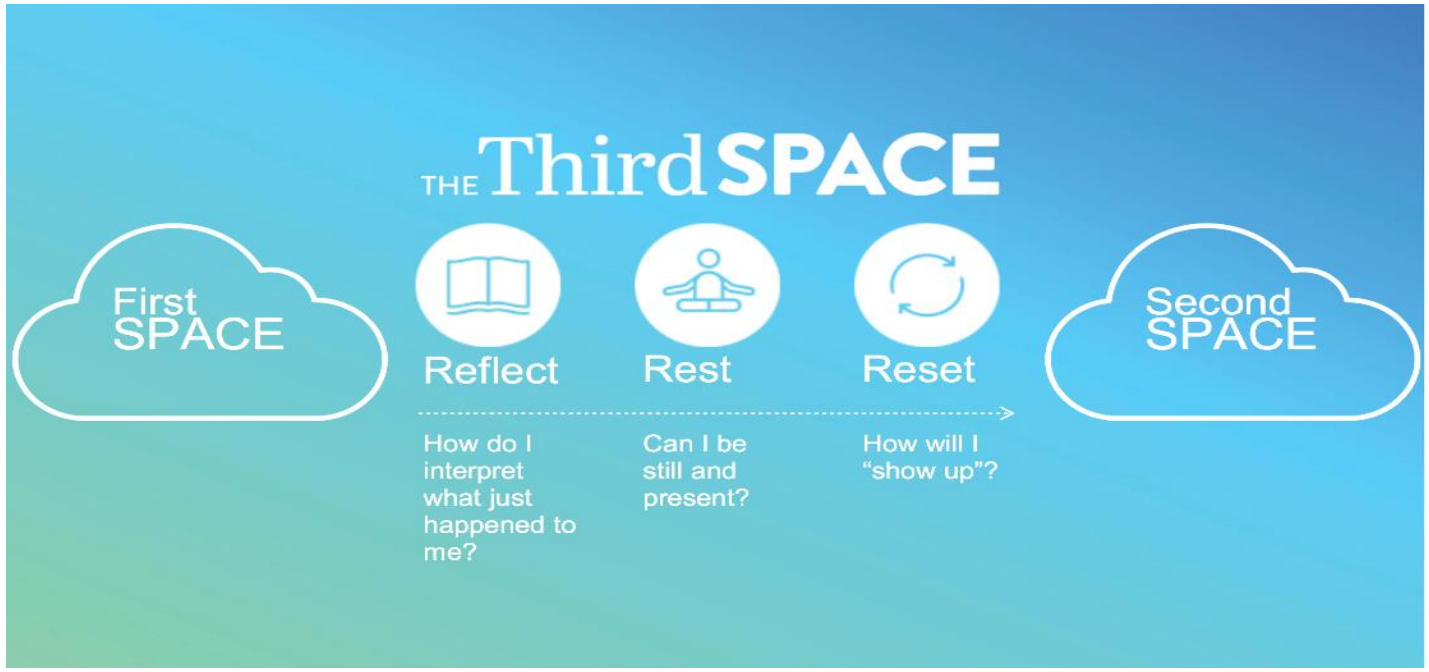
LOOK ONLINE FOR

- ✓ Ruby Wax
- ✓ Amy Saltzman
- ✓ Daniel Siegel

To help you get started

ALSO

- Adam Fraser's The Third Space is actually a mindfulness tool to help you be in the space you are in rather than thinking about what you did before or are going to do next.



KINDNESS TO YOURSELF & OTHERS IS IMPERATIVE

- As is gratitude which you will have heard before.

PRACTICAL TIPS

- Stay connected to colleagues and loved ones.
- If/when working from home have if possible a dedicated workspace at home that you go to work and leave when not working.
- Keep regular work hours and have regular breaks. Observe your weekends.
- Use the Third Space to consciously transition in and out of work and domestic tasks.
- Keep an upright posture with straight back and plenty of air getting into your lungs when dealing with distressing material or distressed people.

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- If possible standing up and moving around whilst in a difficult conversation helps.
- Develop and maintain a healthy, wholesome sense of humour, find ways to laugh a lot and help each other to laugh.
- But also be aware of fear, sadness worry and grief and allow your self to feel them and seek out support when you need to.

BUILD IN BRAIN HOLIDAYS

- Remember the thought is the same as the activity to the brain.
- Read, watch good movies, listen to music, exercise play games, draw, dance all of these things give your brain a rest and stimulates in a good way.

STAY HOPEFUL

- Focus on what's working rather than what's not and back yourself to get through this.

DON’T FORGET TO REST

- Factor in down time every day
- Maintain good sleep habits
- Conserve energy where you can

FINALLY

- Seek help if you need to from EAP, counsellors your GP mentors and others.
- Actively reach out and help others.
- And thank you for your efforts and willingness to adapt in order to continue serving your community.

RESOURCES

- The Resilient Lawyer. Robyn Bradey

http://www.lawcover.com.au/personal-wellbeing/

UK Bar Wellbeing Portal, type in Barrister needing help or clerk needing help

www.wellbeingatthebar.org.uk

The Pursuit of Perfect Tal Ben Shahar various audio and online versions

Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers Robert Sapolsky

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- www.soft-wired.com for growing brain capacity
- www.stillquietspace.com Amy Saltzman's mindfulness technique
- www.drdansiegel.com for the neuroscience of wellness
- www.rubywax.net