

Stress Busters

Preparing Transition Age Youth with Autism for Employment

Stressed and Laughing Out Loud

- ❖ What do you think was the funniest part of the video clip?
- ❖ What was serious?
- ❖ What is your take away message?



What is Stress?

Mental or Emotional

- ❖ Tension
- ❖ Irritability
- ❖ Inability to concentrate
- ❖ Feeling excessively tired
- ❖ Trouble sleeping



Physical

- ❖ Dry mouth
- ❖ Pounding heart
- ❖ Difficulty breathing
- ❖ Upset stomach
- ❖ Headache
- ❖ Frequent urination
- ❖ Sweating palms
- ❖ Tight muscles, etc.

The Rule of the Mind

If you try not to think about something, then it is more likely to stay in your mind.

1. How many times have you thought about chocolate in the past week?
2. Now use all of your mental powers to NOT think about chocolate for 30 seconds.
3. What happens?

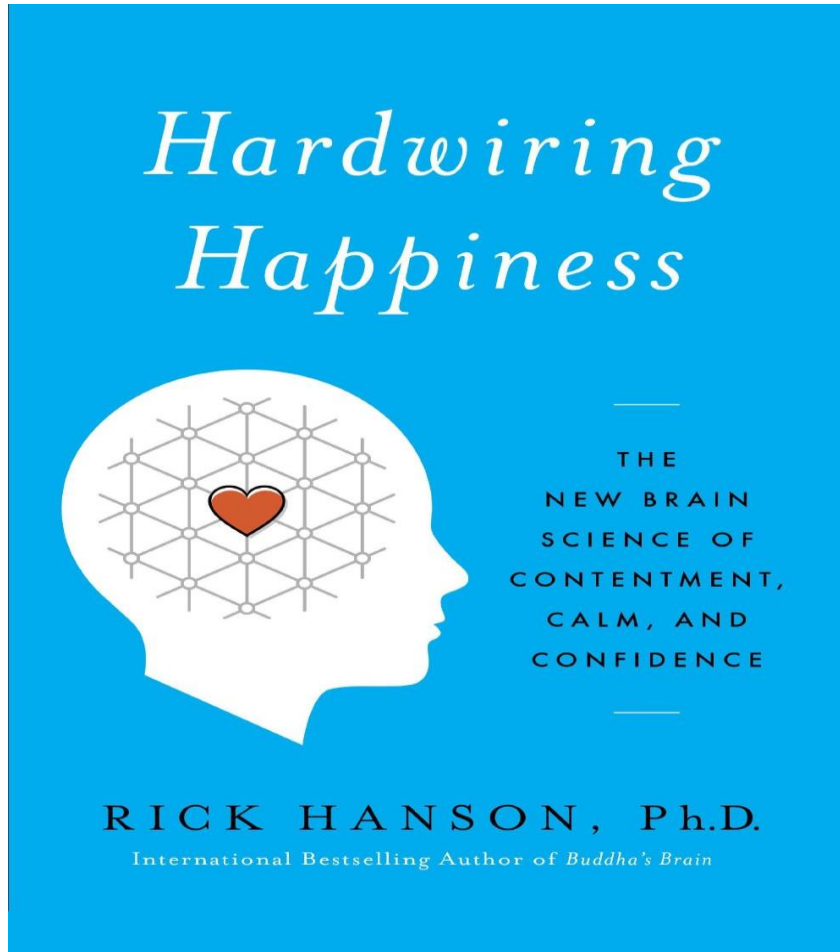


Pursuing Happiness

"You don't have to be normal to be happy."
(Jerry Newport)

- ❖ **Nor do you have to make anyone else normal to be happy.**
- ❖ **But this is not an easy journey.**
- ❖ **It's about living in the here and now.**

Is happiness a choice?



“The brain is like Velcro for negative experience and Teflon for positive ones.”

- ❖ The brain has evolved to be constantly scanning for threats to protect us but loses sight of the big picture.

How do we do this?

“The way to ‘hardwire happiness’ into the brain is to take in the good -- being present to life's tiny, joyful moments.”

- ❖ **Take in the good.**
- ❖ **Be on your own side.**
- ❖ **Focus on the positive experiences with the greatest personal impact.**
- ❖ **Maintain a sense of wonder.**
- ❖ **Open your eyes and look around.**
- ❖ **What do you notice?**

Strategies for Dealing with Stress

Practice 1: Take a Break

1. Hit pause and inhale



2. Exhale slowly and deliberately
3. Repeat three times

As you breath, think...

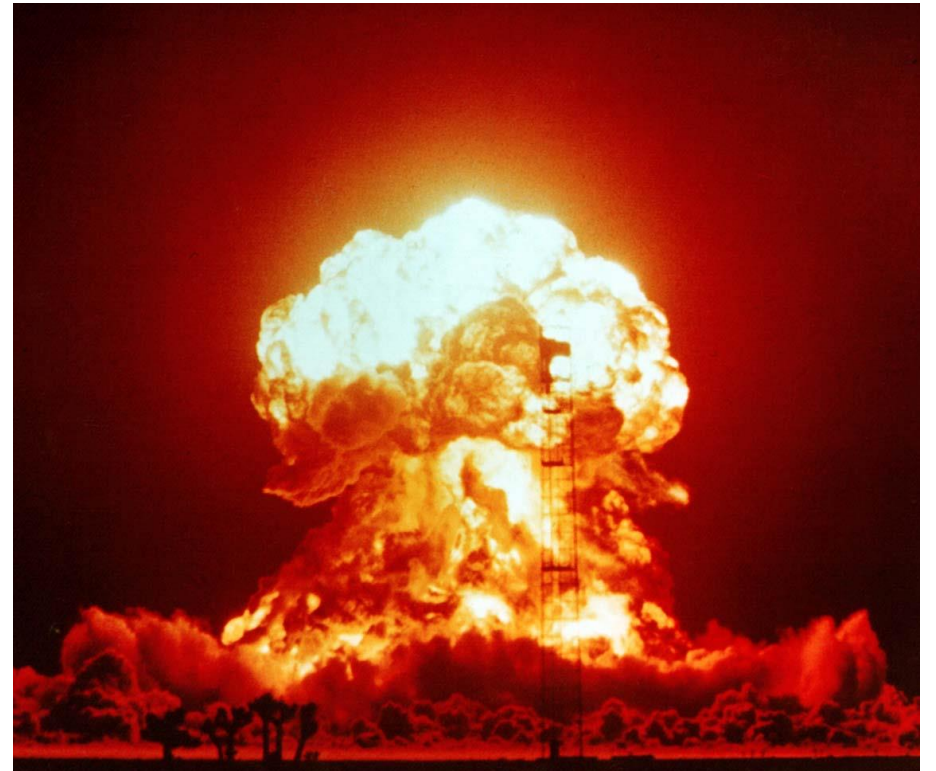
Inhale calm

Exhale stress

4. How do you feel in your body and mind?

Practice 2: Meltdown Prevention

1. **Notice warning signs in your mind and body.**
2. **Decide you won't freak out or meltdown**
 1. Hit your pause button
 2. Breathe
 3. Don't talk
3. **Distract yourself**



Practice 3: Short Yoga Break

1. **Breath in, clench fist**
Long breath out, release
2. **Breath in, clench fist**
Long breath out, release
3. **Breath in, clench fist**
Long breath out, release

*“Happiness often sneaks in through a door
you didn’t know you left open.”*
(John Barrymore)

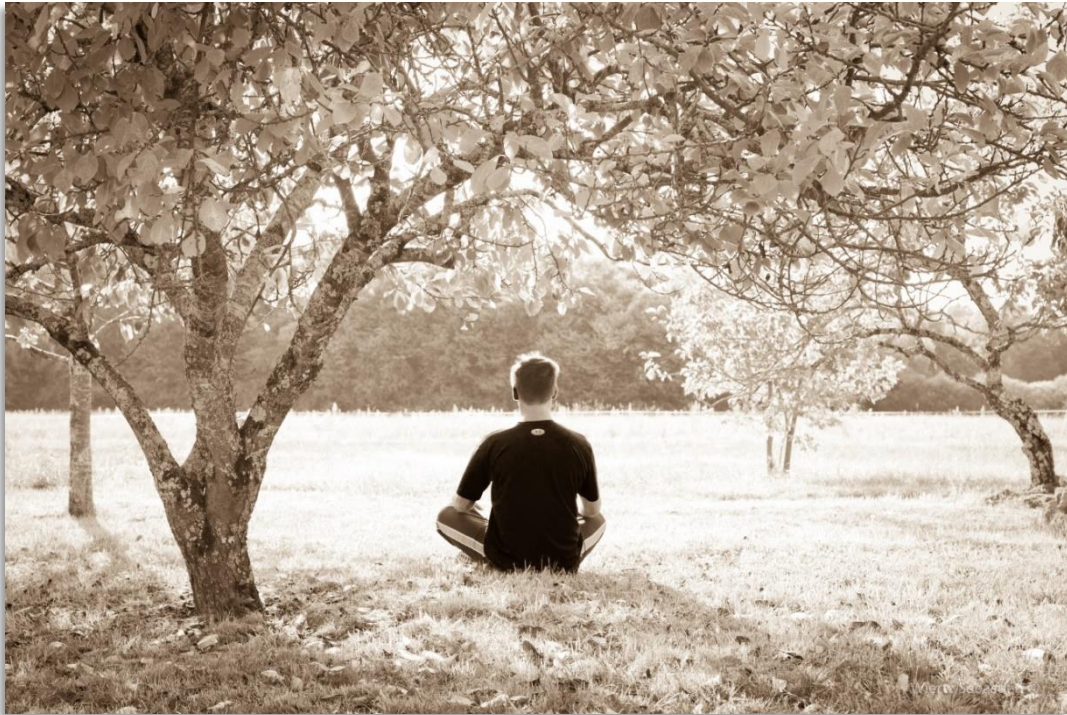
Practice 3: Short Yoga Break cont.

1. **Breath in, palms apart**
Breath out, palms pressed
2. **Breath in, palms apart**
Breath out, palms pressed
3. **Breath in, palms apart**
Breath out, palms pressed



Practice 4: Breathe

1. Take a few breaths



2. Sit back and just observe

3. Watch your thoughts run through your mind.

4. Notice what happens when you do not try to stop them or engage in them.

Practice 5: Take a Walk

1. Begin walking at a comfortable pace.



2. Focus on the sensations that you feel in your body as you walk.

- Feel the weight of your body on the bottom of your feet.
- Feel your arms swinging with each stride.

3. Stay focused on now.

- If you find thoughts coming into your mind, gently let them go and redirect your focus to the sensations you're feeling as you walk.

4. Continue for at least 5-10 minutes

Practice 6: Music



Acceptance

Accepting the stress of our lives

Acceptance

Does not mean...

- ❖ wanting or liking autism.
- ❖ changing your opinion.
- ❖ resignation.
- ❖ giving up on life or possibilities.

Is about opening up to...

- ❖ the sad and the sweet in life.
- ❖ the possibilities and the alternatives.
- ❖ the lessons that come with really hard experiences.

Serenity Prayer

Give us grace

To accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed,

Courage to change the things that should be changed,

And the wisdom to discern the one from the other.

-Reinhold Niebuhr

Life: A Balancing Act



Questions?