

THE JOURNEY IS YOURS TO TAKE

Choose to Move Through
Frazzled to Fabulous

An Anthology

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RESILIENCE PREPARATION, BEFORE THE EVENT (RP)

“Fortune favors the prepared mind.”

Louis Pasteur (1822-1895)

French microbiologist and chemist.

WHEN YOU COMBINE PERSONAL RESILIENCE BUILDING with **RESILIENCE PREPARATION**, you create a two-bladed propeller. Think of the power...when having these two blades is enough to cause a small airplane to defy gravity and fly. A phenomenon I am grateful for every time I get into my husband's Piper Archer.

If you have walked this planet for any length of time, you probably have experienced stress and probably some form of trauma. The more stress and trauma you experience, the more this blade is important to your resilience. Truth...in this life, there will be something, somewhere, sometime, which will happen and will challenge you. You may experience a difficult loss, an accident or illness, or some other event...either of which has the potential to take you down.

This blade combined with **PERSONAL RESILIENCE BUILDING** allows you to be proactive and heal past traumas or mitigate the stresses in your life in your quest to be healthier.

To best utilize the benefits of **RESILIENCE PREPARATION**, the blade has three components: education, embracing reality, and taking action.

EDUCATE YOURSELF

EDUCATING YOURSELF ABOUT stress, trauma, self-care, and resilience is important to understand how to take care of yourself. Every day, new information is being discovered by science how modalities like meditation, mindfulness, EFT, hypnosis, yoga, exercise, and multiple others can support and help us manage stress, resolve traumatic events, and increase our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual domains of resilience.

Learning how the brain works and how stress and trauma impacts the brain and body equips you with knowledge so you understand what might be going on with you and inform you of the broad range of normal responses.

About a week or so after the attack, while watching television my legs begin to tremor and shake. This occurred without my consciously thinking about the attack. At first this was weird and frightening. Then I realized that was my body doing what it is supposed to do and releasing the trauma. Rather than fighting or trying to subdue the tremoring, I recognized it was an important part of my healing, welcomed it, and allowed it to happen. This happened several times over the course of a couple of weeks, then stopped as quickly as it started.

In the animal kingdom, nature has given the animals being attacked an incredible gift. When its death seems imminent, and fight or flight are no longer options, the animal goes into a state called *freeze*, where the respiration of the animal slows way down, the animal goes limp and appears dead. This state has two purposes:

The first being...that the body does not feel pain.

The second reason is for survival as many predators do not eat their prey immediately but drag it off to a safe place.

If the predator leaves the prey animal for a while in this *freeze* state, an amazing thing happens. The animal will begin to shake, its muscles will tremor, and it appears to convulse. What is believed to be happening in the body is completing the action of fighting or fleeing, thus releasing the trauma from the body. After a few moments, when this process is through, the animal will get up and flee to a safe space and will resume its normal life...grazing, mating, and whatever else they might do. The animal has also experienced an event that enhances its survival skills.

I can't claim to know the thoughts of what is going on in the animal brain, but in observing animals, they do not appear to be traumatized by their experience. Unlike animals, however, humans rarely go through the processing state after a traumatic event. When a person seems hysterical or shaking, we typically tell them to calm down. Unfortunately, when this activity is suppressed, it may create trauma that remains in the body's memory.

When I was out of the yard and standing alone in the street, I found myself screaming...and screaming. I screamed so much a part of me recognized what I was doing and admonished, *Stop screaming. You sound like an idiot!* Yet, my body continued the deep, shrieking sounds far beyond my ability to stop them. When other people were drawn to my location by my cries, the screams subsided. It wasn't until sometime later that I realized that much akin to the trembling of animals, my uncontrollable screaming was the first step in my body releasing the trauma. If I had not known of the body's natural response to release trauma by trembling, it would have freaked me out when my legs started shaking on the couch that night! I could have easily convinced myself there was something wrong with me. Knowing this was a normal response, I was able to embrace what was happening and let my body do what it needed to do.

Today, when I work with clients, part of my role as a resilience coach is to use the techniques and tools designed to promote healing. There are many techniques available, which have been proven to be effective both in trauma work and stress management. Many of my clients benefit significantly when I work with them and use Emotional Freedom Technics (EFT/tapping), hypnosis, breathwork, and neuro-transformational coaching.

Let's look first at what I believe has been perfectly termed: EMOTIONAL FREEDOM TECHNIQUES (EFT). It is an integrative healing modality that uses tapping on acupuncture points to help resolve a multitude of issues. It has been shown to be effective in resolving trauma and posttraumatic

stress injury. When used by a qualified professional during trauma healing, EFT is a safe and gentle technique, which allows for the different aspects of a trauma event to be explored and the physical and emotional responses to be processed.

HYPNOSIS is a term with which more people are aware and is effective in helping to process experiences, beliefs, and behaviors that a person might not know, these that are held in the subconscious mind. You will find it in my “tool chest” to help reinforce learning that occurs during a session.

If you are not familiar with NEURO-TRANSFORMATIONAL COACHING, it is utilized as a collective of exercises and techniques to create integration between parts of the brain, which are distinct and have different characteristics but perform better when working together. The left and right hemispheres of the brain both have very different jobs but complement each other and allow you to be more effective in your thinking and performance when they work together. The brain is one of the most fascinating elements of a human being, where you find the pre-frontal cortex (higher executive-functioning part of your brain) and the amygdala (the emotion and survival part of your brain) also work better together. If this were not to be the case, or if your AMYGDALA is running the show you will find yourself FRAZZLED for sure!

It is one thing to work with clients and resolve issues during sessions; it is another and possibly more important task to teach them how to use the tools for themselves. To be RESILIENT, it is imperative you learn techniques of self-regulation since you cannot be with a coach or licensed professional 24/7. You do not have to be a neuroscience or trauma expert to benefit from understanding basic information about the science and the expertise it takes to use it. Knowledge is always power; knowledge will make you better prepared for the next challenge that crosses your horizon.

EVALUATE AND EMBRACE YOUR REALITY

LAW ENFORCEMENT PROFESSIONALS and first responders often use the metaphor of a backpack to describe how the experience of doing their job begins to weigh them down. Every traumatic event they respond to, and even simple confrontations with unhappy citizens can be like bricks that are piled into the backpack, whittling away at their resilience. Over the course of time, the backpack becomes too HEAVY to carry any longer and problems occur.

Using this metaphor, we all carry backpacks. We all have a past. We all have current everyday stresses. And, we all have worries for the future. Each of us can find ourselves FRAZZLED! This is simply part of being a human.

If your backpack is relatively light, FABULOUS! This means you are probably doing a good job right now taking care of yourself. On the other hand, if your backpack is heavy, FABULOUS! You have the ability to lighten your load.

Another way to think about how past experiences and stresses can affect us is to consider how these layer...one on top of the other. Let's start with daily stressors. We all have more responsibilities, stimulation, and demands than we were created to experience and handle. We cram our day full of things we want or need to accomplish.

Allow your mind to insert how this scenario might relate to you:

Last night, you collapsed into bed several hours later than you intended. Maybe you skipped an important part of your nightly ritual because you were so exhausted and lately washing your face or your nightly bath has become less of a ritual and skipping the ritual has become more of a habit. As you crawl between the sheets, you let your head sink into the pillow, close your eyes, and anticipate the wonderful bliss of sleep.

BAM! The first thought hits you like a brick as your mind inconveniently reminds you of a bill you have to pay tomorrow, or it will be late. Then the next thought slams in—you forgot to

make a very important phone call and you lay there thinking of the potential consequences of the missed call. You are overcome with worry that tomorrow may be too late, but recognize you can't call now.

The sweet blissful sleep that drew you to your pillow is now out of the question. More thoughts continue to flood your mind as you flip and flop. You may even get out of bed and attempt to work. Even if you are lucky enough to fall asleep, chances are it isn't restful; your mind continues to knead each concern.

Your mind whirls as you work to make sense of things and fix what it perceives needs to be fixed. You toss and turn, waking sporadically—only to sink back into a fretful sleep.

Today arrived too early...you greet the day exhausted, stressed, and FRAZZLED. There is no time to even think about what you'll do NEXT because the long list of things, which rattled around in your head all night, needs to be done today. The cycle continues, stressful days layering on stress-filled nights; you are not surprised that your exhaustion compounds and resilience diminishes.

Sure, you might look like you have it all together, but inside is a whole different story.

Now, let's look at other emotional experiences you've shoved down—refused to deal with—because it hurts too much, or you are NOT sure how. These experiences might be big events in your life, or simply something your brain perceived as life-threatening or dangerous. It is even possible the emotions are relevant to smaller, yet hurtful events, which ACCUMULATED during your life.

Even when you think you've shoved these memories in some dark recess in your mind, and you've chosen not to think about them...they continue to influence you daily. We have all seen the image of an iceberg, a beautiful white tip of

ice sticking out of crystal-clear blue water. Below the water line is the massive part of the iceberg, the part you can't see but is big enough to sink the Titanic.

Metaphorically, all your memories, experiences, and deeply held beliefs exist below the water line—or more accurately—buried in your subconscious mind. Those that haven't been processed or healed continue to act like the proverbial iceberg below the line...capable of wreaking havoc in your life.

Obviously, the dog mauling was a catastrophic event, which had the potential for me to experience long-term traumatic stress—if I hadn't had the tools and support to process it properly. I am so grateful I had the appropriate knowledge before the attack occurred.

It wasn't always that way for me.

As an officer with the California Highway Patrol, I had a remarkable twenty-five-year career; I found it fulfilling, rewarding, and growth-promoting. It was also profoundly foundational to the WORK I do today. However, it also had some negative influences that held a tight grip on me.

Based on some of the incidents to which I responded and the darker side of life I encountered, I suffered post-traumatic stress on several occasions. I feel fortunate I did not experience long-term post-traumatic stress injury. And, although I arrived at the end of my career intact mentally, my physical health was a different story.

I had ridden that old push, push, push treadmill for so long I didn't even recognize the physical influence the stress was having on my body. For the first eighteen years of my career, I worked the road as an officer responding to people injured in traffic collisions. I dealt with people who were scared and angry, OFTEN because their day wasn't going well, managing fatal accidents, and arresting others who violated

the law.

Few people realize that even when law enforcement and first responders show up to help people it is not usually a positive experience. The people who need help obviously are having a bad day, otherwise, we wouldn't be there. It is a rare event that an officer is contacted by someone having a great day and graciously just wants to share it with them! For the first fourteen years of my career, I was a single mom raising two children and trying to meet all the responsibilities that includes. It was toward the end of my career I traded the stresses and experiences of the road for administrative pressure as I was promoted to the rank of sergeant and then, lieutenant.

When I reached the age of fifty, I decided to have a complete physical. We have cardio-vascular disease in our family, and I felt it was important to just check things out. I wasn't expecting anything to come back negative because I thought I was reasonably healthy. Imagine my surprise when my doctor told me that my C-Reactive Protein, an indicator of inflammation and a predictor of cardiovascular health, was at a moderate to high risk of a heart attack or stroke! Believe me, this bit of news grabbed my attention...recalling that my father suffered a heart attack when he was forty-four and passed away at a young fifty-eight years old.

A wake-up call such as our health being at risk makes us more willing to accept that we are all FRAZZLED in time. Fortunately, awareness allows us to evaluate what causes the stress or pain that keeps us stuck or damages our health. The introspection required may not be comfortable, but it is the first step toward the need to resolve past experiences, heal, and lighten your backpack.

Although it is well-studied how detrimental stress and trauma can be to our physical and mental wellness, there is some really good news here! Science and technology provide continual developments and insight; those about trauma and how the brain and body work now counter the old beliefs that

stress is harmful and post-traumatic stress disorder is a lifelong sentence.

Stress does not have to be bad for you, in fact humans do not grow and thrive without stress.

Dr. Kelly McGonigal posits in her book, *The Upside of Stress*, stress is not detrimental to your health, but the way you believe stress is detrimental to your health that is detrimental. Read that one more time.

We know that when we suffer a traumatic event, the brain and body will resolve the trauma on its own...most of the time. If certain parts of the memory continue to be problematic and interfere with a person's life, they may be experiencing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD was once thought to carry a life sentence where one could only learn to manage the symptoms. Consider this if you will...much like a broken leg, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Injury (PTSI) is an injury and with the right help can be healed. Many in the healing community are moving from referring to PTSD to PTSI with this understanding.

EFFORT IN ACTION

STORIES OPEN YOUR eyes to the possibilities; experience and wisdom provide options. However, even with the best of intentions, if you do not act on the intention, nothing happens. Engagement is where choice, commitment, and consistent action supports the effort needed for your RESILIENCE PREPARATION. This is where you create strategies to both mitigate and manage daily stressors and create new neuropathways of resilience.

Through these steps, you try to heal the past hurts and release old thoughts and emotions, which no longer serve you. Even though this requires an effort that only you can put forth, it need not be hard or painful. Recall the various modalities which science has learned, that when combined,

can heal mind and body.

Let's revisit the PREVIOUS scenario and see how just a few small changes can make a world of difference for you. Remember, this is not prescriptive. Let your mind imagine what and how you can incorporate some of the actions that resonate with you.

Noticing the comfort of your bed, your body begins to wake up. You stretch before opening your eyes, feeling rested, calm, and ready to start today. Last night, after enjoying your nightly ritual of _____ (you fill in the blank: yoga, cup of tea, bath, quiet meditation, self-hypnosis and/or tapping, writing in your journal, etc.) you slipped peacefully into sleep at your desired bedtime. You slept throughout the night, your subconscious mind content with the accomplishments of the day and prepared to work on tomorrow.

It has been several months since you read this book and gathered knowledge that has changed your life. Your days are more relaxed. Not because you have fewer demands on your day, but because you are rested. You implement self-care regularly, and you maintain a different perception of "stress." You actively manage the stressors in your day, so you don't have to carry it into the next DAY.

You have also lightened your backpack by clearing old experiences. Using your favorite healing modalities, you no longer carry hurt, fear, shame, blame, guilt, or anger. You have processed the memories that kept you stuck, and you continue to work to build your resilience every day.