

Neuroplasticity – Dr. Rick Hanson and Susan Dunn - Rachleff

Build new neural pathways by using your mind to change your brain to change your mind.

- Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to change and be flexible, depending on its environment. External connection - to what is outside of myself. Internal connection - thinking, rest, how do I process the world?
- What **fires** together, **wires** together.
- The brain has a natural negativity bias: it is like Velcro for negative experiences and Teflon for positive experiences! This bias is not our fault, but a natural consequence of our evolutionary past. We can learn to counteract this bias by deliberately focusing on positive experiences and intentionally taking them in, like savoring positive moments and intending for them to be internalized.
- **Let Be, Let Go, Let in!** What do you set your mind on - worries, self-criticism, anger, anxiety, or noticing you are basically ok - seeing the good in yourself and regularly resting your mind on gratitude and taking in moments of goodness, therefore creating calm, strength, self-confidence, and inner peace.
- How do I go into a relaxation response to create a safe internal environment? Often, we are engaged in a threat response because of all kinds of bombardment. How do I regulate my nervous system?
- **Accept what you are feeling.** Ask yourself, "How do I help myself in this moment?"
- **Have a beneficial experience** – Notice one you already have, or create one by thinking of something you feel grateful for.
- **Enrich it** – Stay with it; open to it in your body; enjoy it!
- **Absorb it** – Intend and sense that experiences sink into you like water into a sponge, becoming a part of you.
- Essentially, there are three fundamental ways to engage the mind:
- **Be with what's there, experience the experience, and feel the feelings.** Let contents into your awareness – sounds, sights, smells, tastes, touches, and thoughts– come and go without attempting to change them in any way.
- **Prevent, eliminate, or decrease what's (pragmatically) negative** - softening around it, relaxing, intending, and helping it to release. Seeing through untrue, negative thoughts; letting go of unhelpful, wrong beliefs. Imagery - imagine that the negative is floating above and out of you.
- **Create, maintain, or increase what's (pragmatically) positive** - noticing, foregrounding, and bringing attention to beneficial "tiles" in the mosaic of experience and thinking of things that call up a beneficial experience. Enrich and sustain the experience. Stay with it, bring attention back to it, and help it last.

- If we think of the mind like a garden, these three excellent practices are:
- **Witness the garden – let be**
- **Pull weeds – let go**
- **Grow flowers – let in**

If we practice appropriately, we can overcome our brain's negativity bias. Be on your own side and treat yourself like you treat your friends - with kindness and compassion. Your needs and dreams matter.