



# Harnessing Strengths during Challenging Times

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**[www.moodwatchers.com](http://www.moodwatchers.com)**



## For more information:

- [www.moodwatchers.com](http://www.moodwatchers.com) (slides in the resources section)
- Email: [moodwatchers@eircom.net](mailto:moodwatchers@eircom.net)
- MOODWATCHERS FACEBOOK PAGE
- Moodwatchers blog



## What do we want for the people we love most?

- HEALTH
- HAPPINESS
- MONEY?
- RESILIENCE

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## Three realities

- We are all vulnerable
- We will all face challenges, crises
- We underestimate our own potential to cope during the challenging times



## What as psychology researched?

- Illness
- What is wrong with people
- Why people fall down

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## What does psychology provide?

- Interventions for people when they have symptoms
- Theories for failure rather than success
- Tests to see how weak you are, how low your mood is, how anxious or stressed you are?

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## The 'Bias'

Taking depression as an example


- Research into what constitutes depression, how many people have it, potential triggers, effective treatments
- Limited research into those people genetically pre-disposed to it and don't develop it!
- Limited research into those people who recover from it

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- Science is as good as it gets
  - Science can be applied to help us understand what makes us healthier and happier
  - Authentic happiness




- What keeps us strong during the challenging times?
- What is right about us?
- Harnessing inner-strengths
- - 8 to 0 but also 2+ to 8+



- Ten tips for a better quality of life
- Scientifically validated for enhancing health and happiness
- **THIS IS FOR YOU!!**



# **1. RATIONAL THINKING!**

- 
- A degree of stress is helpful
  - Prolonged stress is bad for us
  - Unhealthy stress eats away at our health and happiness




## The Role of Thinking within Stress

- Bias thinking
- Irrational thinking
- Private thinking
- Powerful thinking



## Exploring the thought:

- **Is it helpful?**
- **Is it fair?**
- **Is it absolutely true?**

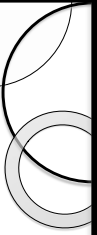
- 
- Is there another way of making sense of this?
  - Am I right to be as annoyed as I am?
  - Would this annoy you as much as it's annoying me?
  - Does it really matter?
  - Have I got good advice or am I making conclusions on my own?
  - Am I my own best or worst coach?



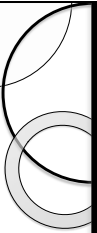
## **2.**

# **PRACTISE BEING COMPASSIONATE!**







- Self-blame
- Over analysing
- Exclusive rights to stress
- You're not on your own!




- You share imperfection with your fellow beings
- We all make mistakes
- Worse things have happened others
- You need to 'mind' yourself not 'hammer' yourself

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- The clinical benefits of kind acts
  - Putting our worries into context
  - What we share in common with our fellows



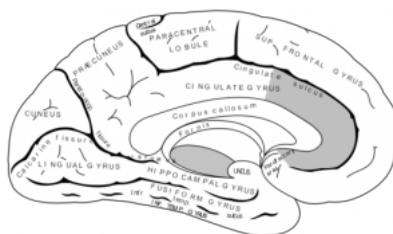
# **3. UNLEARN HELPLESSNESS!**

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- Failures are temporary setbacks!
  - Never underestimate your own potential
  - Doing different things, doing things differently
  - Change (even forced change) can produce opportunities



**4.**  
**REACH**  
**OUT!**


- Psychologists have shown that social ties and increased contact with family and friends are associated with a lower risk of illness
- What's more, a 2010 meta-analysis of 148 studies showed that social connection doesn't just help us survive health problems but the lack of it causes them
- (Williams, 2011)





- The anterior cingulate cortex—the same structure involved in the emotional component of physical pain
- Physiological effects of exclusion



# **5. INVEST IN GRATITUDE!**


- 
- Counting our blessings
  - Looking at what is right about our lives
  - Celebrating all the things that we have rather than always talking about the things we don't have
  - Digging deep
  - Savouring golden moments or days


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- Grateful individuals report higher positive mood, optimism, life satisfaction, vitality, and less depression and envy than less grateful individuals (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002).
  - Grateful people tend to be more helpful, supportive, forgiving, empathic, and agreeable (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002)
  - The practice of gratitude (counting blessings) is linked to fewer physical symptoms, more optimistic life appraisals, more time exercising, improved well-being and optimal functioning (Emmons & McCullough, 2003)



## **6.**

# **BASKING IN THE ‘NOW’**


- 
- Respecting the past but not being governed by it
  - Not letting the past hold you back
  - Over anxious about the future
  - Today is a gift
  - Make today count!



# **7.**

# **INCREASE**


# **‘FLOW’!**


- 
- Csikszentmihalyi
  - Doing the things we love best
  - Doing the things we are best at
  - Starting new things
  - Switching the channel
  - Being 'stretched'



## **8. INVEST IN THE SPIRITUAL SELF!**



- 
- Sense of purpose
  - It's not all about me!
  - Life as a journey
  - The benefits of prayer
  - Investing in our spirituality:
  - MINDFULNESS



## **9.**

# **Mind your body**

# **EXERCISE,**

# **DIET, SLEEP**



# **10. Invest in HUMOUR!**

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