
LIVING WELL

Obstacles and Resilience | Better Together | Practitioners, Programs & Services



Resilience

I read in NS Naturally this month (coincidentally written by my father) that the Mayflower "emerged around 1820 as a native patriotic symbol, suggesting high achievement in the face of adversity. It blossoms amid the last remaining snows of winter" and is our provincial flower. How fitting. This winter's adversity tested our resilience that's certain. So is human resilience similar to that of the mayflower? Is it a trait, a genetic disposition, something you either have or don't have? Contrary to popular belief its not. Resilience is a process not a trait and you can learn to train your brain to choose how to act and who you want to be in the face of stress and adversity. This in turn also affects the quality of your being and your life when things are calm. Learning lies in first recognizing and allowing ourselves to be present to our experiences of discomfort, pain and sadness. Sometimes just pausing and holding our pain for moments is all we can manage in the face of strong emotions. Resilience is then about what we think and do in response to our pain. Recognizing and allowing, thinking, doing can be learned to be experienced in a healthy way. Carl Jung said "I am not what happened to me, I am what I choose to become".

-Dr. Maria J Patriquin Ivanov MD, CCFP Owner of Living Well



Julie D'entremont Osteopath Graduate

Julie has officially graduated with her degree from the Canadian College of Osteopathy. Julie brings over a decade of experience and passion for helping people regain and maintain balance in their bodies. Julie loves working with families as a whole, treating all ages from newborn to grandparent. She believes that the power to heal is within each and everyone and she strives to help each express their true nature and potential.

Julie's passion, commitment and perseverance has clearly served her well.

Congratulations Julie!

www.stillpointwellnessclinic.com

Ten Resilience Steps:

1. Connect to caring supportive people in and outside family.
2. Recognize thinking traps like “making mountains out of molehills” and use strategies to untrap the mind.
3. Accept change as a part of life.
4. Make realistic plans and work on goals. Achieving a small goal everyday, making every day meaningful builds our self trust and confidence in our ability to achieve bigger goals even if we still worry we are in a losing battle.
5. Be proactive, take action. As much as we find ourselves wishing away pain, trying to stay (and as much as possible not detach) so we can take action is necessary.
6. Be curious, expect to surprise yourself. We grow in many ways from our obstacles and losses if we choose to turn towards the positive aspects of ourselves, our strengths that remain regardless of the circumstances.
7. Maintain a positive self view and nurture positive emotions. We need to have confidence in our ability to problem solve and to trust our instincts. Nurturing positive emotions helps us cope and increases our sense of well being. Believe it or not, it actually causes neurologic, hormonal and immunological changes that even counteract some of the physiologic changes that our bodies and minds experience with negative emotions.
8. Keep perspective, recognize the “catastrophizing” thinking trap and get the bigger picture. Being in nature and using humour are two of my favourites.
9. Keep optimistic, expect good things to happen. We can be afraid and still allow ourselves to imagine and to visualize how we'd like things to be, how we'll overcome and grow.
10. Take care of yourself by doing things you like even if you don't feel like them. Take opportunity to create joy for yourself. Exercise, cook, journal, meditate, pray, play music, make art, enjoy nature or whatever works for you.

-Dr. M. Patriquin Ivanov



Resilience and Mindfulness

When we lack resilience we dwell on past problems and feel stuck. We may feel victimized or sorry for ourselves and both these mind states are unhealthy, depleting and contribute to our not being able to cope with stress and adversity to the best of our ability. Being now in the face of stress and adversity and knowing how to respond does require some intentional past reflection (not to be confused with ruminating or getting stuck in the past). The who, what, where, when and how of having overcome prior obstacles (and we all have) can now help us think about our present circumstances with courage, positivity and confidence in our ability to overcome. We can't change the past. We can't alter that things have changed and are always changing. Life requires that we have emotional flexibility to adapt to changes but often we find ourselves trying to control things within

ourselves and our outside world in an attempt to feel less vulnerable, as if this moderates the stress that accompanies change. This is something akin to using a match to put out a fire. We may even seek and take refuge in unhealthy ways to escape and cope. Our society even reinforces these ways. This limits our ability to creatively and thoughtfully respond to what we and the current situation need to make it through the difficult time or feelings. We tend to worry about the future which doesn't allow us to predict it nor to affect it intelligently. How we are now, what we choose to turn towards inside and outside ourselves and how we respond to ourselves and our circumstances does allow us to be NOW, where we already are, which is all we can ever do. In turn, the present experience does affect our future.

"Mindfulness" is a term that is buzzing right now. Mindfulness is simply being present in the moment without trying to alter, change or judge our experience. I value it in so much as I believe that it is the only way in which to authentically live well, how to be more than okay in the face of calm and adversity. Similar to resilience, mindfulness is not a trait, it can be learned. It is a process and a way of being. Mindfulness can help us learn to be more present, to reflect on our pasts or consider the future without getting stuck. It teaches us how to judge less and how to be more accepting of ourselves, our circumstances and other people. We learn how to respond rather than react. It helps us recognize our true nature, our strengths and our vulnerabilities, and to see how we can turn towards rather than avoid ourselves in an attempt to live consciously.

Mindfulness helps us to accept and adapt to change which is at the core of resilience. Mindfulness lets us be ourselves, which is what we already are. In a sense it is like giving ourselves permission to be just who we are, to befriend ourselves. We learn how to listen to what we already know, what is best for us. Deep within us is all of this. Time, experience, conditioning and habits can alter our ability to access our knowing, confidence and our resilience. We once fell a thousand times but still got up and tried to walk. We succeed because we fail and because each and every one of us has within us a deep seated understanding of what it takes to make ourselves happy and healthy. Please see our website or call reception to register for my stress reduction classes. Now accepting for Fall and Winter 2015. Covered on MSI. -*Dr. Maria J. Patriquin Ivanov*

Obstacles

The last straw! The one leading to total meltdown. What a great time to look at our mind and smile!

Meditation traditions have a long history of using obstacles as fuel for the spiritual path. All human beings have an amazing ability to puzzle through, cut through, climb over, dissolve and reframe obstacles. In human culture, much traditional music, poetry and stories are about long journeys of heroism, or in other words, how someone dealt with their obstacles.

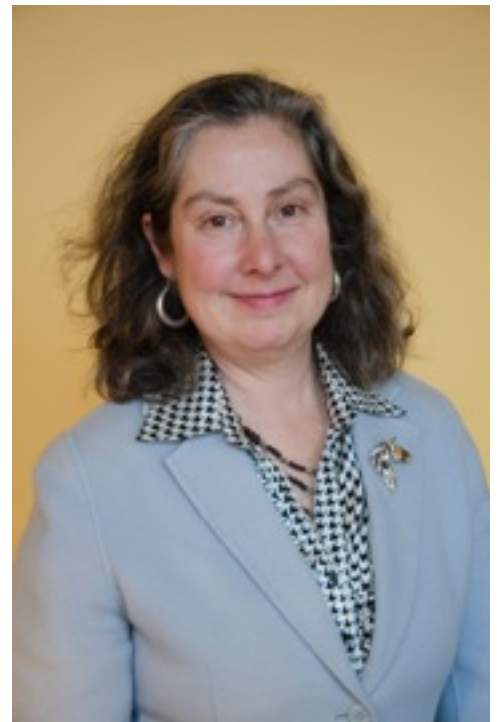
Generally we go about trying very hard to avoid obstacles, as if we can stop their appearance in our lives. The first helpful thing to notice is that we can't: no one, no matter how "perfect," has a life without obstacles. Even if we have privilege, and are doing everything "right," many challenges will present themselves. They can be inner or outer challenges. But everyone has them and their appearance is not necessarily predictable. One bag of luggage we can put down is self-blame and self-criticism for having the challenges we face.

What are obstacles anyway? Generally they are something we'd rather not deal with; we feel they are something "bad." We feel an obstacle is something that pulls us off course, prevents us from achieving our goals, prevents us from getting the money, the love, the efficiency, the status, the power, the profile we want. All that may be true in some sense.

But there is usually a deeper message coming from obstacles: often it is to slow down, and appreciate who we are, where we are, right now.

The message of obstacles is often to soften up towards ourselves or others. We can take the opportunity of sudden losses or shifts to give ourselves as human beings more of the care and attention we deserve. We can use it as a reminder to "try softer" instead of becoming more bitter, resentful and harsh. We can use the time we have to really make the most of our children's visit, or a sunny day, or time alone with our spouse, even if that wasn't what we had in mind. Obstacles remind us that none of these simple things are guaranteed and we can cut through much of our suffering by savoring the moment right now.

If we are speeding ahead too fast, with loads of goals and plans, often this is covering up harsh criticism and discontentment towards ourselves and our life. Obstacles can cut this speed for us, help us look in the mirror, and truly relate to what we see.



Often the point when obstacles start to disappear is when we begin to accept their message. If we are prioritizing the concept that our schedule must go on as if the natural world didn't exist, we may get a message in the form of a fall as we try to hurry down the icy sidewalk. If that doesn't slow us down, then nursing the aches and breaks that won't heal will force us to slow down further. When we let go of our tightly-held plans, and deeply relax and heal using our self-care, then we find the obstacle was our friend. One evening last week, I was awakened by a toothache, something that has not happened to me since childhood. It was a message to me of respecting my aging body. I can't get away with disregarding the risks of sugary foods, especially before bed. I had to acknowledge I really, really cannot skip flossing anymore, the way I used to if I was tired and just wanted to snooze and go to bed. By paying attention to that little obstacle, I am reaping a lot of benefits, as better diet and self-care increases my overall wellbeing. It also led to some other self-reflection – why was I so fond of eating cookies, looking at Facebook and drowsing on the couch just before bed? How could I give myself positive attention on the way to bedtime, instead of feeling my energy dip, and dealing with a sense of sadness via the snacks/Facebook route? What's wrong with a little evening sadness anyway?

Instead of feasting on cookies, today I'm enjoying these poems and I hope you do too,

Turning

turning into my own turning on in
to my own self
at last

turning out of the
white cage, turning out of the lady
cage
turning at last
on a stem like a black fruit
in my own season
at last -*Lucille Clifton*

Belief in yourself
Is a powerful river
To erode obstacles
- *Jeremy J*

tabi ni yande / yume wa karenno wo /
kake meguru

falling sick on a journey / my dream
goes wandering / over a field of
dried grass -*Basbo*



Pamela Rubin CCC offers individual counselling and specializes in recovery from trauma and abuse. She also offers mindfulness groups for lawyers. Drop-ins welcome.



Living Well Welcomes Jeannie Mundle RMT

Jeannie Mundle earned her diploma, with honours, in 2001 from ICT Northumberland College School of Massage Therapy in Halifax, Nova Scotia. She has over 14 years experience practicing with the following modalities: Swedish Massage, Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD), Myofascial Release, Deep Tissue Massage, Craniosacral Therapy, Reflexology, Hot Stone and Pregnancy Massage. Jeannie's therapeutic approach is client centered, aiding her clients in relief of pain, recovery from injury and relaxation. She is an active member with the Massage Therapy Association of Nova Scotia (MTANS).

After living in Ottawa for the past 8 years Jeannie and her family relocated back to Halifax in December of 2013. In Ottawa she owned and operated a successful

massage clinic for 6 years, Myobalance Registered Massage Therapy, while maintaining a full time practice. Her vision from the start was to provide a welcoming and professional space for clients to come, relax and receive exceptional massage therapy care. With her strong belief in the benefits of collaborative care Jeannie is excited to continue her practice within Living Well Integrative Health Center.

In her spare time she enjoys playing tennis, painting, trying new recipes and spending time with her family and friends.





Robin Stamm is our in house physiotherapist. She has been practicing yoga since 1999 and regularly travels to Europe to work with her teacher. Along with traditional physiotherapy, and still within its scope of practice, Robin utilizes a form of structural integration that can be helpful in relieving poor postural patterns and chronic conditions (or pain) of a musculoskeletal origin.

Robin's professional areas of interest include assisting adults and children with chronic neurological and musculoskeletal challenges, peri-natal issues relating to movement, holistic and preventative medicine, and empowerment through experience and education. Robin believes that changing the structure can change the person and views her private practice as a means of assisting in the development of human potential. She welcomes all interested to her practice.

website: www.stammsomatics.com

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Please see our website for news and blogs, programs, services and providers:

www.livingwellihc.ca

referrals welcome

