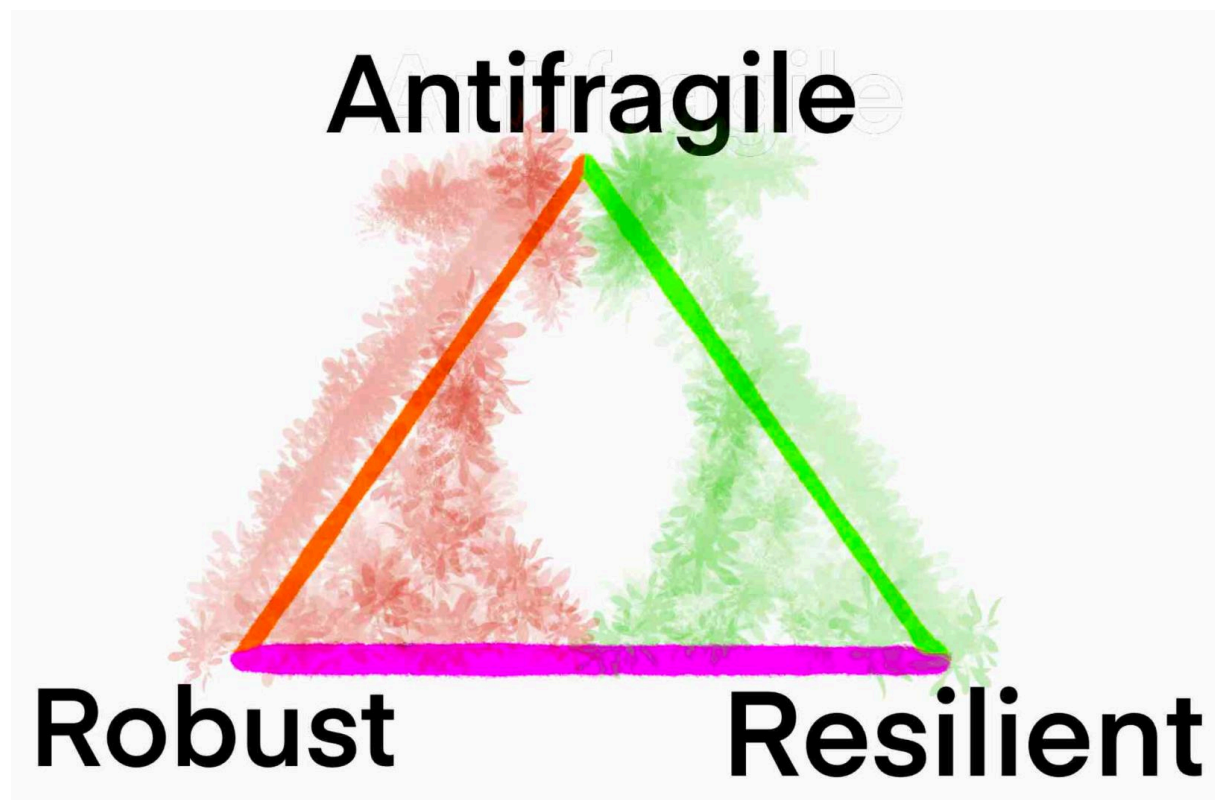


Intentional Antifragility

2024-10-13



Life will always expose you to risks, uncertainty, chaos, and random shocks. Being able to get better and better as you grow from these types of life stressors takes a growth mindset. Improving the quality of your life takes daily growth actions that create your own physiological, mental, physical, and emotional antifragility. Our speaker will talk about some of his daily antifragility strategies and actions that help him thrive.

Moment for All Ages - Video (Please view it before reading the service)

"How to Neigh Like a Horse" by Granma Joy
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sonM4ZF3Oyg>

===== SERVICE TALK =====

I'm today's speaker. I'm 76 years old, I stand five feet ten inches tall and weigh 130 pounds. Subjectively, I'm healthy, happy, strong, fit and trim.

For those willing and able please stand up for a quick exercise. I'd like to have everyone do some very difficult hard mental problems. Then I'd like us all to go do a marathon run! OK, that's not true! I'm just pulling your chains - trying to get an emotional reaction!

However, let's do some deep breathing while we say the following words for three deep breaths:

"Breathe deeply to shift away from being hyper emotional"

What I want you to do is to take a deep in breath as I say these words, then on the out breath you repeat the words I said. OK ready? Now begin doing a deep in breath as I say...

[1 in breath-ME say:] "Breathe deeply to shift away from being hyper emotional"

Now repeat those words as you breathe out deeply.

[1 out breath-ALL say:] "Breathe deeply to shift away from being hyper emotional."

[2 in breath-ME say:] "Breathe deeply to shift away from being hyper emotional."

[2 out breath-ALL say:] "Breathe deeply to shift away from being hyper emotional."

[3 in breath-ME say:] "Breathe deeply to shift away from being hyper emotional."

[3 out breath-ALL say:] "Breathe deeply to shift away from being hyper emotional."

Now we continue for two more in and out breaths in the same pattern but saying the following different words:

"Because under stress, anxiety, and fear your brain needs oxygen for cognition."

OK ready? Now begin doing a deep in breath as I say...

[1 in breath-ME say:] "Because under stress, anxiety, and fear your brain needs oxygen for cognition."

[1 out breath-ALL say:] "Because under stress, anxiety, and fear your brain needs oxygen for cognition."

[2 in breath-ME say:] "Because under stress, anxiety, and fear your brain needs oxygen for cognition."

[2 out breath-YOU say:] "Because under stress, anxiety, and fear your brain needs oxygen for cognition."

Now that our brains are oxygenated, let's rationally think back to the beginning when I asked you to "Please stand up for a quick exercise." and answer this question? What was your gut emotion about the request to please stand up and do a very difficult exercise? What went through your mind and especially what was your gut feeling or emotion. Was your emotional reaction dismissive or was it being curious and exploring about what's happening. There really is no right emotion, the key is to quickly get your reasoning and cognition in gear so you can assess the utility of your emotional response. If the emotion was either helpful or not while noticing that currently your well oxygenated brain's thinking is more clear and rational.

OK let's be seated and do a quick easy quiz. Let's say that you are at home and your significant other comes into the room and says "We need to talk!" which immediately causes you some big anxiety. Now tell me, in one sentence what do you need to do? Everyone says out loud: "Breathe deeply to shift away from being hyper emotional." Great - everyone gets an A+. Now there is a 2nd part to the quiz. This test is a little harder since we only practiced it twice. Starting with the word BECAUSE why do we breathe deeply? Everyone says it out loud please: "Because under stress, anxiety, and fear your brain needs oxygen for cognition!" GREAT, another A+!

Today's service is about mental and physical well-being and antifragility. I'll go over some of the more useful stuff that I've found, like breathing deeply to shift away from potentially very unhelpful hyper emotional states.

First I'd like to start with my basic beliefs.

I believe in "God" with an extra "o" - or Good! Zoroastrianism's motto of: "Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds" is an excellent summary of my basic belief. However, proactively creating a good life for one's self and others is not always a simple and easy task. A good life also needs two other critical traits.

The first needed trait for a good and happy life is wisdom. Learning what choices are wise and will favor good outcomes. Secondly and perhaps the most important of all is the trait of justice. Understanding your actions and reactions while always favoring the justice of fairness, respect, equality, and compassion for yourself and others.

So I believe that a good and happy life comes from being wise and doing just living in all of one's feelings, thoughts, words, and deeds.

I've found the following framework of the four rules of the shaman helps me in focusing on being wise and just so I can grow my well-being and antifragility.

The First Rule is one word: Attend

The Second Rule is two words: Pay Attention

The Third Rule is three words: Speak Your Truth

and The Fourth Rule is four words: Be Open To Outcome

Your current situations are different from mine. For example, I'm old and retired while many of you are not. Also, my goal and desire is to maintain, not necessarily grow my antifragility while being effective and efficient. However, your goals might include growing or increasing your antifragility. So during my sermon you can think about "Speaking Your Truth" and what being antifragile means to you. How you can add more antifragility to your life so you are better able to achieve your own desires. Growing antifragility is all about taking repeated actions to enable you to reach and maintain your desires and goals in life.

I view the good life from six key foundational areas:

First. diet for biochemical and physiological health

Second. sleep for biochemical and physiological health

Third. social relationships for spiritual/emotional well-being and growth

Fourth. stress and recovery management for growth

Fifth. mental training & exercise while building wise & just strategies and skills for growth

Sixth. physical training & exercise for growth

This sermon will not discuss diet and sleep but bear in mind that healthful dietary nutrition and sleep are absolutely essential for being physiologically antifragile and they are determining factors in avoiding many chronic diseases. This sermon focuses on my mental and physical practices that help me maintain a good, antifragile lifestyle.

OK, let's talk about antifragility. The basic idea of antifragility is that you do repeated stuff that grows your ability to withstand more difficult physical, physiological, mental, and emotional stresses.

About 12 years ago I started playing disc golf. Disc golf is basically a throwing sport that begins with a highly stressful hard throw off the beginning Tee box area. You wind up and throw as hard as you can. Unfortunately when I throw as hard as I can I frequently end up injuring muscles in my upper body. Even in high school playing baseball as an outfielder I'd usually begin the season by injuring my arm due to trying to throw as hard as I could. In hindsight it's easy to see that I should have done antifragility or strength building work to grow my muscle resilience before throwing hard. Unfortunately I did not learn that lesson 60 years ago in high school, and when I started playing disc golf twelve years ago I also did not learn that lesson at first. It took me about 7 years and two episodes of very sore, injured arm muscles until I was able to successfully build up my arm antifragility enough to throw a disc golf disc as hard as I could without injuring my arm!

Building antifragility is all about pushing yourself in doing an effective cycle of stress and recovery so your mind and body grows into being able to withstand additional stresses. The most effective cycle for me is to practice little and often, day in and day out to grow better and better.

I think Margie Warrell, Ph.D (who is a global authority on human and leadership development) says it most concisely (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HCkAgp4kH4k>):
"Growth and comfort can't ride the same horse!"

Many of you in the audience have excellent things you do to maintain and grow your own antifragility.

I know DawnN & ElisaK do the hard work of keeping a large outdoor garden. Keeping and processing a large garden is one of the best ways to maintain and build strength and stamina.

DebbieR has done kick boxing which is just marvelous for fitness and growth.

LaurieB does both Zumba and Body Combat at the gym for her growth!

ChrisL does martial arts which is a super growth activity.

DanielR does indoor rock climbing which builds extraordinarily strong arm muscles.

GraceN does yoga instruction which is significantly greater for both mental and physical growth compared to just doing yoga.

GeoffS does weight lifting and treadmill work for his growth.

SusanB does extensive morning outdoor gardening.

I'm sure many others here have their own ways of maintaining and growing their minds and bodies.

My daily antifragility work focuses on preventing the typical major risk factors of old age such as: loneliness, accidents, cognitive impairment, diseases, and general health problems. My morning work starts while I'm laying in bed as I wake up. I will do a loving kindness meditation and also recite my auto-suggestion a few times. The loving kindness meditation consists of naming people who I know are struggling with their well-being. After naming these people I will say: "May you be healthy, may you be well. May your joys and contentment far outweigh any pain and suffering that might come your way!" The auto-suggestion I recite is based on the world-renowned psychologist and hypnotist Émile Coué's auto-suggestion of: "Every day and in every way, I'm getting better and better." These practices and others help me maintain a daily positive perspective and mindset that reinforces my mental focus, strength and antifragility.

Upon getting out of bed and standing I will say my daily gratitude greeting that starts with "As I stand upon earth I'm grateful for ...yada ...yada" From there I will use the restroom and immediately afterwards use my doorway chin up bar to do the maximum amount of chin ups that I can do. THIS IS EXHIBIT #1 [holds up chin up bar]= What I call my First DISCOMFORT HORSE! (for kids and all in the audience you are welcome to neigh, do horse breath, or do horse gallop sounds out loud like a horse whenever I say the words DISCOMFORT HORSE or DISCOMFORT HORSES!) So let's try it with neighs, horse breathing and/or horse galloping sounds. Consider this a test to see how well you paid attention to the children's video we watched earlier! This is my first DISCOMFORT HORSE! [neighing...]

From chin ups the next antifragility exercise I do is my daily mental memorization practice. Every season I spend about one half hour daily memorizing a new handful of frameworks. I created a public website, <https://myseasonalimperatives.com>, last year that I keep updated with all the seasonal memorization work I do. Currently I'm working on memorizing useful frameworks such as "Constructing Internal Confidence States" and "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs." After the memorization work I will do a focused mindful meditation for up to 23 minutes. Both of these mental efforts help to grow my brain strength and antifragility. After the focused mindful meditation I will get up from my chair to do my first one-legged jumps! I do these two jumps on a red stability balance disc that makes the jumping slightly more difficult and definitely more interesting and fun. [DEMO NOW - and after jump move a "tracking" coin] THIS IS EXHIBIT #2 [hold up red stability balance disc] = My Second DISCOMFORT HORSE! [neighing...]

After these leg jumps I will revisit my First DISCOMFORT HORSE [holds up bar again] [neighing ...] to do the maximum amount of chin ups again. That finishes chin ups for the day - YEA!

Now I will begin eating breakfast starting with my standard breakfast oatmeal. The next horse I mount is doing a traditional farmer's carry using two kettlebells. I carry the extra 97 pounds of weight for 120 steps. [DEMO now] THESE ARE EXHIBITS #3 [point to kettlebells] = My Third DISCOMFORT HORSES! [neighing ...]

Now throughout the day I will always do single one-legged jumps whenever I get up out of my chair. On average I get out of my chair 20 times a day so I end up doing a total of forty jumps every day. Also when I use the restroom I do a one-legged balance for sixty seconds. For this sixty second one-legged balancing I keep a second yellow stability balance disc near the restroom. After I've accomplished a sixty second single leg stand I'm finished balancing for the day on that leg.[DEMO now - and after balance move a "tracking" pencil] THIS IS EXHIBIT #4 [hold up yellow disc] = My Fourth DISCOMFORT HORSE![neighing..]

This finishes the early morning part of my daily antifragility practices. However, during the rest of the morning and day, as mentioned, I continue to do jumps when getting out of my chair. The last daily antifragility work I do is to practice the Five Tibetan Rites for about 8 minutes shortly before going to bed. This series of yoga mat exercises improves my mood, energy, vitality, and flexibility. I won't demo the Five Tibetan Rites. However, you can do an Internet search to see thousands of videos for doing the Five Tibetan Rites. [NO DEMO] THIS IS EXHIBIT #5 [hold up yoga mat] = My Fifth DISCOMFORT HORSE! [neighing...]

So that's my day in, day out, daily cycle of antifragility work!

You may have noticed that I fiddle with some coins after doing my one legged jumps. Also you watched me move a pencil when I finished my one legged balancing. These two practices add some additional tracking along with cognitive and aesthetic fun while making the exercise more rewarding. Also, after doing the farmer's carry and the chin ups I always greet myself in a nearby mirror and give myself a high five and some verbal encouragement as a reward for my effort.

I do some additional weekly antifragility work including attending services and meetings at our local Unitarian Universalist church. A few years back I started

going to the gym with the Silver Sneakers medicare program. I attend a group workout with about 50 other seniors twice a week for one hour. This one hour class of continuous movement is very beneficial. The class not only adds a lot of physical exercise but also lets me engage socially with a large group of my peers. I also do about 10 minutes of exercise with a large Zumba class that meets right before the Silver Sneakers class. I find these weekly social gym activities very rewarding and beneficial.

In summary, the title of my talk is Intentional Antifragility. Building your mental, emotional, physical, and physiological antifragility takes doing repeated practices that foster being strong so you can better realize your life's desires. When I'm at home on the figurative ranch I intentionally practice maintaining my antifragility. My mental practices include attending social gatherings, using auto-suggestions, memorizing frameworks, and doing both loving kindness and focused mindfulness meditations. My daily physical practice is to simply get up off my rear end and mount my five figurative DISCOMFORT HORSES! [neighting...]

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Closing Words

Prayer for Living in Tension by Joseph M. Cherry

If we have any hope of transforming the world and changing ourselves,
we must be
bold enough to step into our discomfort,
brave enough to be clumsy there,
loving enough to forgive ourselves and others.

May we, as a people of faith, be granted the strength to be
so bold,
so brave,
and so loving.