



## RESILIENT!

### LEADERSHIP & THE INTEGRAL LIFE

Edited by Dr Sven Hansen

Welcome to RESILIENT! - Our client newsletter which aims to bring you topical and practical ideas to improve leadership, build resilient organisations and create a meaningful life.

### Attention Deficit Trait (ADT)

A man staggers onto a train with 3 bags, cellphone jammed under his chin, sweating and talking at full speed. As he collapses onto a seat he reaches for another electronic gadget, drops the phone, pulls out his laptop and spills the content of a bag across the floor. He continues to rant about a previous meeting and all the tasks he has to do before tomorrow. His phone shrieks and he switches to another call becomes totally absorbed until the phone shrieks with his first caller. Just as his computer boots the door opens, he misses the station and swears, starting another call and slamming down his laptop cover.....

Frenzied, distracted, multitasking, impatient, late, disorganised, guilty and panicky.... Is it you?

### How the brain lets us down?

Ned Hallowell, a psychiatrist writing in the January issue of Harvard Business Review describes this as "Attention Deficit Trait". He suggests that 5% of the adult population experience an adult form of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD or ADHD). Learning, emotion regulation, focus and thinking are compromised.

#### The Good

Sufferers are often talented, creative and energetic grouping amongst the exuberant and sometimes manic entrepreneurs, artists and scientists. They make good leaders during change and tend to bounce back quickly. They can learn to manage ADT.

#### The Bad

Sufferers cannot access this talent as they procrastinate, miss deadlines, forget, drift off and fail to learn. They rely on stress and crisis to survive. They can be emotional, angry, "stressed" and prone to collapse into the death spiral. They cause others to burn out.

#### The Ugly

Brain scans show loss of volume in several areas including those associated with learning, emotion regulation and attention control. Unmanaged these critical brain areas simply fire themselves to death. After the age of 45 the brain has trouble recovering from the excess cortisol and adrenaline secreted with ADT. ADT creates a spiral of fear, confusion, error, panic and cognitive decline.

#### Why Now?

While the tendency to ADT is partly genetic, most researchers (including Hallowell) argue that it is purely a response to the hyperkinetic lives we try to lead. Never before have we had to track so many data points from so many sources and at so great a speed.

Information overload has a direct effect on the Executive Attention Network (Executive) that sits at the front of the brain (prefrontal cortex). The Executive governs decision making, planning, prioritisation, risk management and timing.

This absolutely marvellous master of the trillion celled brain that distinguishes human beings operates beautifully if two conditions hold:

1. We are supported by positive emotions of calm, wellbeing, happiness and love.
2. We limit the tasks in the Executive to about seven – and ideally two.

#### Catch 22

We can enter the death spiral if either condition fails. Too much information in the EAN leads to self doubt, anxiety and fear. This triggers the reptilian brain causing a flood of adrenaline and "stress" into the body. The "stress" then disables the Executive and the brain resorts to reptilian coping strategies such as withdrawal, panic and anger (freeze, flight and fight).

Equally, a situation, culture or leader that provokes fear triggers the reptilian system and shuts down the executive. Both are common in the modern workplace.



## Leadership Failure

Think of the Executive Attention Network as the leader of the brain and your life. If you disable it, you lose direction and support. It is easy to spin out of control. It is not much fun being around you and you certainly stop having fun.

Leaders manage attention. What if organisational leaders fall prey to ADT – and we know that millions do? The ADT leader becomes agitated, distracted, fires multiple confusing messages around the organisation and starts to contaminate the organisation with fear through his or her anger and impatience. Leadership action disintegrates and people become confused, afraid and threatened.

The very energy, decisiveness, enthusiasm and optimism they demand is destroyed by their own behaviour and moods. This is what Goleman called toxic or dissonant leadership.

## So, what to do about ADT

Fundamentally we have to control the conditions described before. We must ensure that:

1. Supported by positive emotions
2. Limit the tasks in the Executive to seven

These two conditions have an individual and an organisational perspective. Clearly, we must take responsibility for managing our own brains. Equally, leaders and all of us in a healthy organisation need to take steps to create working conditions that support the Executive Attention Network.

## Self Management

The entire resilience model supports an effective brain but in short the following are the key points:

1. **Self Awareness.** Perhaps the biggest risk for ADT is lack of self awareness. We must each be vigilant about watching how we pay attention to the world around us. If any of the symptoms we describe occur - stop and rest.
2. **Microbreaks.** Take regular breaks during any task. Learn to watch your concentration span and take a rest before your mind starts to wander.
3. **Maintain blood sugar and hydration.** Regular meals, add snacks and a bottle of water. Use coffee sparingly.
4. **Sleep well.** Learn to discipline your sleep to at least 7 hours per night - sticking to regular hours.

5. **Stay fit and exercise daily.**

6. **Practice relaxation daily.**

7. **Maintain a strong support system.**

We need warm, authentic human connections. Seek them daily.

8. **Serial Task.** Group your activities through the day. Drive one activity at a time and stay focused until complete.

9. **Simplify.** Actively seek things to subtract from your life – TV, stimulants, dull people, electronic noise...

10. **Train your brain.** Tools such as the Peak Achievement Trainer (see overleaf) allow one to train concentration and alertness systematically with brain wave biofeedback.

## Organisational Management

This is a particularly demanding leadership challenge. Organisations need the Executive Attention Network of each and every employee to be operating in full engagement. The cost of failing in this task is turnover, absenteeism, presenteeism and toxic cultures. Here are some practical steps:

1. Simplify and organise the workplace in every possible way.
2. Remove clutter and control e-mails.
3. Stick to time commitments.
4. Have face to face meetings.
5. Affirm the positive, creatively seek ways to overcome performance barriers.
6. Use adversity positively. When facing difficulty seek creative solutions.
7. Take time to celebrate genuinely
8. Outlaw angry outbursts.
9. Champion your corporate wellbeing programmes with regular breaks, quiet rooms and exercise options.
10. Leaders must learn to generate positive emotions such as calm, generosity, optimism, laughter and joy.
11. Leaders must regularly highlight priorities and remove complexity and barriers.
12. Make sure people play to their strengths most of the time.
13. Use humour and laughter generously.

Remember to be authentic with culture change. Honour what is good and established and gently help people develop trust for new styles. Relapsing to the old way is very destructive.



## Staff Profile - DEB PICK



Deb is based in the Auckland office and is running Health Checks and seminars. She also coordinates individual or group based support classes and coaching to further develop skills in the domains of Resilience Training. The content of these vary but can include:

- exercise prescription
- stretch
- core strength training
- practical nutrition
- relaxation
- massage & muscle tension release

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## Training the Brain - Executive Briefing - Sydney

Learn how executives, athletes, and children are developing their powers of focus, concentration and alertness. Leading Neurotherapist, Jon Dr Cowan PhD, will demonstrate the remarkable Peak Achievement Trainer, the most accurate and responsive way to measure and train focus and alertness, and present his new insights about attention and the function of the brain's frontal lobes—the hypotheses that lead to its development. The Peak Achievement Trainer is a key component of an outstanding Peak Performance Training Program at a U.S. Fortune 500 company, where using it doubled the duration of concentration of the top 23 executives in the first five sessions.

Dr Cowan and Stuart Taylor will show how the Peak Achievement Trainer and other current leading brain technologies can be applied in practical ways to resolve many of the complex challenges facing leadership, entrepreneurship and professional services.

**Date : Monday 15 August - 10am To 11.30am**

Registration - Contact Adam Fraser on 0409360511 or email [info@resilienceinstitute.com.au](mailto:info@resilienceinstitute.com.au)

## Practical Resilience Program – Public Program - Melbourne

In two half-day workshops, learn how to train your brain and build your happiness and resilience...

- ✓ Health & Resilience assessment
- ✓ Introduction to Resilience
- ✓ Mastering Relaxation and Fatigue
- ✓ The Practice of Flow
- ✓ Health and Physical Vitality
- ✓ Emotional Intelligence
- ✓ Brain Training & attention control
- ✓ Spirit in Action

### Previous attendee said...

*"I found the Practical Resilience Program run by Stuart to be enlightening! I feel that I have gained valuable insight into my own behaviour and lifestyle and have implemented numerous principles from the course."* Michael Schiller, Managing Director Modern Promotions

### Next Program - 11 & 25 August 2005 in Melbourne

- Visit our website [www.resilienceinstitute.com.au](http://www.resilienceinstitute.com.au) and download a registration form
- Contact Stuart Taylor in Melbourne on 03 9889 0344
- Email [info@resilienceinstitute.com.au](mailto:info@resilienceinstitute.com.au)



## Resilient Products

### Freeze-Framer: Own a Resilience Building Biofeedback Device

FREEZE-FRAMER, from the Institute of HeartMath, [www.heartmath.com](http://www.heartmath.com), is the most practical way to assess & build resilience under different situations.

➤ **Why we use FREEZE-FRAMER for Resilience Training:**

The HeartMath Institute has a long scientific background with hundreds of clinical studies showing measurable benefit & positive outcomes. FREEZE-FRAMER quickly helps our clients build proficiency in a number of our Resilience Disciplines, these include:

- Mastery of effective diaphragmatic breathing (Stress Mastery)
- Quick relaxation & stabilisation (Physical Vitality)
- Cardiovascular biofeedback for lowering pulse and blood pressure (Physical Vitality)
- Create physiological state for effective visualisation (Physical Vitality)
- Building emotional resonance for stronger empathy and resilience (Emotional Competence)
- Preparation for critical meetings, presentations and negotiations (Emotional Competence)
- Management of attention disorders in kids and adults (Cognitive Discipline)
- Feedback on negative and helpless thinking (Cognitive Discipline)
- Create physiological state for optimal mindfulness, prayer or meditation (Spirit in Action)
- Identifying which skills or activities get you closest to FLOW (Spirit in Action)

**\$450 plus GST  
& postage**



## Practical Resilience Books

Dr Sven Hansen has written five practical books on the five disciplines of Resilience. They are practical & user friendly introductions to the concepts of Resilience & help you build your own practice strength.

**1. Stress Mastery: Being Calm, Alert and Engaged**

Introduction to Resilience, Managing stress, Breathing & Sleep, Relaxation & Flow

**2. Physical Vitality: Enhance and Extend your Life**

Prevention & Longevity, Mastering Health Risk, Exercise, Nutrition, Integral Daily Practice

**3. Emotional Competence: The Feeling of Being Alive**

Building your EQ through self awareness & emotion regulation; Social skills, Leadership & Resonance

**4. Cognitive Discipline: Creativity, Decisions & Execution**

How the mind & brain work, Attention control & focus, Watching, disputing & reframing how you think, Learned optimism & the mind in sport

**5. Spirit in Action: Moral Resilience, Leadership and Enlightenment**

Understand consciousness & the role of spirit, Defining your core strengths & talents, Creativity, Compassion, Spiritual practice for normal folk



**Full Series \$60  
plus GST & postage**

**Single Book \$15  
plus GST & postage**

For more information on products, please email [info@resilienceinstitute.com.au](mailto:info@resilienceinstitute.com.au)