BUILDING YOUR RESILIENCE PART 3

(Image: Pixabay Images)

"Upgrade" your thoughts and actions

As the new semester approaches, it's important to rest, recharge and also reflect on last semester in terms of what worked well, what didn't work well and what we can do to improve our situations academically and personally. In order to build our resilience, it's important to change or "upgrade" our current thinking style/s and behaviour/actions that may not be serving us optimally.

Why is it important to "upgrade" our thoughts/thinking style?
Our thoughts are like a software programme that "runs" 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The average person has approximately 60 000 thoughts that stream through their mind within a 24-hour period. Over time, some of our thoughts become more dominant and habitual. These habitual thoughts influence our feelings and behaviour. It also affects our functioning in the various areas of our life e.g. academics, work, relationships, etc. Although most of us are largely unaware of the habitual thoughts that stream through our minds daily, we can develop skills to notice or pay closer attention to our thoughts and identify thoughts that are unhelpful, unrealistic or destructive and "upgrade" or replace these thoughts with more realistic, helpful and constructive thoughts. Just as our phones, tablets and computers require frequent software updates in order to function optimally, we human beings need to regularly upgrade our thinking and behaviour if we really want to improve our functioning in the various areas of life.

For example, if you've been experiencing academic difficulties during the first semester, you may be feeling demotivated, worried and stressed about how things will turn out in the second semester. There may be thoughts like "these modules are too difficult for me", "what if I fail" or "I'm not cut out for this". If you think the above thoughts frequently each day, it could lead to you feeling more stressed and anxious, you may tend to procrastinate/avoid your academic tasks and this may lead to you feeling even more stressed, anxious or overwhelmed. You may leave studying or completing assignments/projects for challenging modules to the last minute because of the high stress or anxiety levels with that module. As such, your grades will drop even further for those modules.

Instead of repeating the same unhelpful thoughts and behaviour with your modules and being stuck in this unhelpful pattern, it would be more effective to acknowledge your feelings of anxiety, find ways to calm yourself down/relax and upgrade your thinking with more helpful, realistic thoughts like "what can I do with these modules that will help me understand/master the work and do better?", who/what can help me succeed with this module?", "I do have what it takes to pass these modules, I've passed other modules in my degree". So, acknowledging how you feel and calming yourself down but changing how you think about your academics (constructive, realistic thoughts) and how you respond/act (constructive, proactive behaviour) regarding academics can be helpful. Constructive

actions/behaviour may be to ask yourself what you did last semester that helped you pass certain modules and implement that as well as accessing academic support from various resources available to you such as your FSA, tutor, lecturer, fellow classmate/s etc. You may also need to reach out to your FSA for help with dealing with academic stress or even contact the SCU for help with managing anxiety. Upgrade your thoughts and behaviour if you want to upgrade your life!

"You can't get different results by doing things the same way." - Richard Moran
"Action is the foundational key to all success." - Pablo Picasso

For more info on "upgrading" your thoughts:
- Listen to our SCU podcast episode: "Thinking traps" - Unhelpful thinking patterns and how to change them https://anchor.fm/scumentalhealth
- To help you identify common unhelpful thinking styles/ thinking traps. https://www.anxietycanada.com/sites/default/files/ThinkingTraps.pdf
- How to upgrade your mindset, the advanced tools and hacks https://agileleanlife.com/how-to-upgrade-your-mindset-tools-and-hacks/

SCU Resources to help you succeed in semester 2:

1) **Listen to the SCU's very own podcast series.**
Check out the episode on "Creating and maintaining a routine with online learning" to help you with getting into a workable routine during the upcoming semester.
https://anchor.fm/scumentalhealth

2) **Check out our wellness posters on a variety of helpful topics:**
https://www.up.ac.za/student-counselling/article/2960452/scu-mental-health-awareness-series

3) **Online workshops to help you succeed**
Upcoming workshop topics include Identity, diversity and self-esteem and Relationships and communication. Click below for more info! To register for a workshop, send an email to scuworkshops@up.ac.za.
https://www.up.ac.za/media/shared/396/ZP_Resources/scu-workshops-2021-final-edited.zp201484.pdf

4) **"When your brain feels drained, get it trained!"**
Online Cognitive Training program offered at the SCU. For strong and weak learners. Find out more. It's free of charge!
https://www.up.ac.za/media/shared/396/ZP_Resources/cognitive-training-flyer-pdf.zp201273.pdf

5) **Your Community of Care - UP Peer Support Groups**
Join a UP Peer support group today! There are groups on various topics e.g. stress and anxiety, general mental health, grief and loss etc. To get more info or join, phone 0800 747 747 and request the latest peer support group info (times, topics, online link etc.). There are 2 groups running daily and one on Fridays. Don't miss out on this great opportunity to connect with your peers and contribute to this amazing community of care!

6) **Supportive Conversations with a Counsellor - UP Careline**
You can have a supportive conversation with a counsellor, any time, day or night. By phoning 0800 747 747, or sending and sms to 31393, you can enjoy the support and advice of a registered counsellor standing by to assist you immediately. This service is available through our mental health partner SADAG.

7) **Chatbot SCU-B**
This chatbot does not replace formal counselling but provides information on important aspects of mental well-being. You can also build your own personalised toolkit comprised of tips/skills to manage your mental health via this chatbot. To access SCU-B, logon to your student portal, click on SCU-B and login with your student details.