Module 1:

eBook statements:

1. The author described stress as the wear and tear on our physical and emotional health.
2. “Depression, which is a life-depleting emotion, certainly falls under the umbrella of stress.”
3. “Some bumps might be self-induced, or stress you created yourself. Other bumps were just there, or stress that was completely out of your control.”

Reaction

1. The first statement stook out to me because I’ve never really considered or thought about stress as a wear and tear. I know stress is not entirely good for me, but it has been a necessary evil in my life for a long time. I think my relationship with stress has developed over time, but ultimately, I always think of it as helping me get to the next stage of life. I recognize how harmful it can be, especially heightened levels over long periods of time but I don’t really see how high performers can reach that level. (99)

Video Notes:

video 1: Celebrities on Being Rich But Not Happy

1. Celebrities are the pinnacle of what we consider to be successful people— at least in America— and they are describing they success not equating to happiness.
2. Sometimes you are wrapped up so much in the pursuit of success such that you no longer give attention to the elements in your life that ground you and provide you with unfiltered happiness.

video 2:

1. “In the 1960s, Americans had among the highest life expectancy in the world. Today the U.S. ranks at the bottom of the major developed nations.”
2. Drug related deaths were more prominent to the autopsy specialist than the AIDs epidemic.

video 3:

1. Deaths through liver cirrhosis, drug overdoses, and suicide have become so common place they have been given a name called Deaths of Despair.
2. “We take 80% of the world’s oxytocin and oxycodone…I’m pretty sure we don’t have 80% of the world’s pain.”

Video Reaction :

1. The interviewer’s statement that we take most of the world’s narcotics, like derivatives of oxy, caught my attention but the second part of his statement really put things into perspective. I think bringing back the conversation to what the original purpose of these medications were for helps contextualize how bad the drug epidemic has gotten here in America. Sometimes statistics aren’t as impactful as certain writers and journalists are led to believe, I think you always need to contextualize the figures for it to strike a nerve with your audience— they did that perfectly. (95)

Reflections:

1. There have been a few times where I was not able to properly deal with the stress and anxieties brought on through relationships, friendships, family, financial stress, and of course academic stresses. During these times, I had a goal I was working toward so I felt like I had no option but to ignore the accumulation of stresses in other parts of my life while I dealt with one or two parts of a typical adult’s complicated life. I felt like I wasn’t functioning properly, or at least not to the best of my ability, so there was another layer of stressing about how I was managing my life. (110)
2. My perfect world would be one where my family is taken care of, I’m physically and emotionally healthy, finances are no longer a stress, I’m able to date and sift through the dating pool to find a partner, and I’m able to live a comfortable life enjoying the fruits of my labor. I think this perfect world would be one where all my top stressors are removed, I’m able to just be myself instead of thinking of myself as a commodity for production. I’m the second oldest in my family and the first one to have a college education, there is stress associated with building a foundation for my siblings to build off. (114)

Questions/ideas:

Building off of the idea introduced that hours worked doesn’t necessarily correlate with satisfaction/happiness— what do you think would be the a range where hours worked negatively affect health regardless of how much enjoyment we get from work?

Do you think there would be some kind of medication in the future that generally eliminates some of the unsavory parts of physical and/or emotional stress?

Activities:

Youtube link for the video response

Module 2:

eBook notes (the three statements)

three statements:

1. “Stressors that elicit positive emotions like excitement, happiness, pleasure, enthusiasm, motivation, and invigoration are considered to be positive stress or eustress. All of these emotions bring us out of homeostasis, so it’s technically falls under the umbrella of stress.”
2. “If you’re dealing with too much stress and are hit with numerous stressors all at once, and you don’t have enough of a break between those stressors, you might not have a chance to recover which likely results in inefficient coping.”
3. “Chronic distress, even if you feel you’ve gotten used to it, can have long-term consequences on your body and your mind. You might not necessarily be experiencing the life-depleting emotions but there are still consequences occurring in your body and your subconscious mind.”

eBook reaction

1. This statement hit home particularly hard for me in the greater context of the text because I went through one of those situations where a lot of stressors hit me all at once. I was enrolled in 12 units of upper division CS courses over the summer while working a full-time software development internship. Around this time, I was dealing with financial stress from not working throughout the spring semester and I had recently broken things off with an ex of mine. It was a tough time where it felt like things were firing on all cylinders. Thankfully I had some time to recoup after all my responsibilities ended and the new semester began. (115)

Video notes:

video 1: khan academy

1. Narrator broke down stress into four categories: significant life change, catestrophe, daily hassles, and ambient.
2. Ambient stressors are the ones that are in the background for all of us, they are more at the scale of global stressors.

video 2: jen butler: 3 types of stress

1. “It’s vital that you know what kind of stress you are dealing with. You can’t deal with that you don’t know”
2. They describe three main forms of stress, situational stress, psychological stress, and physiological stress while describing how they can feed off of each other.

video 3: fight or flight response

1. He provides a split second reaction where adrenaline is not able to reach there quick enough, so he goes on to explain that the person’s muscles just had more energy made available.
2. Epinephrine is a single signal that goes to different parts of the body and prepares all of our vital body parts for the fight or flight response.

Video Reaction :

1. This part of the video stuck out to me because of how she described the interaction between our coping mechanism for situational stressors can produce and affect different kinds of stressors in our life. I think this kind of feedback loop where trying to cope with one kind of stressor while unintentionally starting off a whole host of other problems. I’ve personally dealt with this, so it was something that felt like my internal monologue discussed out loud by someone who wasn’t me. (84)

Reflections:

1. There have been a few times where the negative stress associated with starting something new and being out of my comfort zone in professional or academic situations ended up being converted into more of a positive one. I’ve done summer internships that have hybrid components where I’ve had to take a flight to a different city and meet hundreds of interns across different service lines. In the end, it ended up being a much better experience than I thought, I was able to make connections with other like-minded folks in tech which ended up being an elating experience. (99)
2. I agree with Yerkes-Dodson Law, there needs to be a fine balance where there is enough on your plate without completely overwhelming yourself. I have personally experienced too little stress in my life, I graduated high school early and there were a few months where I didn’t work and didn’t go to school, so I felt like my mental and physical capabilities were rotting away the more I didn’t have much on my plate. On the flip side, I’ve also been on the other side where you have no more bandwidth available. Being on either extreme will feel like your life is being drained, finding the right balance is key to maintaining a work ethic over a lifetime. (119)

Questions/Ideas

What do you think is the best categorization of stress from the examples you showed us and the ones known to you personally?

How might you discuss this topic with children, would you remove the specifics and abstract it to good/bad stress?

Activities (even week so we can write it out)

1. My current stressors are my academic workload, financial stress from trying to find a part-time job while keeping up with my work, career stress from needing to revamp my resume to get better post-grad opportunities, and familial stress from being disconnected because of everything else taking up my headspace. Of these, I think the financial stress causes the most life-depleting emotions, the other ones are burdensome but it’s something I enjoy working at.
2. I believe the academic and career stress are more along the lines of eustress, I love knowing that I get as much out of my efforts as I put in. My familial and financial stress are more along the lines of distress. This is because of the negative emotions that get brought up when I think of or work on these issues, there is a point where it becomes eustressful but there is a large mountain of work to do before I get there so it feels like more weight than the rest.
3. I think all my stressors are chronic, in the sense that none of them will be gone from me tomorrow or in a week. For me to address these stressors, it’ll take months of effort and a lot of financial resources being allocated to get to a place where they are gone or diminished enough for me.
4. My academic and career stresses felt distressful when I first entered school, I wasn’t a programmer before and I only took one CS class before so I felt like I had a mountain of information to take in before I can feel comfortable in my skills. Today, I don’t know everything, but I have the skillset to learn anything and that provides a sense of security whenever you start something new or when you know aligning your efforts to a certain goal will require you to upskill yourself. I think getting your first internship is the hardest part, so having done two so far I don’t feel the same distress whenever I interview. I have an offer ready after school so whenever I interview or shoot for something new, it is mostly just for practice or to see what I can get after I upskill myself. It is quite refreshing, I never used to have this relationship with the career/academic part of my life.

eBook statements:

1. “The mind/body connection is also referred to as psychophysiology. Psycho: mind or consciousness— Physiology: the body. Psychoneuroimmunology is more specific and refers to the study of the interaction between your consciousness (psycho), your brain and nervous system (neuro), and your body’s ability to fight disease(immunology).”
2. “It’s thought that up to one third of people seen in an average neurology clinic have symptoms that can’t be explained by medical tests. In these cases, an emotional cause is often suspected.”
3. “Because stress increases our blood pressure, we can directly pin-point the link between heart disease and stress. Prolonged stress also affects blood sugar levels which can affect the way the heart functions. Heavy stresses over time can lead to insulin resistance, which often leads to Type 2 diabetes and hardening of arteries.”

Reaction

#2. This one stook out to me because I’ve always felt that there must be some kind of nuanced understanding of neurological cases. I don’t think that every case that passed through a neurologist’s desk is going to be something that can be fixed through what they know how to practice. I feel like grey area exists in other medical fields as well. Hearing that line rang true for me, I don’t want to overly generalize or invalidate someone’s experience, but I think it would be fascinating to devoting more resources to research this topic to see how common those kinds of cases are. (103)

Video Notes:

video 1: Adrenaline: Fight or Flight Response

1. When you are in a life-or-death situation, your body and mind are capable of truly extraordinary superhuman things.
2. There is an unpredictable nature to what humans can do under stress, it affects everyone differently and by chance someone might be able to accomplish something that defies convention.

video 2: How Stress Affects Your Brain

1. Stress can be a good thing if you need more energy or focus. It becomes to become bad whenever it is chronic.
2. Stress can affect your brain so much that it can affect your brain and genes.

video 3: Cortisol: The Death Hormone

1. Cortisol is known as both the sneaky and the death hormone. This is because it can go under most people’s radar while wreaking havoc on their body.
2. “Cortisol levels surge to unhealthy high levels causing a major problem and a real tangible threat.”

Video Reaction :

2.I found this one the most interesting, because everything is a game of chance— being in the wrong place, at the wrong time, while also having the kind of physical reaction to the stress that would allow you to escape. It’s not just about having the appropriate stress response, but it also needs to handle correctly in the moment to leave the situation triumphantly. Some people might get put in that exact same spot, but they might not leave alive or unscathed— that is what I find the most intriguing. (90)

Reflections:

Questions/ideas:

1. I agree with the quote at the beginning of the chapter, there have been many times in my life where I felt like I got physically ill from the amount of stress that I was going under. I felt in those moments that I was legitimately sick; I’ve gone to my primary care provider over things like this before. One time where I could feel a lot of tension in my body was last spring semester, I have three finals back-to-back on one day with my final projects falling a few days before. By the time I got to my last final for that day, I couldn’t stand up straight at the desk anymore for that Operating System final because of how much my back and neck hurt from all the studying/exam taking. I had to write my answers like if I was taking a nap, my head was on the desk, and I was looking at the exam writing as fast as I could. (166)
2. Yes, I behave differently when I am under a large amount of stress. There have been times where I was not able to control how I reacted to a situation and consequently treated my peers and team/group mates. I am usually a nice and passive person, but in those moments where I am at my breaking point I have lashed out or regressed to a younger version of myself/how I used to handle those situations. When this has happened, I always feel a lot of regret and thankfully the other people seem to understand since they were also under a ton of stress with me. (106)

Activities:

Youtube link for the video response

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMjZhkPNNl4>

Module 4:

3 statements:

1. “In a nutshell, happiness is a mental or emotional state of well-being. We’re generally in a happy state when we feel any of those life-enhancing emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy. ”
2. “How can you feel happy when you’re feeling stressed? You can’t. It’s impossible to experience life-enhancing and life-draining emotions at the same time. ”
3. “Specific physiological responses induced by pleasant stimuli were investigated. The immune and endocrine systems were monitored when pleasant stimuli such as odors and emotional pictures were presented to subjects. ”

reaction

2.This one stuck out to me because I never really thought about being happy or stressed at the same time. I am a goal-oriented person, maybe type-A like you described in the chapter, so I feel like stress is a means to an end— happiness. That notion has always been instilled in me, but now that I am trying to think about every moment, I’ve been really stressed I don’t think that I’ve felt pure joy or happiness until the moment of stress is gone and I can enjoy the fruits of my labor. (94)

Video notes and reaction

video 1: 12 reasons to be happier.

1. “Happier people have lower expression of inflammation producing genes.”
2. “When you’re happy, your cells and tissues are happy. Happier people have healthier and younger cells for their biological age.”

video 2: 3 basic anger styles

1. There are three basics forms of anger: explosive anger that is expressed outwardly (narrator calls it anger out), more inwardly, and controlled anger.
2. “A single anger out episode, in fact, can even cause a heart attack. That anger expression style does have some risks. It also has personal consequences. As you can imagine if this is your employer or employee, this is gonna cause problems in the workplace.”

video 3: anger management techniques

1. “Anger is inevitable. You cannot just stop getting angry. Even the world’s most sedate person has uttered a few choice words in traffic. ”
2. “…recent studies have shown that angry reactions are pretty harmful to your physical health. A Yale university study found that people with anger management issues tend to get sick more often—their anger actually weakens their immune system. ”

reaction:

3.I found the categorization of anger into those three categories was interesting to me. In my teenage years I had a problem with controlling my anger, so hearing it broken down in that way was a bit refreshing as someone who finds it hard to take a bird’s eye view on a situation when I’m angry. I’ve gotten better at controlling myself and falling more within that last category that was mentioned, but it did take some time and applying what I had learned in therapy. I feel like there are not enough conversations about our more unsavory feelings like there are narratives about the good stuff— like love and friendship— so I enjoyed this video. (116)

Questions/ideas

Do you prefer Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs or the ABCs of Human Needs as an all-encompassing theory?

How do you think you can teach children to be more stress resistant when they grow up?

Reflections:

1. I didn’t entirely agree with the quote at the start of the chapter. I think by large we can stereotype certain types of people who are seeking happiness, but there is a notable subsection of people who are very mindful of how to achieve happiness for themselves—so they’ve dialed into their own needs. For this group of people, I think they cultivate a life where pockets of happiness aren’t very far from their current state, but they are also intentional of building a life that enables that for them while also taking advantage of their opportunity. (98)
2. The moments in my life where I was the happiest isn’t exactly when I was the least stressed. I would like to think of stress as episodes and seasons, sometimes some episodes are longer, but they all build up to a season-finale where hopefully all the groundwork laid was worth it. Along the episodic journey you also come to many moments where you can enjoy what has happened, at least that is how I picture my life. I’m happiest just after I accomplish something, sometimes the accomplishments build up to something bigger, so the stress continues to accumulate but I have moments of complete joy as I finish one thing and move onto the other. (116)
3. I think I can bounce back quickly for most trials, except those that might involve family. For some reason whenever something involves family, it feels like scabs keep coming off it for weeks after the worst of it. With other things where I am pushed, like school or work, I can bounce back after a long stretch over a weekend— then I get bored and ready for something new. I am still mindful of how I snap back into it, I don’t go full speed again, there is a buildup period where you allow yourself to catch your breath some more while not being completely bored out of your mind.
4. I see them as challenges most of the time, if the outcome truly determines my wellbeing instead of some marginal gain or loss then a lot more pressure it mounted which makes it feel more like a problem, but I try to approach them as challenges even if instinctually that is what it feels like.
5. I have a high level of hardiness which was not completely surprising, I had a high level for the commitment, control, and challenge. I have a high level of hardiness; it makes me a good candidate to handle stress and adversity. Strong commitment, a sense of control, and willingness to face challenges contributes to the mental toughness.
6. I feel like it aligns with how I think of myself. I think these are all traits that I’ve discussed with a therapist, so it did not surprise me to see something categorize myself in that way. I’ve had many situations where I had to persevere, so these are also traits that I value in own self. Most recently, I worked 40 hours a week while doing a full-time summer course load, I think other people might not have been able to maintain control over situation even as it got increasingly hectic to do well in both parts of my life. I will say though that I gained weight during this time, even though I got a full-time offer and straight As through the summer I was not able to cope well enough without letting some part of my life go downhill a bit.

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Module5:

Ebook:

my three statements:

1. “Results of one study indicate that although stress had both positive and negative effects, excessive levels of stress impaired judgement, decision-making, and communication among surgeons.”
2. “Both physiological and psychological effects of stress on our brain and mind compromise creativity and innovation and ability to focus. Student show that when people are under stress, their thought processes narrow. This narrowing of attention prevents divergent thinking, which is the foundation of creativity.”
3. “In many ways, the brain is like a computer. If memory capacity is low or impaired, performance will be slower, less efficient and there will be less information that can be processed at a given time.”

reaction

1. This one stood out to me because I love any kind of computer metaphor, especially when it is applied to humans or human biology. I’m a computer science major and I love whenever different fields intersect or we can explain one concept using the ideas from another. In our computer science classes sometimes we learn a new concept and they are alike it to some biological process or structure so it’s good to read on the other side of it. (81)

Video:

video 1: effects of stress

1. “It's always something: family, work, money, your health. Understanding stress is an important part of learning how to manage your stress.”
2. “Stress is a part of life and it’s not always a bad part of life. Most of us enjoy good stress in small doses like roller coasters, watching sports, or even a scary movie. That’s the kind of stress that keeps us young and on our toes.”

video 2: emotions, stress, and health

1. “Emotions and the ways we express them are strange and powerful things. And emotions aren’t just ephemeral psychological phenomena, they affect our bodies and our health.”
2. “The act of smiling broadly, even if you aren’t happy, can actually lift your mood just as scowling can lower it.”

video 3: stress and obesity

1. “Experts think that stress may contribute to obesity. It affects the way we store fat - the more stressed we are the more long-term damage we are doing to ourselves as we store fat in the most dangerous areas.”
2. “We know that fat carried on the trunk or actually inside the abdomen is much worse for you than fat carried elsewhere on the body. It behaves differently, it produced different kinds of hormones and chemicals and has different effects on your health.”

reaction:

1. This statement really resonated with me, I think mostly because I feel like without a good amount of stress— probably more than the average person— I’m not able to function at my highest. When I don’t go right up to my limit of workload, I feel like my worst habits take over my life and I become an inefficient version of myself— stress allows me enough pressure to perform while hitting enough goals that it feels like it is worth it. There are times where I feel like there is too much going on, but usually I keep a positive outlook on it like the first line of the statement. (111)

reflections

1. I agree with the quotation at the start of the chapter. I think that some people have better reasons than others to persevere if we hold workload and responsibilities constant. When you have a better reason, it is much easier to continue to work hard without getting burned out when there is a deep reason for the ambition. I’ve felt burned out when I’ve worked full time and did full time school, it was a slow burn where I slowly felt sapped of energy, but it got worse when midterms and finals came around. I think being isolated from my family during this time— when they are my primary motivators— withered at my resilience as the stress increased. (119)
2. I think that when I am stressed my ability to be creative and innovative is diminished. I find it hard to operate at my highest level when I pass my threshold for acceptable and maintainable levels of stress. When I pass that threshold, I can feel my brain slow down— while I am spending more time working, I have increasingly diminished returns on my efforts. When learning a new concept some creativity is involved in capturing the essence of the concept while connecting it to what you already know and your understanding of the domain the concept is bound to— so I feel like it’s harder to learn new things when there is too much going on. (118)