Workshop: Hack Your Brain: Tools and Tips for Building Emotional Intelligence

Wednesday, October 17
8:15-9:30 a.m.

Dr. Lindsay Bira, LLC, Clinical Health Psychologist

This workshop will expand upon Dr. Bira’s keynote presentation to elaborate on brain function as it relates to work stress, building emotional intelligence, and mindfulness. Attendees will be able to explain the brain’s basic response to work-related stress, define emotional intelligence and its benefits, describe mindfulness, and practice tools and techniques designed to stimulate the frontal lobe and regulate emotion, attention, and behavior in a way that benefits work, government, and laws related to the auditor’s office.
Dr. Lindsay Bira, LLC, Clinical Health Psychologist, San Antonio

Dr. Bira is a clinical health psychologist, TEDx speaker, and served as assistant professor of psychiatry at UT Health San Antonio. She has clinical research specialty in behavioral medicine and PTSD/trauma. She speaks often on the topic of mental health and wellbeing, serves as a consultant on projects that seek to incorporate mental health, and runs a private practice, treating adults and teens for a range of issues. She received her Ph.D. in clinical health psychology from University of Miami. She completed residency with Harvard Medical School and Boston University School of Medicine before completing an additional two-year fellowship in trauma psychology. Dr. Bira has been featured by TEDx, Texas Public Radio, Women’s Health Magazine, Headspace, Science, Nature Biotech, and more for her work in PTSD, mindfulness, brain health and personal growth. She is passionate about breaking stigma around mental health to improve wellbeing and works to bridge the gap between complex research and global understanding.
HACK YOUR BRAIN:

BUILDING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Dr. Lindsay Bira
Clinical Health Psychologist

1 heart disease

OBESITY
HYPERTENSION
HIGH CHOLESTEROL
SMOKING

25% 25%

100% of people experience STRESS
CONSEQUENCES

STRESS ➔ PHYSICAL EMOTIONAL BEHAVIORAL

Burnout, bad habits, relationship problems, work difficulties, chronic health issues
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

EI / EQ
SEL - social emotional learning

1. Notice, label & monitor what you're feeling
2. Notice, label & monitor what others are feeling
3. Use this info to guide thinking & behavior

BENEFITS

• Can manage / regulate emotions in self & others
• Can manage / regulate behavior
• Healthier relationships
• Better mental health & resiliency
• Career success
• Better parenting
4 Tools for EI

- Mindfulness
- Labeling thoughts / emotions
- Cognitive flexibility
- Empathy & social skills

Frontal lobe activation!

MINDFULNESS EXERCISES

- Pay attention
- On purpose
- Without judgment

Simply observe
EMOTIONS

Experience of DRIVING

- Fine: 55%
- Great: 15%
- Horrible: 10%
- Bad: 20%
4 Tools for EI

- Mindfulness
- Labeling thoughts / emotions
- Cognitive flexibility
- Empathy & social skills

Frontal lobe activation!
NATURAL VS. MANUFACTURED EMOTIONS

Activating Event A
"Something happens"

Belief/Stuck Point B
"I tell myself something"

Consequence C
"I feel something"

Someone cut me off in traffic
What a jerk! Drivers suck! They will eventually cause an accident!
Anger Rage
**ANGER**
*Tame The Beast!*

1. Recognize your anger
2. Label it, but distance from it
3. Do the opposite:
   - Relax, open, breathe
4. Ride the wave

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**4 Tools for EI**

- Mindfulness
- Labeling thoughts / emotions
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Frontal lobe activation!
NATURAL
VS.
MANUFACTURED
EMOTIONS

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<tr>
<td>Someone cut me off in traffic</td>
<td>Somewhere to be. They didn’t see me. Maybe they have a problem.</td>
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REALITY

= Guilt, Anger, Frustration, Disappointment

IDEAL
The problem with IDEALS

1. Perfect version of something
2. Often unrealistic expectations
3. Can leave us disappointed with reality

Watch out for tricky ideal talk: SHOULD / MUST
Letting go of

GUILT

GUILT

ASK YOURSELF:

1. What did you do & why?
2. Why didn't you do anything else?
3. What was your intention?
What was your role?

1. Unforeseeable
   No way to predict

Resick et al. (2017)
What was your role?

Resick et al. (2017)

1. Unforeseeable
   No way to predict → accident = SADNESS

2. Neglected a responsibility
   responsible = REGRET
What was your role?

1. Unforeseeable No way to predict  
   *accident = SADNESS*

2. Neglected a responsibility  
   *responsible = REGRET*

3. Intended outcome / harm  
   *to blame = GUILT*
What was your role?

1. Unforeseeable No way to predict → accident = SADNESS
2. Neglected a responsibility → responsible = REGRET
3. Intended outcome / harm → to blame = GUILT

What did you do & why? Why didn't you do something else? What was your intention?

SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY

YOU 23%
OTHER 43%
OTHER 34%
Guilt vs. Shame

- something you've done
- who you are

4 Tools for EI

- Mindfulness
- Labeling thoughts / emotions
- Cognitive flexibility
- Empathy & social skills

Frontal lobe activation!
The Mud Hole

SYMPATHY
OVERIDENTIFICATION
CARE RECEIVER

EMPATHY
#Goals: High-level skills

- JUDGMENT
- APATHY
- SYMPATHY
- EMPATHY!
- COMPASSION!

**Empathy + Compassion**

- Our partner is doing the best they can
- Every reaction makes sense in context
- Understanding does not equal agreeing or accepting
- Combine with communication to problem solve
Apologies
The greatest mend

Don'ts

- Say "I'm sorry but . . . " = justify / excuse
- Blame the other person ("because you..." or "I'm sorry you...")
- Minimize consequences ("it was a joke!")
- Expect forgiveness or a certain reaction
- Use non-verbals that conflict

Sorry
Apologies

Do's

• Start with: "I'm sorry"
• Focus on your role in the chaos - responsibility ("I'm sorry I...")
• Express emotion & empathy to connect
• Offer a fix or Give hope - promise better
• Use matching non-verbals

5 Steps to a Good Apology

1. A clear "I'm sorry" statement
2. Express regret
3. Acknowledge norms / expectations / values were violated
4. Empathy statements to acknowledge full impact on other person
5. Request forgiveness; promise better trying
I-N-I-W-I-W TECHNIQUE

I notice ____ . . .

I worry ____ . . .

I wonder ____ .

MINDFULNESS EXERCISES

- Pay attention
- On purpose
- Without judgment

Simply observe
EMOTIONS

Diaphragmatic Breathing
MINDFULNESS EXERCISES

- Pay attention
- On purpose
- Without judgment

Simply observe

MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT

- Call Insurance
- EAP = free sessions
- www.PsychologyToday.com
- Google "cognitive behavioral therapy for ____ in _____"
THANK YOU

Dr.
LINDSAY BIRA
Clinical Health Psychologist

www.DrLindsayBira.com
FREE AUDIOS

1. www.DrLindsayBira.com
2. Audios / Store Tab
3. Add "Diaphragmatic Breathing" Audio to cart
4. Enter code "TACA18"
COMPASSION MINDFULNESS EXERCISE

INFORMAL:

- Begin with some diaphragmatic breathing.
- Now, wherever you are, look around you.
- Who do you see?
- Notice your immediate judgments, negative and positive. Those are normal. But try to drop them.
- Remind yourself that everyone is exactly how they are for a reason.
- Remind yourself that everyone is trying the best they can.
- All reactions make sense when considered in context: where a person came from, early experiences, genetic makeup, recent events....
- Think about each person and feel compassion toward their struggles. Focus on growing that feeling.
- Wish them well in your head with the following words:

  WISHING WELL DIALOGUE:
  I wish you happiness.
  I wish you health.
  I wish you ease in riding the waves of life.

FORMAL:

- Close your eyes.
- Imagine someone you love. Feel that love and compassion. Wish them well.
- Now imagine an acquaintance you are fond of. Bring up the feelings of love. Wish them well.
- Now imagine someone who grates on your nerves. Try to bring up those feelings of compassion toward them. Wish them well.
- Now maybe imagine someone who you really, really dislike. Try to bring up those feelings of compassion toward them. Spend time on this. Remember what it feels like when it comes easy. Let it grow. Wish them well.
- Now, imagine yourself. Notice what you feel. Try to bring up feelings of compassion toward yourself. Wish yourself well.
Hack Your Brain: APOLOGIES

DON’T!
• Say "I'm sorry but..." = justify / excuse
• Blame the other person ("because you..." or "I'm sorry you...")
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WAYS TO FACE THE MUSIC:
• Get in touch with your values. It doesn’t matter what the other person did....how did you act that doesn’t match the type of person you value being? Focus on that.
• Make sure your emotion is appropriate.
  o Is it hard to face because you are feeling shame? Is it appropriate to feel bad about who you are as a person or is guilt more appropriate – feeling bad for a way you acted?
  o If intention of harm wasn’t there...then it’s not even guilt. Maybe you acted out of line and neglected a responsibility? Much different. Peel off unnecessary emotions.
• Think about apologies as a way to build trust in a relationship of any kind. Or, if the relationship can’t be saved or isn’t a healthy one, look at is as a way to grow as a person.
• VULNERABILITY = GROWTH & POWER....the best leaders are ones who express empathy and acknowledge their wrongdoings, no matter how small or seemingly justified.
APOLOGIES: Plug it in

ADDRESS DIFFICULT SITUATIONS:
- “I notice _____, I worry _____, I wonder”
  - “I notice this project is moving much slower than it needs to be. I worry we are not on the same page and will keep having problems unless we get there. I wonder how we can all contribute more efficiently?”
- State what you can do better to get people to be open to being better themselves
  - “I notice this project is moving much slower than it needs to be. I worry we are not on the same page and will keep having problems unless we get there. I know I personally have been dragging my feet because of other demands but also because this just isn’t fun. That is not a good excuse though and I am going to be better. I wonder what your experience has been? Thoughts?”

APOLOGY EXAMPLE:

“I’m sorry for ______.” (focusing on your actions)
“I wish I had said or done _____ instead.” (express regret and a better way)
“Doing _____ was not ok because ____.” (what value/norm/expectation did it violate?)
“I realize my actions caused you to ______.” (empathize with the impact)
“I understand it may take a while, but I hope you can forgive me.” OR “I’m going to be better about keeping _____ in check. I promise it won’t be a problem again. Can I _____ to offset the wrong?” (request forgiveness, promise better trying, offer solution)

Keep in mind that you CAN offer some explanation of why you acted the way you did, but be clear that it is NOT an excuse and does not justify your behavior. Use this only in a way that can promote empathy in the other person; not as a way to show you were right.
# Letting Go of GUILT

## Describe target situation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guilt Level (0-100%)</th>
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## All factors involved:

(people, timing, weather, etc.)

## LOOK AT THE FACTS:

<table>
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## APPROPRIATE EMOTION:

- **accident** = SADNESS
- **responsible** = REGRET
- **to blame** = GUILT

- What did you do and why?
- Why didn’t you do something else?
- What was your intention?
- If responsible, for what or who?

[www.DrLindsayBira.com](http://www.DrLindsayBira.com)
**Responsibility Pie**

- Who else neglected a responsibility?
- Why was the responsibility neglect by you, others?
- Were there conflicting roles and responsibilities?
- How does responsibility get distributed?

**Bothersome thoughts:**

"I should / shouldn't have ______.

"If I would have _____, then it wouldn't have happened / it would be better."

"It's my / their fault it happened."

"Things like this should not happen."

**Healthy Questions:**

Why didn't I? What else was going on? What was the info I had then?

How do I know this? What other factors were involved? What else could have happened?

So, I / they intended the harm? What was the intention? Who, if anyone, intended the harm?

What are the actual stats? Under what circumstances does this happen?

What can you say to yourself now about what happened?

Guilt Level (0-100%)