Human Resilience to Stress: How Emotion Regulation Helps or Hinders

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Stress – the experience of adverse life events and circumstances – is one of the most robust contributors to psychological and other health problems. Crucially, however, the deleterious effects of stress are not observed in all people exposed to stress. Many people exhibit resilience: They maintain health and well-being even under conditions of elevated stress. What psychological factors contribute to resilience? Given that negative emotions such as sadness, anger, and anxiety lie at the heart of what makes stressors stressful, individuals’ ability to regulate these negative emotions should be a pivotal resilience factor. In this talk, I will present research that examines how people can successfully regulate their emotions, via what pathways emotion regulation contributes to resilience, and when emotion regulation might hurt rather than help. This research contributes to understanding of resilience and points to ways in which we might enhance it.

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With introductory remarks by Daniel Sullivan