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Developing A Resilient Practice Off The Mat: Part I

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Part I: What if stress is a good fella?

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> Being **resilient** has never been this crucial during **[VUCA]** (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) period. In this article, the subject of resiliency will be dissected through yoga and the wisdom of the East, instead of conventional business theories.

I don't know how many times in a day I come across with the words "change, adapt, improve, be agile, be resilient..."All these sound pretty well but easy to say, hard to do. I've been in the marketing business since 2000 and practicing yoga since 2010. As I go deeper in both, I found out some similarities and tools which yoga can be helpful especially on being more resilient off the mat. In this article, I'll try to sort out the resilience subject with yoga and wisdom of the East, instead of using business theories.

Well, it's a fact that the world is going mad with its volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (aka **[VUCA]**) structure. As G. Moore referred; "Exponential change is happening at this very moment." People are struggling, companies are struggling. The pace of the change makes it hard to adapt and survive. Everyone suffers from uncertain, slippery, stressful environment and seeks comfort to sustain. On the other hand, **is stress really a bad thing?** Can stressful, uncomfortable conditions be a tool to be more resilient?

Stress but how much?

In his recent article, renowned yoga teacher Bernie Clark mentioned: **"**Stress is often considered to be bad: But it is not bad, per se. It depends upon the amount and the context.**"**

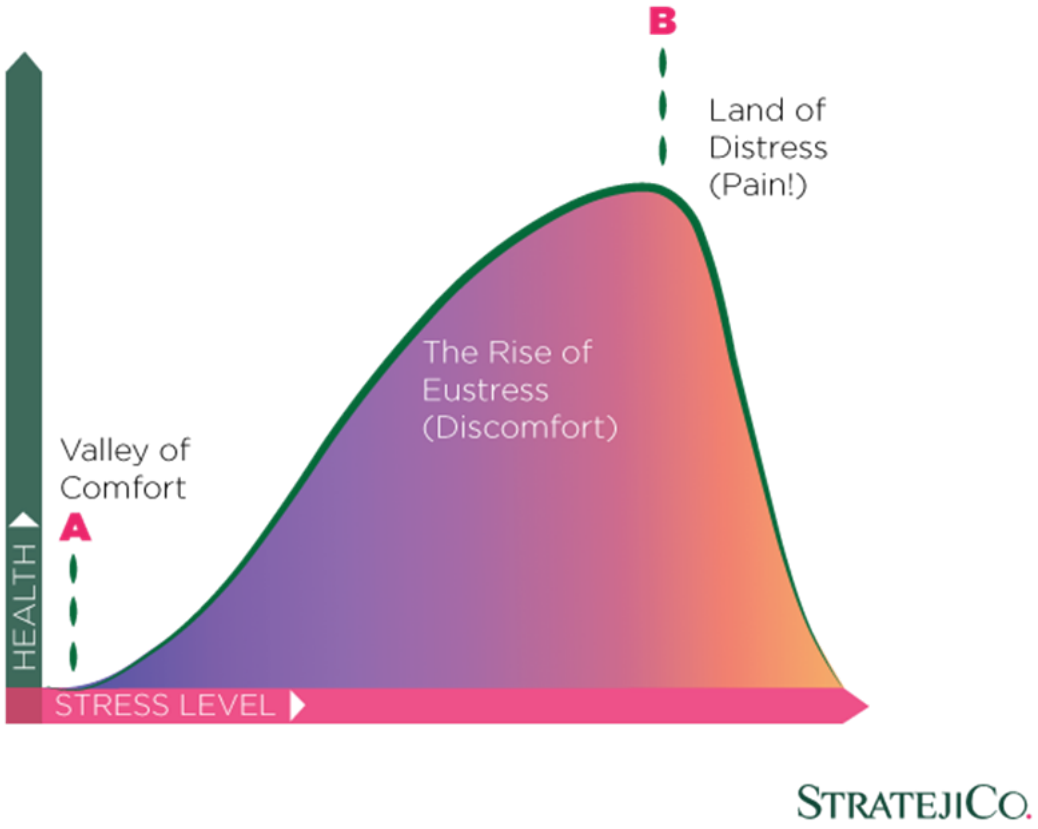
It's a fact that if there is no stress (challenge in business terms), we become weakened.

How come?

Take a well-rounded hatha yoga session. During yoga, technically you lose the muscle fibers, they tear apart and when you have rest at night, the body recovers the torn fibers as it is designed to do so. That is how muscles get strong: Cycle of tearing, instead of fixing. In the case of over practicing, you get injured however you get weakened when you avoid practicing. You need to give the body **the right amount of stress to make it stronger. So to a certain degree, stress is essential for a resilient body.**

In the same article, B. Clark added when the stress of gravity has gone, the tissues become weak.

In terms of work life, gravity is the reality, reality of the volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous world which is always there inevitably. On the other hand, when there is no gravity we would be floating in the endless emptiness. (Can you imagine how boring it would be in a very stable market without any competitors, any change. Indeed!)



Courtesy of Bernie Clark

In the Valley of Comfort (point A) there is no pain, no stress hence no space for improvement. Moreover, it means within time, it reduces the potential.

In the Land of Distress (point B) there is a pain. In many cases, it seems to be an improvement but finally, it is a "**perfect**" burn out. Even though point A and B seems to be completely opposite, they all end with atrophy.

"In between comfort and damage, there exists eustress (constructive stress) where 'good pain' takes place which is transformative."

In terms of work, we need to create our own land of eustress where sustainable exploration so the growth exists.

Fasting example:

Let's think about fasting like many of the yogis do. Basically fasting is missing out food -so source of stress, scarcity- As mentioned in Bernie Clark's article, one study found that women with breast cancer who fasted 13 hours a day had 21% lower mortality rate. Because during fasting really surprising things happen.

The body needs nutrition and if it doesn't come from food, the body cannibalizes its own cells. **As an intelligent structure, the body chooses harmful cells first**. And if you never be hungry, these harmful cells always stroll around. Fasting (which is labeled to be source of stress for the body in this analogy) kills the harmful cells and makes us immune. Fasting makes us strong to overcome. Fasting makes us more resilient.

In business terms, during fasting times -times of crisis, scarcity- we need to drop our habit of consumption (food, money, relations, all sorts of sources). This limited condition tames the mind and the body. We experience a state without the thing we think we can't live without. Most of the things we avoid and be hooked is just an ephemeral point of view, defects of our comfort zone which is reducing ourselves. In effect, scarcity is a chance to make a company more aware and resilient depending on how the situation is read and comprehended.

Good news: We have a choice!

Hard conditions make us stronger when you respond to it in a constructive way. Labeling fasting / difficult market conditions (let's say VUCA) as: "We will die or we are learning something new to become stronger" is a choice, whether for a company or for an individual.

Swami Muktanada says "A yogi is someone who can turn every circumstance to her/his advantage. So why not to say a resilient business team is able to turn every circumstance to its advantage too.

So, how do we become more resilient?

The answer is coming from yoga sutras "Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional". The answer is learning to be resilient to overcome suffering and labeling pain in a constructive aspect. In effect, pain is an information for the ones who want to see. So, if you like to learn the recipe of Bruce Lee to be resilient, wait for "Part II: Bruce Lee way of resilience at work" soon!

Comment & Questions We would like to hear your thoughts on this report. Please get in touch with us.

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