

Stress Management and Resiliency Training (SMART) licensed by the Wellness Journey Partnership from Dr. Amit Sood of the Global Center for Resiliency and Wellbeing.

Donald King, principal coach at the Wellness Journey Partnership, has trained with and licensed the SMART Program from the world's number one stress management and resiliency expert Dr. Amit Sood (formerly professor of medicine and Chairman of the Mind Body initiative at the Mayo Clinic). SMART is a structured approach to enhance self-awareness, focus, and positive mindset based on integrating cutting-edge advances in neurosciences with timeless principles.

## Background

SMART is a structured program scientifically proven to decrease symptoms of stress and anxiety, and increase well-being, resilience, mindfulness, happiness, and positive health behavior. SMART is based on recent advances in neuroscience combined with positive psychology, philosophy, ancient wisdom and the impact of modern culture. SMART addresses two aspects of human experience – attention and interpretation.

SMART focuses on how we pay attention and how we interpret. Research shows human attention instinctively focuses on threats and imperfections, especially in the past and the future. So, attention wanders; it ruminates. The human brain's default mode (dominated by default network) hosts mind wandering. Scientists have shockingly discovered we spend half our day or more with a ruminative mind. This excessive 'dwell time' in the default mode correlates with symptoms of anxiety, depression, and attention deficit. It also fatigues our brain, one reason you might feel completely wiped out by 6 o'clock in the evening.

SMART offers a way out of this human dilemma by engaging the brain's focused mode – not only to experience more uplifting emotions, but also develop better focus, enhance creativity and productivity, better engagement at work, deeper relationships, and to find greater purpose in life.

## Description

SMART workshop helps its participants with three closely integrated and inter-related steps:

**Awareness** – As a first step, participants develop a pragmatic understanding of the causes of stress, and deficits in thriving. These are somewhat customized to the specific group that is being addressed. The participants learn three key neural vulnerabilities that generate and multiply our stress: focus, fatigue and fear. This is shared in an evidence-based fashion while keeping the format simple, participatory, and fun. The self-awareness that emerges from these understandings empowers the individual to take the first step toward more fully realizing the potential of their brain.

**Attention** – As a next step, participants learn skills to develop authentic, undistracted, and intentional presence. SMART fosters such engagement by training attention, a process that

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helps one discover greater novelty and meaning in the world. Trained attention finds deeper more nurturing connection with people (friends, strangers, and loved ones alike), fulfills greater purpose, and helps one direct and sustain deeper focus. Such an attention is flexible and relaxed, yet passionate and purposeful. The outcome of positive engagement is less fatigue, greater creativity and productivity, and a more empathetic disposition.

Attitude (positive mindset) – SMART offers individuals a disciplined yet flexible focus to re-frame their thinking with a more adaptive and pragmatic perspective that is conducive to calm temperament as well as passionate engagement. Such perspective helps enhance gratitude focus, nurture greater compassion, creatively work with ‘what is,’ explore life’s higher meaning, and strengthen forgiveness skills. The result is greater emotional intelligence, which in turn fosters more rewarding relationships, better emotional regulation, and thus enhanced ability to deal with adversity.

The workshop shares application of these skills to daily life, both personal and professional. The program has been tested in over twenty completed research studies at Mayo Clinic and elsewhere, with the results showing consistent and strong improvement in stress, anxiety, resilience, mindfulness, self-regulation, happiness, and positive health behaviors.

## Learning Objectives

Learn the neuroscience and behavioral aspects of human experience, particularly with respect to stress, resiliency, performance, and wellbeing.

Learn practical approaches to enhance self-awareness, attention, and positive mindset and thereby decrease stress and anxiety, increase resilience, enhance performance, and improve relationships.

## **SMART Workshop Outline**

### **30-40 minutes (Part 1 - Awareness)**

- Why is stress a problem in my life (our lives)?
- Better management of our brains
- The wandering mind and busy lives
- Focus and default modes of the brain
- Brain fatigue and boredom
- Shifting attention to the focused mode
- Morning Gratitude – practical application

### **50-60 minutes (Parts 2-4 - Attention and Attitude)**

- Mindful presence
- Threat and Novelty
- Attention and Interpretation
- The power of kindness
- Stress and Fear
- Kind Attention
- Meditation
- The resilient mindset
- The 5 Principles
- Daily and Flexible practice – Practical application
- Resources