Strategies to Minimize Pain and Maximize Joy

Notes from **Hidden Brain** 56 min podcast: Minimizing Pain, Maximizing Joy (Aired Jan 2022)

Life is often filled with hardships and tragedies. This podcast shares the difference between a resilient response and a victim response to stress.

What is a resilient response to stress? What is a victim response?

Make intentional choices by taking a moment to breathe, calm yourself, and then reflect:

1. Focus on what you can control—(rather than remaining stuck in the mad or sad about what you can't control or what is now in the past—which is victim thinking).

2. Avoid the unhappiness trap: Recognize when your response to stress falls into the "**gap theory**" thinking: Unhappiness is the result of your awareness of a gap between what you have now and something "better".. or "more". But once you achieve "better" or "more"—the gap starts all over again…..looping into unhappy victim thinking.

3. Align your response with your values: Do the best you can — with what you have — in this moment.

4. Thinking "this could aways be worse" creates gratitude in every hardship and rejects victim mindset.

5. Rise to the challenge. Painful, negative emotions and events are opportunities to learn coping skills and build emotional resilience. **Gamify stress** by thinking of it as an opportunity to level up. (Rather than responding with avoidance, dread, fear, shame—other "victimy" emotions.)

6. Quickly reframe anger thoughts before they burst your resilience into flames. Immediately reframe stressful situations by gamifying them into a challenge and applying your sense of humor. This habit reframes anger into an opportunity for insight, coping and problem-solving.

7. Remain aware of your mortality. Intentionally embracing the life cycle builds resiliency skills. Thinking "this could be the last time" allows you to be fully present in the moment.

8. You have one life to live, and it is happening right now. Be intentional, be mindful. Create purpose.