SH Steven Hess

Strategies

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Unit 1 Overview

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As we start this journey toward a flexible, growth mindset, we begin to uncover tools and natural abilities we have always had at our disposal. Along with these existing tools, we will gather in new tools that allow us to seek the future we want, and meet the challenges along the way, with confidence. First up, a pre-existing tool we may not realize we have – the Reticular Activating System.

Objectives

By the end of this unit, I will be able to:

- describe the Reticular Activating System (RAS), where it is and what it does.
- identify two past experiences where my RAS has led me to information that I needed to fulfill a goal.
- compare my sense of self-efficacy in three different areas of my life.
- describe how my perceptions of my efficacy affect how I approach my life, my work and my responsibilities.
- assess your beliefs about whether your locus of control is inside of you or outside of you.

Thinking Ahead

Do you feel that accountability for achieving the goals you have for your education, your professional life, and your personal well-being lies within you or do you believe that it is outside of your control?

Key Concepts

Locus of Control: a way to measure if we feel control of our lives is outside of us, or inside of us. Those who believe in self-reliance and self-accountability have an internal locus of control. Those who feel helpless and not personally accountable have an external locus of control.

Neuroplasticity: the capacity of the brain and nervous system to develop new neural connections throughout life. Neuroscientists have discovered that the brain never stops growing.

Reticular Activating System (RAS): a network of neurons in the brainstem involved in consciousness; a primary alert to awareness network that transmits sensory stimuli to higher brain centers.

Self-Efficacy: one's appraisal of one's own ability to cause, bring about or make happen; one's capacity to produce the desired effect; a combination of self-esteem, skills and resources; task specific.

Threat: words or actions that frighten or imperil.

Value: quality of worth or merit; something of excellence or importance that varies with each individual.

Lesson 2 of 6

Unit 1 Key Terms

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Efficacy	the ability to produce a desired or intended result.
RAS	s a component of the reticular formation in vertebrate brains located throughout the brainstem

Unit 1 Review Questions

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Answer the following Review Questions to ensure you understand the main concepts in this Units's Video.

Question

01/05

Describe your understanding of the Reticular Activating System, including where it is and how it works.

Type your answer here

Question

02/05

1. List two experiences in your past where your RAS helped you obtain information you needed to achieve a goal or end result.

Type your answer here

Question

03/05

Pick three different areas of your life, and list them below. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate your sense of personal efficacy in each area. [1 is low sense of self-efficacy and 5 is high sense of self-efficacy.

- Area 1:
    - Efficacy
- Area 2:
    - Efficacy
- Area 3:
    - Efficacy

Type your answer here

Question

04/05

In the areas noted in question 3 above, describe how your sense of self-efficacy in each of those areas affects your behavior and actions.

Type your answer here

Question

05/05

What strategies could you use to develop your efficacy in the three areas you identified in question 3 above? (List at least two strategies.)

Type your answer here

Unit 1 Summary

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Unit 1 SummaryUnit 1: Where Do We Start?

- The Reticular Activating System (RAS) is a built-in filter system, a net-like grouping of cells in the brain's central cortex, that sorts and prioritizes all of the information coming at us through our senses. Its primary function is to alert us to information that is of value or threat, information that is significant.
- Based on past experiences, our RAS knows what we value or fear, and raises our awareness about situations that could affect our behaviors, as in the value of a baby's cry to its parents, or the presence of a potential threat, like a spider or snake. We could be totally focused on something else (or even sound asleep) and the RAS will immediately pull our attention to the situation at hand.
- We can program our RAS when we set goals, because each new goal is declaring a new significance to us. The RAS goes to work scanning for the information we need to complete the goal. Try using it the next time you need to find a parking place.
- Not only can we turn on our RAS to find information we need, we can also turn it off. When we give up accountability for a goal or responsibility for a situation, our RAS shuts down. If we know someone else is taking care of something, our RAS goes back to working on a previously-set goal.
- While our RAS is a 'built in' mechanism originally activated by the survival instinct, effectively using it nowadays requires us to believe that we can make things happen for ourselves. That is our sense of self-efficacy.
- The term "efficacy" has long been used in medicine as a way to measure the usefulness of a specific therapy, often pharmaceuticals. Research from Dr. Albert Bandura, of Stanford University, applies this to self, as our belief in our ability to cause something to happen for ourselves. And we do not have one sense of self-efficacy, but as many as we have beliefs about our abilities.
- Our current self-efficacy appraisals are based on our experiences of the past, including the emotions – positive or negative – that we attached to those experiences. With each new

experience, we either build up our self-efficacy and take on new challenges, or let it fall and avoid the challenges.

- Our self-efficacy is not fixed; we can change how we feel and we start by deciding who is in control. Is control over my life inside me or outside me? Do I decide or do I let others make the decisions over my life? This is the "Locus of Control" (LOC) and to more fully live into our potential, we want that LOC to be inside us. Then we decide, we invent and we take control of our future.

Unit 1 Topics for Class Discussion

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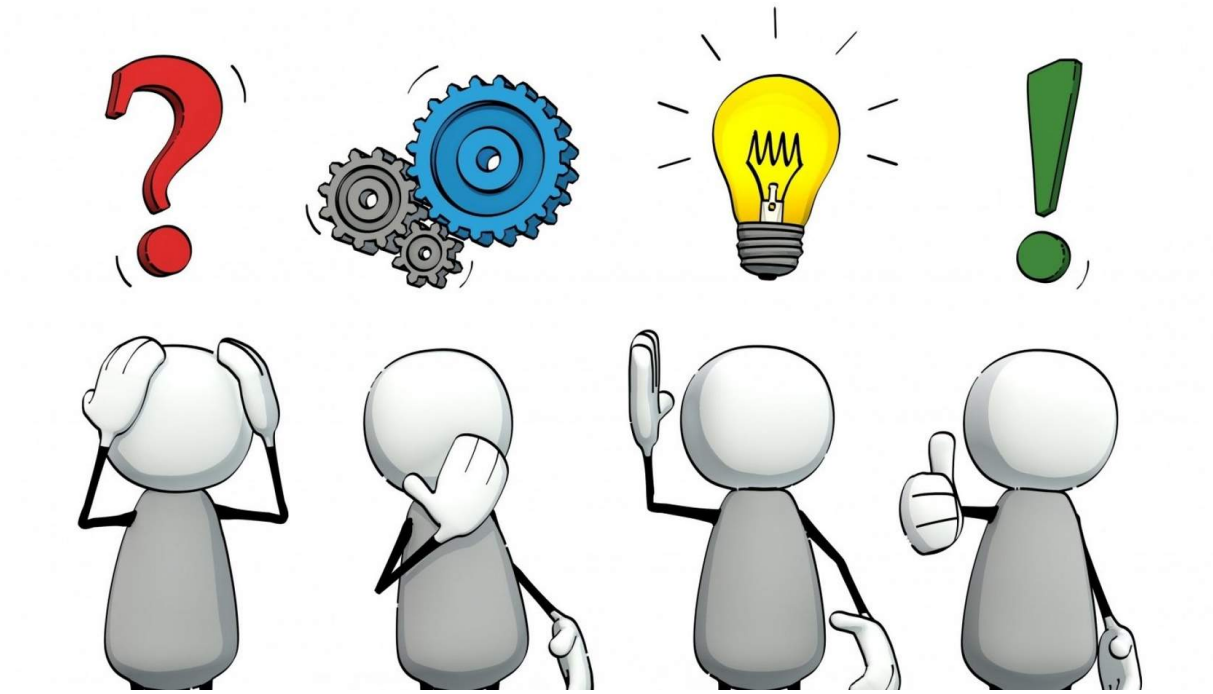
Below are some potential discussion topics that your instructor may cover in class:



1. With a partner complete the Exercise: Stuck in Traffic and be prepared to share your solutions and ideas with the class.

2. With a partner discuss why you think we need to focus on our goals to see results? Be prepared to share your opinions with the class.
3. Discuss with your partner people you have known who clearly believed that the Locus of Control was within them and that they were accountable for decisions about their future. How could you tell?
4. Discuss with a partner areas of your life where you have a high sense of self-efficacy and those where you have a lower sense of self-efficacy. Share ideas with one another about what you might be able to do to raise the self-efficacy in those areas that are low.

Unit 1 Conclusion

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Sidebar: Negativity BiasUnit 1: Where Do We Start?

Recent research has shown that the brain can get side-tracked. We're great rationalizers, and neuroscientists refer to this as cognitive bias. We can get overly optimistic or unrealistically negative without even knowing it.

There's a price to pay in either case, but a negativity bias often has a greater overall effect because the brain is wired to be on the alert for threat, especially when fear is involved. (Remember the RAS?) Negativity has a stronger influence on our perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and memories – even our decision-making – than positivity or things of a neutral nature. The key seems to be the emotional charge.

Negative information has a priority when engaging the brain's processing, leading to the effect that negative situations are more likely to be remembered than positive ones. For example, behavioral finance tells us that if we are an investor, and our stock goes down on a particular day, we get double the negative emotional hit than if our stock had gone up. The lesson, don't follow your stocks too closely; you're not going to win emotionally. Over-watching may set the stage for bad decisions. The math, the emotion, and the negativity bias is working against us.

In fact, research points out that our negative vocabulary – the words we know and use – is also more richly descriptive than our positive vocabulary. We may want to reconsider our use of sarcasm and a cynical view of the world. They may be clever, but there are consequences and these consequences cascade through everything we attempt to do.

We will take a closer look at this when we get to goal-setting.