

## **First Clearing**

**December 10, 2020**

**1:24 p.m. ET**

**OPERATOR:** Building Resilience in Uncertain

**Operator:** It is now my pleasure to turn the webcast over to Bill Coppel, Chief Growth Officer at First Clearing and host of the Next Frontier podcast. Bill, the floor is yours.

**Bill Coppel:** Thank you, (Nakoa), and welcome to our webcast, Building Resilience in Uncertain Times.

2020 will likely be recorded as one of the most challenging period we've experienced in the past 100 years. We've had a lot to deal with and had witnessed some extraordinary events. From the devastating impacts of climate change, the endless wildfires across the West, to what feels like a regular occurrence of severe weather up and down the East Coast, from a divisive political environment culminating in the baseless questioned outcome of the presidential election, to our ongoing struggle as a society to reconcile the cry for social justice.

And to cap it all off, we find ourselves smacked in the middle of a global pandemic; devastating in and of itself, but further exacerbated by the false and conflicting information and debate that has not only impacted our day to day existence, but has created additional uncertainty, stress, and anxiety, and place a significant drag in our economy, and for many jeopardized their livelihood. Together, these realities have adversely affected our collective wellbeing.

In your role as advisors, you're probably witnessing this, this diminished state of wellbeing with the clients that you serve, and perhaps experiencing it yourself.

But as my colleague, John Peluso, Head of First Clearing, would say, the only way through it is through it. That's why we've asked our friend, Dr. Tim Bono, to join us today, to help us find the path through it.

Tim is often referred to as the happiness guy, based on his work and research around the science of what makes us resilient and happy. He is the author of "Happiness 101: Simple Secrets to Smart Living and Wellbeing", as well as the sought after expert by national media outlets on the subject of managing stress in uncertain times.

Tim has also been a guest on the Next Frontier podcast. By day, Tim is a faculty member at Washington University in the Department of Psychology and Brain Sciences where he studies the science behind happiness. In addition, he created and teaches one of the most popular classes to freshmen on the subject of dealing with the stress of college life, or as I'd like to say, the stress of growing up.

We've asked him back to help us understand what science tells us about mustering the strength to persevere when times are their most trying, and the very times we are experiencing today.

He will share how the true measure of psychology strength – or psychological strength is found and applied in times of distress and adversity to avoid becoming a victim of them.

A quick reminder, we'll be back at the end of the presentation with a Q&A session.

And with that, I'll turn it over to Tim.

Thanks for joining us today, Tim.

Tim Bono: It's my pleasure to be with you today, Bill. Thank you so much for that very nice introduction. And thank you everyone for joining us today.

As Bill mentioned, I am a Psychologist, and I teach undergraduate courses in the Psychology Department at Washington University.

Since we're not able to be together in the same space physically today, in an effort to make this presentation as interactive as possible, I'm actually going to invite you all to participate using an online polling software that I use in my classes called Poll Everywhere.

So I'm going to invite you to take a moment right now to type into your web browser [www.pollev.com/tjbono](http://www.pollev.com/tjbono), or you'll also notice on the bottom left hand corner of your screen, there is a files button, and you can also click on that and that link should also popup. But either way you do it, please take a moment now to log in.

And I'm going to invite you to just type a couple of words or phrases that come to mind when you reflect on 2020 over the entire year, the last eight months in particular, and think about all that's going on in the world right now.

Bill alluded to a lot of that going on right now in his introduction. But I'll invite you to take moment just to type in a couple of words, or a phrase or two that comes to mind when you think about what this past year has looked like.

I'm going to take a look at those responses in a moment. But while those are coming in, I would just like to provide a framework for my presentation to you in which I will be sharing with you an overview of some of the research that behavioral scientists have been conducting over the years that offers some insight into the psychology of mindset and resilience.

This has become a really hot topic in the field. And I hope that some of the ideas that I present here will be useful for all of us as we reach the end of again what has been a very challenging year, and as we head into a holiday season, that is going to look very different for most of us from what we are used to, or otherwise perhaps had been anticipating.

It looks like a couple of words are starting to come in now. You'll also notice that you have the ability to give a thumbs up or a thumbs down if you agree or disagree with anybody's comment. It looks like stressful is getting some thumbs up. Unpredictable, certainly this is a very trying time.

And there – that is kind of what we would expect. This has been a year marked by a lot of angst and a lot of challenge. And as you might imagine, given that my teaching and research focus on happiness, a lot of people have been asking me, “Ok happiness guy, what do you have to say about everything that's going on right now in the midst of this pandemic?”

But one of the things that we know about our happiness and about our overall psychological health and wellbeing is that part of psychological health involves understanding that life comes with really challenging times, and therefore our wellbeing is about having strategies that allow us to cope effectively with that negativity so that we can get back on path forward wellbeing and toward becoming happier.

So I've distilled some of the major findings from this research that's looked at this topic into three main areas that I'll use as a framework for my presentation this afternoon.

So first, we'll take a look at what we know about self-esteem during adversity, then we'll take a look at what the research tells us about mindsets that can help us persevere. And then finally, we'll take a look at how we can incorporate emotional intelligence into the ways that we respond to challenges or to anxiety that comes up.

Now I can tell you that part of the reason why this has become such a hot topic in psychological research is because there seemed to be a lot of barriers that have been preventing us from being as resilient as we might be otherwise. And to illustrate that for you, I'd like to share with you an article that appeared a few years ago in Time Magazine. You can read along with me.

A standardized math test was given to 13 year olds in six countries last year. Koreans did the best. Americans did the worst, coming in behind Spain, Britain, Ireland, and Canada.

Now, the bad news, besides being shown triangles and equations, the kids were shown the statement, “I am good at mathematics.” Koreans came last in this category. Only 23 percent answered yes. Americans were number one with an impressive 68 percent in agreement. American students may not know their math, but they have evidently absorbed the lessons of the newly fashionable self-esteem curriculum where kids are taught to feel good about themselves. And I might add to that, no matter what.

This article that we see in front of us here can very likely trace its roots to the self-esteem movement that was introduced in the 1980s which was developed by politicians and educators who got their hands on datasets showing a correlation between a child’s self-esteem and all sorts of really positive outcomes for that child later in life.

So the kids who had really high self-esteem when they were young had – as they were going through school and growing up, they had higher grades, they had higher quality friendships, they were the most likely to go to college and be successful in their careers.

And so this led everybody to say, “Hey, we’ve got it figured out.” If we want to position young people to be successful and happy, the way to do that is by boosting everybody’s self-esteem. And so all of a sudden, there were posters in the classroom walls, telling kids that they were special, they were great, they could do anything.

This also took effect on the sports fields. Like, we don’t even know if these kids here actually won the game they just played. They might play it for – they start early where every kid gets a trophy or a ribbon. Because after all, we wouldn’t want a child to know what it’s like to have to work really hard at something and have it not turned out as they hoped or expect, because that’s not how life works, right.

Now, before I go any further, to be clear, I don't mean to be a critic here. We know that the self-esteem movement was rooted in good intentions. And it is true that there is a correlation between high self-esteem early in life and all sorts of good outcomes over the course of one's life.

But in the 1980s, we did not have a very sophisticated knowledge base about the true nature of self-esteem and how it can be built. But over the last 30 to 40 years, we have developed a much more robust body of scientific literature in this area, which has helped us understand that authentic self-esteem is not simply a matter of feeling good about ourselves all the time. It also has a lot to do with the ways that we respond to adversity.

And one of the first studies to draw our attention to this was a project done by a team of psychologists named Brown and Dutton. This was a study back in 1995 where they brought undergraduate students into their lab, and they have them complete word puzzles.

Now the way that these word puzzles were situated, there would be three words that were presented. For example, they might see the words car, swimming, cue. And in order to solve the puzzle, the participants had to identify some fourth word that's somehow related to each of the previous three.

So I'll give you a second. If you feel so inclined, you can take a look at those three words, and it might occur to you that the correct answer here is pool. So you can drive a carpool, you go swimming in a pool, you shoot pool using a cue stick.

Well, the participants are given a long list of these word puzzles and asked to find the fourth word that relates to the previous three. Unbeknownst to the participants, half of them were given word puzzles that were extremely easy to solve. Everyone was essentially guaranteed to be successful. The other half of them were given word puzzles that were actually impossible to solve. There was no solution. They just took three random words, put them together, and these poor students had to try to figure out something, when in fact no solution existed.

Well ultimately, what they had done, they randomly assigned half to those students to the success condition, the other were in what we call the failure condition. They were either given very easy problems, or impossible problems.

So the participants then are shown their feedback. So half of these students see that they've succeeded, the other half get objective feedback that they failed.

Immediately following that, the psychologist gave them an emotion scale, asking of how are you feeling in the aftermath of this test. This is a pretty standard instrument that is used to gauge someone's emotional response to some of the activity that they've engaged in.

Not surprisingly, those who succeeded felt good, those who failed felt bad. We did not need a study in 1995 to tell us that.

The true purpose of this study was to answer another more important question, which was how does self-esteem affect reactions to success, or to failure? So Brown and Dutton had also measured the self-esteem of all these students and knew whether those students had high self-esteem, or low self-esteem.

Well, I'll share with you the results on this graph here.

So you'll notice that you're looking at a 7-point axis along the vertical axis there. A higher score means they feel good, a lower score means that they feel bad. The blue bar is for those with low self-esteem. The red bar is for those with high self-esteem.

I'd like to direct your attention first to those in the success condition on the left. What you'll find there is that there's no statistically significant difference at all whether you have low self-esteem, or high self-esteem. If you are in the success condition, you felt good about yourself. You laugh out loud feeling a level of confidence, and overall feeling like you had done a good job, which is not surprising. It feels good to perform a task and to succeed.

What became more interesting was to look at the data among those who had attempted the test and failed.

So take a look now at the bars on the right hand side above failure. And here, you can see two things going on. The first one is what we call a main effect. On average, people who failed felt worst overall. I think no surprise there either. It feels bad to fail.

But you'll notice that this effect is especially pronounced for people with low self-esteem, those represented by the blue bar. For those with high self-esteem, the red bar, yes, they don't feel great, but their high self-esteem seems to provide a buffer that softens the blow, and essentially allows them to keep going.

So what this study is telling us is that if you really want to know something about an individual's psychological strength, you don't look at them on the day when the sun is shining, and everything is going their way, and they've got an A+ on an exam, or they scored a winning goal on the soccer game. Everybody feels good on that day.

If you really want to know something about somebody's psychological strength, you look at them on the day when they failed, on the day when they are facing adversity, on the day when there's a source of anger or angst in front of them, on the day maybe that they worked really hard for something and that they had their heart set on, but it still doesn't turn out as they hoped or expected. Again to be clear, everybody feels worse on that day.

But you'll notice that even though on average, their overall wellbeing is lower, there's something about people with authentically high self-esteem that provides a buffer that allows them to restore their mood and to persevere. It's not that we've identified super human people walking around who are immune to the effects of adversity, but it is that high self-esteem that positions them to keep going.

This research reminds me of one of my favorite quotes from the great St. Louisan, Maya Angelou, who once said – just advance to the next slide here – “I've learned that you can tell a lot about a person by the way they handle



these three things: a rainy day, lost luggage, and tangled Christmas tree lights.” And she is exactly correct. It is in someone’s response to adversity that you really learn something about that individual.

Now granted, that does not change the fact that negative things happen all the time. There are things that make us anxious or angry that are outside of our control. And having to adapt to those difficult circumstances, or the pandemic, or other challenges that our society is facing, it’s still very hard to do that.

So I’d like to turn our attention now to the second item on our agenda, which is what the research tells us about mindsets that can help us persevere, and that can help us develop that psychological strength, and that high self-esteem.

So to illustrate this topic for you, I’d like to share with you another of my favorite studies. This one is from Emmons and McCullough back in 2003. They recruited a large group of adults and they have them keep weekly journals over the course of 10 weeks.

And these participants were instructed to list five events that occurred last week, again each week, they’re doing this over 10 weeks – they could choose any five events that they wanted, but they were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. So one third of them were told to write down five things that they were grateful for, five good things that had occurred over the preceding week.

There was another group that was told to write down five hassles, five negative things, things that bothered them over the preceding week. And there was a control condition. They were given no further instructions beyond list five events that happened. Usually, those are pretty neutral or ambiguous by nature.

Well, in addition to listing these five things of either positive, negative, or neutral, they also were asked to make ratings on global scales. They were asked to indicate how do you feel about your life overall; are things going well, or not so much. They were asked to indicate how they felt about the

upcoming week; were they optimistic or pessimistic about what the upcoming week would look like. Then they were asked to indicate how often they've gotten sick over the preceding week. So they were given a checklist with symptoms of cold, fever, flu, or other common physical ailments.

Well, when you looked at the pattern of data among those 10 weeks, and you looked at it specifically depending which of those three experimental groups that participants had been assigned to, a very interesting pattern emerged.

So you'll notice we've got the three experimental groups; those writing about the negative things, the hassles group; those in the control group writing about neutral things; and those in the gratitude condition, writing about positive things that have happened over the preceding week.

What you find is that by the end of those 10 weeks, those in the gratitude condition felt significantly better about their life as a whole. In terms of the upcoming week, we find a very similar pattern; those in the gratitude condition were significantly more optimistic about what the upcoming week would look like. In terms of how often they got sick, here we find the reverse pattern; those in the gratitude condition actually got sick less often. And this is consistent with a growing body of research on the mind-body connection, that our physical health and our psychological health are very closely linked to one another.

The key thing to keep in mind about this study is that the instructions were not, OK, you folks in the gratitude condition, we want you to go out and have more positive experiences next week. And in the hassles condition, we want you all to go out and have more negative experiences. Rather, the instructions very simply were prompting subjects to focus their attention either on the good things, or on the bad things that had already transpired over the preceding week. And it turns out that it was a simple focus of their attention that led to these outcomes.

And there's been a lot of research on the importance of gratitude for our wellbeing, all of which reminds me of another of my favorite quotes. This one, from (Andre Matisse) who once said, "There are always flowers for those

who want to see them.” The idea being that we could have 100 good things going on in our lives right now. But if we don’t make the choice to focus our attention on them, we might miss them completely, and therefore not derive any of the goodness that they have the potential to provide.

And again, this is not to say that we shouldn’t give any attention to anxiety, or frustration that we might be facing at a given moment. But it is still valuable to maintain balance and to still be mindful of the good things that are out there that we might simply be taking for granted.

One of the ways that psychologists conceptualize happiness is with a simple formula that says we can think about it as a quotient of a – as you can see, of what we have, as compared to what we want. And it becomes very easy for us to fixate on the denominator, the what we want part. And in particular, to the things that we don’t want to be dealing with at home, or at work, or how we wish things could be different right now in 2020.

But if we can maintain proper perspective, and even amid the challenges, direct some of our attention to the numerator, to the things that are going well, the things that we have, the things that are still a source of happiness and joy, and even amid the many stressors and difficulties that we’re facing right now by giving attention to those good things that we may simply have lost sight of, that’s going to make the overall quotient of that formula much larger, which can go a long way in keeping us motivated and leaving us feeling better about our work, and helping us to contribute a more positive dynamic both to work and at home.

Another of my favorite quotes is from Teddy Roosevelt who once said, “Comparison is the thief of joy.” And he’s exactly right. There’s a lot of contemporary research showing that ultimately, when we spend too much time on social media, or if we constantly have our head over our shoulder wondering how we measure up to those around us; our colleagues at work, our neighbors who maybe seem to be better off in some way, that is ultimately inflating the denominator of this formula which mathematically is going to make the overall quotient really large.

So we are social creatures as humans. It's only natural for us to be tuned in to what others are doing. But if we can catch ourselves in the act of that and maybe spend a little less time on social media, and every once in a while put the phone down and instead focus on that numerator, the good things that are the source of gratitude in our lives, that can make the overall quotient much larger.

So this second point about mindset then really boils down to the choices that we make regarding where we focus our attention in any given situation, which is very closely linked then to the third and final topic on our agenda, which is that of emotional intelligence.

In a moment, we're going to do a quick activity where we're going to watch a very short video clip. But I would invite you to go back to that link and have it ready to go. Don't answer it just yet. It's going to ask you to describe what you saw in the video. But don't answer it yet. Don't do that until the video is over. But just have that ready to go so that the answers can come in as soon as possible.

But ultimately, to set up this video that we're going to watch, emotional intelligence is really about recognizing emotions in ourselves and in those around us, and also understanding how emotions can affect us, and how emotions can sometimes take over and undermine good judgment and decision-making. This is something that most of us think we're pretty good at by nature, but sometimes we overestimate how good we actually are at this.

So to illustrate this in a moment, we're going to watch a 60-second video. And then after it, I'm going to ask you just to describe in a couple of words or sentence what you saw in that video.

To provide some background for this video, just to let you know, this was developed in the 1940s by a psychologist who took some shapes from little pieces of felt and then created some animations by taking pictures of them one frame at a time. That's why it's a little bit grainy. But overall, I think you'll still get a sense of what this video is doing. And then ultimately, I just want to remind you that we're just looking at some little shapes cut from pieces of

felt. And as soon as the video ends, go ahead and enter a couple of words or a sentence or two about what you see in that video.

Let's call up that first video, please.

(Video Presentation)

Tim Bono: OK, so at this time, I would invite you to turn to your mobile device or that browser window that you might have and describe what you saw in that video just now. And then it will work in much the same way as the previous poll did where you will be able to see the responses that all other participants had given. And if you see a comment that you agree with, you can give a thumbs up. If you see a comment that you disagree with, you can give a thumbs down.

It's my understanding that there's about a 20 second delay here between me speaking and you giving your responses. So I'm just going to vamp here for a second and turn my attention over to my other screen here to see if any of these responses are coming in yet.

And in the interval here, again, about 20 second or so, please feel free to scroll through as those responses are coming in, and feel free to give a thumbs up or a thumbs down to anything that you might see again, that you agree with, or that you disagree with.

I'm already seeing one comment come in, saying that the big triangle is bullying the two smaller pieces. It looks like that one also got a thumbs up. We'll give this another second or two to see if any other responses come in.

That's a very common response to see bullying.

Another person is saying that they see aggression or fear, or anxiety. Another person saying bullying.

It's very interesting to see these responses coming. I've shared this video with groups of many different background. I've shared this with college students, I've shared this with high school teachers, I've shared this with attorneys, I've

shared this with a group of pediatricians. And bullying seems to be a word that a lot of people have to say in response.

It looks like all of these responses mentioned bullying in some form or fashion.

When I showed this to a group of social workers, they went and saw this as a domestic violence case. I showed this to college students, and they saw this as a roommate conflict and people chasing each other around. I showed this to a group of young parents and they actually saw the large triangle as a parent just trying to get some peace and quiet, and the little shapes were little kids who are just causing a problem. And then the big triangle was essentially overreacting to that.

Even though different groups have different interpretations to that video, there's actually one thing that all of those interpretations have in common with one another. You're all wrong, because we just watched a video comprised of little shapes cut out of pieces of felt. And shapes cut out of little pieces of felt don't have feelings, which means nobody was the mean one, nobody was trying to protect anybody, there was no domestic violence case, or roommate conflicts, or anything else.

What's critical about this video is that when we watch it, we can't help but see what's happening here in terms of human emotional, mental states. Very few people watch this and then report, I saw a bunch of shapes moving around and that's it, even though that is objectively the correct answer. Instead, we also create this narrative in which we jumped to conclusions and we make assumptions about what's going on, and we end up falsely attributing feeling and emotion to objects that cannot possibly have them.

Here in St. Louis, we just got this IKEA. It's been a couple of years now. But one of the best parts of having an IKEA in your city are the IKEA commercials. And I'd like to share with you one such example of this where IKEA clearly was capitalizing on this tendency for us to jump to conclusions and attribute feeling and emotion to completely inanimate objects. Let's play that second video, please.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

Male: Many of you feel bad for this lamp. That is because you're crazy. It has no feelings. And the new one is much better.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

Tim Bono: I felt so bad for that lamp the first time I saw that commercial. I was like, where is the lamp, you can be in my apartment, little buddy.

The fundamental insight here is that if we can get it this wrong when we are dealing with inanimate objects, think about how wrong we can get it when we are dealing with each other, with real people who actually do have the capacity for thought and feeling and desire and intention, but for whom those thoughts and feelings and desires and intentions are no more visible than they are for shapes and lamps.

Which is why from time to time, we all end up just like Charlie Brown in this cartoon here, he sees these two girls way on the other side of the field and he says, "I bet those girls are talking about me, I wonder what they're saying about me. Gee, I was feeling so good, too, now I'm all depressed. Why does someone always have to spoil my day?"

Well, we might consider Charlie Brown here to be the eternal pessimist. He's often jumping to conclusions that things are much worse than they actually are.

Well, we all have those Charlie Brown moments where we make these unfounded inferences about what's going on in the world, or we preemptively speculate about what something means without firm evidence to support the conclusions that we've drawn. And that approach to our problems, or the situations that we find ourselves in can significantly encumber our ability to maintain a sense of optimism when we are adapting to difficult work situations, or just the overall challenges that come with the pandemic situation that we're in right now.

So one simple thing that we can do that can go a long way toward our psychological health and wellbeing is to bring awareness to this automatic tendency, and to the extent that we can, avoid jumping to conclusions, especially those that involve what psychologists call cognitive distortions, which are defined as exaggerated or irrational thought patterns.

One of the things we know about anxiety and distress is that those emotions can distort our cognition and the way that we think and feel about a given situation. And these distortions very often can lead us to exaggerate, or otherwise misrepresent the reality of a given situation, or circumstance.

And I'd like to highlight three of the most common cognitive distortions that can affect us. One of them is what we call catastrophizing. This is where we imagine what the worst possible outcome of something could be. We assume that it's going to be catastrophic, and then we jump to the conclusion that this catastrophe is both imminent and inevitable, instead of acknowledging that we might be exaggerating in our minds just how bad it's really going to be.

The second one is what we call all or nothing thinking. This is where we tend to believe that things are either all good, or all bad. And then at the first sign that something is challenging, or frustrating, we jump to the conclusion that it's all going to be bad, again without acknowledging that many things in life are in shades of grey. And yes, there are usually some bad things, but there are also often some good things too.

And this one can be a trap that leads us to the third of these distortions which we call the negativity bias. This is where we interpret everything in a negative light and we fixate only on the negative aspects of the situation without acknowledging any of the potential good that might eventually come from that situation.

Another quote that I like that's relevant here, this one from Ralph Waldo Emerson, who said, "To different minds, the same world is a hell and a heaven. And whether something is a hell or a heaven depends a lot on the aspects of the situation that we choose to focus on."



So to avoid those cognitive distortions, some of our best research tells us that we can turn to many of the ideas that we've covered in this presentation today. And there are three major ideas here.

So first, as we covered in that first study with the word puzzles, remember that the ability to persevere through adversity is necessary for wellbeing. So use failure as an opportunity to learn and to teach others. Think back to that quote from Maya Angelou. Those are the moments of adversity when you truly learn a lot about somebody. Not in fact that they feel bad, but in the way they allow that anger or anxiety to affect them and how they choose to respond to it.

Number two is to stay positive by maintaining attention on what's going well, even amid challenges that come up. Remember that study on the importance of gratitude. It's not just about what's going on, but again what we choose to focus on that can affect our psychological health.

And third, cultivate close relationships with colleagues. Ask for help when you're facing a challenge, and offer empathy to others who are experiencing difficulty.

One of the things that we know about emotion is that left to its own devices, emotion can run rampant in our minds and can easily blow things out of proportion. And especially right now, there's a lot going on in the world that is a major source of distress. But a lot of our research is showing us that the active translating that emotion into language by talking things over with a friend, or someone we trust, that can be a powerful way to gain insight into this situation, and to take a more rational perspective moving forward.

And to draw my presentation to a close now before we open it up to Q&A, I'd like to share with you a personal anecdote where I saw these kinds of choices play out myself.

To provide the backdrop here, the setting for this anecdote is Orlando, Florida, a few years ago, where I had been for a several days for a conference that I was attending. Now Orlando is reported to be home to the happiest place on

earth. But you wouldn't know that if you looked at this scene at the Orlando Airport on the day that I was headed back to St. Louis after my trip.

So this group of people that you see here, most of whom had just finished vacations frolicking through the Magic Kingdom where they were posing for selfies with Mickey and Minnie, yes, this group had now morphed into this angry mob that you would have thought had been commissioned by Cruella de Vil herself because for reasons that are still unclear, this airline which shall remain nameless, somehow did not have an aircraft available to take us back to St. Louis. How they just lost an airplane, I still do not understand.

But it ended up causing a nine-hour delay before we could get home. And as you might imagine, everyone, including me was upset and frustrated and irritated by the situation. But what I observed over those nine hours was how much people's responses to those emotions differ drastically from one person to the next.

So in one part of the boarding area, you have this whole group of people here slamming down their fists, yelling at this poor gate agent for hours on end. In fact, members of the Orlando Police Department had to be called in because the crowd was getting so rowdy. So you have them on one side of the boarding area.

But then on the other side, there was some other people who although they were frustrated, they chose to respond differently. I remember overhearing one woman say, well hey, at least we're not having to spend this delay sitting on the aircraft like some people have had to do; or there is another woman who saw what was going on, she drew a deep sigh, opened up her laptop, let either – put both kids on either side of her, and then said, well, now is our chance to watch those movies we've been meaning to see.

And as we covered in that very first study I shared with you, or that quote from Maya Angelou, again it's moments like these where you really see somebody's true colors. Unleashing anger like these people here did in this picture, that did not make the situation any better. It did not make the plane

come any sooner, it only ramped up the anxiety that people were already experiencing.

So taken all together, if there's just one take home message from my time with you this afternoon is this. You may not be able to control every situation and its outcome, but you can control your attitude and how you deal with it. Remember, it's only natural for us to become anxious or upset when things don't turn out as we want them to. There's a lot of anxiety and distress that all of us are feeling right now as we wrap up 2020.

Remember though, the emotions themselves are always OK. What really matters is how we respond to those emotions. We are in control of that. We get to make decisions about how we're going to respond to things that make us angry, or upset, or anxious.

And when we're faced with those challenging situations, whether it's an airport delay, or a tough situation at home, or just the general anxiety that accompanies so many facets of life right now, by choosing to respond with grace and patience and a willingness to be flexible, and perhaps even a willingness to identify some of the silver linings such as the way the communities are coming together to support one another during these challenging times, that's the attitude. That's the way of dealing with it that can make for a much more positive environment, not only for ourselves, but for those we share our home with, and for those we work with.

So I hope that this presentation and these strategies can be useful in helping us navigate these very trying times, certainly these things are easier said than done. But I think it's also important to practice self-compassion and to be kind to ourselves when we're having a bad day.

I'll share with you one more quote that I like. It's another from Maya Angelou who once said, "Forgiveness is the greatness gift you can give yourself." And I truly believe that starts with self-forgiveness and self-compassion. And on those days when we're not at our best, I think it's one of the most important gifts we can give ourselves. And eventually, that's what can help us stay on track in pursuit of our goals, to have that mindset of

resilience to help us persevere. And that's the case whether we are a financial planner, or even for a little kid who's just learned how to ride a bike. Let's play that third and final video.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

Male: I feel, I feel ...

Male: You feel alive?

Male: I feel, I feel happy of myself.

Male: I feel happy in yourself, too.

What, do you got any words of wisdom? What about for all the other kids trying to learn how to ride their bike? Can you say anything to them?

Male: Everybody, I know you can believe in yourself. If you believe in yourself, you will know how to ride a bike. If you don't, you must keep practicing. You will get the hang of it, I know it. If you keep practicing, you will get the hang of it, and then you can get better and better at it and feel good if you do it.

Male: Give me some thumbs up.

Male: Thumbs up for everybody.

Male: All right.

Male: Rock and roll.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

Tim Bono: OK. So that is the other take home message. If you keep practicing, you'll get the hang of it, and then you can get better and better at it. Thumbs up, everybody for rock and roll.

Thank you very much for your participating in the polls and your time this afternoon.

We have a few minutes for Q&A. But I'll just put out there, if you're interested in learning more, I have released a book that provides an overview of the topics I teach in my positive psychology class at Washington University, called "Happiness 101: Simple Secrets to Smart Living and Wellbeing", or please feel free to be in touch with me at [tjbono@wustl.edu](mailto:tjbono@wustl.edu), and correspond with me over email.

But for now, I believe if you do have a question, we have some instructions here. For myself or for Bill, you can dial in on the number that you see on your screen. And I'll hand things back over to Bill and (Nakor). Thank you very much.

Operator: Thank you, Tim. At this time, we would like to take any questions you might have for us today.

To ask a question, please dial in. Dial 844-283-3345, conference ID 1764267.

Please mute your computer speakers if you are dialing in.

Again, please dial 844-283-3345. Once you have dialed in, please press "star," "1" on your telephone keypad. Again, that is "star," "1."

We will wait about a minute to see if anyone dials in and I'll give a reminder at that time.

Female: Tim, we did have one questions come in from the audience via chat. And it was in regard to your point about asking for help and how that can help you with your outlook.

Why do you think people are so reluctant to ask for help? What's the barrier?

Tim Bono: Yes, that's a really good question, and it's an important one, because part of our reluctance very often is that we often believe that if we are asking for help that we are showing the sign of weakness.

But I would encourage you to rephrase that and reframe it to understand that asking for help is actually revealing an aspect of our humanity. And when we

make the decision to reveal that aspect of our humanity to another person, we are positioning us to develop a relationship with that person because that is what unites all of us, independent of any other demographics, characteristics, our race, or gender, age, anything else, is that we all have insecurities. And so when we are willing to go to another person and say, and expose what are those insecurities, or questions, or concern, what we are saying to that person is I trust you with this information, and I am making myself vulnerable to you.

And yes, there's always the possibility, there's the risk that that person might not take well to it. But more often than not, people will. And it also empowers that other person to give them the confidence that there's a reason someone is turning to them, because it's also saying to that person, I trust you, and I respect the expertise that you have in this particular area.

And so when there is a question or a concern, I think that going to someone that you trust has the potential to actually strengthen the relationship that you have with that person. And it's also on the flipside, it's valuable to do what we can proactively to build strong relationships with other people so that if we should need help, that relationship already exists which can increase our comfort and our confidence in doing so.

Female: Thank you.

Operator: Again, if you have dialed in and would like to ask a question, please press "star," "1" on your telephone keypad. Again, that is "star," "1."

Bill Coppel: So Tim, let me ask a question. It's Bill. If I may.

You know, we're all feeling a lot of stresses as was mentioned during this unusual period of time right now. And there seems to be a light flickering at the end of the tunnel. We're poised to introduce a vaccine hopefully and begin the process of distributing that.

In your experience, what are the things you'd caution folks to think about before essentially feeling like we're at the end of this thing? Because my sense is we've got a bit a ways to go. And how do you maintain that steady

status, steady as possible as we get closer to the finish line, but yet we still have some miles to go?

Tim Bono: Yes, it's a great question, Bill. And in some ways, it reminds me of people who are long distance runners. If they're running a marathon, they've got 26 miles to go overall, and sometimes it's at like the 20th mile that they've already accomplished an awful lot, and they are aware that the end is closer than the distance that they've already travelled, but nonetheless they still got those remaining six miles which are still going to be a significant amount of time, effort, and energy.

And I think that that's kind of where we are. We're sort of at the 20th mile, which is significant and we know that the end is in sight, but we're not there yet. We still have to put a lot out there.

And I think that that's where it's important to identify where we can still be taking care of ourselves and continue to take things in stride, and also to be transparent about those things that we are struggling with.

And one of the most important things that we can have at our disposal to do that is a strong sense of community. I think continuing to maintain social connections and relationships with other people, that is the single strongest predictor of wellbeing at any time, but especially during times of adversity, the importance of that truly cannot be overstated.

The other thing to keep in mind here is that it does take a certain amount of willpower in order to remain steadfast in pursuit of any goal. And I think that the same thing can be said here in terms of continuing to heed the precautions that have been outlined by our public health officials.

And so making sure that that willpower is not being expended in other ways that are not useful for us; so having routines that have some level of predictability where we are essentially maintaining some level of control over those aspects of our lives that are within our control, that can be another thing that provides some level of consistency when there's still a lot of effort that we have to be directing to sort of overriding the angst that comes from not being able to gather in large groups over the holidays, or not being able to

participate in other things that may be we normally would have as things to look forward to at the early part of the year.

I think that maintaining strong relationships with other people and continuing to engage in those behaviors that give us a sense of meaning and purpose, whether that's revisiting piano, it's maybe we used to play the piano or other projects, or reading, or other things that give us things to look forward to that can temporarily replace the other things, I think that's a good place to start.

Bill Coppel: That's great. Thank you.

Well Tim, let me take a moment to again, thank you very, very much for your time today, your insight, your wisdom, on how we can help our clients, and ourselves for that matter continue to navigate these difficult times, and maintain a sense of self, a sense of purpose, a sense of community, all the things that are healthy, and important for us to carry on.

So I wish you the very best in this holiday season, and I hope that you remain well. Thank you for joining us today.

Tim Bono: It's been my pleasure. Thanks for the invitation, and I certainly wish that to you and everyone else. Thanks again.

Bill Coppel: Thank you.

That concludes our program today.

Operator: Thank you again for joining us today. You may now disconnect. Have a great day.

END