Agency Is:

- what allows you to pause, evaluate, and act when you face a challenge;
- about being *active* rather than *passive* — reacting effectively to immediate situations and planning effectively for your future;
- lost when you become too overwhelmed — you can no longer evaluate your circumstances, reflect on challenges and opportunities, make creative decisions, act in ways that open up possibilities for a meaningful life on your own terms;
- what humans have always used to *feel in command of their lives*;
- essential for coping with the obstacles that life throws our way and building a healthy fulfilling life

*The Power of Agency* by Paul Napper and Anthony Rao
Linked directly to the crisis levels of anxiety we see in current times

When we don’t have agency: problems fester, plans don’t get made, leaves us with a constant sense of worry about what’s not getting done and the impending consequences of inaction

*The Power of Agency* by Paul Napper and Anthony Rao
Confidence and Agency

- Confidence is linked to the ability to meet significant challenges.

- Those who are more confident (feel more in charge of their lives/connected to their sense of agency) = less anxiety and overwhelm, even when placed under highly challenging pressure situations.

- Sympathetic nervous system (fear/aggression when threatened — fight or flight) seesaws with parasympathetic nervous system (returns the mind/body to calm and homeostasis).

- Instead of trying to lower worry/anxiousness, encourage a confidence that can help keep stress away.

- Low-agency/stressed people = near constant state of fight or flight. Always on high alert.

*The Power of Agency by Paul Napper and Anthony Rao*
“Action seems to follow feeling, but really action and feeling go together; and by regulating the action, which is under the more direct control of the will, we can indirectly regulate the feeling, which is not.”

William James
7 Principles for Building Agency

Behavioral Principles
- Control Stimuli
- Associate Selectively
- Move
- Position Yourself as a Learner

Cognitive Principles
- Manage Your Emotions and Beliefs
- Check Your Intuition
- Deliberate, Then Act

The Power of Agency by Paul Napper and Anthony Rao
7 Principles for Building Agency

- **Control Stimuli** - cut back number of distractions in immediate environment — increases ability to choose where attention goes, increases concentration, bolsters creative thinking, less susceptible to impulsive acts and poorly thought-out decisions

- **Associate Selectively** - surround self with healthy, empathetic, open-minded, candid, and supportive people — boosts mood, elevate motivation, improve overall health and well-being

- **Move** - Focus on movement, nutrition and rest necessary to keep active and in balance — increases mental/physical strength/stamina

*The Power of Agency by Paul Napper and Anthony Rao*
Position Yourself as a Learner - actively question, listen, learn as part of daily routine — deeper understanding of the world around you (expands knowledge and capabilities)

Manage Your Emotions and Beliefs - cultivate greater self-awareness — identify and bring order to strong feelings/beliefs that could misguide you (navigate with greater confidence)

Check Your Intuition - learn to access your intuition and use it wisely — provides valuable guidance

Deliberate, Then Act - use a defined deliberation process — identify and weigh options in a contemplative, inclusive, rational way
The closer you are to your smart phone, the more it acts like mental kryptonite (Journal of the Association for Consumer Research)

The more time people spend on Facebook, the worse they felt and the less satisfied they were with their lives (University of Michigan researcher, PLOS ONE)

People watching news coverage of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing reported higher acute stress 2-4 weeks after the tragedy than people who had direct exposure to the events at/near the bombings (Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of American (PNAS) journal)

Agency begins with what you let into your mind!

The Power of Agency by Paul Napper and Anthony Rao
Control Stimuli

- 86% of adults report being constantly or often connected to their electronic devices. *(The American Psychological Association’s 2017 Stress in America survey)*

- To detox: find regular times to completely unplug and stay away from all devices — this will lower stress, maintain better mental health, help break the chronic compulsive behavior many of us have to constantly check in with their electronic devices *(APA recommendation)*

- Stress caused by the news (as opposed to stress caused by your life) is unique in its ability to trigger a sense of hopelessness — increases the risk of developing depression or post-traumatic stress disorder *(The Upside of Stress, Kelly McGonigal)*
Control Stimuli

- There’s a neural basis for how we share emotions — we are wired to replicate the moods of others, both positive and negative.

- For every happy friend in your network, your own chance of being happy rises by 9%. For every unhappy friend, your chance of being happy decreases by 7%.

*The Power of Agency by Paul Napper and Anthony Rao*
Associate Selectively

- Hang out with people with high agency.
- Surround yourself at every stage of life with supportive, open-minded, optimistic people — will have an enormous positive impact on your state of mind and your physical health (critical building blocks of personal agency.)
- Buddha: “Avoid the company of the immature if you want joy.”

*The Power of Agency by Paul Napper and Anthony Rao*
Move

Feeling stuck on a task? Overwhelmed? Literally get yourself up and move — any amount, no matter how small, is beneficial.

Pay attention to your body so that you can provide it with what it requires to be healthy and in balance.

If your body is out of balance, your mind is out of balance.

Engage in physical movements in multiple ways, rest adequately, and eat nutritious food.

Your agency is driven by your energy.

*The Power of Agency by Paul Napper and Anthony Rao*