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### Review of Stacy Jones, Spencer Bradshaw, Rodney Limb Presentation

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# The Neurophysiology of Peace: How Integrating the Spirit into Stress Associations Builds Resiliency

## PRESENTERS/AUTHORS

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The neurophysiology of peace can feel like an intimidating topic for those who are not vested in that particular field of research. Discussions of neurons, in-depth physiological stress responses, and the anatomy of the brain can feel a little out of left field for those of us who are invested in counseling. However, Dr. Spencer Bradshaw and Dr. Stacy Jones take what can feel like complex topic and make it understandable to practitioners so they can effectively use techniques to help defuse stress in clients' lives.

Dr. Bradshaw detailed basic anatomy and physiology of the brain, giving a basic tutorial on how the stress response works in the brain and throughout the rest of the body. He connected these systems to understanding the well-known idea of "the window of tolerance". Essentially, human beings can vary in their ability to self-regulate and even more so if their physiological stress response is not optimal. The mind/body connection is demonstrated through these human experiences.

Dr. Jones moved forward in discussing neuroplasticity. More specifically she noted that "what is absorbed [by the brain] is what is stored [in the brain]." In other words, the more an experience hits on our physical senses and impresses meaning upon us, the more likely it is to be stored and remembered. However, as Dr. Jones noted, the unfortunate reality is that the brain absorbs more negative events and experiences than positive ones. Therefore, mental health practitioners have the opportunity to attempt to intentionally reverse this tendency. Therapists can make it so that the brain absorbs more positive experiences than negative. The goal, as Dr. Jones put it, is to "calm the body to prime the brain to change the mind."

In facilitating this change, it is important to recognize that an individual can hold space for more than one thing at a time. For example, a mother can feel the stress that comes from a child experiencing a temper tantrum while simultaneously attempting to calm her own body and response. This is an area of opportunity to work with clients. Negative experiences (i.e. child's temper tantrum) can be infused with positive experiences (i.e. calming techniques) and over a period of time this can change a natural response.

Additionally, as members of the Church, we have the unique opportunity to include spirituality with our clients when appropriate and welcome. The positive experiences that can help individuals change their response includes bringing the Spirit into stressful moments. Practitioners have the opportunity to help bring the gospel and the spirit of peace and weave it into stressful situations creating an overall new and positive experience."

The insights shared by Dr. Bradshaw and Dr. Jones demonstrate that while the physiology of peace can seem complex, it offers powerful opportunities for mental health practitioners. By understanding the brain's stress

response and neuroplasticity, we can help clients reshape automatic reactions to stress. With knowledge of the mind-body connection, we can teach calming techniques that quiet the body to open the mind to positive change. And as members of the Church, we can draw on spiritual resources to infuse stressful moments with peace. Though cultivating peace may be a lifelong journey, these speakers made clear that small steps of progress are within every practitioner's reach. With wisdom, empathy and faith, we can move individuals from turmoil toward tranquility, one therapeutic encounter at a time.