Post Doc Happy Thoughts

January 11, 2015 By Lance D. Presser

Recently, a manuscript was published in the journal Stress and Health. The primary finding of the study suggested that post docs who experience high levels of positive emotions are less likely to suffer from stress-associated anxiety or depression than other post docs. This was according to a recent study of 200 University of Texas (UT) Austin postdoctoral fellows, 79% of whom work in the sciences.

That's right. You heard it here first post docs; think happy thoughts and everything will be A-Okay!

One apparent link between positive thoughts and reduced anxiety and depression is resilience. More positive emotion was correlated with high resilience, which in turn was linked to less anxiety and depression.

Personally, I fall into the Viktor Frankl - Man's Search for Meaning side of things. I have always sort of approached things as a "hope for the best, plan for the worst".

Another blog post I stumbled upon this week mentions a similar finding.

I have a thought. You know what would help lower post doc stress levels? Money. Stability. Upward mobility.

Ask any post doc out there and I guarantee in five minutes you will have a long list of problems that need fixing. I think a lot of people in science know there is a problem and probably have a few ideas to fix it. Action is slow, I get it. However, I am extremely tired of the lack of progress, and more so the "apologists". Usually they are long-tenured professors that "when they were post docs got a paper in Nature, their first RO1, and their first job all by the time they were 30".

Here's to hoping for the best, but planning for the worst.

I encourage everyone to use the comments section below!

- Lance D. Presser has a PhD in microbiology and immunology and is a public health laboratorian.
- Hire Lance for any of your microbiology, virology, teaching, editing, grant writing, or public

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