SCI-TECH

Sweet dreams are made of this, Who am I to disagree?
SWEET DREAMS (ARE MADE OF THIS) EURYTHMICS

Yale expert on emotional intelligence pens book on managing feelings

BY EMMA QIAO
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Happy, sad, mad, glad. We all know what these emotions feel like, but do we know how to deal with them?

Last month, Marc Brackett, the founding director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence and professor in the Child Study Center, released his second book, "Dealing with Feeling," which aims to share a set of skills and strategies to assist with understanding and responding to your emotions.

"It was, for me, very important to write a whole book just on one skill, which was to help people learn how to regulate their own emotions, but also importantly, how to engage in healthy co-regulation," Brackett said. "Meaning, how do you help people to help other people manage their feelings?"

Brackett's first book, "Permission to Feel," which was published in 2019, revolved around understanding what emotions are and the value of learning emotional intelligence. It has been widely read around the world, and Brackett said readers then wanted to know how to manage such emotions. In response, Brackett began writing "Dealing with Feeling."

To begin the book, Brackett said he applied his background in emotional intelligence research toward answering the questions of what people were hoping to learn and what they had not learned before.

The book begins by describing an imaginary world where everyone knows how to regulate their emotions. He then transitions to exploring why emotional regulation is such a foreign topic to many.

The book progresses through answering what emotional regulation is and what current attitudes towards emotions are, then ends with multiple chapters detailing specific regulation strategies.

Brackett ultimately concluded that emotional regulation is the set of learned intentional skills for managing feelings wisely that align with our goals and values.

Brackett said writing this book proved challenging at times.

"I'm a much better storyteller when I'm on stage than I am sitting around thinking about a story to tell," Brackett said.

Brackett recalled using the very regulation strategies he describes in the book — such as self-talk, seeking social support and physical activity — to assist in the writing process.

He especially credited Karen Niemi and Robin Stern as colleagues at the School of Medicine who provided support for his book after reading it thoroughly.

"We had never-ending cycles of discussions on how to frame the information to strike a delicate balance in adding humor, relatability and research," Niemi said. "My focus was always being practical, specific and consistent."

Stern echoed the idea of helping the book become more relatable.

"One of the things we have done together is create a space for people to reflect as they're reading," she said. "He did a beautiful job of being personal and compassionate while also presenting a strong case for science."

Brackett stressed that he wanted a way to share this valuable information with more people through this book. Because there were only so many places he could go in one week, he said, "the only way I thought to do that was I had to write a book."

Brackett said he has three ultimate goals for the impact of "Dealing with Feeling."

His first goal is that people see the value and importance of emotion regulation in areas ranging from health to academic and workplace performance to longevity. His second hope is that people understand that emotional regulation is learned and refined through practice.

His third goal, which he called "audacious," is that people will see emotion regulation as a new definition of success.



COURTESY OF MARC BRACKETT

Marc Brackett has published his second book, "Dealing with Feeling," arguing that emotional regulation skills are central to every aspect of life.

"If we define our success by how skillful we are at managing life's ups and downs and at helping other people to do the same, the world will be a very different place than having our definition of success being how much money you make, the status of your job and the objects that you own," Brackett said.

Former Yale President Peter Salovey helped develop the concept of emotional intelligence.

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New medical school center set to investigate healthy aging with HIV

BY EDIS MESIC
STAFF REPORTER

A new center at Yale's medical school dedicated to discovering strategies for healthy aging for patients with HIV is set to launch with the support of a five-year grant from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

The Aging Well with HIV Through Alcohol Research and Risk Reduction and Education — or AWAR3E — Center is led by Amy Justice MED '88, a professor of internal medicine and public health at the School of Medicine; Julie Womack NUR '94 GRD '08, an associate professor of nursing at the School of Nursing; and Vincent Lo Re, a professor of medicine and epidemiology at Rutgers University's Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

"There are more people aging with HIV now than ever before, thankfully, because we have therapy to suppress the virus and to extend people's life expectancy, and they are subject to a greater risk or vulnerability for a number of medical conditions that are associated with aging, whether it be cancer, cardiovascular disease, liver disease, diabetes, etc," Justice said in an interview.

"So we want to understand why that is both in terms of being able to help manage aging with HIV better, but also to gain insights into aging more generally as well," she added.

Justice explained that while both people with HIV and people who are aging have immune dysfunction, HIV causes "immune dysfunction with a vengeance."

She said many HIV-infected people continue to use alcohol and other substances, are co-infected with hepatitis C and may be socioeconomically disadvantaged — all of which are factors that could contribute to premature aging, and that the center will explore to help guide designs of future health interventions.

The center builds on the foundation created by the Veterans Aging Cohort Study, or VACS, Consortium, which was originally founded by Justice to study the impact of alcohol use on aging in HIV-infected and uninfected individuals. VACS provides access to over two decades of longitudinal data representing as much as 13.5 million people from the national electronic health record data system.

Justice said the team spent years learning how to use and interpret the data from VACS and, in the process, developed a network of experts in different fields to support the project. Womack has extensively studied preventing falls and fractures among people aging with HIV, and the team also has world experts on liver disease, neurologic disease, heart disease and cancer.

As a general internist who has experience studying multiple research domains, Justice noted that having a less specialized position also has its benefits.

"I think it doesn't hurt for me to be aware that I'm not an expert in any of these areas, because I can listen to the expertise of others," Justice said.

For Womack, one key challenge was the process of writing the grant for the center. To get each draft finished on time, everybody on the team had to agree to a timeline and meet regularly throughout the grant's development.

Justice said the team started work on the grant in January 2024. Every member would produce a draft of their project, and then the entire team would discuss questions and goals with one another to make each iteration of the grant more and more consistent.

Despite the challenges of preparing the grant itself, Womack said the experience of working with an interdisciplinary team has been rewarding.

"We have the evaluation and dissemination core, and we're bringing in providers. We're bringing in people from different HIV related agencies. We're bringing in people who represent the HIV community. You know, just the opportunity to work with all these different people who have all these different interests and all these different lenses on the problem was just fascinating," Womack said in an interview with the News.

The grant is particularly centered on determining whether or not stress from different sources such as alcohol use and socioeconomic deprivation contributes to premature aging through inflammation.

According to Justice, a lot of premature or adverse aging has been associated with chronic inflammation in people with or without HIV. She further noted that obesity, bad diet, lack of exercise, substance use and stress are all factors that can drive chronic inflammation.

One of the team's projects focuses on biological markers of stress and inflammation in people living with HIV. Even those who have their HIV managed with treatment can have tiny traces of the virus — known as viral reservoirs — lingering in their body, and the study seeks to determine whether these reservoirs contribute to stress and inflammation.

Another project seeks to better understand how aging-related health problems like falls, fractures, dementia and hospitalization might be linked to socioeconomic disadvantage.

When asked about the team's goals for the center, Lo Re emphasized the importance of research and mentorship.

"From my standpoint, aside from the terrific science that we will advance with our new center, one of the big benefits of our new center is that it will nurture the generation of significant research in alcohol-HIV/AIDS research, provide valuable mentorship to early-stage investigators, and attract scientists new to alcohol-HIV/AIDS research," Lo Re wrote in a statement to the News.

Womack also voiced excitement for another focus of the center: widely sharing its findings from each project.

"Actually one of the core groups within this grant is a group of people who are going to look at all the different projects and give advice and input about, how do you get this information out there? Who do we need to get this to?" Womack said.

The team hopes that this core will help inform patients, clinicians, providers and organizations of the results from their research.

According to 2022 estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 1.2 million people live with HIV in the United States.

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YULIN ZHEN / PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR

The interdisciplinary research team at the School of Medicine will work together to explore the effects of factors like alcohol use on aging in patients with HIV.

