

Looking Back Looking Forward 2024 Episode Transcript

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SPEAKERS

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Ricky Telg 00:04

This is Science by the Slice, a podcast from the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Center for Public Issues Education. In this podcast, experts discuss the science of issues affecting our daily lives, reveal the motivations behind the decisions people make, and ultimately provide insight to solutions for our lives.

Phillip Stokes 00:34

Welcome to Science by the Slice, I'm Phillip Stokes, Education Coordinator at the PIE Center. We've made it to Season four. That's right, you heard it correctly, we're beginning our fourth season of this podcast. And as we've done the past two years, we're looking back and looking forward. That is, revisiting clips from last season while examining one theme and then looking forward to what we have in store for 2024. Last year, we explored the concept of change and people's willingness to change. The year prior was about trust and trust in science. And this year, I want to discuss patience. We've all heard the trope, "Patience is a virtue" or the phrase, "Good things come to those who wait." But patience is more than a practice of self control, patience is predictive. More on that shortly. Now, when I say patience, I'm addressing it as this, the relative valuation of present versus future payoffs. For example, people often pursue education or training that might not be all that enjoyable in the present moment, but will hopefully lead to better job prospects or provide the skills to accomplish goals in life that give us purpose, and fulfillment. So how is patience predictive? I think the best example to explain this is the marshmallow test. Have you heard of this? The marshmallow test refers to a research study from the 1970s that was conducted by Stanford psychologist Walter Mischel. The study has become somewhat of a cultural phenomenon that has had implications on everything from pop culture to public policy. The study's premise goes like this, a young child is given the choice of having one marshmallow right away, or two marshmallows if they can wait 15 minutes. The research team recorded the choices of the children and then checked in on those individuals throughout future decades of their lives to see if there were correlations between the choices made during the marshmallow test, and certain life outcomes, including

those related to their health and academic performance. He found that the children who could delay gratification for a bigger reward in the marshmallow test were more likely to have higher academic attainment, better stress resilience, and lower drug use, just to name some of the results. This study highlighted and made mainstream the relationship between impulsivity and life outcomes. More recent research has shown that patience at regional levels, not just with individuals, is strongly positively associated with student achievement in schools. In other words, if the culture of a region is more patient, they tend to make more long term investments in education, which leads to better academic performance for students. Now, I will say since Mischel's study in the 1970s, there has been a wealth of research related to this concept, much of which has provided more nuance to this relationship. And I want to be clear, that by no means does one success in life hinge on an individual's self control or patience. And in fact, there are other social and environmental factors are not accounted for in this explanation. But for me, as an educator who shares information about new research, I think about this concept a lot. Many of the recommendations regarding agriculture and natural resources will provide payoffs that are not immediate. There's a delay in gratification and therefore require patience. So I want to think about this concept more as we explore clips from last season. And the first clip I want to play as we think about patience, is from our February 2023 episode, about the impact of COVID-19 on food and agricultural systems. You'll hear Noah Bloedorn share strategies learned from a multi-region, multi-institution research project designed to provide evidence based recommendations for coping with future crises.

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Noah Bloedorn 04:47

I think there's a couple of recommendations going forward. One is prioritizing food workers and their safety in times of catastrophe to ensure that supply chains are secure. and food prices are stable. And that, you know, we've talked a lot about food insecure populations and how we reacted to that. But if we're able to sort of get ahead of it, perhaps like, the population of people who need to access emergency food wouldn't be so high in moments of catastrophe, if we effectively planned for the safety of food workers, right. And two is that making sure that individual actors have access to resources, and access to sort of education and knowledge about what the best practices are. And especially, you know, as the scale of the business goes down, and the less access to those resources they have in being aware of that. So yeah, I think that was a major issue in terms of safety within the supply chain. But again, I think, looking forward, one of the big takeaways is how do we build food systems that are more resilient. Right, that was sort of the focus of this study. And again, a lot of the work has been centered around regionalizing food systems. But something we wanted to make sure came out of this focus group was not only, you know, calling just for regional food systems, but understanding how regional food systems work within the larger food system, and how they relate and rely on larger scales that are more efficient and more built for, sort of, industrial agriculture.

P

Phillip Stokes 06:25

Bloedorn stated that a main takeaway from the research was learning how to build food systems that are more resilient. Resilience in any system allows for continuation when things go awry. When a system is not stressed, investments in resilience are not necessarily noticeable. So in this case, implementing lessons learned from COVID-19 and food supply chains will strengthen resilience for future disruptions. In the next clip, you'll hear Alex Freeze

from the Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation discuss the concept of corridor compatible communities when developing land in Florida. She talks about the importance of where and how land is developed and I would say that patience is a prerequisite for corridor compatibility.

A

Alex Freeze 07:18

Humans need to be able to survive and live and thrive in Florida just as much as wildlife needs to be able to survive and live and thrive in Florida. But it's all about how do we build? Where do we build? What is the design implementation that is going to make this what we call a corridor compatible community. We have about 1000 people a day. That's the one of the best, you know, estimates that we have for people moving to Florida. And how we accommodate those people is really important. So say we wanted to build, you know, a new housing development. If the city planners and the county planners and the decision makers that are coming together with the developers to decide, how is this new community going to go in? If they were thinking in terms of corridor compatibility, they would think, "Okay, where can we put this development that's not going to cause a fragmentation or a breaking up of that highway." Development is going to happen in Florida. And it's needed, we need to be able to support successful, you know, full human lives in Florida. But we can absolutely do that in a way that is sustainable and thoughtful towards the other residents of our state, which are our wildlife.

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Phillip Stokes 08:49

The Florida Wildlife Corridor is this network of designated lands and waters that are connected and serve as a highway for wildlife. Freeze shared the importance of making development decisions thoughtfully, so the corridor is not fragmented. There's a trade off here between the immediacy of being free to build anywhere in Florida and the longer term benefits of preserving the corridor's wild spaces. So far, we've been discussing patience, once again, that is the relative valuation of present versus future payoffs. And from the two clips that were played, we may make the assertion that governments and communities with higher levels of patience would be more willing to invest in more resilient food systems and protect wild lands of Florida. However, you can teach people about the benefits of adopting certain recommendations, but you cannot control their levels of patience. Keeping that in mind, I'd like to play this next clip from our episode about ticks, specifically the public perception of ticks and tick-borne illness risks, you'll hear Dr. Lauri Baker talk about a foundational model that addresses another angle for sharing recommendations from research.

L

Lauri Baker 10:16

We are, again really focused on that public perception and understanding around ticks. And so one of the ways we've approached this research is through the health belief model. And within that model, it really talks about people aren't going to make a decision related to their health, if they don't believe it's a problem. And so the more we can kind of understand what risks people see both for themselves and for their animals, and for their livelihoods and their families, the more that they believe those things are a problem, the more they're going to be willing to take action to preventing problems associated with it. So one of the very first things that we did on

this project was to look at what kind of online messages were being shared about ticks and tick diseases and risks around those, as well as what types of behaviors people had and what they were searching for in an online environment.

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Phillip Stokes 11:16

One's patience may be one predictive factor in determining the choices people will make, but if they don't believe something is a problem, they may not be willing to take any action at all. In this last clip, you'll hear Wendy Wilber discuss her approach in sharing the benefits of Florida Friendly Landscaping practices as the Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Program Coordinator. She too talks about understanding your audience and knowing what resonates with them when trying to promote a beneficial practice, such as with Florida Friendly Landscaping.

W

Wendy Wilber 11:49

It's a multi-pronged approach, because what appeals to you may not appeal to the next person. So, we have to think about selling our concept of Florida Friendly Landscaping in a few different ways, you know, is it going to save you time? So you may be very busy and you want to save time. Is it going to improve your environment? You know, are we doing the right thing? Is it going to save you money. So we have to kind of hit all those concepts and get people thinking, you know, pick the one that is going to resonate with you and make the most sense. For me right now, it's saving time. So I don't want to spend a lot of time out landscaping, pruning, mowing, mulching, watering, so. But it may for somebody else, it might be about the money in the inputs. They don't want to pay that lawn service \$100 a month So can I help them to design a landscape that would be lower maintenance, and so. Or maybe their water bill is high, and they want to help reduce that. So I think you know, trying to find what resonates with that homeowner for why they would want to adopt this program. And that's for the people who care, Phil, there's other people who have this, you know, it's green, the yard is green, the shrubs are green, and the house is blue and that's all I care about. So we have to try to appeal to them in a different way to kind of get them excited about or interested in caring about their landscape and how it impacts the environment and how it impacts their life.

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Phillip Stokes 13:31

2023 of Science by the Slice had such wonderful guests. And while I hope you enjoyed today's quick recap as we explored the concept of patience, I invite you to go back and listen to any episodes you missed, or just any episode that's of interest to you. Be sure to follow us on your favorite podcast apps, so you won't miss the episodes we have planned for 2024 Our next episode is on the topic of aquaculture. And after that, you'll hear about natural disasters in the agriculture and natural resources industries, which is a prelude to two brand new courses on the subject from the PIE Center coming out later this spring. And hey, if you want to find out more, we invite you to stay connected to the UF/IFAS PIE center and keep listening to Science by the Slice.

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Ricky Telg 14:26

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