



# Improving Wellbeing and Engagement: Regaining Connectivity, Certainty and Control

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# What is it?

- It's spiteful
- It creeps into every moment in our lives
- It influences our relationships
- Impacts our physical body
- Works its way into our conversations
- Sparks non-nourishing behaviours
- Forces us to do things we'd never want to do
- It's infectious
- It's contagious
- It's relentless

This information is intended solely for educational purposes.

# Stress is always in the eyes of the beholder!



Stress is how we respond when our needs are not met.

It is universal because our needs are universal.

The individual way each of us responds to having our needs met, and how we respond when they aren't, become this unique mosaic we call our reality. Stress is how we respond when our needs are not met.

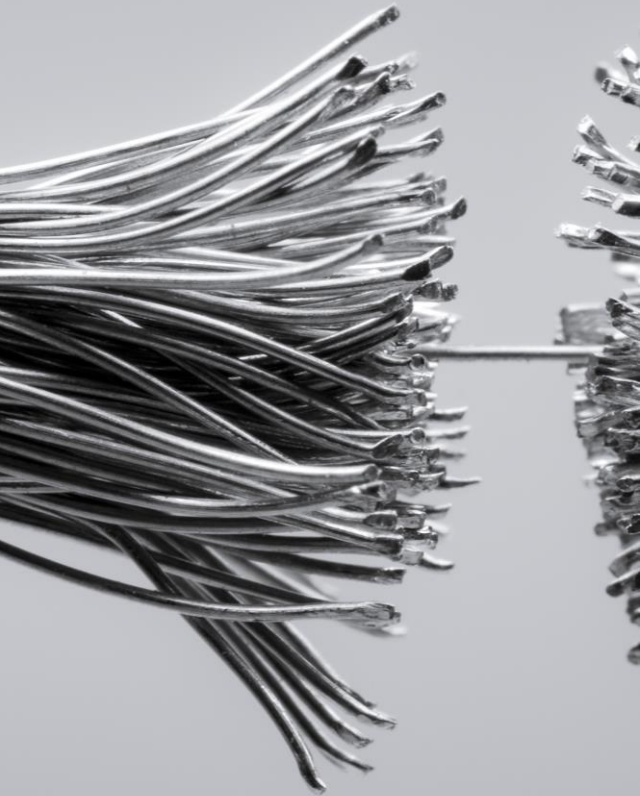
# The Ingredients of Stress?

**(N)ovelty** - Something new you have not experienced before

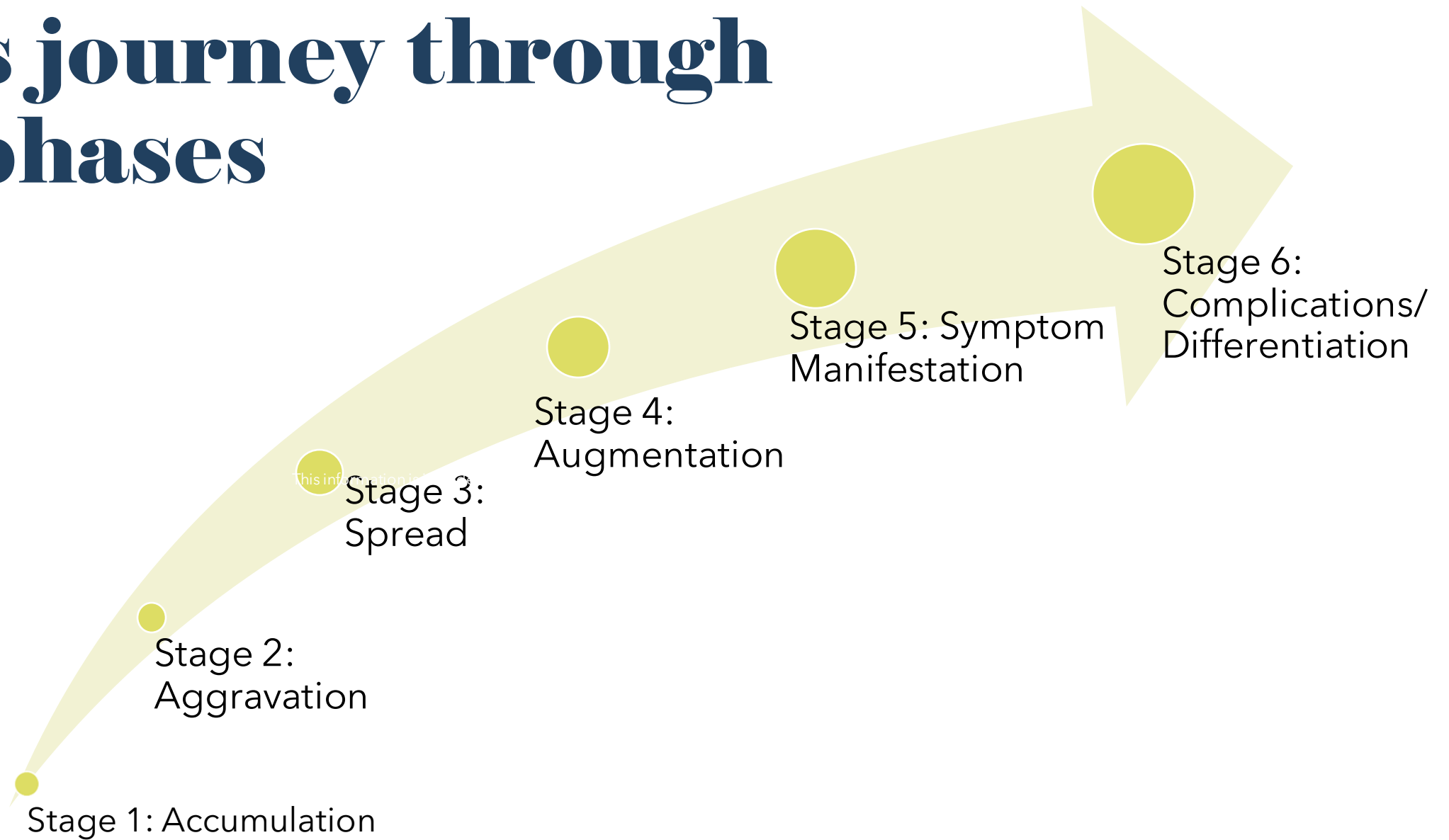
**(U)npredictability** - Something you had no way of knowing it would occur

**(T)hreat to the ego/self** - Your competence as a person is called into question

**(S)ense of Control** - You feel you have little or no control over the situation



# Let's journey through the phases





# Understanding Our Reaction to Stress:

# Regions of the Brain Involved in the Stress Response

## Prefrontal Cortex

- 💡 evaluation
- 💡 thinking
- 💡 logic
- 💡 what to do



## Hippocampus

Regulates memory and emotions

## Amygdala

Turns on fight or flight, and stores memories of the event

# The Reactive or Ego Response

When we feel mentally or emotionally threatened, we respond with what is either the reactive or ego response.

EGO - the realm of **I, Me, Mine** - it's our sense of self, our sense of ownership of people, things, and experiences.

When that ownership is questioned or one of our boundaries is contested or attacked, we lash out to defend it or shut it down into resignation.

The ego response has the whole spectrum of "fight-or-flight" reactions woven into its emotional expressions.





# What Happens to Us on An Interpersonal Level?

When we are experiencing an overload of stress;

- We may begin to remove ourselves from our social supports.
- Defensive behaviour in case we need to mobilize (fight or flee).
- There may be a lot of shame (“I’m bad”) and guilt (“I did something bad”)
- Difficulty cultivating calm, connection with others (survival > connection).
- Preoccupied with impression management.
- Rigid or porous boundaries in relationship.

# Variables



## Situation

The situation variable describes the event that is occurring, along with timing, concurrent stresses, duration, and previous similar experiences.



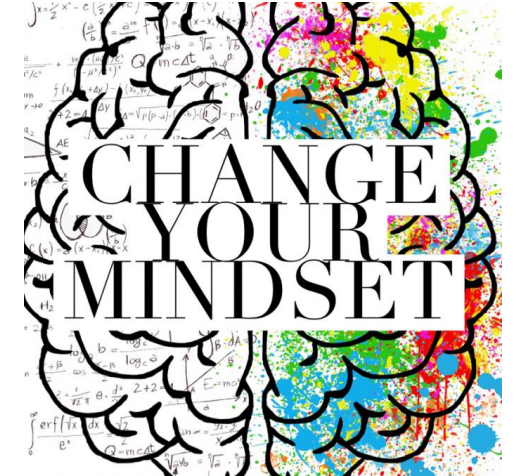
## Self

The self variable refers to personal characteristics and psychological resources an individual has developed overtime to remain resilient.



## Support

The support variable determines social support available to the individual; this can be family, friends, romantic partners, and other networks that may provide support (Anderson et al., 2011).



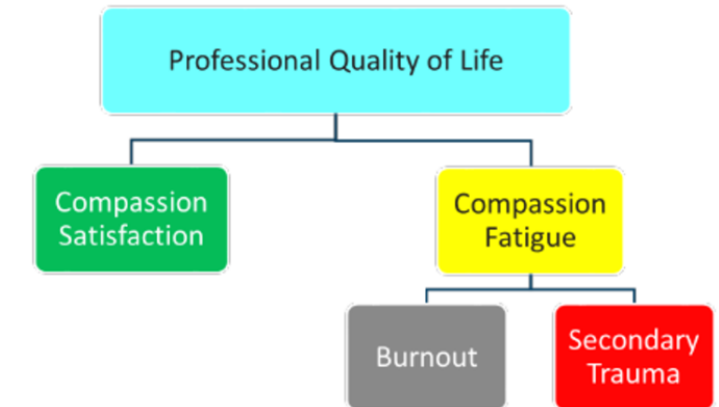
## Strategies

The strategies variable refers to coping responses to new experiences and ability to find information and resources to ease transitions.

# The Impact of Caring: Compassion-Satisfaction & - Fatigue?

- **Compassion Satisfaction:**  
Positive aspects/Pleasure doing  
work to help/care
- **Compassion Fatigue:**  
Negative aspects/feelings from  
helping/working in caring  
systems

CS-CF  
Model



[https://hmmal.org/Customize\\_a\\_Presentation.html](https://hmmal.org/Customize_a_Presentation.html)

# Signs and Symptoms of Stress Overload to Beware of?

## Physical

- Chest pain and rapid heartbeat
- Gastrointestinal issues
- Headaches
- Low energy
- Insomnia
- Somatization (psychological distress through bodily sensations)



## Emotional

- Anxiety and depression
- Irritability and mood swings
- Poor concentration
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Loneliness and isolation

# Signs and Symptoms of Stress Overload to Beware of?

## Cognitive

- Forgetfulness
- Inability to concentrate
- Constant worrying
- Racing thoughts
- Pessimism (around current / future-orientation)

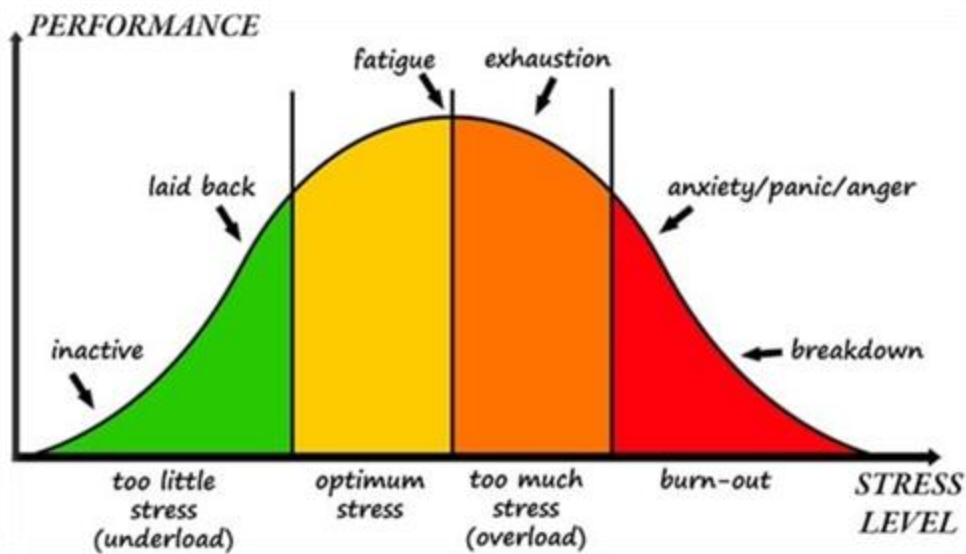


## Behavioural

- Nervous habits (e.g. nail-biting / gripping, pacing)
- Procrastinating
- Eating more or less
- Withdrawal from others
- Sleeping more or less (lethargic)

# Co-creating a Stress- & Trauma-Informed Culture?

## Preventing Collective Burnout



- Provide education and awareness on stress and it's impact on individual / team well-being. (Cyclical-relationship)
- Explicitly, provide resources and pathways of support for staff (Self-directed / EAP)
- Co-create space for open discussions and disclosure around well-being; **prioritizing safety, transparency, connection, voice and choice.**

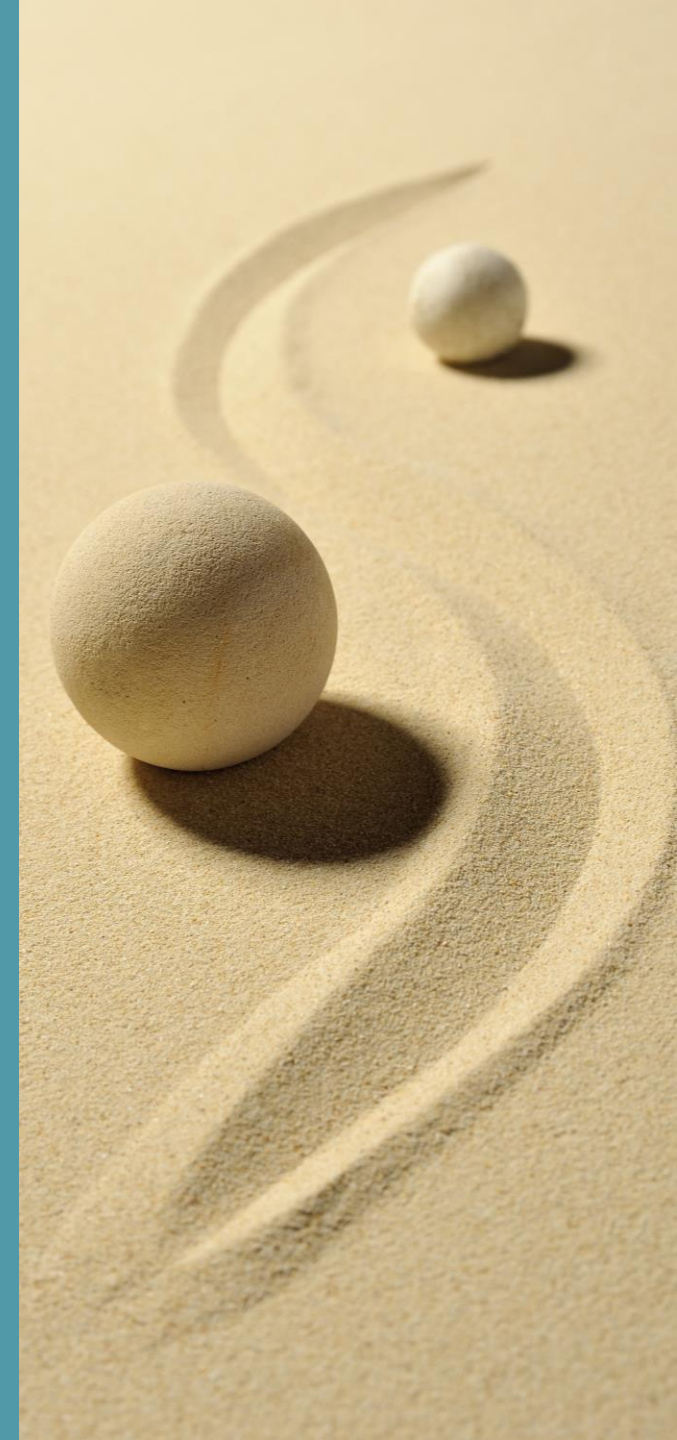
# Boundaries and the Power of No!

## Boundaries are:

- Healthy emotional and physical distance you can maintain between you and another so that you do not become overly enmeshed and/or dependent.

## Boundaries Support:

- Managing our stressors effectively
- Being able to say No, creates space for the things we truly want to say Yes to.
- Modeling your humanness, you're a HUMAN resource with limits





# Triple A

OUR VARIOUS OPTIONS TO APPROACH STRESS





# Alter

Our '**Emotional Tell**' tips us off that we are about to get emotionally constricted.

A 'Tell' is an unconscious sign that you're feeling a certain way. We especially do this at the first sign that our needs are not being met.

If you can't avoid a stressful situation, try to alter it. Often, this involves changing the way you communicate and operate in your daily life.

# Reach for SODA:



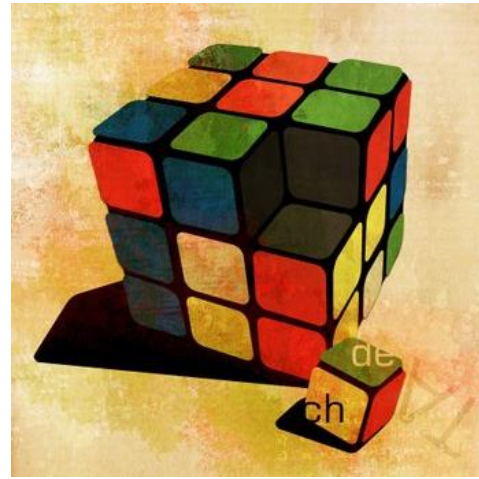
## Stop

Stop whatever you are doing or thinking. JUST STOP. Silently whisper to yourself, **Stop!**



## Observe

Observe yourself - where are you, whom are you with, what's going on from a witnessing perspective.



## Detach

Detach - just for a moment - from the drama, charge, and emotion of the situation and take a long deep breathe in. Step back and exhale.



## Awaken

Awaken to a better version of yourself, the part of you that makes you smile from pride on how you respond to life. Stay in this space for a few seconds and simply breathe.

# Limbo

- Stress and anxiety are like two peas in a pod, always pushing each other's buttons.
  - Stress makes us feel like we're stuck in a situation that we shouldn't be in.
  - Anxiety makes us feel like we're not where we should be.
- It's like we're stuck in a weird limbo, feeling like we need to escape.
- **Remember**, as long as stress isn't prolonged, and as long as its perceived as positive, its harmless.
- Alter your response by finding another gear.

# Mastering Your Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence can be learned, developed, and mastered.

Emotional Intelligence is an awareness of your actions and feelings and how they affect those around you.

Emotional Intelligence is essentially our ability to “own” the four capabilities.

## **Our Four Capabilities:**

1. Correctly perceive emotions
2. Retrieve and produce emotions to assist thoughts
3. Comprehend emotions and understand them
4. Effectively adjust emotions to promote personal development and growth

# Learning to SWEEP



**Self-Assess:** ask yourself some deep questions about your life and answer honestly. Start with, what are my top ten weaknesses? Be willing to accept you're not a perfect person.



**Witness:** Observe how you interact with – and react to – people.



**Examine:** How do you react to stressful situations? What do you do in the moment when your daily needs aren't met?



**Empathize:** Put yourself in the shoes of others. Ask them what their needs are.



**Practice Humility:** Let go of the need to defend your actions or sing your own praises.



# In-The-Moment De-stressifying - Adapt

When we introduce a pattern interrupt into our flow of thoughts, we can gently step aside from the uneasy memories of the past or the anxious thoughts of the future and truly ground ourselves back into the present moment.

Some of us are wired to be a bit more reactive than others.

We all have the tools to live a “stress-free” life - no equipment necessary.

We can learn ways to adapt our perspective, adapt our relationship to stressors, and quickly move through the stress.

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# In-The-Moment De-Stressifiers

## In the Morning at Home

- Creating stillness as the starting point of your next 24-hours sets a powerful trajectory.
- Spend 5 minutes holding your child, your partner, your pet, or yourself. This will instantly ease your blood pressure.
- Take a 10-minute walk, connecting to nature to ease anxiety and replace it with calm. Leave your phone at home and don't plug in any music.
- Start with 5-minutes of deep alternate-nostril breathing. Then practice 15-minutes of yoga or gentle stretching to awaken your energy, release tension, and rejuvenate your body.
  - Then finish by lying on your back with your eyes closed and practice a Mindful Flow Meditation for 5 minutes.

# In-The-Moment De-Stressifiers

## At Work

- As soon as you notice frustration, irritation, or intensity starting to build, take these steps to adapt...
  1. Reach for SODA
  2. Pour lavender - or sandalwood-based oil or lotion gently into your open hand. Massage your palm with your thumb; then massage every finger from the base to the tip, and then the webbed area. Close your eyes and breathe in the vapors.
  3. Step Away - go outside or an unoccupied place where you can sit for a few moments. Close your eyes and breathe in and out deeply through your nostrils 10x.
  4. Take 3-minutes and chew a piece of gum to loosen the stress in your jaw. While you chew, roll your neck around to ease the tightness.



# In-The-Moment De-Stressifiers

## After Work

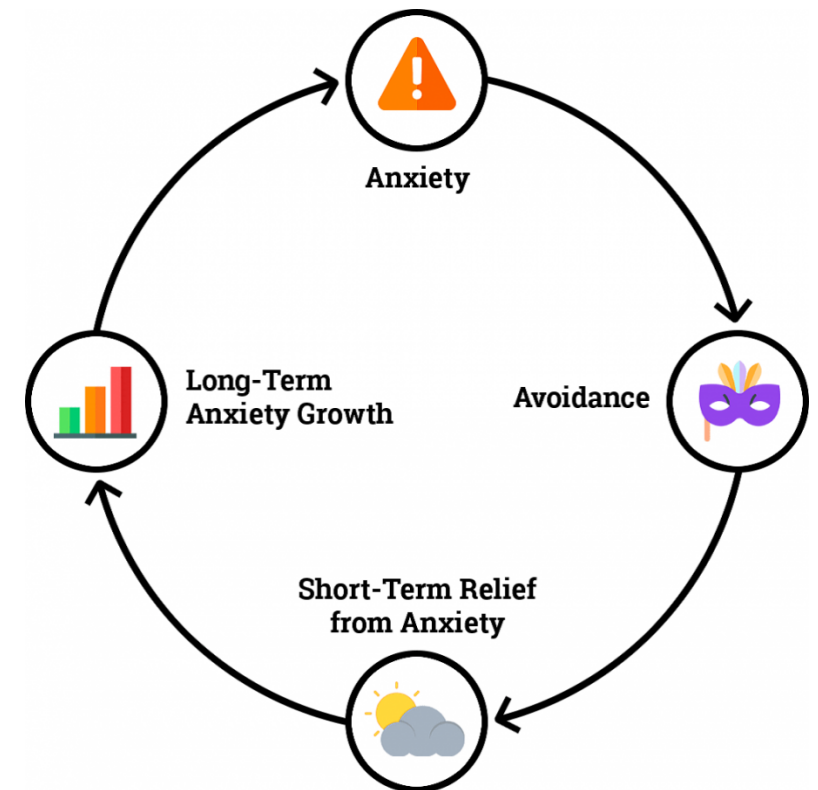
- You're carrying the past 12-hours of the day inside every cell in your body. Take time to release the day by:
  1. Shake the tension right out of your body. Roll your shoulders, reach your arms to the sky and stretch, then do some arm circles. If you're feeling energetic, finish off with 10 jumping jacks.
  2. Shake the tension out of your mind with recapitulation. Spend 5-minute replaying your day in fast-forward from the moment you woke up.
  3. After dinner, slow down.

# What's the Difference: 'Triple A's' Avoid vs. Avoidance?

Avoiding: **Looking at...**

- Understanding and accepting that stress is a normal part of our day-to-day lives.
- Asks us; Can I say no to this source of stress?
- Avoiding is taking an assertive-stance in how we each navigate the stress we encounter.
- Avoiding asks, what part do I play in the stress that I am experiencing – **am I participating in my own suffering? If so, why?**

Avoidance: **Looking away from...**



# Identifying & Managing Our Stress Triggers?

**Internal Stressors** - Internal triggers come from within. They're self-induced and the result of harmful emotions and thought patterns.

- **Worry** – Worry can lead to a stress spiral, causing anxiety about various situations such as an upcoming speaking event or projects.
- **Phobias** – Phobias, such as fear of tight spaces, flying, or crowds, can cause real stress responses even when the threat is imagined.
- **Lack of Control** – Feeling helpless is a common stress trigger, causing us to wait and hope for the best, as seen in situations like waiting for a test result.

# Identifying & Managing Our Stress Triggers?

**Internal Stressors** - Internal triggers come from within. They're self-induced and the result of harmful emotions and thought patterns.

- **Decision-Making** – Stress can arise when making crucial decisions, such as choosing the right college, career move, vehicle, partner, or home.
- **Unrealistic Expectations** – Overexpecting yourself and others can lead to stress, as seen in planning perfect team dinners or training new employees.
- **Attitudes and Perceptions** - Your perspective significantly influences your stress levels.

# Identifying & Managing Our Stress Triggers?

**External Stressors** - External triggers come from the outside. They're the result of things that happen to us—and they're not as easily controlled.

- **Life Changes** – Major changes, whether positive or negative, trigger a stress response.
- **Financial Pressures** – Financial worries are common and can be long-term or sudden, especially when facing major life purchases like a house.
- **Workplace** – Stress can be exacerbated by heavy workloads, long hours, and demanding bosses, as well as a toxic work environment with uncooperative colleagues, unclear expectations, and discrimination.

# Identifying & Managing Our Stress Triggers?

**External Stressors** - External triggers come from the outside. They're the result of things that happen to us—and they're not as easily controlled.

- **Environment** – Your surroundings can trigger stress; noises, temperature, or messy environments, which can cause tenseness and emotional reactions.
- **Unpredictable Events** – Unexpected events, whether positive or negative, can cause stress.
- **Social Stressors** - Social stimuli and relationships may also lead to stress.



**NO**

**U**

**TURN**

# “Avoiding:” Strategies to Respond Effectively to Stress?

- Listen to the subtle cues your body is letting you know that this stress is too much
- Connect to your “why” when it comes to managing your stress (anchoring / grounding)
- Ask yourself; **“Can I say no to this stressor?”**
- Reflect on experience; **“What? So What? Now What?”**
- Move towards (knowing what to avoid) and not away from (avoidance)

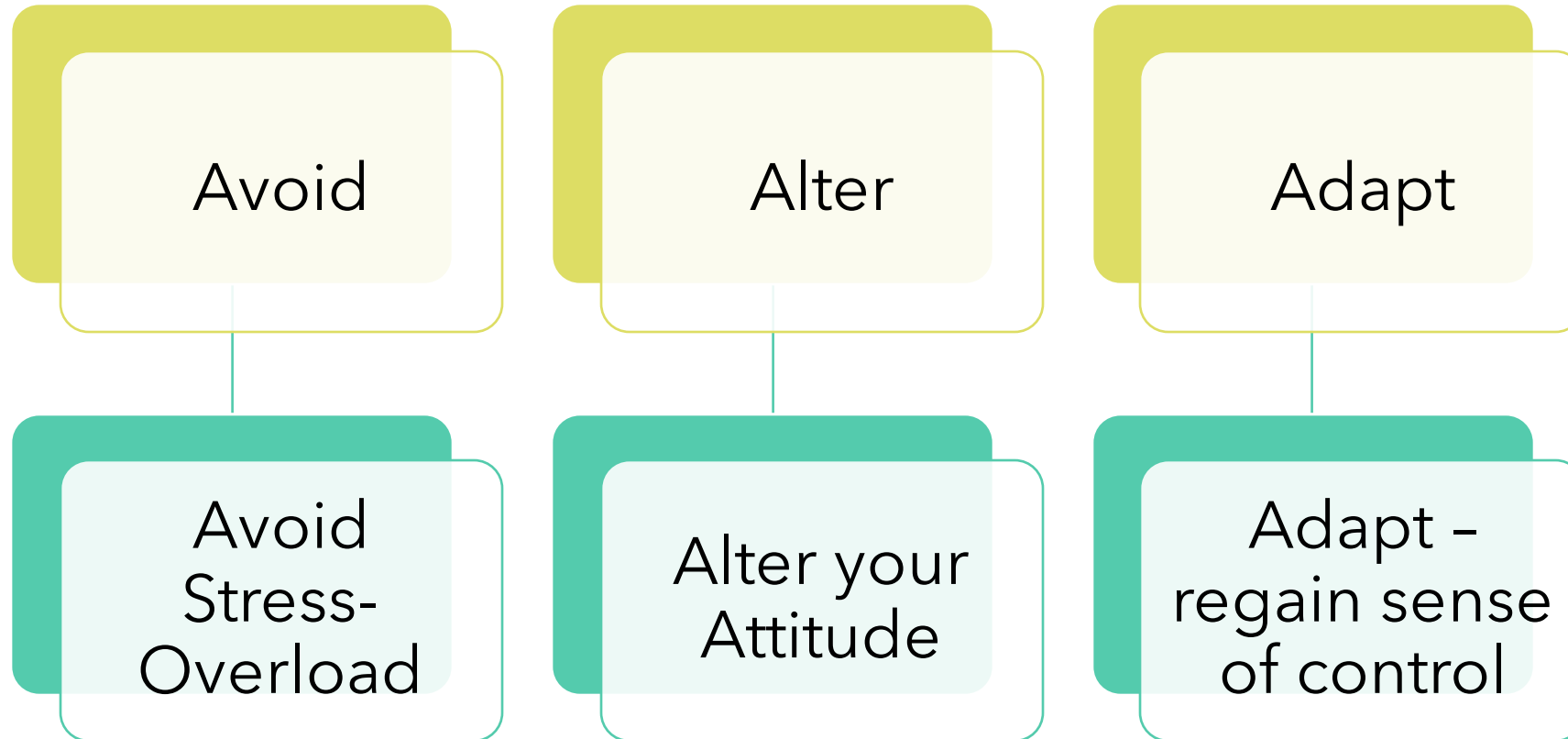


# “Avoiding:” Strategies to Respond Effectively to Stress?

- Practice titration / scaffolding (sustainability)
- Avoiding entails an ongoing self-appraisal; where am I at, and where am I looking to go?
- Create space for your triggers with curiosity and compassion vs. a judgmental stance
- **Explore coping strategies; calming strategies like journaling, relaxation techniques like breathing exercises, or talking to a trusted friend / colleague / professional.**



# Triple “A” Approach



# Now Wait!! There is another A!

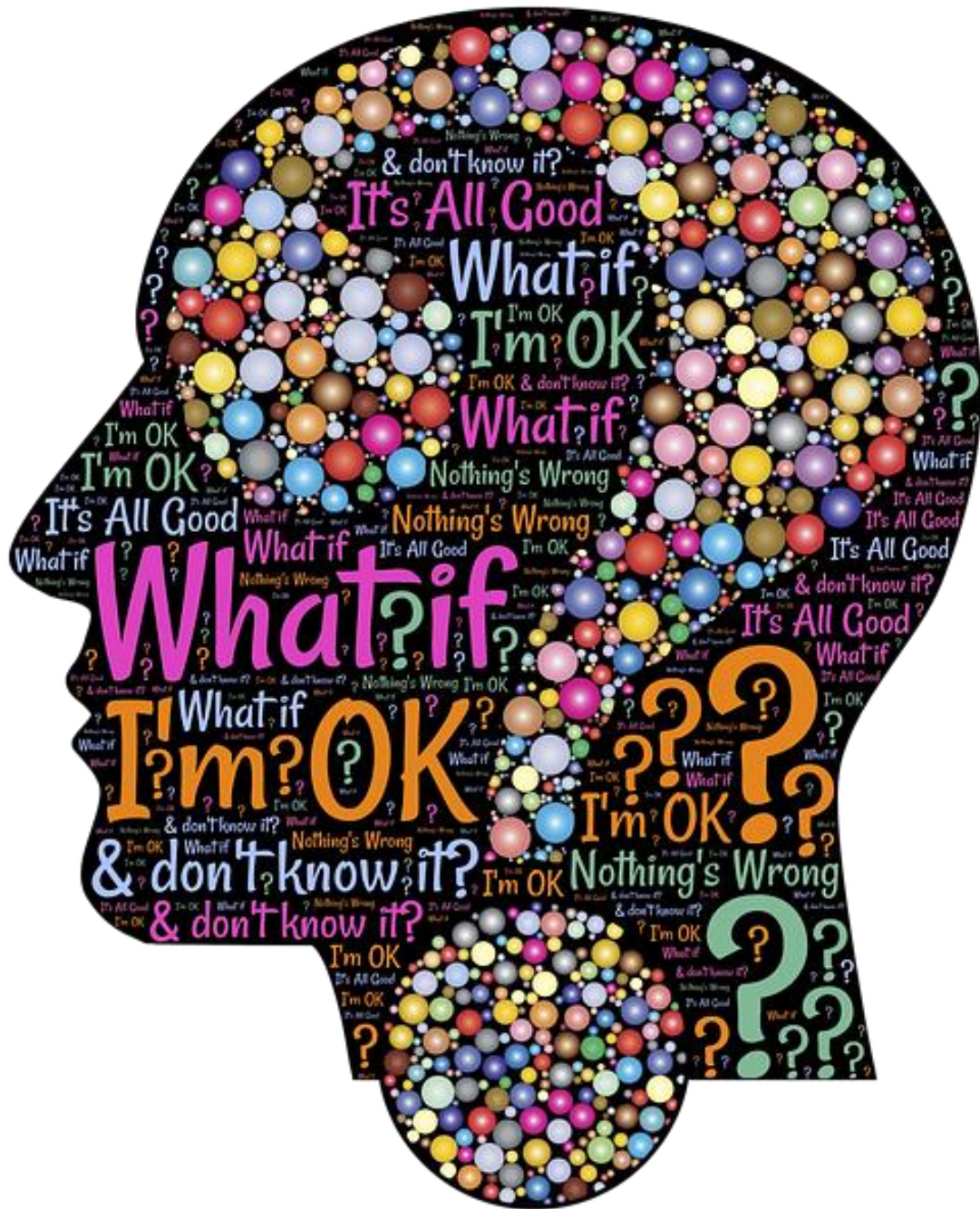
- **Acceptance** is just like any other skill: it takes practice. People who are accepting of themselves and others have made acceptance a mental habit by continuously choosing a more accepting mindset over and over again.
- Acceptance is not the same as resignation.
- Acceptance refers to acknowledging and allowing your present experience—not necessarily your life situation.
- Acceptance is your ability to accept negative emotions without judging them. This is an essential part to managing your stress rather than it managing you.

# Acceptance

- Change your perspective
- Put the past behind you
- Have realistic expectations
- Mindfully adjust your attitude
- Get more information
- Be part of the change
- By letting go of the need to constantly change or control every situation, we can focus on what we can maintain and find peace in the present moment.

## Adjusting your Attitude

- Each stressful experience you have **prepares** you for one in the future
- The better you become at handling stressful experiences, the more **resilient** you become
- Everything may not happen the way you want it, but understand that it's just a comma and not a period



# The right tools makes all the difference.

- Master Your Awareness
- Master Your Needs
- Master Your Emotions
- Master Your Communication
- Master Your Purpose

**With the right tools, you can fully de-stressify!**

# Let's Stay Connected!

спасибо 谢谢  
GRACIAS 谢谢  
**THANK YOU**

ありがとうございました MERCI

DANKE धन्यवाद

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