



# Child Resiliency

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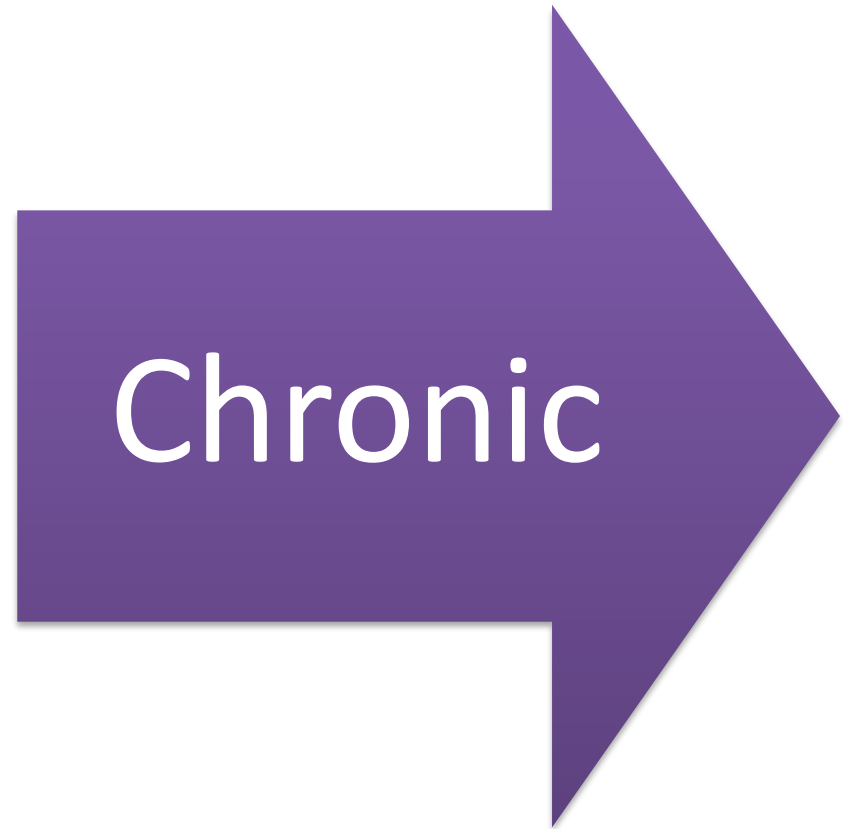
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**Why do some people continue to grow and thrive despite adversity whereas others experience debilitating distress and impairment?**

# Different Types of Stress

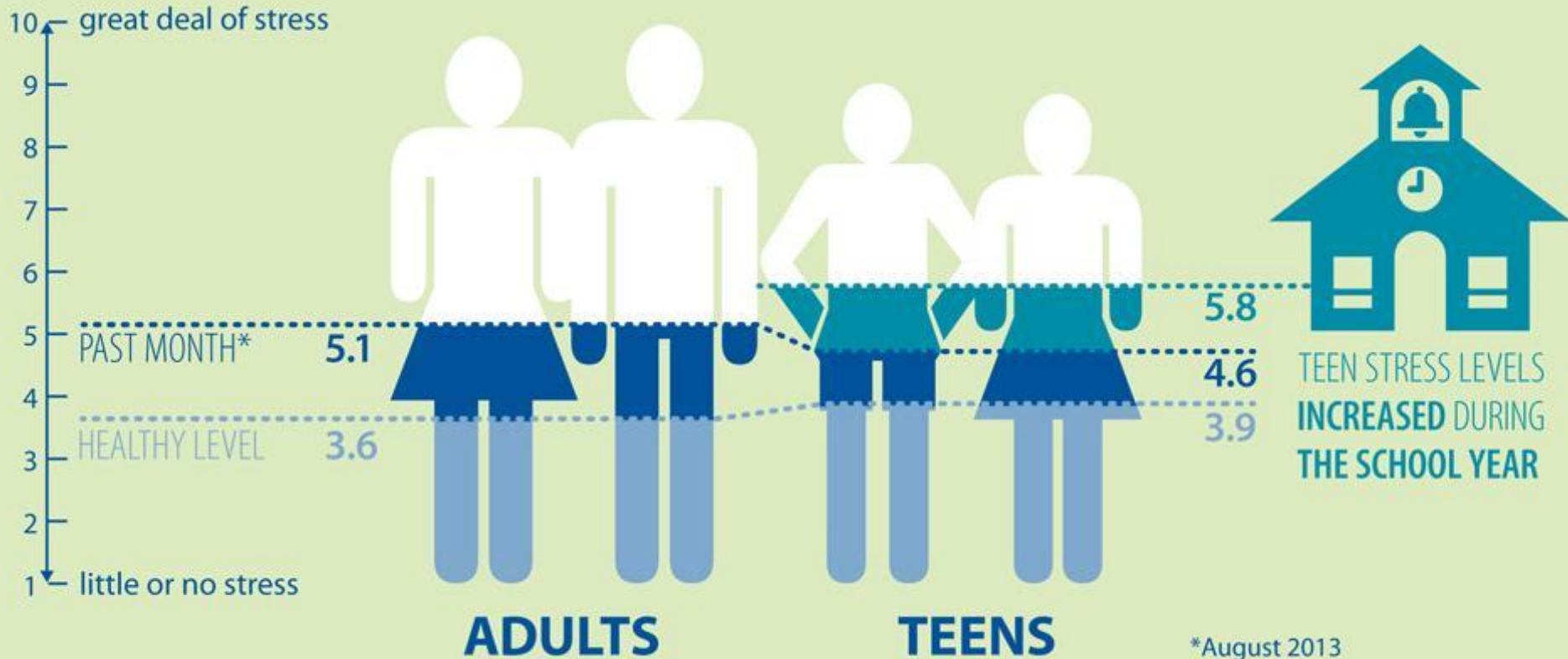


# Common Sources of Stress

- Home/family
- School
- Friends
- Sports
- Safety
- Health
- Finances
- Discrimination



# Teens Report Stress Similar to Adults, Exceeding Levels Seen as Healthy



# Teens and Stress

- As a result of stress:
  - 31% of teens report feeling overwhelmed
  - 30% say that they feel sad or depressed
  - 36% report feeling tired or fatigued
- 16% of teens say their stress levels have declined in the past year, while 31% say their stress has increased in the past year
- 42% of teens say that they're either not doing enough (or aren't sure if they are) to manage their stress

# The Psychological Impact of COVID-19 on Youth



- 21-47% of parents reported their child experienced changes to health and learning because of COVID-19 (Brown et al., 2020)
- A study of 168 British children (ages 7.6-11.6 years) before and after lockdown found moderate-to-large increases in depressive symptoms (Bignardi et al., 2020)
- A study of 825 18-25 year-olds found that 5% had significantly increased mental healthcare needs in April/May 2020 (Marchini et al., 2020)

# Studies of Quarantine Effects

- PTSD sx occur in 28-34% and fear in 20% of people in quarantine during COVID-19 (Brooks et al, Lancet 2020)
- In a study after H1N1 and SARS epidemics (Sprang & Silman, Disaster Med Public Health Prep 2013):
  - 30% of children who were quarantined met criteria for PTSD by parental report
  - This was 4 times the rate of children who were not quarantined



# Impact of COVID-19 on Parental Stress

- One study from Japan of 1200 caregivers of children aged 3-14 years found:
  - 24.1% had moderate mental distress
  - 29.3% had severe mental distress
  - This was double the number reported in a 2016 survey
- Health problems in children were:
  - Twice as likely if parent reported moderate distress
  - Three times as likely if parent reported severe distress

(Horiuchi et al. 2020 PLOS One)

# Individual Stressors

- Loss of daily structure
- Loss of meaningful and pleasant activities (and outdoor or collaborative play)
- Loss of exposure to peers and adult models
- Negative mood states Lack of effective coping skills
- Exposure to repeated media and social media coverage of COVID-19
- Decreased access to mental health care



# Health-Related Behavioral Risks Associated with COVID-19 Social Isolation

- Increased screen time (+4 hrs per day)
- Decreased physical activity and increased sedentariness (-2.3 h/week)
- Altered eating habits (increased potato chip, red meat, sugary drink intake)
- Irregular sleep time and delayed bedtime
- Associated with increases in cardiovascular disease risk factors over time
- Associated with poorer mental health outcomes in the short- and long-term

Cuschieri & Grech, 2020; Lopez-Bueno et al., 2020; Pietrobelli et al., 2020; Storz et al., 2020; Tso et al., 2020

# COVID-Related Stressors Most Impact Children and Families who:

- Are from communities of color
- Are experiencing significant psychosocial stressors:
  - Racism
  - Socio-economic disadvantage
  - Discrimination because of other factors (e.g., immigration status, gender or sexual identity)
- Have ongoing mental health challenges or developmental disorders
- Have previously experienced trauma or significant loss
- Are in a period of developmental transition (e.g., preschool or college)

Conti et al., 2020, Edwards et al., 2020, Guan et al., 2020,. Li et al., 2020, Pedroza et al., 2020; Tso et al., 2020)

# What is Resilience?



# How Might We Define Resilience?

Mental toughness?

An internal trait that you either have or don't?

Psychological flexibility?

A skill that can be learned?

Figuring things out on your own?

Not allowing stress to impact you?

Coping with what life throws at you?

Staying calm under pressure?

Adapting in the face of stressors?

Not having psychological problems?

Growing despite adversity?

# The Interaction of Nature and Nurture

- Nature:
  - Personality factors
  - Predispositions/family history
- Nurture:
  - Loving, responsive, consistent, predictable conditions during childhood
  - Reasonable opportunities to master challenges and stressors
  - Supportive cultural, political, economic systems



# Individual Skills: The ability to:

- Tolerate and regulate emotions and self-soothe
- Actively solve problems under stress
- Form secure attachments
- Sustain friendships and intimate relationships
- Maintain a realistic and positive sense of competency/self-efficacy
- Have a sense of meaning and purpose



# Social support



# Facets of Social Support

- Size and extent of social network
- Social interactions are experienced as meeting needs
- Feeling loved, respected or cared for
- Material support
- Receiving advice or guidance

# Community Support

- Positive coping by other community members
- A sense of belonging, pride, and purpose
- Promotion of safety
- Available resources to meet basic needs



# Strategies to Foster Resilience



# Strategies to Mitigate Stress: At the Community Level



- Develop policies and practices to ensure that basic needs are met and address health disparities
- Target resources towards most vulnerable youth
- Increase access to supportive and preventative interventions
  - Telehealth
  - School- and community-based options

# Parental Support and Information

- Provide support for parents experiencing stress
- Enhance parental self-efficacy
- Increase social and community supports
- Enhance engagement with teachers and community leaders
- Model healthy coping by parents and other adults
- Limiting pandemic-related news/processing this actively

Wang et al. Lancet 2020



# Increase Individual Skills

- Enhance recognition of stress-related symptoms (physical, cognitive, and behavioral)
- Foster acceptance and tolerance of negative emotions
- Teach resiliency skills
  - Relaxation/mindfulness
  - Cognitive restructuring
  - Problem-solving
- Enhance natural, innate sources of resiliency



# Resilience Education Groups for Elementary and Middle School Students



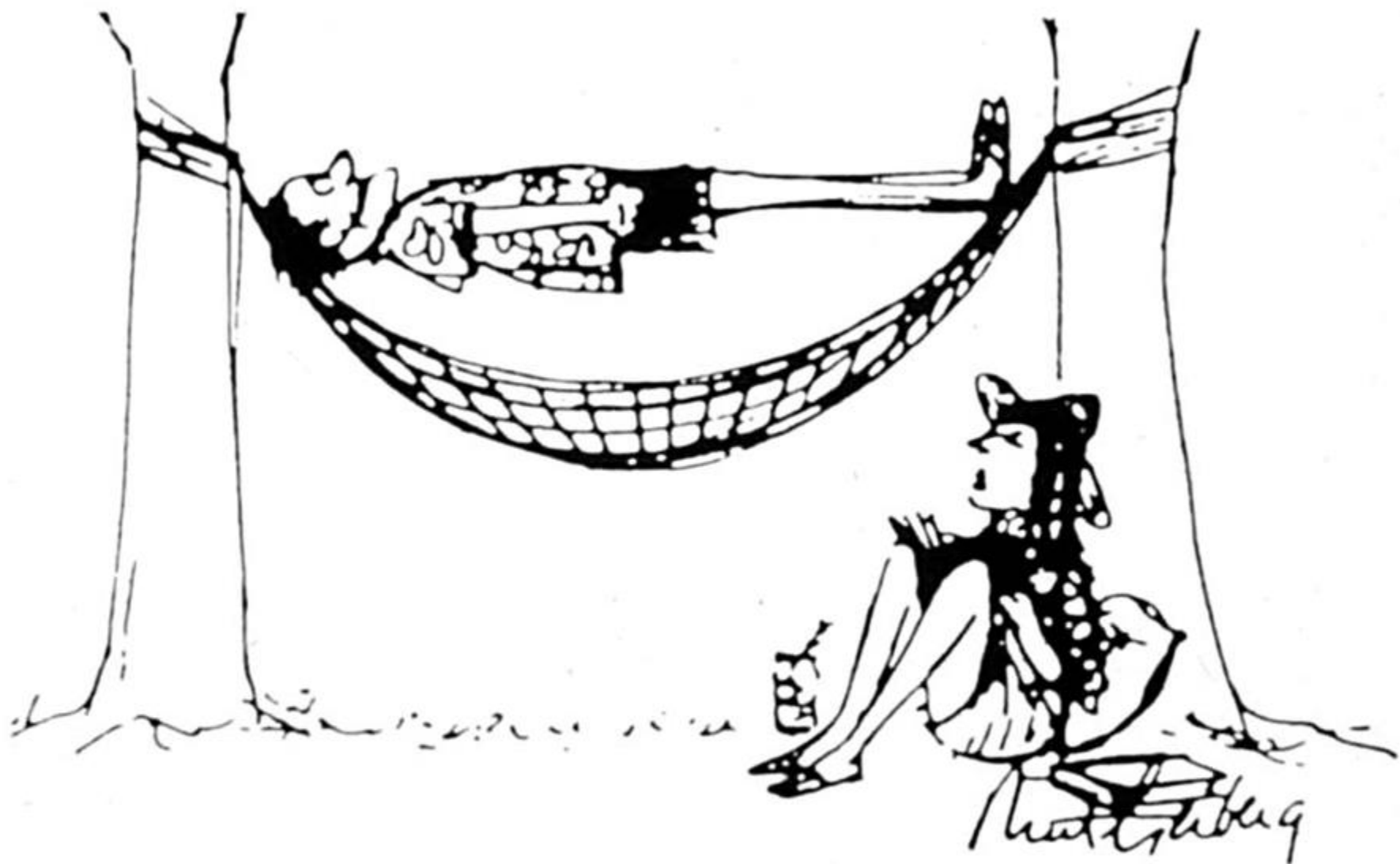
- Offered on Zoom platform, with 5-12 children per group.
- Co-taught by educators and psychologists
- Psychoeducation about the Stress-Response versus the Relaxation Response
- Recognizing physical, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive signs of stress
- Tools for managing stress
  - Breathing, meditation, mindfulness, and relaxation
  - Problem solving
  - Positive self-coaching



# What is Stress?

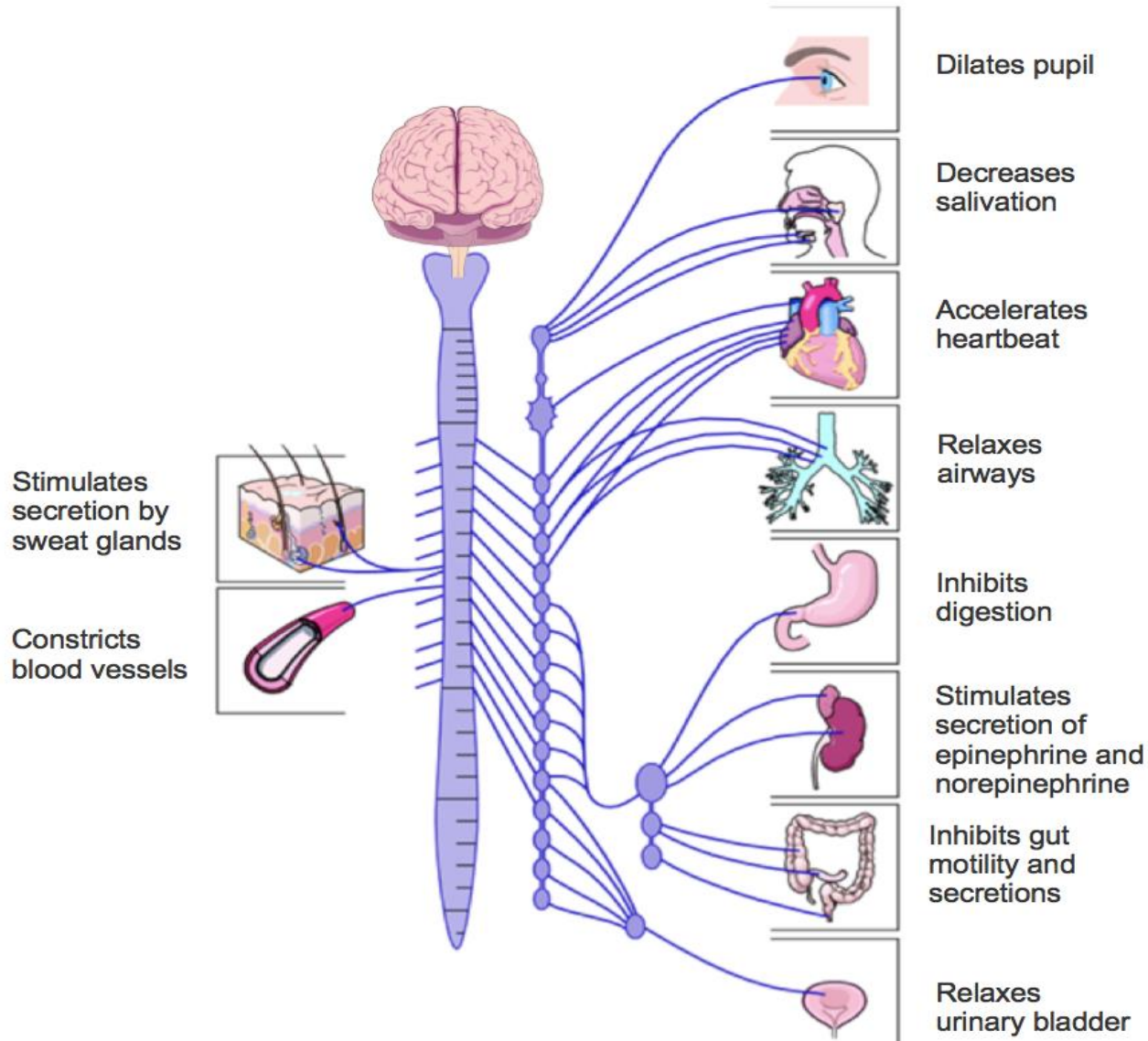


- How would you define it?
- Can stress ever be a good thing?
- When does stress become a problem?



**"The trouble with you, David, is that you don't know what the word 'Relax' means."**

# Fight-Flight-Freeze Response



# Physical Warning Signs



- Headaches
- Back pain
- Stomach problems
- Tight neck, shoulders
- Racing heart
- Hyperventilating
- Dizziness
- Restlessness
- Sleep problems
- Tiredness

# Behavioral Warning Signs

- Avoiding important things
- Alcohol/nicotine/substance abuse
- Irritability/fighting with others
- Being on edge/looking over your shoulder
- Compulsive eating
- Excessive technology use (phone, video games)
- Trouble getting things done

# Cognitive Warning Signs

- Trouble thinking clearly or concentrating
- Inability to make decisions
- Lack of creativity
- Forgetfulness
- Loss of interest/numbing
- Frequent worry
- Being down on yourself
- Hopelessness, pessimism about the future

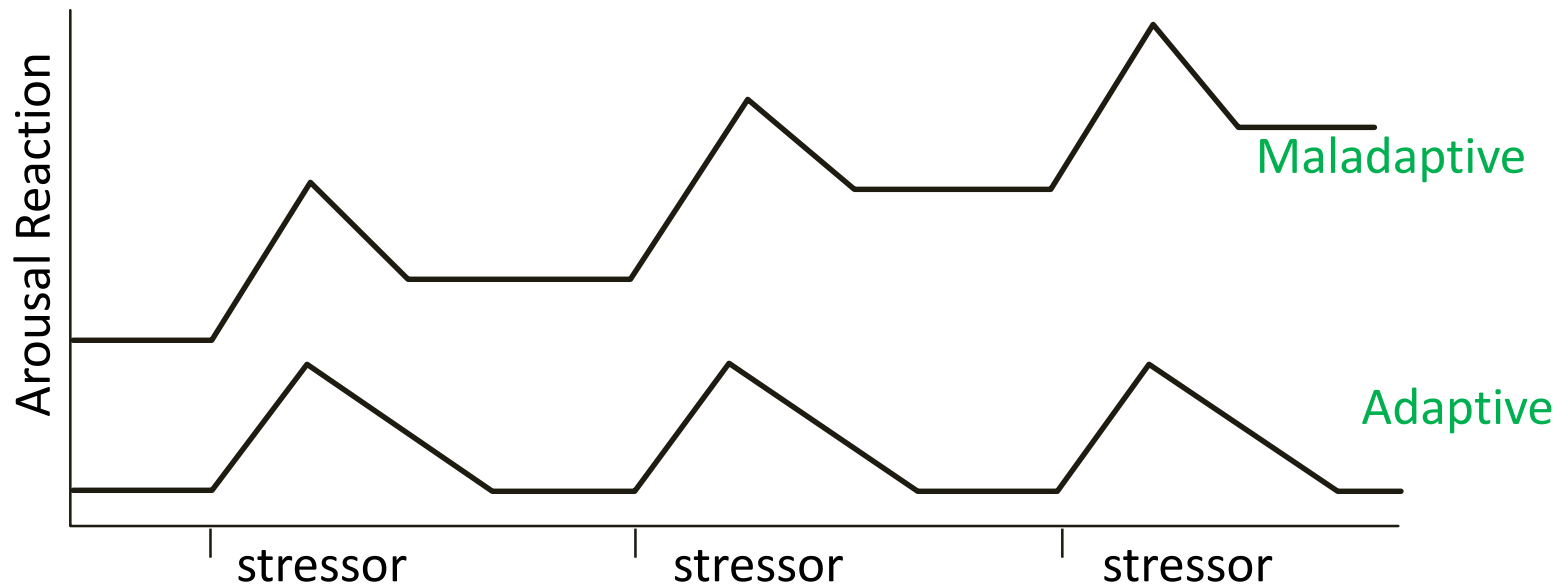


# Spiritual Stress Warning Signs

- Life has no meaning and purpose.
- Lost capacity to be kind and empathic.
- Loss of a sense of connection to self and others.
- Belief that acquiring more and more things will bring you happiness.
- Not practicing altruism.
- Not content just to be quiet.

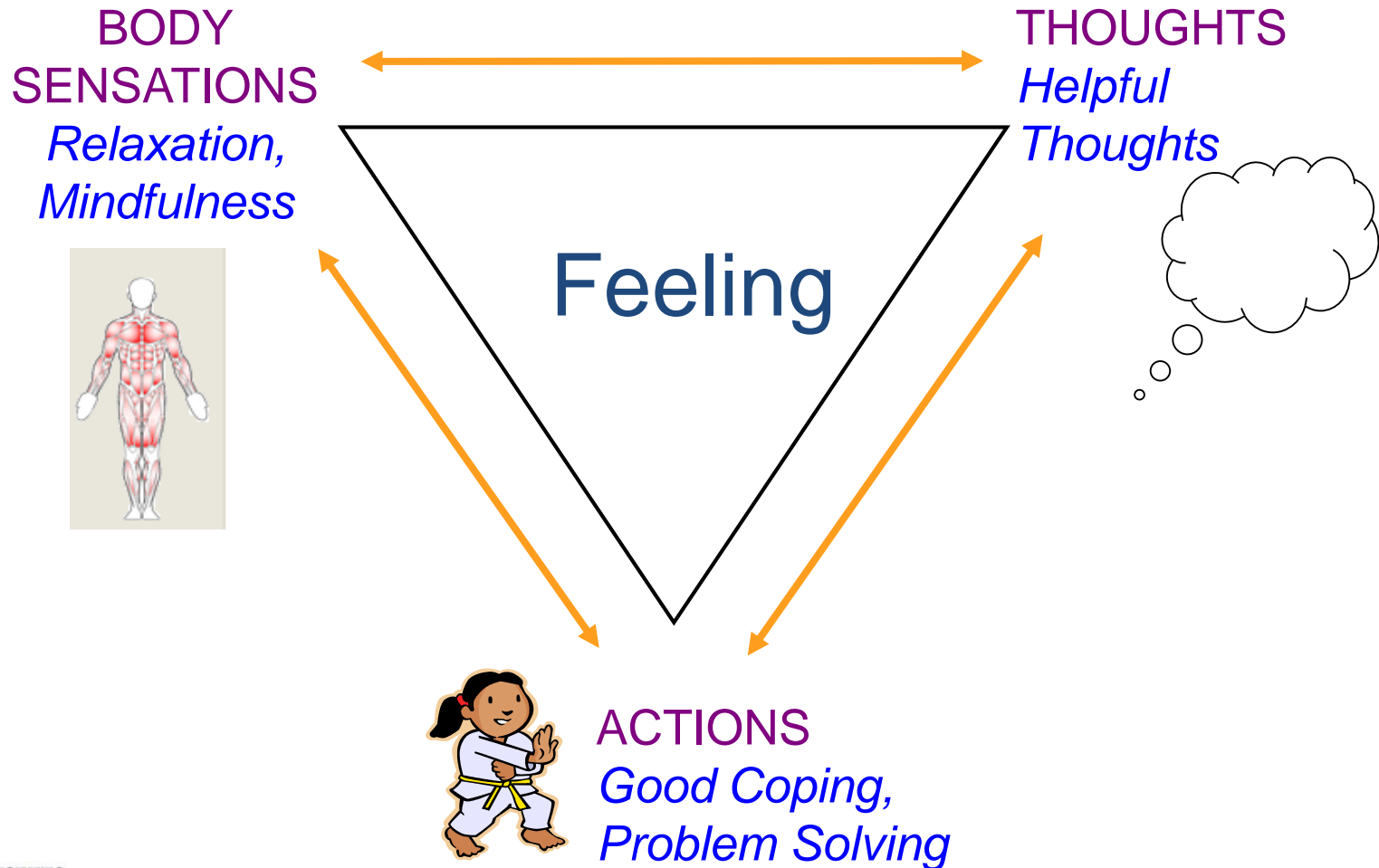
# Comparing Normal and Maladaptive Responses to Stress

In an adaptive response, arousal reactions return to normal after the stressor is dealt with. In maladaptive responses to stress, the arousal reaction continues even after the stressor has been dealt with. In other words, the set point or baseline of arousal reactions is steadily moved upward.





# How Can we Change Stressful Feelings?



# Key Question: Is there something I can do about the stressor?

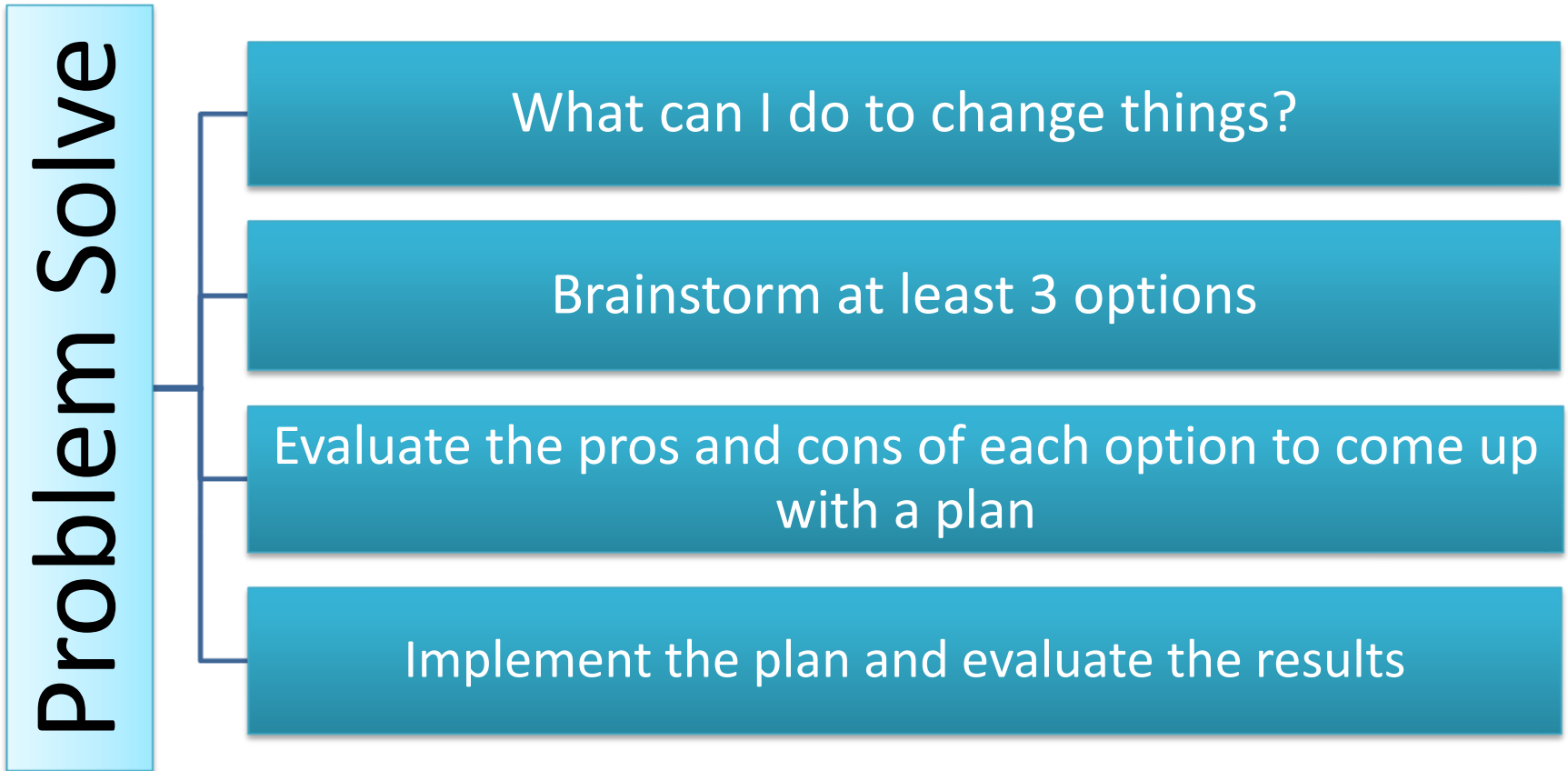


YES



NO

# If YES...



# If NO...

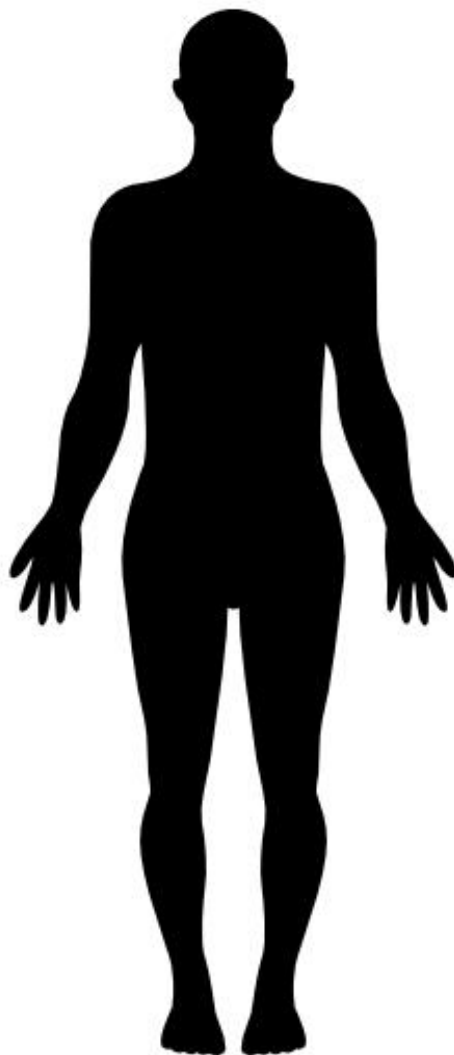


# The Relaxation Response (RR)

## The Opposite of “Fight or Flight”



# Body's Response to RR



**Adrenaline**

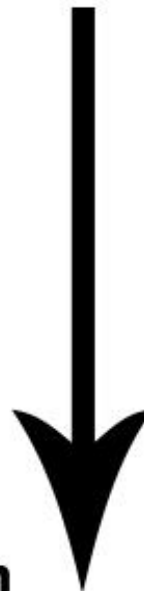
**Heart rate**

**Blood pressure**

**Breathing rate**

**Muscle tension**

**Memory/concentration  
difficulties**



# Two Steps

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1. The repetition of a word, a sound, a prayer, a thought, a phrase or a muscular activity
2. The passive return to the repetition when other thoughts intrude

# What type of repetition do you find relaxing?





# Remember

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The stress response is usually automatic, BUT the relaxation response is voluntary and requires practice.

# Evoking the Relaxation Response

- Diaphragmatic Breathing (Belly Breaths)
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation (imaginative exercises)
- Imagery (“special place”)
- Mindfulness (focusing in the here-and-now)
- Regular daily practice
- “Mini”-relaxation strategies to use in the moment



# Diaphragmatic Breathing



# Just This

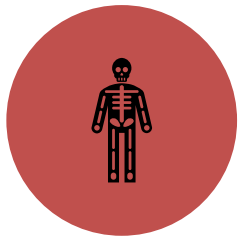


# Sensory Awareness

- Focusing on the here and now
- Using your senses to focus your attention
- Everyone is different in which sense(s) are most powerful



# By Recognizing Unhelpful Thoughts we can Challenge Them....



WHAT'S THE  
EVIDENCE?  
  
IS IT  
HELPFUL?



IS THERE  
ANOTHER  
WAY OF  
LOOKING AT  
THE  
SITUATION?



IS THIS JUST AN  
AUTOMATIC  
THOUGHT  
THAT IS  
MEANINGLESS?



WHAT WOULD  
COACH B SAY?

# Cognitive Strategies

- Noticing “Thinking Traps”
- Testing out if thoughts are accurate or helpful
- Being a good coach to oneself



## **Screening Out the Good**

Not looking at the good things that happened, only focusing on the bad.



## **All or Nothing Thinking**

If something didn't go perfectly, it was terrible. If I don't get 100%, I failed.



## **Thinking the worst**

Always thinking the WORST thing is going to happen.



## **Fortune Telling**

Thinking you know what's going to happen before it does.



## **The Mind-Reader**

Feeling sure that someone is thinking bad things about you.

## **Holding on to Unhelpful Thoughts**

Keeping on thinking about something after it is over.

# Mindful Approaches to Cognitive Restructuring

- Developing a neutral response to unpleasant thoughts (“It’s just a thought”, “Thoughts come and go”)
- Helpful metaphors
  - “Spam mail”
  - “Computer glitch”
  - Leaves on a stream
  - Echoes






# Questioning Rather than Assuming Thoughts are Accurate



- Nobody gives a .... about me
  - That's seeing the negative and Coach A. Who are the people who **do** care? My family, friends, mentors, coaches? I'm feeling bad because I had a hard day. How can I take care of myself right now to feel better.



# How do we coach ourselves under stress?

- Coach A vs Coach B vs Coach C

# Laying a Solid Foundation



- Regular sleep scheduling
- Exercise
- Diet
- Involvement in regular, meaningful activities
- Social connection

# Use of Social Media/ Technology



# Mindfulness at your Fingertips

- Several popular apps:
  - Headspace
  - Breathe
  - Balance
- YouTube videos
- Watch apps that monitor stress, activity levels, sleep
- FitBits



# THANK YOU

