Managing Burnout and Stress

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Ember Experience

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Agenda

1. Reflecting on an evolving workplace environment
2. Understanding the relationship between stress and burnout
3. Preventing and recovering from burnout
4. Takeaways from today

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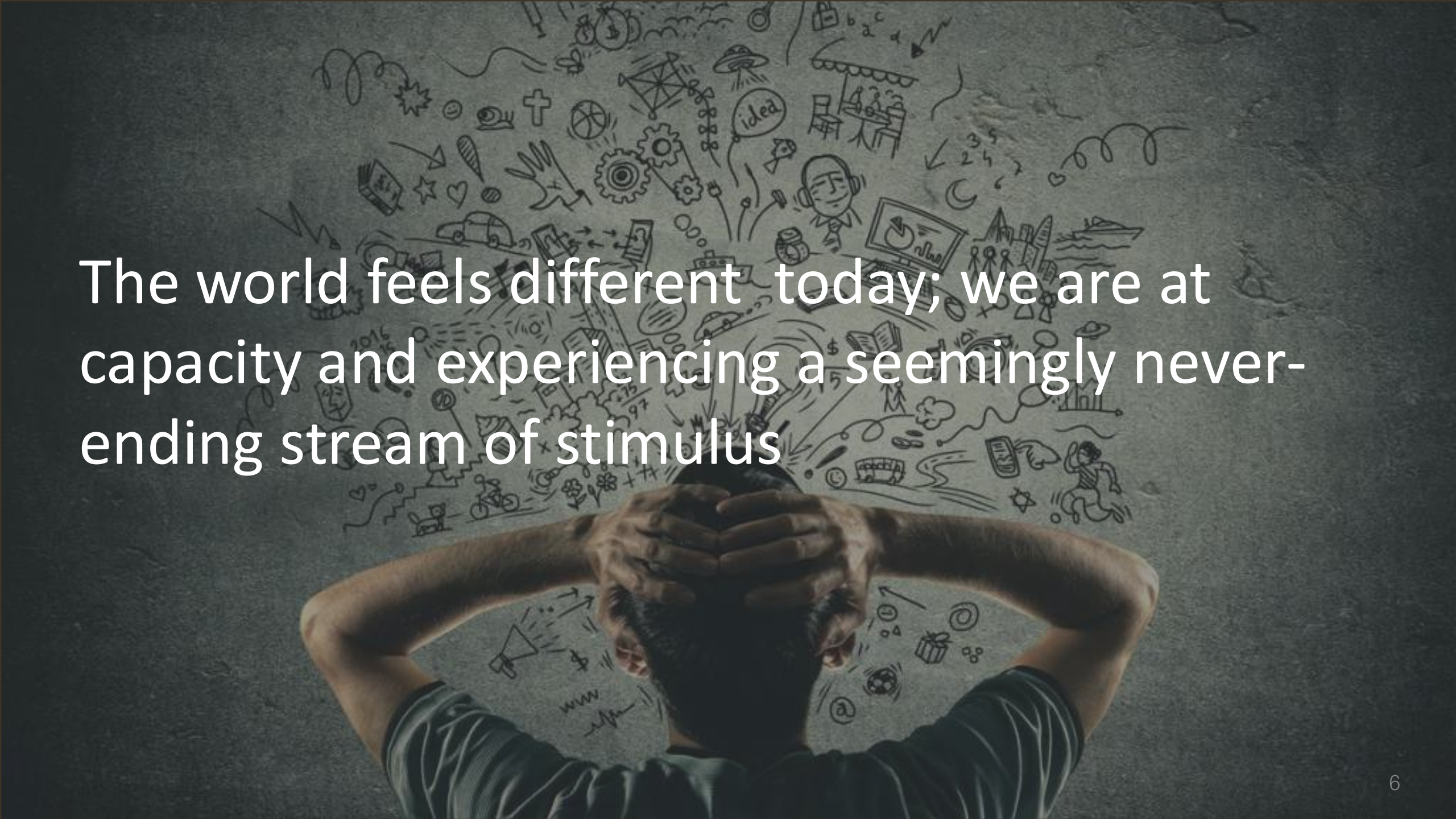
A lot has changed around us over the last few years…

Organizations	Leaders	Individuals
Our communities		

A lot has changed around us over the last few years…

Organizations	Leaders	Individuals
• What we do • How we do it • The culture and norms	• Vulnerability vs. armoured • Curious vs. judgmental/answers • Infinite vs. finite • Lead with vs. from on top • Influence vs. fear	• Our personal values and beliefs • Isolation and loneliness • Personal capacity and boundaries • Navigating emotional stimulus

Our communities		
• Global conflict • Economic uncertainty	• Housing insecurity • Political ideological fracture	• Technology super cycle • Climate change



The world feels different today; we are at capacity and experiencing a seemingly never-ending stream of stimulus

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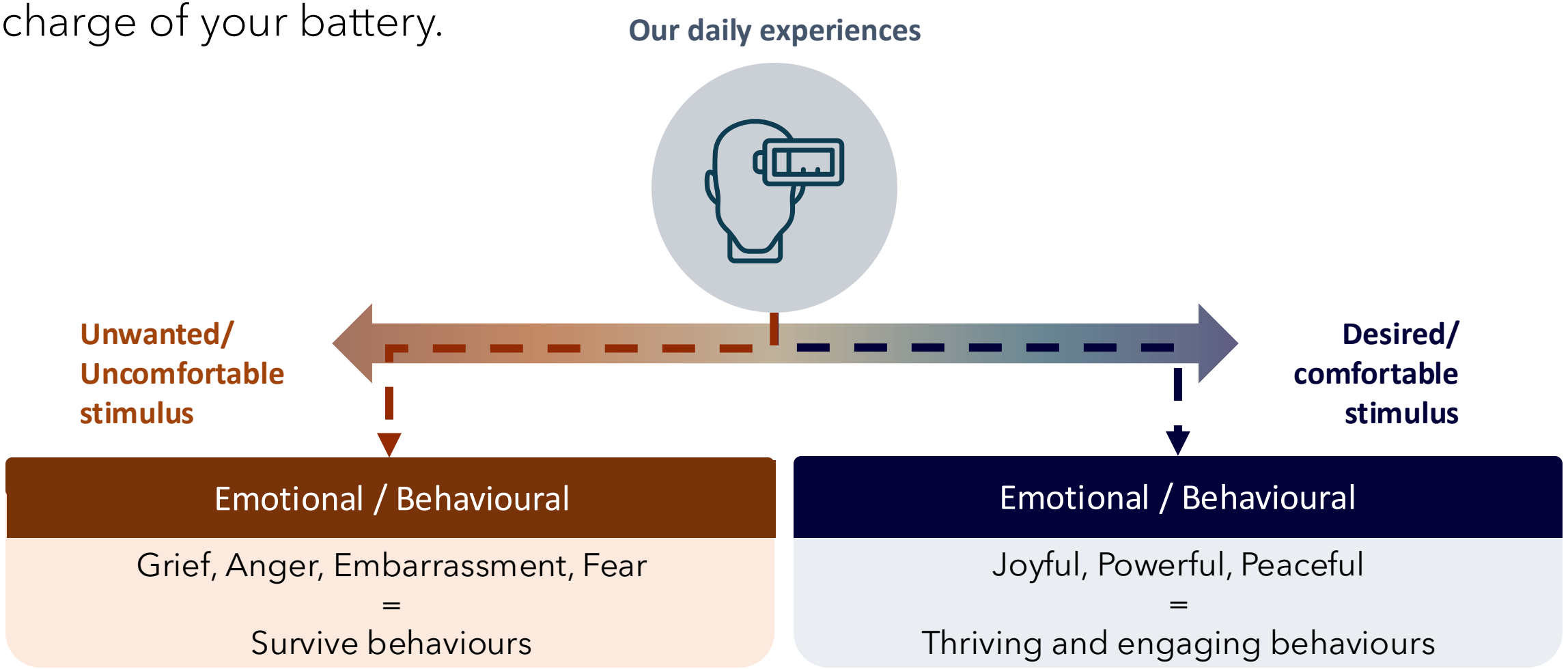
Reflecting on Mental Health

What is the definition of mental health?

Definition of Mental health

- Mental health is your ability to navigate the experiences of your day, and the charge of your battery.



Reflecting on Mental Health

What is the definition of mental health?

What influences our mental health?

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Definition of Psych safety and major influences

Personal

Self-perception

Behaviours

Connections

\+

Genetics

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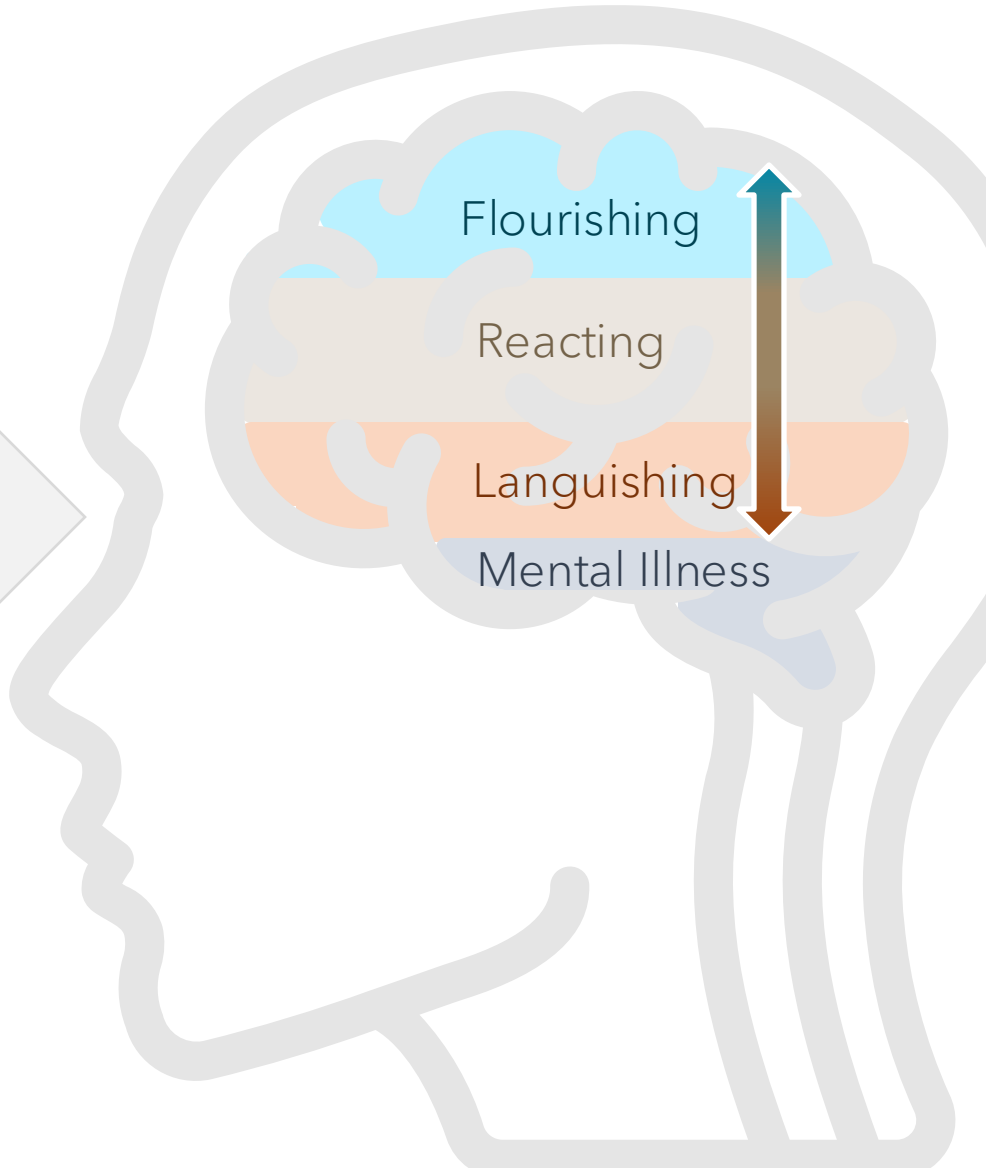
Environment



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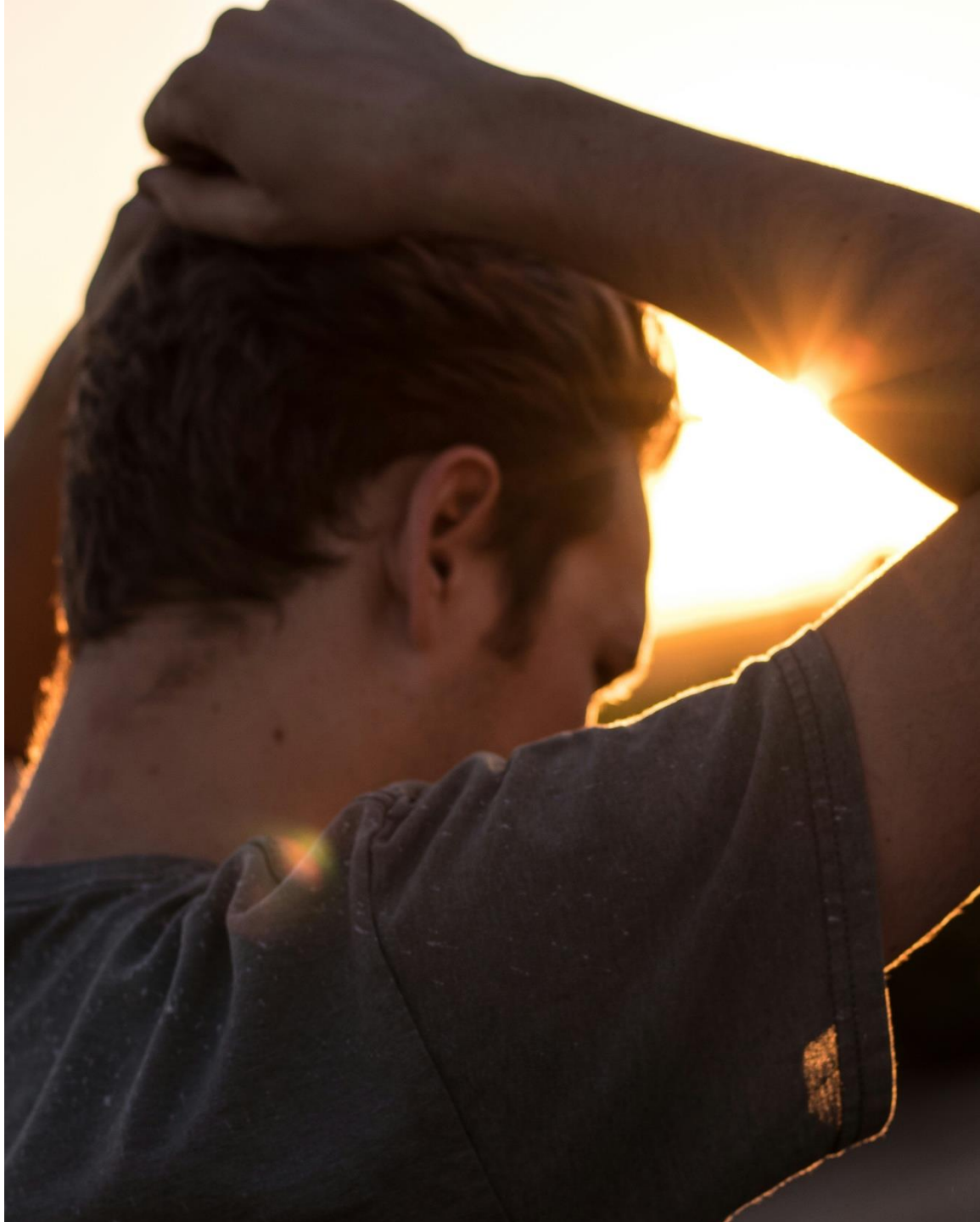
Examining stress

What is stress?



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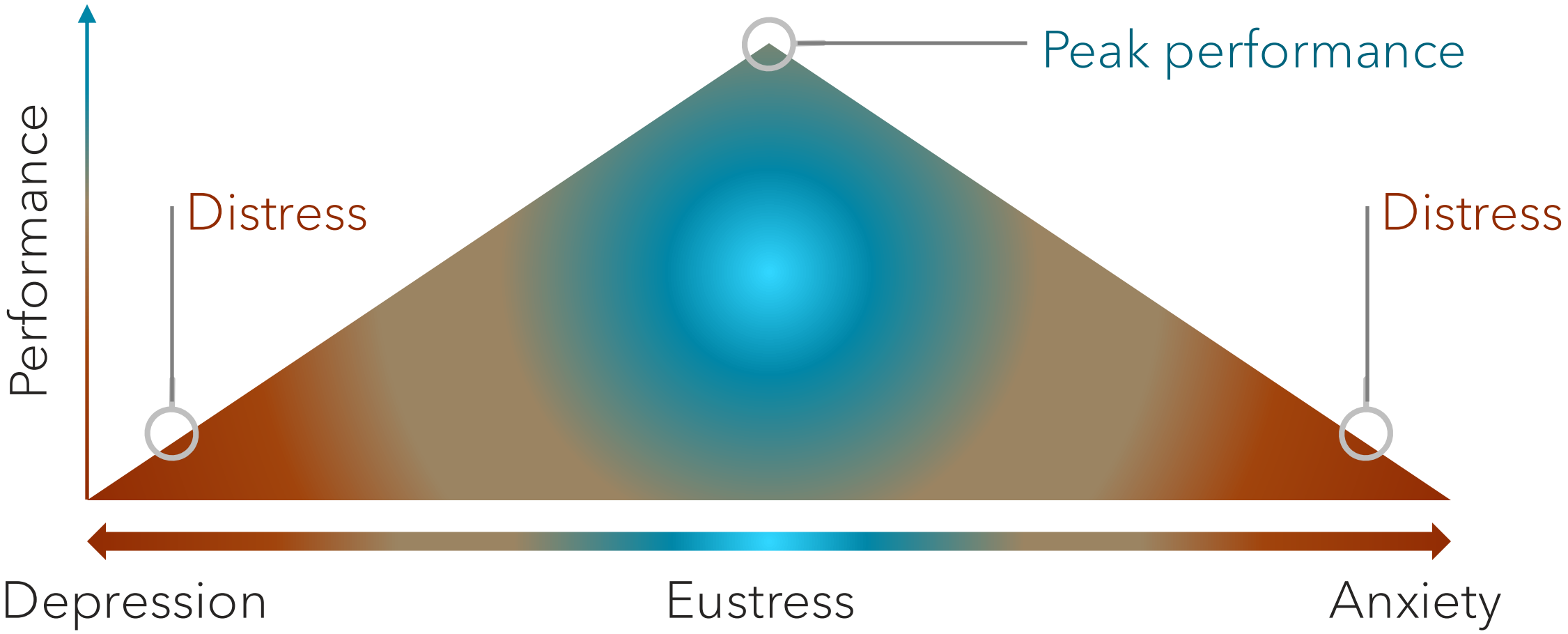
How do you define stress?

Eustress is good stress that motivates behaviour.

Distress is unwanted stress that drains reserves and mental capacity.

Stress itself is just the stimulus that causes an emotional reaction in our bodies

Stress is not all bad



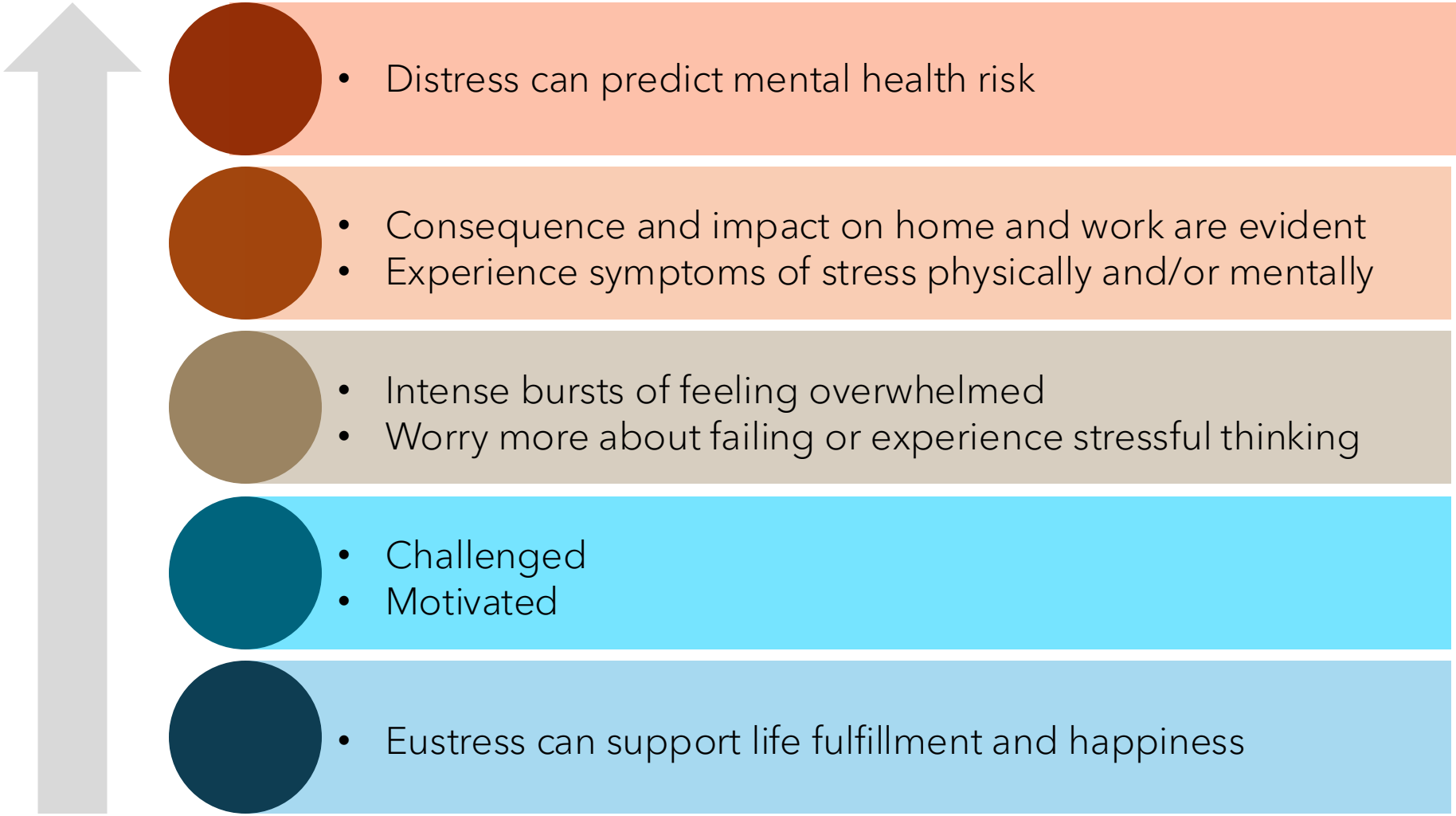
Examining stress

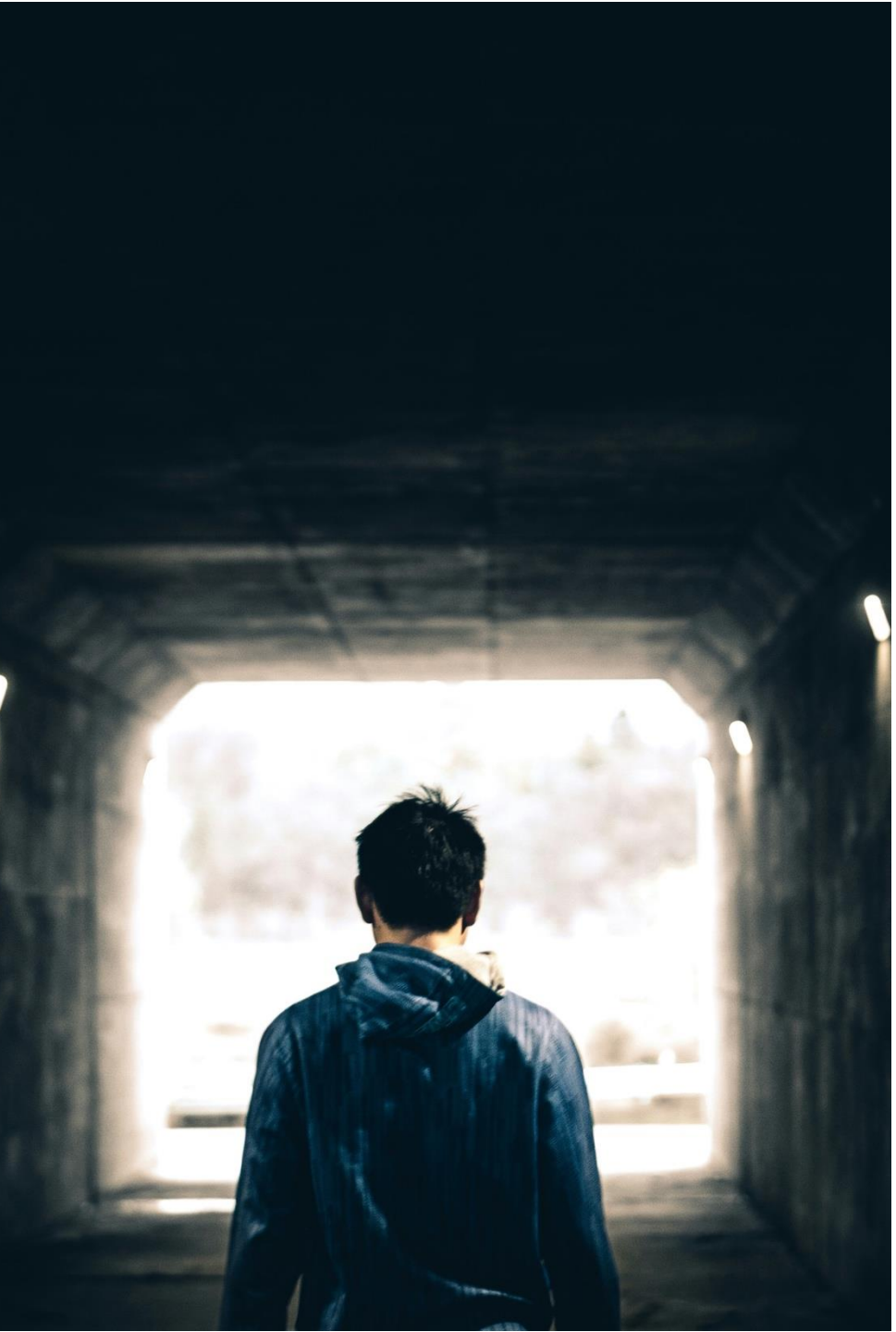
What is stress?

When does stress become an issue?

Stress can become more of an issue if FDI of our stressors increases

Frequency
Duration
Intensity
(FDI)





Emotions are something we must work through… no matter how uncomfortable

- Some emotions as we discussed are more comfortable or easy to process (e.g., joy).
- Others are more uncomfortable and challenging to process (e.g., fear, anxiety, embarrassment)
- Either way they are our bodies response to a stimulus, and we must get to the "otherside".

Examining stress

What is stress?

When does stress become an issue?

What happens when we aren't able to "get rid" of stressors effectively?

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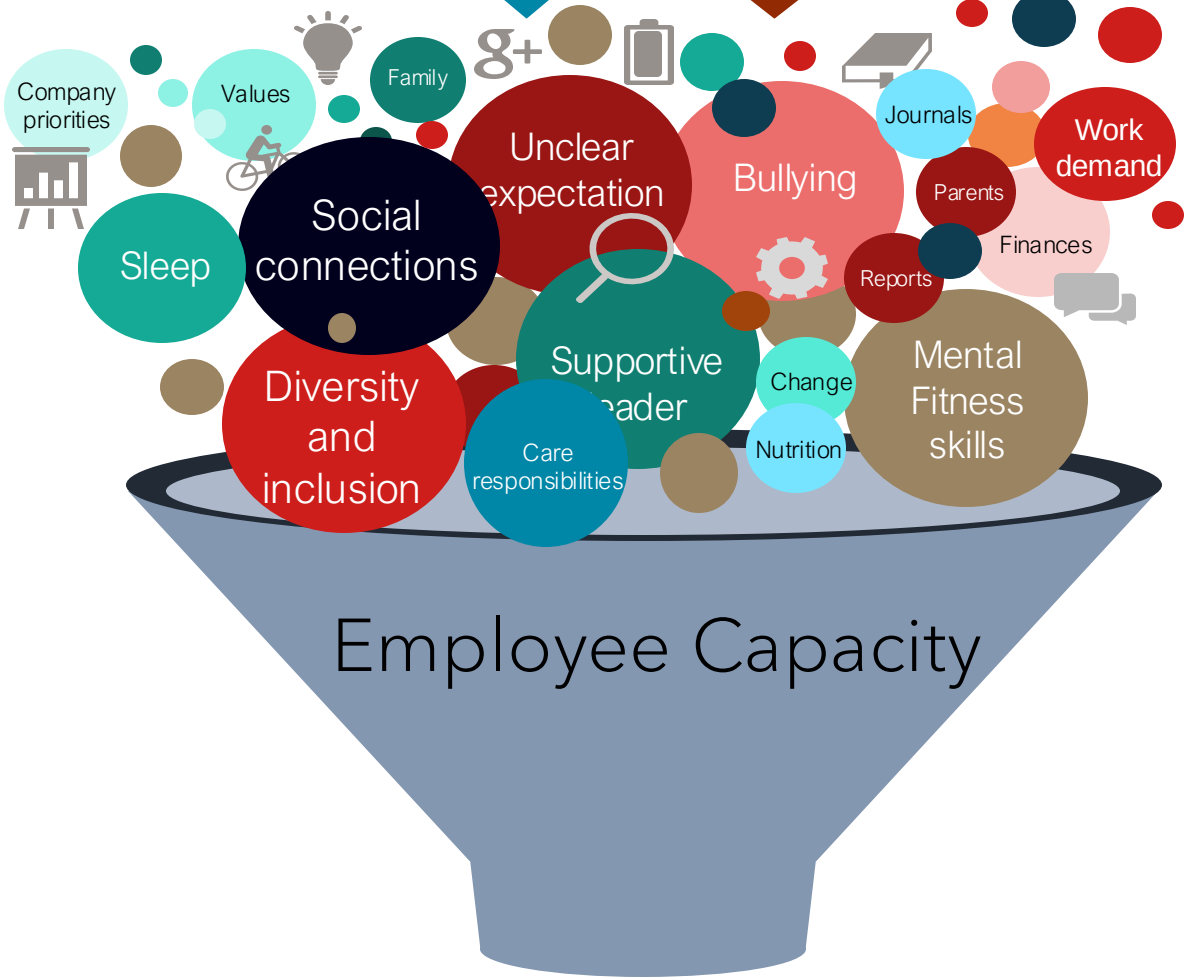
On any given day we have a number of stressors we need to process

Charges

Drains



Sometimes we can get stuck

- We may not have the skills to "*keep up*".
- We may be dealing with the stressor, not the stress response.
- The road may be too treacherous we can't move through it alone.
- We may not have time or capacity to deal with it now.

Examining stress

- What is stress?
- When does stress become an issue?
- What happens when we aren't able to "get rid" of stressors effectively?
- What is burnout & how do I know it is happening to me?

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Burnout defined

- The literature generally accepts burnout is a result of three factors:

1. **Emotional Exhaustion**
2. **Decreased sense of accomplishment**
3. **De-personalization**

- Burnout has occurred when our ability to function has been impacted for some time.

This can look a number of different ways for people

Feeling/Physical	Emotional	Personal well-being	Intellectual
Muscular tension/headaches	Anxiety	Questioning values	Impaired judgement
Upset stomach	Anger	Loss of purpose and meaning	Inability to concentrate
Grinding/clenching teeth	Irritability	Isolating yourself from friends, family, and your community	Easily distracted
Difficulty sleeping/fatigue	Depression	Loneliness	Memory loss
Shortness of breath	Hopeless/trapped	Excessively busy	Excessive worry
Cold hands and feet	Out of control		Difficulty making decisions/procrastination
Trembling/shakiness	Guilty/self-conscious		
Frequent colds, flu, infections	Apathy		
Rapid loss or gain in weight	Feeling of incompetence		

Most common contributors to burnout

- Several factors contribute to burnout, but the most common are:

1. Instability
2. Indebtedness
3. Social media
4. Conflict between tasks and value prop

Examining stress

- What is stress?
- When does stress become an issue?
- What happens when we aren't able to "get rid" of stressors effectively?
- What is burnout & how do I know it is happening to me?
- How do we get stuck in burnout?

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Burnout can become a loop that is hard to get out of

- The most common reasons we can get stuck in burnout are:

1. **Stressor FDI is greater than our resources**
2. **Social appropriateness**
3. **Safety**

Examining stress

- What is stress
- When does stress become an issue?
- What happens when we aren't able to "get rid" of stressors effectively?
- What is burnout & how do I know it is happening to me?
- How do we get stuck in burnout?
- When we're stuck in burnout, is it just a skill's issue?

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Our brain reacts to stress and creates action in two keyways

1. Administrator brain

2. Caveman brain

We are consistently in threat detection

Threat Detection

When we enter a space, we are in threat detection.

Low Psychological Safety

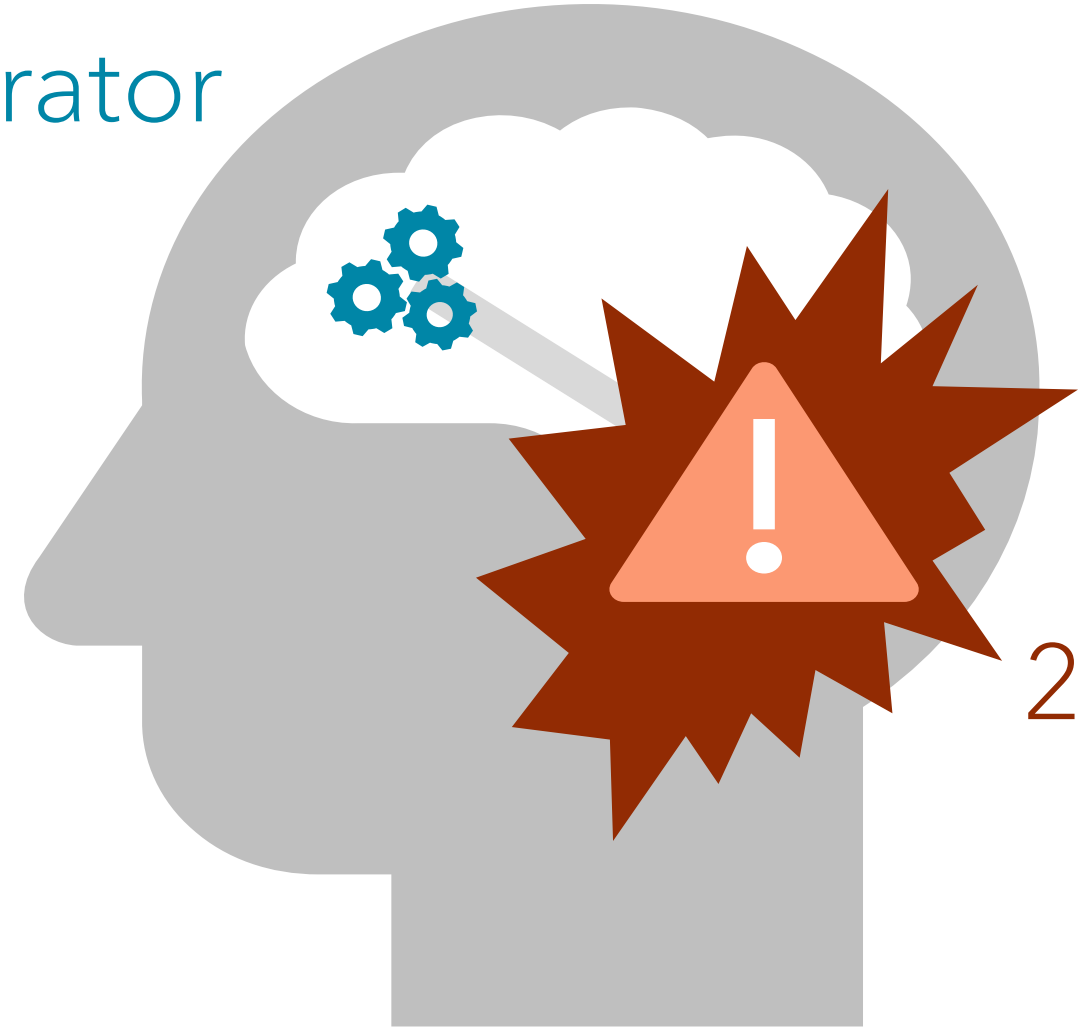
High Psychological Safety

Punished Vulnerability	Rewarded Vulnerability
Fear Response = Survive	Performance Response = Engage, create value

Tim Clark 2016: Stage of Psychological Safety

If we perceive a regular threat, our caveman brains can get into overdrive

1. Administrator brain



2. Caveman brain

Our caveman brains in action

Fight

What is it?

- Run towards response.
- Irritation, annoyance
- Frustration, anger

Why does it happen

- We have the resources and ability to "defeat" the stimulus.

Flight

What is it?

- "Run away" response.
- Worry, anxiety, fear, terror.

Why does it happen

- We do not have the resources and ability to "defeat" the stimulus.

Freeze

What is it?

- Sympathetic system shutdown.

Fawn

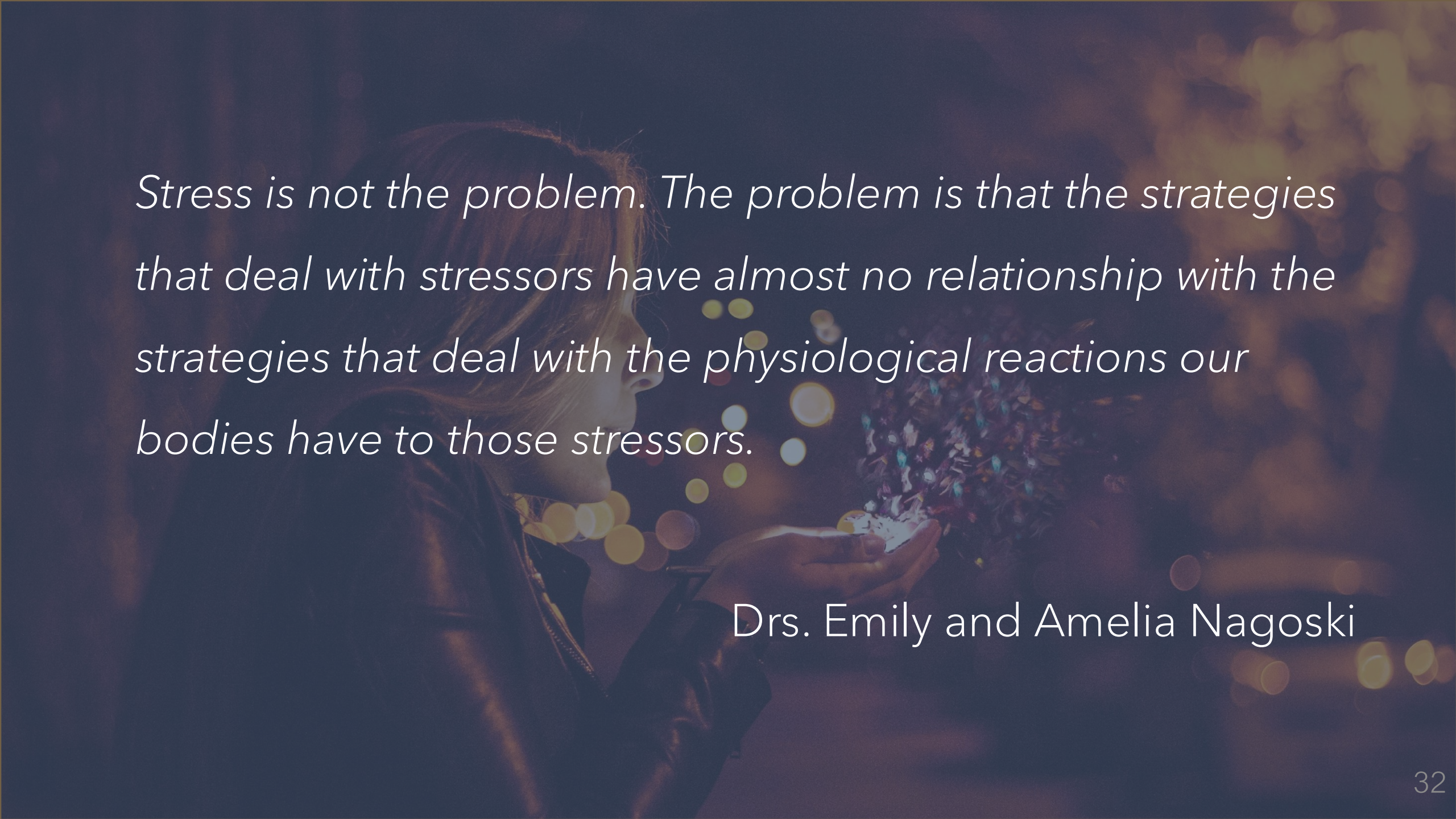
What is it?

- We begin to express a desire or interest in the threat.

Why does it happen

- We don't have the resources and ability to "defeat" or "get away

Sometimes the best survival tactic can not be our most idealistic behaviour



Stress is not the problem. The problem is that the strategies that deal with stressors have almost no relationship with the strategies that deal with the physiological reactions our bodies have to those stressors.

Drs. Emily and Amelia Nagoski

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Mental health requires responsibility on all levels but puts people at the center

- Organizations – **Create** the Space
- Leaders – **Facilitate** the Space
- Individual- **Contribute** to the space

An organization's culture plays the most critical role in prevention and recovery of burnout

- When supporting employees, organizations must be aware of the levers they can influence:

Demand

What is it?

- Adjusting the FDI "pressure" or stimulus.

Practical example

- Boundaries on emails.
- Volume of calls.
- Number of tasks.

Control

What is it?

- Ability for employee to make decisions on role / work.

Practical examples

- Choose the method used.
- The location where we work.

Support

What is it?

- Additional resources available to enable / process work.

Practical Examples

- Tools.
- Additional staff.
- Check-ins.

Navigating Burnout

What can we do as an individual to prevent burnout?

Three considerations to help prevent burnout from setting in

- Define and commit to your values and purpose.
- Be aware and engage with intention in your charge.
- Find safe and meaningful social connection

Evaluating what you are doing today

Individual skill: Evaluating if it is a charge or a drain

Step 1: How does it help you be you:

- Write down how this behaviour helps you move towards your values

Step 2: Reflect on current state, ask yourself the following:

- What are three ways this behaviour helps you or those around you?
- Are there negative impacts to you or those around you from this behaviour?
- What are three emotions I typically feel when doing it?
- What are three emotions you typically feel after doing it?
- On scale of 1 (very easily) to 10 (unbudging) rate how willing are you to allow something to be a barrier to or stop the behaviour?

Step 3: Decide a path forward

- Reflect on what you wrote down for each of the above questions
- If you find it difficult to identify how the behaviour helps you, you do not experience emotions that you enjoy or lean towards the behaviour being something you may easily give up, This behaviour may not be a charge for you. The behaviour may still be a healthy and worthwhile one to maintain, but it is likely not something that can be helpful when you are feeling really drained.

Navigating Burnout

What can we do as an individual to prevent burnout?

When we're experiencing burnout, what can we do to navigate through it and recover?

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Navigating the emotional tunnel

- There are seven tactics / skills individuals can utilize to help in fully processing their emotional experience with stressors.

Drs. Emily and Amelia Nagoski (2020): Burnout: the Secret to unlocking the Stress Cycle.

Navigating the emotional tunnel

Physical Activity | Breathing | Social Interaction | Laughter | Affection | Big Cry | Creative Expression

- Any movement is helpful.
- Could be a bout of high intensity exercise (e.g., sports, running, lifting weights).
- Could be standing up at your desk and squeezing your whole body as long as you can.
- The key is to move.

Drs. Emily and Amelia Nagoski (2020): Burnout: the Secret to unlocking the Stress Cycle.

Navigating the emotional tunnel

Physical Activity | **Breathing** | Social Interaction | Laughter | Affection | Big Cry | Creative Expression

- Breathing down regulates nervous system
- Long slow breaths engage parasympathetic systems
- The types can range:
  - Low = 1-1.15 minutes of breathing
  - Moderate = Non sleep deep rest,
  - High = meditation, mindfulness, and attending to thoughts

Drs. Emily and Amelia Nagoski (2020): Burnout: the Secret to unlocking the Stress Cycle.

Navigating the emotional tunnel

Physical Activity | Breathing | **Social Interaction** | Laughter | Affection | Big Cry | Creative Expression

- Must be positive social interaction
- This signals within our bodies that it is ok, we are not alone
- The types can range:
  - Low = saying hi to a barista
  - High = deep conversation with a trusted loved one

Drs. Emily and Amelia Nagoski (2020): Burnout: the Secret to unlocking the Stress Cycle.

Navigating the emotional tunnel

Physical Activity | Breathing | Social Interaction | **Laughter** | Affection | Big Cry | Creative Expression

- Laughter can often be the universal language.
- It serves as a bridge and reaction to social awkwardness, as well as connection.
- To aid in an emotional creation it requires full belly laughs.
- We can even recollect a past time where we had this experience.

Drs. Emily and Amelia Nagoski (2020): Burnout: the Secret to unlocking the Stress Cycle.

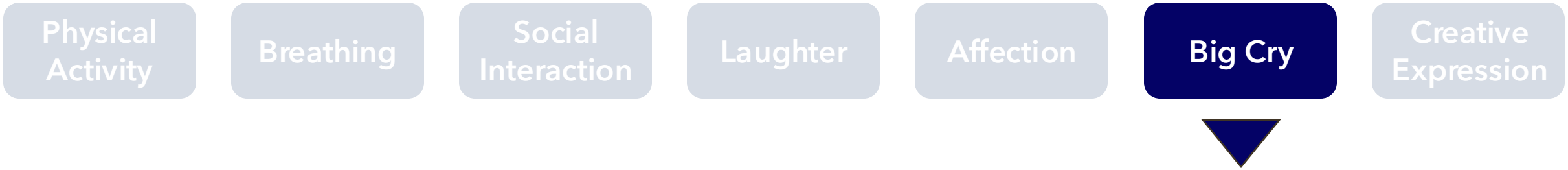
Navigating the emotional tunnel

Physical Activity | Breathing | Social Interaction | Laughter | **Affection** | Big Cry | Creative Expression

- A warm hug has the same impact on on our body's stress response as a 2 km jog.
- This is due to the tremendous increase in oxytocin (social bonding neurochemical).
- This must be a trusting relationship, grounded, and long lasting (about 20 seconds).

Drs. Emily and Amelia Nagoski (2020): Burnout: the Secret to unlocking the Stress Cycle.

Navigating the emotional tunnel



- Crying has almost never been known to solve the problem, but it can be an excellent tool to completing our emotional cycle.
- Learning to cry is a skill developed over time.
- The key aspects are:
  - Do not feed the emotion with more thoughts
  - Shift your focus to the physical sensations of (e.g., number of tears, body tension etc.)

Drs. Emily and Amelia Nagoski (2020): Burnout: the Secret to unlocking the Stress Cycle.

Navigating the emotional tunnel

Physical Activity | Breathing | Social Interaction | Laughter | Affection | Big Cry | **Creative Expression**

- Expression ourselves artistically has been a growing field for mental health.
- This can be almost any type of creative expression (e.g., art, sketching, music, dance, writing).
- This enables our body to deposit the built-up energy from the stressor, and release into what we are creating.

Drs. Emily and Amelia Nagoski (2020): Burnout: the Secret to unlocking the Stress Cycle.

Navigating the emotional tunnel

- The most effective is exercise, but they all can work well for a person.
- There is likely a serious back log of stuff we may be holding on too.
- Focus on how we can get incrementally better each day.
- Your body will tell you once you move through it, you just need to listen.
- Ultimately the cure for burnout is not self-care it is supporting and caring for all of us.

Drs. Emily and Amelia Nagoski (2020): Burnout: the Secret to unlocking the Stress Cycle.

Navigating Burnout

What can we do as an individual to prevent burnout?

When we're experiencing burnout, what can we do to navigate through it and recover?

How can we support others as they move through burnout?

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Create a psychologically safe relationship with people around you

- Reward vs punish vulnerability.
- What could this look like?
  - Encouraging help
  - Acknowledging and respecting boundaries
  - Curiousness about mistakes and failures
  - Clarity of direction
  - Supporting staff with necessary resources
  - Listening to feedback
  - Encourage candor and new ideas

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Key takeaways from today

- Our world can feel overwhelming, this is a combination of both quantity of “stuff”, and the perception we hold.
- Navigating and decompressing our emotions is critical for dealing with day-to-day stressors.
- Protecting against burnout requires a bubble of protection where other people care about your well-being as much as you do.

“To be well is to not live in a state of safety and calm, but to fluidity to a state of adventure, risk or excitement, and back to safety and calm and out again… stress is not bad for you, being stuck is bad for you”

Drs. Emily and Amelia Nagoski

Thank you

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