

# Driven, Not Drained:

● Stress Strategies for High Achievers

## Learner's Manual

Presented by: MESH Coalition





About...

## Monica Morphew, RN, BSN, MS(c)

Monica Morphew is a highly skilled and dedicated front-line healthcare professional with a rich background in critical care. With bedside patient care experience in hospital intensive care units and as a critical care transport nurse, she brings a wealth of expertise to her current role as the Nurse Epidemiologist and Crisis and Continuity Advisor at MESH Coalition.

As a licensed Registered Nurse in the state of Indiana, Monica's academic journey led her to graduate from the prestigious Indiana University Bloomington School of Nursing, where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree, solidifying her commitment to excellence in patient care. Monica holds a MicroMasters certificate in Instructional Design and Technology from the University of Maryland and is currently completing a Master of Science degree in Health Education and Promotion at Walden University.

Monica Morphew's commitment to the well-being of individuals extends beyond her nursing qualifications. She holds certification in Mental Health First Aid, which showcases her compassionate approach to addressing mental health challenges. In addition, she has completed rigorous training in various critical areas, including Stress First Aid, Psychological First Aid, and QPR Gatekeeper for suicide prevention, underscoring her commitment to the holistic well-being of her patients and communities.

Her extensive training also encompasses critical incident response, as evidenced by her training in Critical Incident Stress Management. Monica's expertise extends into trauma-informed care and opioid overdose prevention, as she proudly serves as an Opioid Overdose Educator & Naloxone Distributor. Her commitment to public health and epidemiology is further underscored by her training in these domains.

Monica Morphew's dedication to delivering exceptional care is reinforced by her certifications in advanced life support, including Advanced Cardiac Life Support, Pre-Hospital Trauma Life Support, Pediatric Advanced Life Support, and Neonatal Resuscitation Program. Her comprehensive skill set ensures that she is well-prepared to respond effectively to a wide range of medical emergencies.

With her impressive professional background and unwavering commitment to patient care, Monica Morphew plays a vital role in ensuring the health and safety of individuals and communities. Her dedication to continuous learning and her extensive qualifications makes her a valuable asset to the healthcare industry and a compassionate advocate for those she serves.





About...

## Dr. James M. Floyd, Jr.

Jim Floyd possesses over 40 years of experience in public safety, healthcare, and training and is the Administrator and Chief Marion County Medical Multi-Agency Coordination Center Manager for the MESH Coalition in Indianapolis, Indiana. He specializes in organizational psychology consulting, providing tailored support to build resilience, foster healthy workplaces, and guide teams through difficult transitions. Services include crisis response planning, grief workshops, stress management training, and individual consultations. He understands the human impact of crisis and is committed to helping staff and the organization emerge stronger.

Dr. Floyd is a Diplomate of the American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress and serves as a Chaplain and leadership team member of the Indiana District 5 Resilience & Emotional Support Team. He also serves as a Chaplain and Coordinator of the Hendricks County, Indiana Medical Reserve Corps Crisis Response Team providing Peer Support Services. and is a member of the Indiana Crisis Assistance Response Team. He is a Certified Crisis Chaplain, Certified in Critical Incident Stress Management, Certified in Acute Traumatic Stress Management, Certified Trauma Support Specialist, and Certified Field Traumatologist. He also holds Professional Certification in Trauma & Resilience, Professional Certification in Resilience Strategies for the Workplace, Certified Grief Educator, a Certificate in Grief Support Specialist, a Certificate in Trauma-Informed Leadership, a Certificate in Psychologically Safe Leadership, a Certificate in Psychological Health and Safety at Work, Certified OSHA Workplace Stress Management Trainer, a certificate in Total Worker Health® Professional Program, a certificate in Total Worker Health® Leadership, a Certificate in NOVA National Community Crisis Response Team Training Basic Level, a Certificate in Spiritual Care Specialist, a Certificate in Spiritual Companionship, a Certificate in Teacher of Presence, Certified Ho'oponopono Practitioner, and is a Certified Meditation and Mindfulness Teacher.

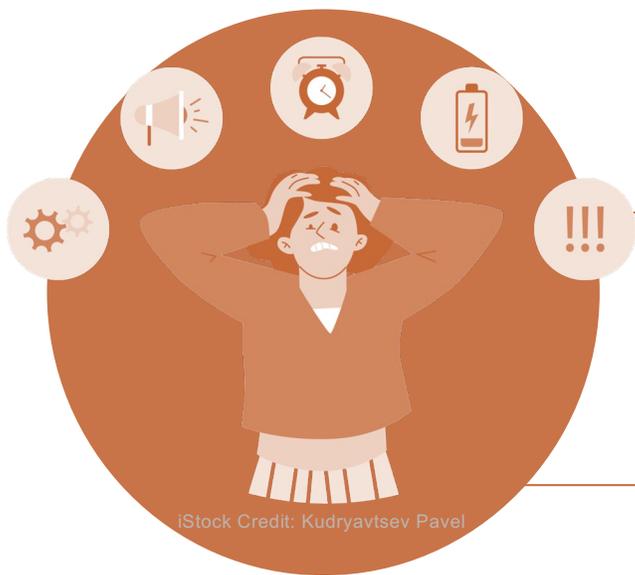
A practicing Tibetan Buddhist since 2000, Jim (Tenzin Kunsang) is an ordained Ngakpa (non-monastic Vajrayana priest) and provides spiritual support to the aged, sick, bereaved, and dying as a volunteer True Refuge Companion.

Jim is an Indiana Certified Community Health Worker with additional training in Stress First Aid, Spiritual First Aid, Psychological First Aid, Mental Health First Aid, Skills for Psychological Recovery, QPR Gatekeeper (suicide prevention), Talk Saves Lives presenter, ResponderStrong Mental Health Curriculum Trainer, Motivational Interviewing, Compassion Fatigue and Resilience Educator, Building Trauma-Informed Organizations, Solution Focused Coaching, Anxiety & Stress Management Coaching, Change Management for Resilient Professionals, Resilience After Adversity, Professional Sleep Consultant, Interprofessional Spiritual Care Education Curriculum, Cultivating Emotional Balance, Psychology of Buddhist Tantra, Death and Dying Educator, Opioid Paraprofessional, and Opioid Overdose Educator & Naloxone Distributor.

Educationally he earned an Associate in Science degree from The University of the State of New York, Bachelor of Fine Arts and Master of Education degrees from American InterContinental University, a Master of Science degree in Industrial Organizational Psychology from Walden University, and a Doctor of Healthcare Administration degree from Virginia University of Lynchburg.

Jim is a member of the National Society of Leadership and Success, the Golden Key International Honour Society, the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, the National Association of Community Health Workers, the International Critical Incident Stress Management Foundation, the American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress Management, the Society for Theory and Research on Salutogenesis, Spiritual Care Partners, and Spiritual Directors International.





iStock Credit: Kudryavtsev Pavel

# High Achievers & Stress: How It's Different

High achievers—people who set ambitious goals, hold themselves to high standards, and thrive on success—experience stress differently than others:

## Self-Imposed Pressure

1. They often push themselves harder than external demands require.
2. Stress is fueled not just by workload, but by their own expectations of perfection.

## High Functioning Stress

1. They may appear calm and successful while internally feeling overwhelmed.
2. Stress hides behind achievement—making it harder to notice until burnout hits.

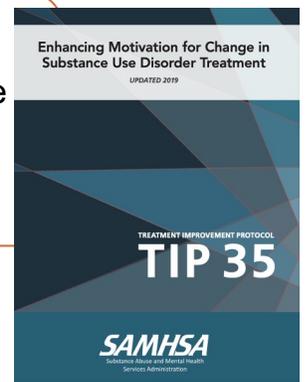
## Difficulty Disconnecting

1. Success-driven individuals often tie self-worth to productivity.
2. They struggle to rest because downtime feels like “falling behind.”

## Fear of Failure

1. Mistakes feel like personal shortcomings, not just learning opportunities.
2. Stress amplifies around the idea of “not being enough.”

Miller and Rollnick (2013) use the term “righting reflex” to describe the natural response to “fix” a person’s problems from a desire to help.



# Stress Management Strategies for High Achievers

Because of these unique challenges, traditional stress management (like “just relax” or “work less”) may not be enough. They benefit from approaches tailored to their mindset:

## Redefine Success

1. Shift from perfection to progress- celebrate small wins.
2. Recognize effort, not just outcomes.

## Detach Identity from Achievement

1. Practice self-worth affirmations outside of career or academic success.
2. Ask: “*Who am I beyond what I achieve?*”

## Set Boundaries

1. Schedule **non-negotiable breaks** the same way you schedule meetings.
2. Protect personal time to avoid constant “always-on” mode.

## Build Emotional Awareness

1. Notice stress signals early (tight shoulders, irritability, trouble sleeping).
2. Label emotions instead of ignoring them—naming stress reduces its intensity.

## Practice Mindful Recovery

1. Activities like meditation, journaling, or deep breathing help reset stress responses.
2. Choose restorative hobbies that don't revolve around performance.

## Externalize Goals & Limits

1. Use mentors, coaches, or accountability partners to help maintain realistic expectations.
2. Accept feedback to gain perspective on when “enough is enough.”

## “Done is Better than Perfect”

Striving for “excellence” rather than “perfection,” will lead to better long-term performance and well-being.



# 01

## Stress



# 01

## What is *stress*?

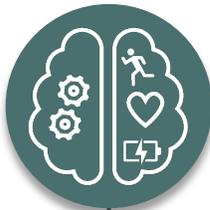
Stress is a natural human response to any demand or threat, characterized by feelings of emotional or physical tension, worry, or strain.

Short bursts can be beneficial by improving focus and motivation.



# 01

## Types of Stress



### Positive

(Eustress)

Coined by endocrinologist Hans Selye, eustress refers to a positive or beneficial form of stress.

It's the type of stress that motivates, focuses energy, feels exciting, & is perceived as within our coping abilities.



### Acute

(Discrete)

This is the most common form of stress and is typically short-term. It's the body's immediate reaction to a new challenge, event, or demand – the fight-or-flight response.



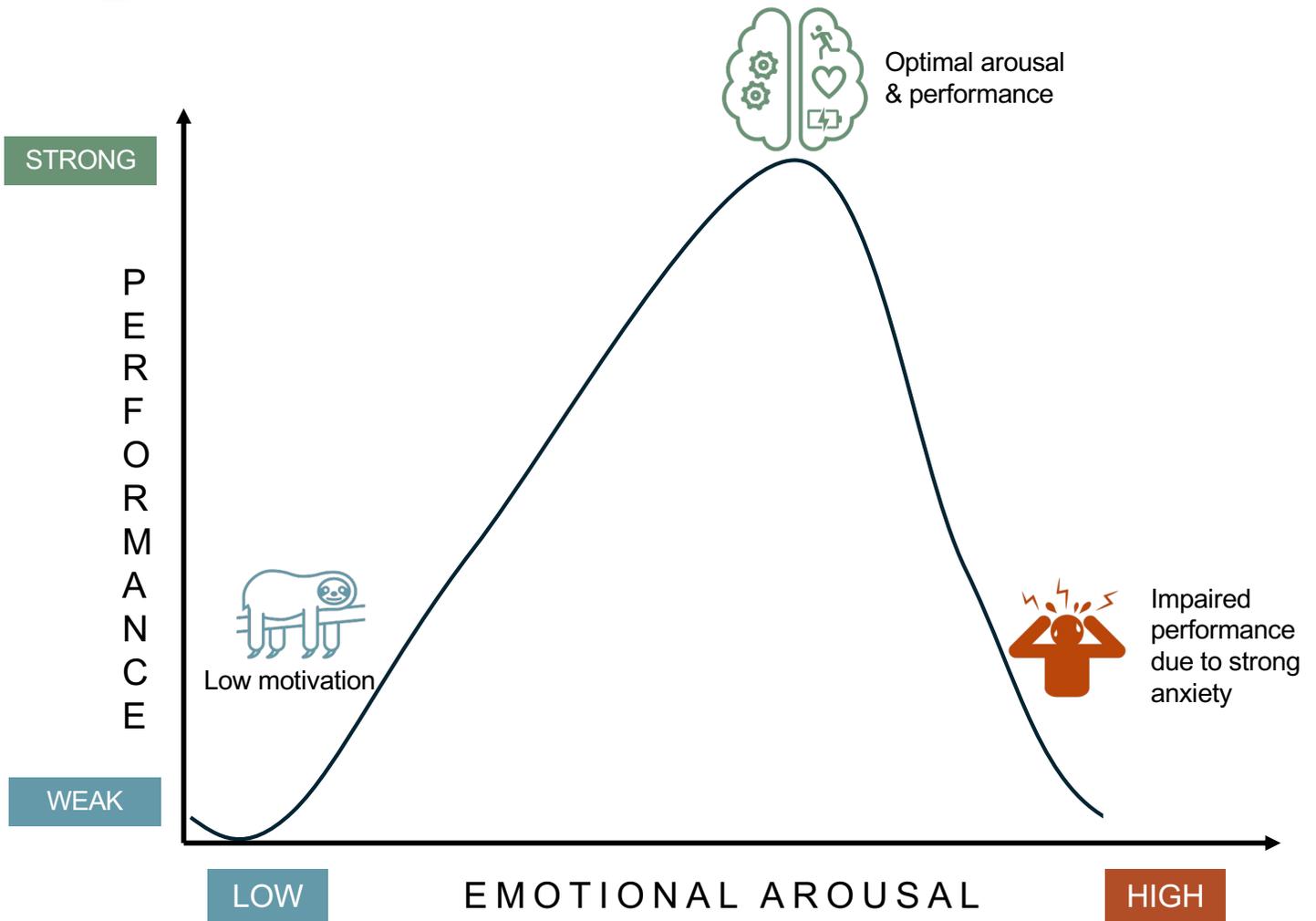
### Chronic

(Continuous)

This type of stress is persistent and prolonged, lasting for weeks, months, or even years. It arises from ongoing situations or pressures that individuals feel they have little control over.

# 01

## The Yerkes-Dodson Law



(Pietrango, 2020)

The Yerkes-Dodson Law describes the relationship between arousal (stress or mental alertness) and performance.

### The Yerkes-Dodson Law suggests that:

- Performance increases with arousal, but only up to a point.
- After reaching an optimal level of arousal, further increases can lead to a decline in performance.

### Optimal level of arousal varies by task difficulty:

- Simple tasks may benefit from higher arousal.
- Complex tasks require lower arousal for best performance.

# 01

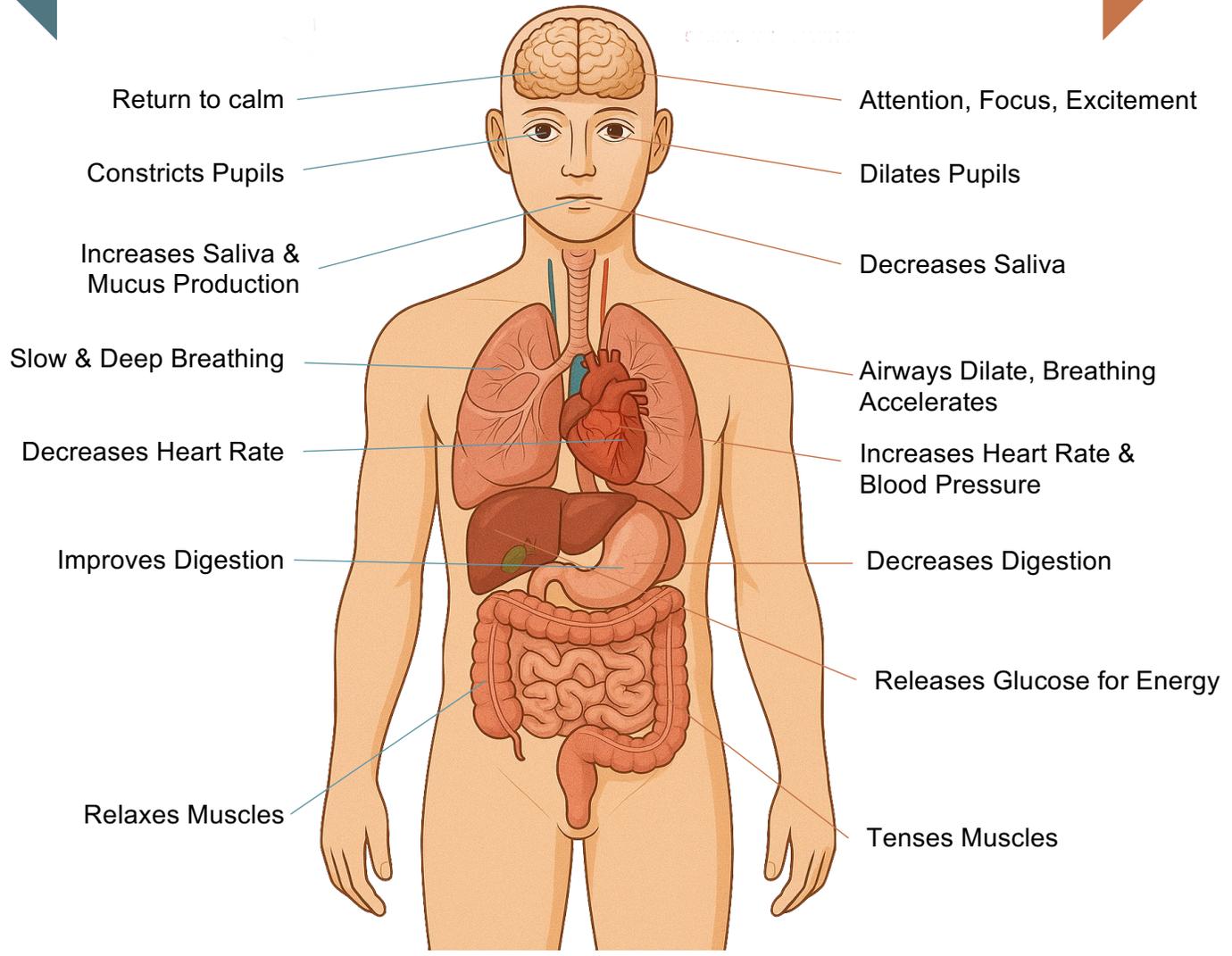
# The Stress Continuum Model

READY (Green)	REACTING (Yellow)	INJURED (Orange)	ILL (Red)
<p><b>DEFINITION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Optimal functioning</li> <li>Adaptive growth</li> <li>Wellness</li> </ul> <p><b>FEATURES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At one's best</li> <li>Well-trained and prepared</li> <li>In control</li> <li>Physically, mentally and spiritually fit</li> <li>Mission-focused</li> <li>Motivated</li> <li>Calm and steady</li> <li>Having fun</li> <li>Behaving ethically</li> </ul>	<p><b>DEFINITION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mild and transient distress or impairment</li> <li>Always goes away</li> <li>Low risk</li> </ul> <p><b>CAUSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any Stressor</li> </ul> <p><b>FEATURES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feeling irritable, anxious or down</li> <li>Loss of motivation</li> <li>Loss of focus</li> <li>Difficulty sleeping</li> <li>Muscle tension or other physical changes</li> <li>Not having fun</li> </ul>	<p><b>DEFINITION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More severe &amp; persistent distress or impairment</li> <li>Leaves a scar</li> <li>Higher risk</li> </ul> <p><b>CAUSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Life threat</li> <li>Loss</li> <li>Moral Injury</li> <li>Wear &amp; tear</li> </ul> <p><b>FEATURES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss of control</li> <li>Panic, rage, or depression</li> <li>No longer feeling like normal self</li> <li>Excessive guilt, shame, or blame</li> <li>Misconduct</li> </ul>	<p><b>DEFINITION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clinical mental disorder</li> <li>Unhealed stress injury causing life impairment</li> </ul> <p><b>TYPES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PTSD</li> <li>Depression</li> <li>Anxiety</li> <li>Substance use disorders</li> </ul> <p><b>FEATURES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Symptoms persist &amp; worsen over time</li> <li>Severe distress or social/occupational impairment</li> </ul>

Trauma	Loss	Inner Conflict	Wear and Tear
<p><b>A traumatic injury</b></p> <p>Due to the experience of or exposure to intense injury, horrific or gruesome experiences, or death.</p>	<p><b>A grief injury</b></p> <p>Due to the loss of people, things or parts of oneself.</p>	<p><b>A moral injury</b></p> <p>Due to behaviors or the witnessing of behaviors that violate moral values.</p>	<p><b>A fatigue injury</b></p> <p>Due to the accumulation of stress from all sources over time without sufficient rest and recovery.</p>



# 01 Autonomic Nervous System



**Parasympathetic**  
Nervous System

**Sympathetic**  
Nervous System

(Guy-Evans, 2022)



# 02

## Identify



# 02

## Why Identifying Feelings, Thoughts, & Emotions Matters

In high-stress situations—whether at work, in a crisis, or in everyday life—**being psychologically prepared** means more than staying calm. It means understanding what's happening **inside you**, so you can take control of how you respond.

### Here's why it matters:



#### Self-Awareness Builds Control

When you can identify your thoughts ("I'm overwhelmed"), your feelings ("I'm scared"), and your body's experiences (like a racing heart or tight chest), you begin to **notice the early signs of stress**—before it escalates. This gives you a **chance to respond intentionally** instead of reacting on autopilot.



#### Naming It Tames It

Research shows that simply **naming what you're feeling**—like anger, grief, or anxiety—can reduce the intensity of that emotion. When you understand what you're experiencing, you can take steps to manage it in a healthy way.



#### Psychological Readiness = Resilience

Understanding your emotional and physical responses prepares you to **stay grounded during tough moments**. You're more likely to make clear decisions, communicate better, and bounce back faster when challenges arise.



#### Mind-Body Connection Is Key

Your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations are all connected. Learning to tune in helps you spot patterns, break unhelpful cycles, and support your mental health—before stress or burnout take over.

### Bottom Line:

Identifying what you think, feel, and physically experience isn't just self-care—it's **mental readiness**. It gives you the tools to stay steady, clear-headed, and strong, no matter what comes your way. **Stress is normal**. Anticipate it. Embrace it.



# 02

## Feeling | Experiencing | Thinking

### Experiencing

- Rapid Heart Rate
- Heart Palpitations
- Dry Mouth
- Crying
- Difficulty Eating
- Headache
- Stomach Pains
- Fatigue
- Irritability
- Loss of interest in daily activities



### Feeling

- Excited
- Scared
- Depressed
- Sad
- Grief
- Fearful
- Terror
- Calm
- Guilty
- Angry
- Anxious
- Helpless
- Ashamed
- Hopeless



### Thinking

- Maladaptive Thoughts
- Self-Harm
- Internal vs. External Locus of Control
- The situation is not inherently stressful but rather the interpretation of inability or lack of options to effectively handle the situation results in stress



# 02

# 4 F's of Trauma Response

## Common Experiences

- Tense muscles
- Increased heart rate
- Increased body temperature
- Angry
- Embarrassed
- Threatened
- Fast/shallow breathing
- High energy

## Common Behaviors

- Rage outbursts
- Bullying
- Intimidation
- Criticizing
- Controlling
- Incessant monologuing
- Acts of entitlement
- Exertion of power

## Recovery Strategies

- Self-initiated time outs
- Accept support
- Safe space
- Physical movement
- Have gratitude
- Offer forgiveness
- Healthy communication



## Fight

Combat the Threat

## Common Experiences

- Anxiety
- On edge
- Tense limbs
- Obsessive thoughts
- Difficulty relaxing
- Easily distracted
- Difficulty focusing
- Tunnel vision
- Excessive sweating

## Common Behaviors

- Worry / Rumination
- Perfectionism
- Hypervigilance
- Micromanaging
- Overachieving
- Escape route planning
- Use of safety behaviors
- Repetitive Compulsions
- Always on the go

## Recovery Strategies

- Decrease habitual responses / rituals
- Being with, not fighting anxiety
- Introspection
- Shrink the inner critic
- Pace yourself



## Flight

Flee

'Stop, Look, & Listen'

## Freeze



## Recovery Strategies

- Understanding the needs of your 'inner parts'
- Coping skills for dissociation
- Mindfulness / grounding
- Self acceptance & compassion
- Relational healing
- Start saying 'yes'
- Somatic or energy focused therapies

## Common Behaviors

- Isolation
- Avoidance of decisions or situations
- Rumination
- Over sleeping
- Day dreaming
- Self - deprecation

## Common Experiences

- Numb / dissociated
- Low energy
- Reduced heart rate
- Stiff, heavy, cold
- Terror
- Stuck / paralyzed
- Breath holding

Act to Avoid Conflict

## Fawn



## Recovery Strategies

- Build healthy, authentic relationships
- Challenge limiting beliefs
- Journaling / talking in a safe space
- Self- validation
- Strengthen assertiveness
- Start saying 'no'
- Creative outlets

## Common Behaviors

- Difficulty saying 'no'
- Acceptance seeking
- Over caring
- Exploited by others
- Lack of boundaries
- Codependence
- People pleasing
- Flatters others

## Common Experiences

- Overwhelmed
- Emotional burnout
- Shame
- Disappointed with self
- Chronic pain / illness
- Depression
- Lack of authentic self

# 02

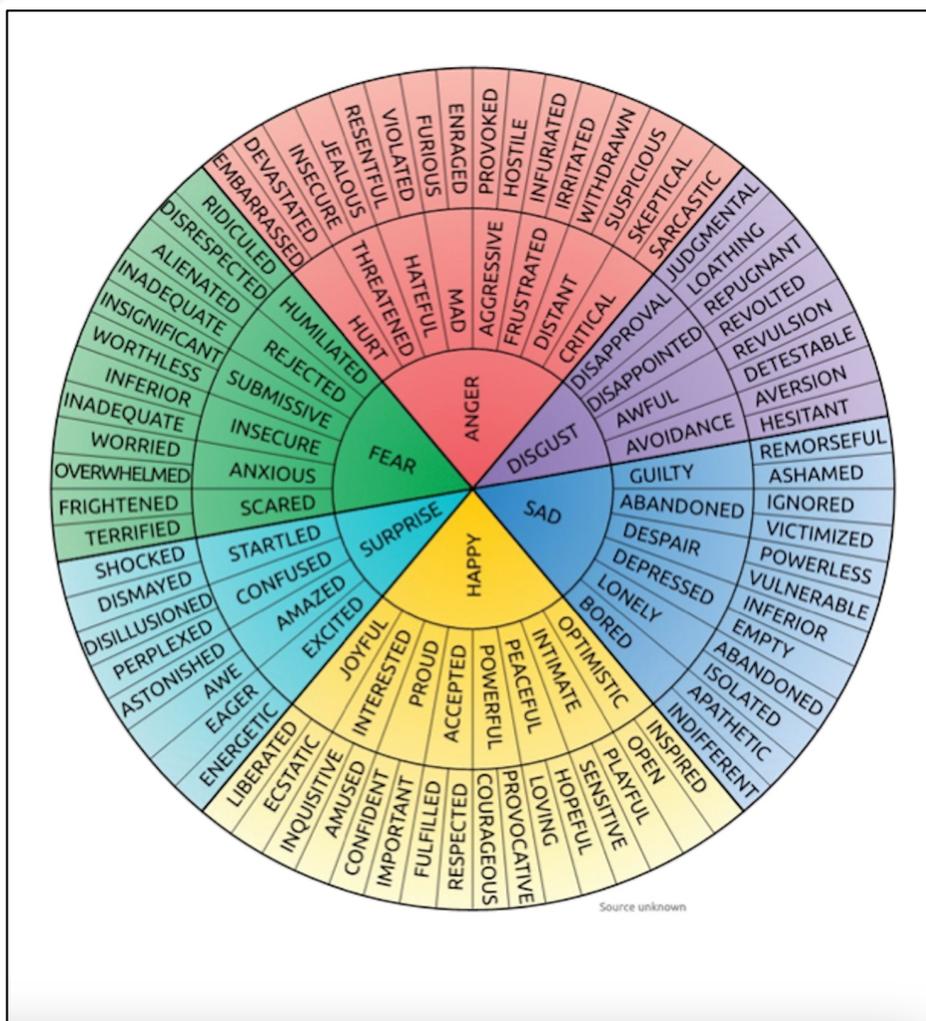
## Stress / Trauma Reactions

MILD - Physical	MILD - Emotional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Trembling</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Jumpiness</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cold sweats, dry mouth</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Insomnia</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pounding heart</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dizziness</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty thinking, speaking, and communicating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety, indecisiveness</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Irritability, complaining</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Forgetfulness, inability to concentrate</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Nightmares</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Easily startled by noise, movement, and light</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tears, crying</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Anger, loss of confidence in self and team</li> </ul>
SEVERE - Physical	SEVERE - Emotional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Constantly moves around</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Flinches or ducks at sudden sound and movement</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Shakes, trembles</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cannot use part of body</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Inability to see, hear, or feel</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is physically exhausted, cries</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Freezes under stress</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stares vacantly, staggers, or always standing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Panics, runs under stress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Talks rapidly, or inappropriately</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Argumentative, acts recklessly</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Indifferent to danger</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Memory loss</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stutters severely, mumbles, or cannot speak at all</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Insomnia, severe nightmares</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sees or hears things that do not exist</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Has rapid emotional shifts</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Socially withdrawn</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Apathetic</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Hysterical outbursts</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Frantic or strange behavior</li> </ul>
Fatigue	Muscular Tension
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Slow reaction time.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty sorting out priorities.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty starting routine tasks.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Excessive concern with seemingly minor issues.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Indecision and difficulty focusing attention.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Loss of initiative with fatigue and exhaustion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Often increases strain on the scalp and spine (backache) and often leads to headaches, pain, and cramps.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The inability to relax because of prolonged muscular tension wastes energy and leads to fatigue and exhaustion. Muscles must relax periodically to enable free blood flow, waste product flushing, and nutrient replenishment.</li> </ul>



# 02

## Wheel of Emotions



“ Beware that, when fighting monsters, **you yourself do not become a monster**... for when you gaze long into the abyss. The abyss gazes also into you.

- Friedrich W. Nietzsche

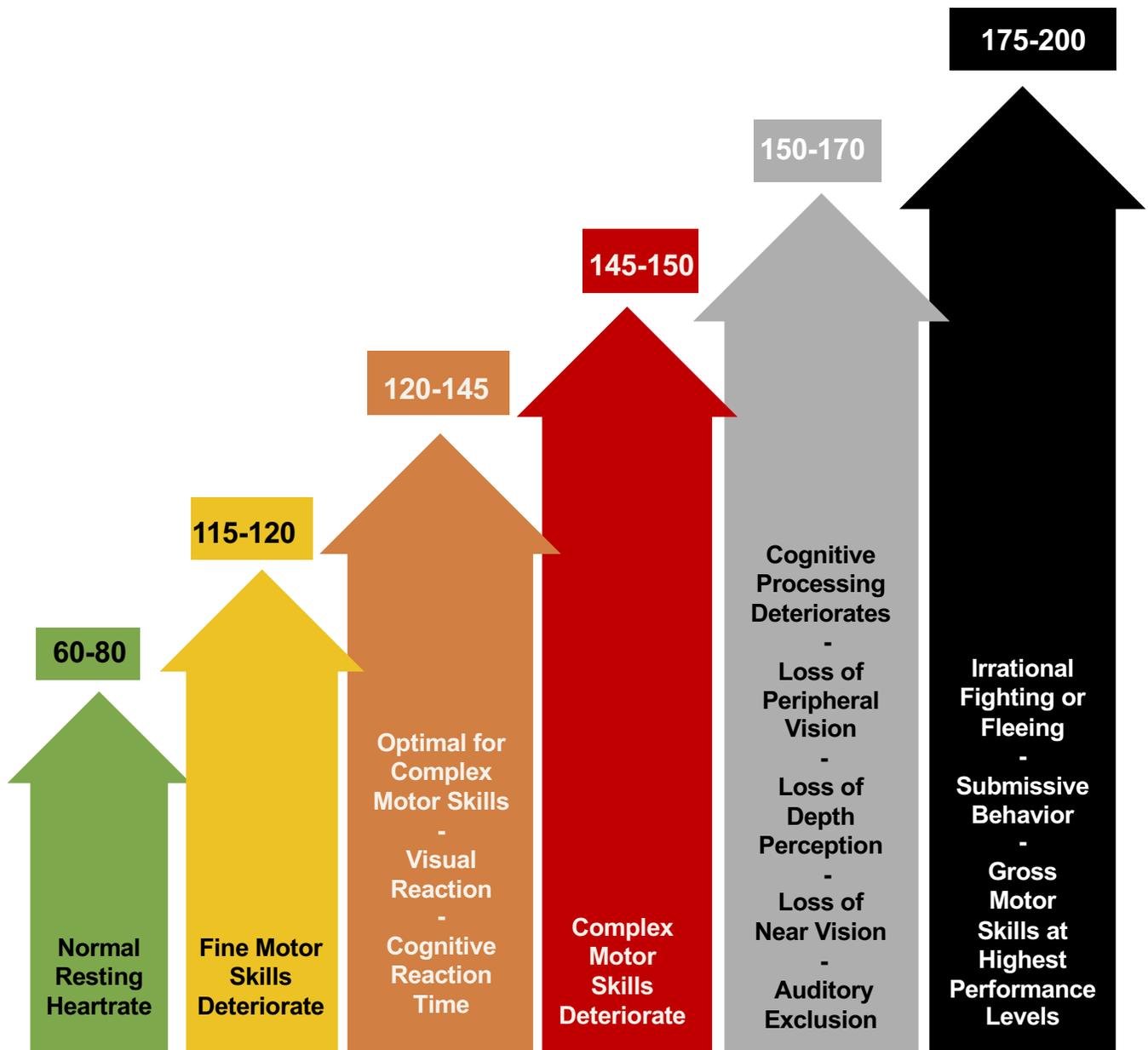
“ **Hurt people hurt people.** That's how pain patterns gets passed on, generation after generation. Break the chain today. Meet anger with sympathy, contempt with compassion, cruelty with kindness. Greet grimaces with smiles. Forgive and forget about finding fault. Love is the weapon of the future.

- Yehuda Berg 17



# 02

## Heart Rate & Performance

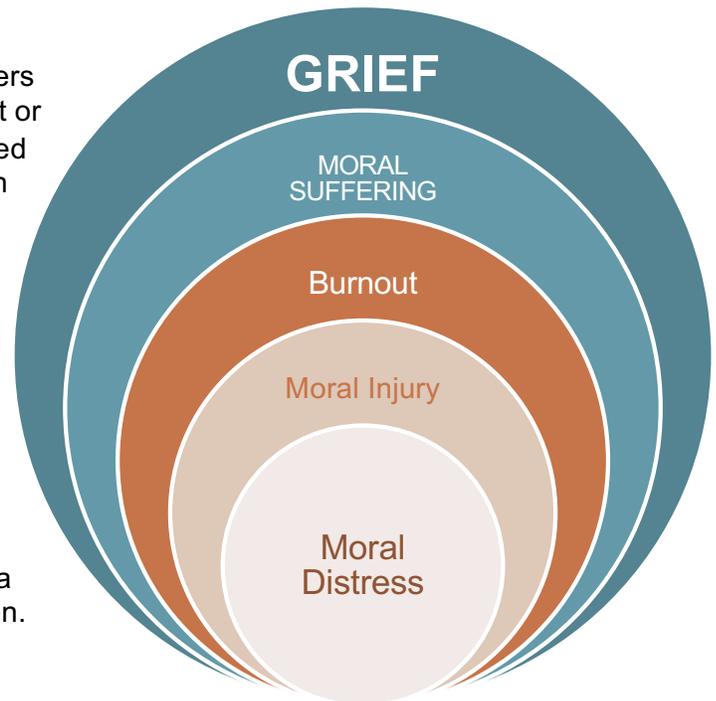


# 02

## Grief

Moral distress arises when disaster workers know—or strongly believe—what the right or ethical action would be but feel constrained from acting on it. This could happen when resources are scarce (e.g., not having enough supplies to treat every patient), when organizational policies conflict with personal values (e.g., being asked to prioritize rapid return to service over proper grieving time), or when systems fail to protect vulnerable populations.

Over time, repeatedly witnessing situations where one feels powerless to alleviate suffering or injustice can create a deep sense of inner conflict and frustration.



**Unresolved grief leads to future physical and mental health issues.**

(Lennon et al., 2008)

“Moral distress, moral injury, and burnout -collectively termed moral suffering - stem from a self-evident reality: **grief**.

- Dr. Pedro Weisleder

“We would rather feel guilty than helpless.

My need to be needed.

-David Kessler

Certified Grief Educator Course

“**You cannot save anyone.** You can be present with them, offer your groundness, your sanity, your peace.

You can even share your path with them, offer your perspective. **But you cannot take away their pain.** You cannot walk their path for them.

You cannot give answers that are right for them, or even answers they can digest right now. They will have to find their own answers...

Jeff Foster

19



# 02

## Ho'oponopono

**Ho'oponopono** is a traditional Hawaiian practice of reconciliation and forgiveness. The word roughly translates to **"to make right"** or **"to correct errors."** It is rooted in the belief that harmony can be restored through confession, repentance, and forgiveness.

In its traditional form, Ho'oponopono was used by families and communities to resolve conflict and restore relationships, often led by a kahuna (spiritual healer or elder).

A more modern, personal version of Ho'oponopono has been popularized by spiritual practitioners, focusing on self-healing through four key phrases:

### **Ho'oponopono** (original)

I'm sorry  
Please forgive me  
Thank you  
I love you

### ***The Four Things That Matter Most***

Dr. Ira Byock

I love you  
Thank you  
I forgive you  
Please forgive me

These phrases are repeated as a form of meditation or prayer to take responsibility for one's own thoughts, actions, and experiences, with the goal of cleansing negative energy and promoting healing and peace.

# 03

## Manage



# 03 Managing Stress

Either **YOU** Manage the Stress...

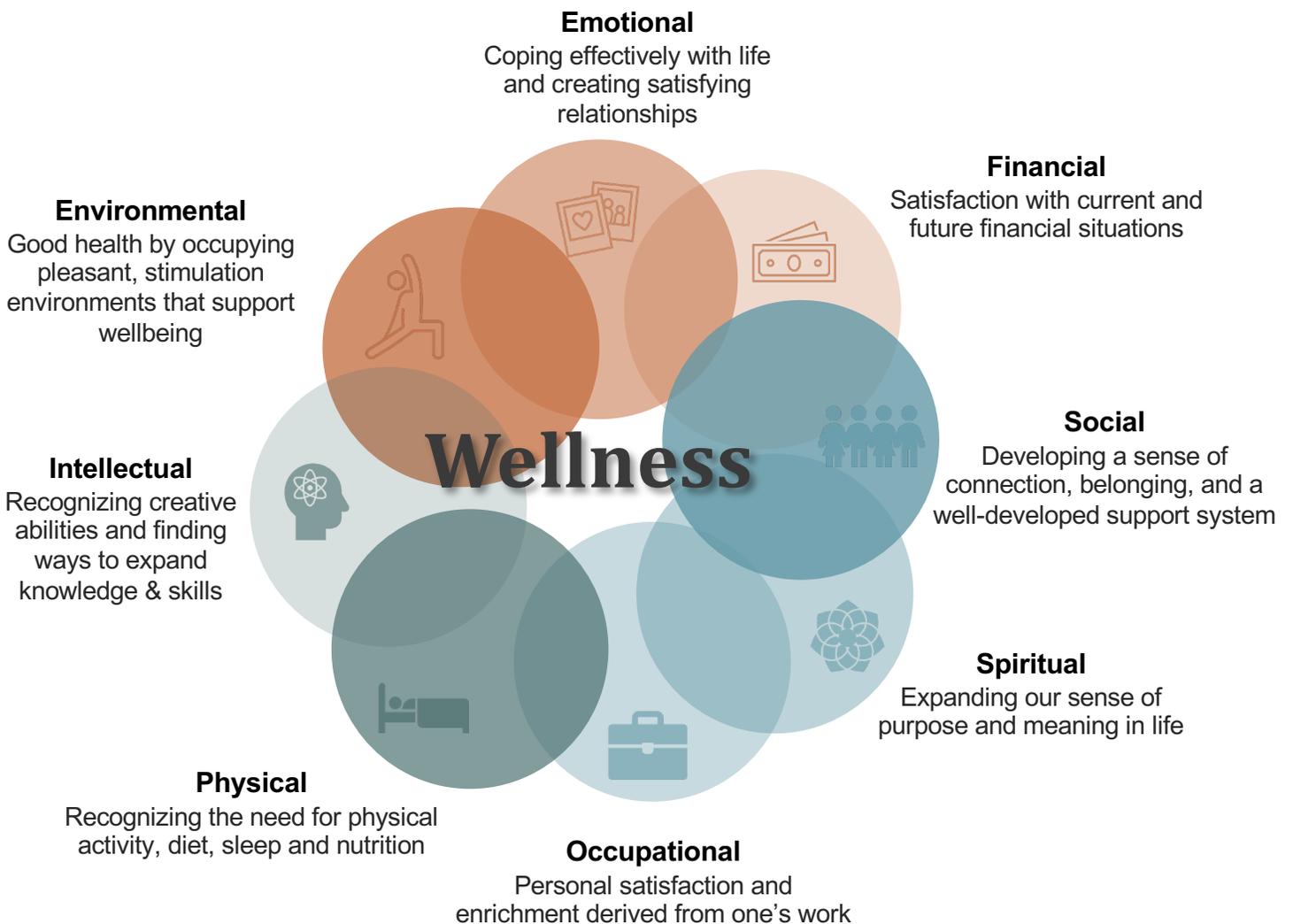
Or the Stress Will Manage **YOU**...

## Wellness



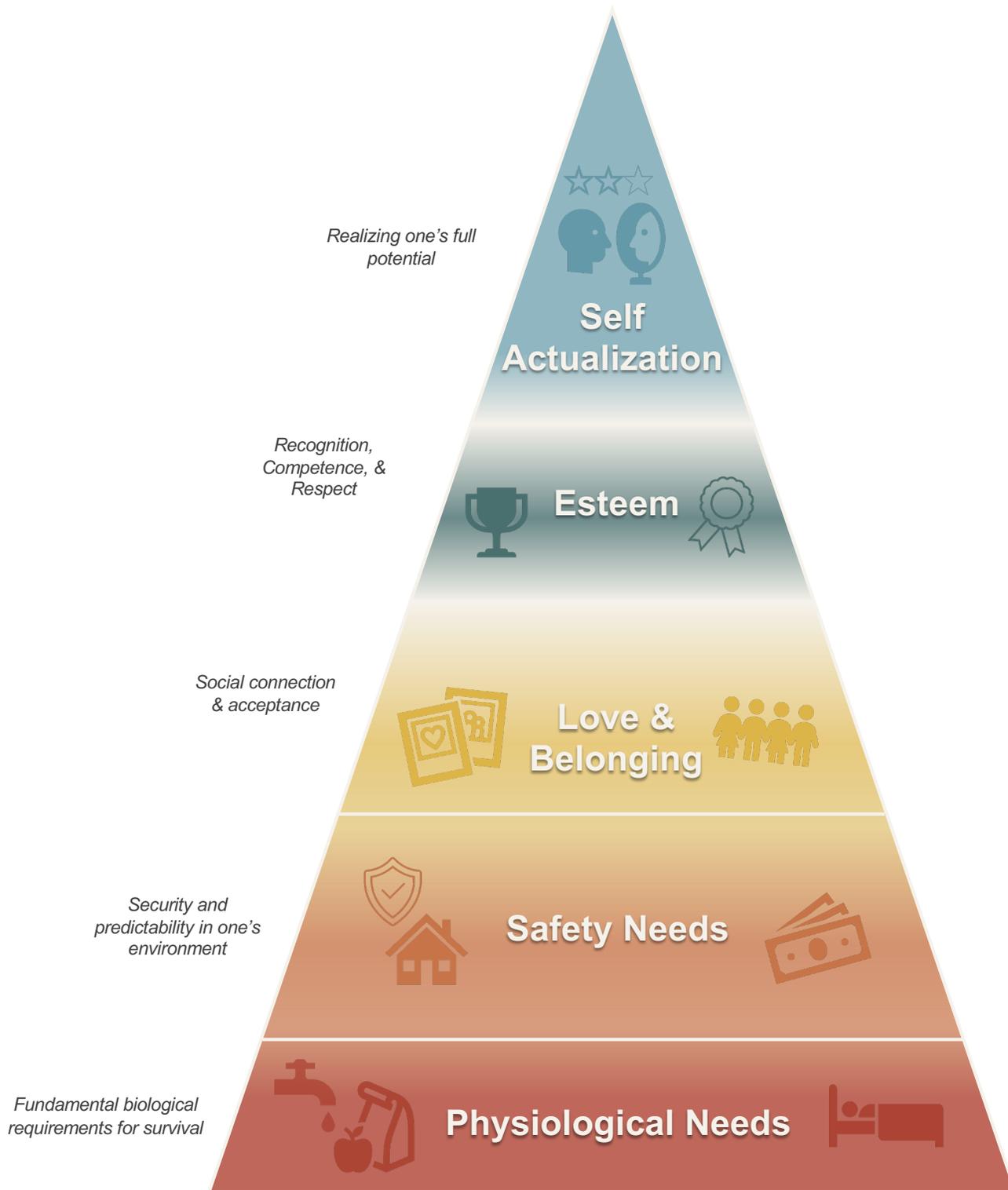
*A conscious, deliberate process that requires a person to become aware of and make choices for a more satisfying lifestyle.*

-Dr. Peggy Swarbrick, 2012



# 03

## Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



# 03 Coping Strategies



What are your current coping strategies?

Are they adaptive or maladaptive?

What are some positive changes you could make?

Police officers & firefighters are **more likely** to die by suicide than in the line of duty.

(Ruderman, 2022)

Consumption of **energy drinks** is associated with **depression, anxiety, and stress** in young adult males: Evidence from a longitudinal cohort study.

(Kaur et al., 2020) 24



## 03 Physiological Sigh



The **physiological sigh** is a natural, double-inhalation breathing pattern that helps **rapidly calm the nervous system**. Developed through research by neuroscientists like Dr. Andrew Huberman (Stanford University).

### Benefits of the Physiological Sigh:

- Rapidly reduces stress and anxiety
- Lowers heart rate
- Releases tension in the body
- Can be done anywhere, anytime—takes just a few seconds
- Effective for grounding, regulating emotions, and improving focus



### 01 Place hand(s) over your heart

Apply pressure.



### 02 Double-inhale through your nose

The **first inhale** fills the lungs. The second, shorter inhale opens collapsed alveoli (tiny air sacs in the lungs), improving oxygen exchange.



### 03 Long exhale through your mouth (sigh)

The **long exhale** activates the parasympathetic nervous system (your “rest and digest” mode), helping slow the heart rate and reduce anxiety.

# 03

## Vanishing Pause

### A Vanishing Pause:

A brief, intentional moment of stillness or silence that is used to center the mind and body—especially during stress or overwhelm. It’s called "vanishing" because it can be **very short—just a second or two—but still powerful** in its effect. It can “vanish” anxiety, reactivity, or mental clutter in the moment.

- A quick pause to **interrupt automatic reactions**
- A moment to **take a breath, re-focus, or anchor to the present**
- Often paired with a **mantram** or calming thought

Some situations are fast-moving, chaotic, and emotionally intense. First responders and healthcare may feel pulled in many directions or flooded with distressing sights, sounds, and decisions.

A **vanishing pause** helps:

- **Interrupt emotional reactivity** before it takes over
- **Create space to think clearly** and make wise choices
- **Reduce anxiety and tension** in the body
- **Strengthen self-regulation** without stopping work

### How to Use a Vanishing Pause:

1. **Stop briefly**—even mid-task, mid-sentence, or between steps.
2. **Take one deep breath** (or focus on the exhale).
3. **Repeat your mantram** or silently note “pause” or “let go.”
4. **Continue your task** with more awareness and calm.

### Example in the Field:

- Before entering: *Pause. Breathe. “Peace, peace.”*
- After hearing or seeing someone’s trauma story: *Pause. Exhale. Ground your feet.*
- While feeling overwhelmed by noise or urgency: *Pause. “This moment. One step.”*



# 03

## Reframing Your Thoughts

**Positive Thinking** is the practice of focusing on constructive, hopeful, and empowering thoughts—even during stressful or traumatic situations. It's not about ignoring reality or pretending things are fine; rather, it's about maintaining a realistic but optimistic outlook that supports resilience and problem-solving.

In the context of **stress**, positive thinking helps first responders and healthcare workers manage overwhelming emotions, stay focused under pressure, and maintain energy during prolonged crises. It involves recognizing your own internal dialogue and intentionally shifting it in a healthier direction.

**Reframing** is a cognitive strategy where you identify unhelpful or negative thoughts and consciously reinterpret them in a more balanced or constructive way. It doesn't erase the hardship but helps you see it from a different angle that can reduce stress and increase effectiveness.

### Negative Thought

"I can't handle this—  
there's too much going on."

"I failed to help everyone."

"This is hopeless."

"I made a mistake."



### Reframed Positive Thought

"This is hard, but I've handled tough  
situations before."

"I did what I could under the  
circumstances."

"This is challenging, but I can take it  
one step at a time."

"I'm learning and adapting—  
mistakes are part of the process."

### Quick Practice

**1. Notice the Thought** – Catch yourself thinking something negative or absolute.

**2. Pause and Reflect** – Ask: Is this 100% true? Is there another way to see this?

**3. Reframe** – Replace it with a more balanced or empowering perspective. Building this habit takes time, but it's a critical skill for staying grounded and effective in high-stress environments.



# 03

## Mantram

A **mantram** (also spelled *mantra*) is a word or phrase that is repeated silently or aloud to focus the mind, calm the body, and promote inner peace. It is often spiritual or sacred in nature but can be personally meaningful regardless of religious affiliation.

Mantram repetition involves choosing a short, meaningful word or phrase and silently repeating it—especially during times of stress, waiting, or emotional overwhelm. It can be done anywhere, anytime, and does not require specific posture or setting.

### Benefits of Mantram Use:

- **Quick calming effect** — lowers physiological stress without needing privacy or equipment
- **Improves focus** — helps maintain clarity and concentration in chaotic settings
- **Promotes emotional regulation** — offers a grounding tool during moments of fear, grief, or frustration
- **Accessible and portable** — can be used while walking, waiting, or during tasks
- **Strengthens spiritual and psychological resilience**

### How to Use a Mantram in the Field:

1. **Choose your word/phrase** — something comforting or personally meaningful.
2. **Repeat it silently** — while breathing, walking, waiting in line, or trying to sleep.
3. **Use it regularly** — not just in crisis, but also during downtime to build the habit.

By incorporating mantram repetition, healthcare workers and first responders can enhance their inner stability, sustain compassionate service, and prevent burnout in the face of adversity.



# 03 Mantram

## Mantrams (pronunciation)

## Description

Om mani padme hum (Ohm mah-nee pahd-may hume)	An invocation to the jewel (Self), in the lotus of the heart
Namo Butsaya (Nah-mo Boot-see-yah) My God and My All	I bow to the Buddha St. Francis of Assisi's phrase
Maranatha (Mah-rah-nah-tha)	Lord of the Heart (Aramaic)
Kyrie Eleison (Kir-ee-ay Ee-lay-ee-sone)	Lord have mercy
Christe Eleison (Kreest-ay Ee-lay-ee-sone)	Christ have mercy
Jesus, Jesus	Son of God
Hail Mary or Ave Maria	Mother of Jesus
Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me	Jesus Prayer
Rama (Rah-mah)	Eternal joy within (Gandhi's mantram)
Om Namah Shivaya (Ohm Nah-mah Shee-vah-yah)	Invocation to beauty and fearlessness
Om Prema (Ohm Pray-Mah)	A call for universal love
Om Shanti (Ohm Shawn-tee)	Invocation to eternal peace
Shalom (Shah-lome)	Peace, completeness
So Hum (So Hum)	I am that Self within
Barukh Atah Adonoi (Bah-rookh At-tah Ah-doh-nigh)	Blessed art Thou, King of the Universe
Ribono Shel Olam (Ree-boh-no Shel O-lahm)	Master of the Universe
Bismallah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim (Beese-mah-lah ir-Rah-mun ir-Rah-heem)	In the name of Allah, the merciful, the compassionate
O Wakan Tanka (Wah-Kahn Tahn-Kah)	Great Spirit



# 03

## Metta (Loving-Kindness)

**Metta**, also known as **Loving-Kindness**, is a form of meditation and mental training that involves silently **sending wishes of goodwill, compassion, and peace** to yourself and others. The word *metta* comes from the ancient Pali language and means universal love, goodwill, benevolence, loving-kindness, or friendliness.

It is not about forcing emotions, but about **gently cultivating an attitude of love and compassion** for ourselves and others, even in difficult or chaotic situations.

Meditation is a mental practice that involves focusing one's attention on a particular object, thought, or activity to achieve a state of mental clarity, relaxation, and heightened awareness.

Calm abiding meditation (Shamatha) sham-a-ta

Insight meditation (Vipsassana) va-pas-a-na

### How to Practice Metta

**Sit quietly, even for just 1–2 minutes.**

**Repeat silently phrases of goodwill—start with yourself, then extend to others:**

“May I be safe.”

“May I be strong.”

“May I be at peace.”

**Then extend it to others, such as:**

“May the people I serve be safe.”

“May my team be well.”

“May all affected by this disaster find strength and healing.”



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# 03

## Five Senses Grounding Exercise

The **Five Senses Exercise** is a simple and powerful grounding technique that helps bring you into the present moment by tuning into your body and surroundings using your five senses. It's especially helpful for managing **stress, anxiety, or emotional overwhelm**—making it ideal for disaster responders or anyone working in high-pressure environments.



### 5 Things You Can See

Look around and name five things you can see right now – big or small.



### 4 Things You Can Feel

Notice four things you can physically feel – on your skin or inside your body.



### 3 Things You Can Hear

Listen carefully and identify three different sounds.



### 2 Things You Can Smell

Take a breath and identify two scents or note natural smells.



### 1 Things You Can Taste

Focus on one thing you can taste right now.



# 03

## S.O.B.E.R. Grounding Exercise

The **S.O.B.E.R.** technique is a mindfulness-based strategy to help you pause, regulate emotions, and respond with awareness rather than reacting automatically—especially helpful in stressful or traumatic situations, such as during disaster response.



### Stop

Pause what you're doing.  
Take a moment to interrupt the autopilot response.  
Even just a **few seconds** can make a difference.



### Observe

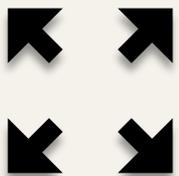
Notice what's happening inside and around you.

- What are you feeling emotionally?
- What sensations do you notice in your body?
- What's going on around you?



### Breathe

Take a slow, deep breath.  
Let your breath anchor you in the present.  
This helps calm the nervous system and creates space between stimulus and response.



### Expand

Widen your awareness to see the bigger picture.

- Can you see this moment with more perspective or compassion?
- Acknowledge that this feeling will pass.
- Remember your values and purpose.



### Respond

Choose a response that aligns with who you want to be.  
Act with clarity and calm instead of reacting out of fear, anger, or impulse.

(Wayword, 2016) 33



# 03

## Other Stress Reduction Techniques

### Movement Breaks



- Stretch, walk around the office, or do a few squats.
- Even **2–5 minutes** of movement boosts circulation and relieves tension.

### Digital Detox Moments



- Set "no screen" intervals—even just 10 minutes a day—to reset.
- Try no phone during meals or the first 30 minutes after waking.

### Prioritization with the Eisenhower Matrix



- Sort tasks into: Urgent/Important, Not Urgent/Important, etc.
- Reduces decision fatigue and prevents overwhelm.

### 5 – Minute Journal



- Morning: Write 3 things you're grateful for + intentions.
- Evening: Reflect on 3 good things from the day.
- Increases emotional resilience.

### Mental Declutter



- Take 5 minutes to do a "brain dump" on paper.
- Helps stop repetitive thoughts and clarify priorities.

### Say "No" (Politely but Firmly)



- Protect time by declining low-priority requests.
- Scripts help: "Thanks for thinking of me, but I can't commit right now."

### Adult Coloring (5–15 min)



- Great for unwinding without screens or pressure to be "productive."
- Low-effort creativity that soothes the brain and reduces anxiety.
- Keep a small coloring book and pencils handy at your desk or bag.

# 03

## Resources

**Be Well  
Indiana**

**Call: 2-1-1**

(available 24/7)

**Safe Call  
Now**

**Call:**

**206-459-3020**

(available 24/7)

**988**

**Suicide &  
Crisis Lifeline**

**Call: 9-8-8**

**Text: 988**

(available 24/7)

Other resources you or your team can use:

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# Daily Reflection

Date:

M T W T F S S

**MOOD/DATE RATING:**

AWESOME     GOOD     NORMAL     BUSY     SAD     FRUSTRATED

**MY DAY IN 3 WORDS:**

**TODAY I FEEL GRATEFUL FOR:**

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**WINS:**

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**GOALS/SKILLS/THINGS I WORKED ON:**

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**CHALLENGES:**

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**TOMORROW I'LL BE FOCUSING ON:**

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**TOMORROW'S GOAL/NOTES:**



# 04

## Engage



# 04

## Engage

**Social support** is one of the most important protective resources against secondary traumatization.

(Greinacher et al., 2021)

A **Support Network Map** is a visual tool that helps you identify, organize, and reflect on the people, groups, and resources in your life that offer support—emotionally, practically, professionally, or spiritually.

This is especially valuable for **disaster volunteers**, who operate under high stress, unpredictable conditions, and emotionally intense situations.

- Helps you recognize that you are **not alone**
- Provides some comfort that what you went through and how you responded is **not "abnormal."**
- Highlights both **formal and informal** sources of support
- Creates a sense of being understood and accepted
- Offers practical help solving problems
- Reduces the stigma of asking for help by making it part of a plan
- Knowing who you can turn to increases **resilience** and decreases the risk of **emotional exhaustion**
- Reminds you to **nurture relationships** that replenish your energy
- Allows for sharing of trauma experiences

### **Especially Important for Healthcare Workers and First Responders:**

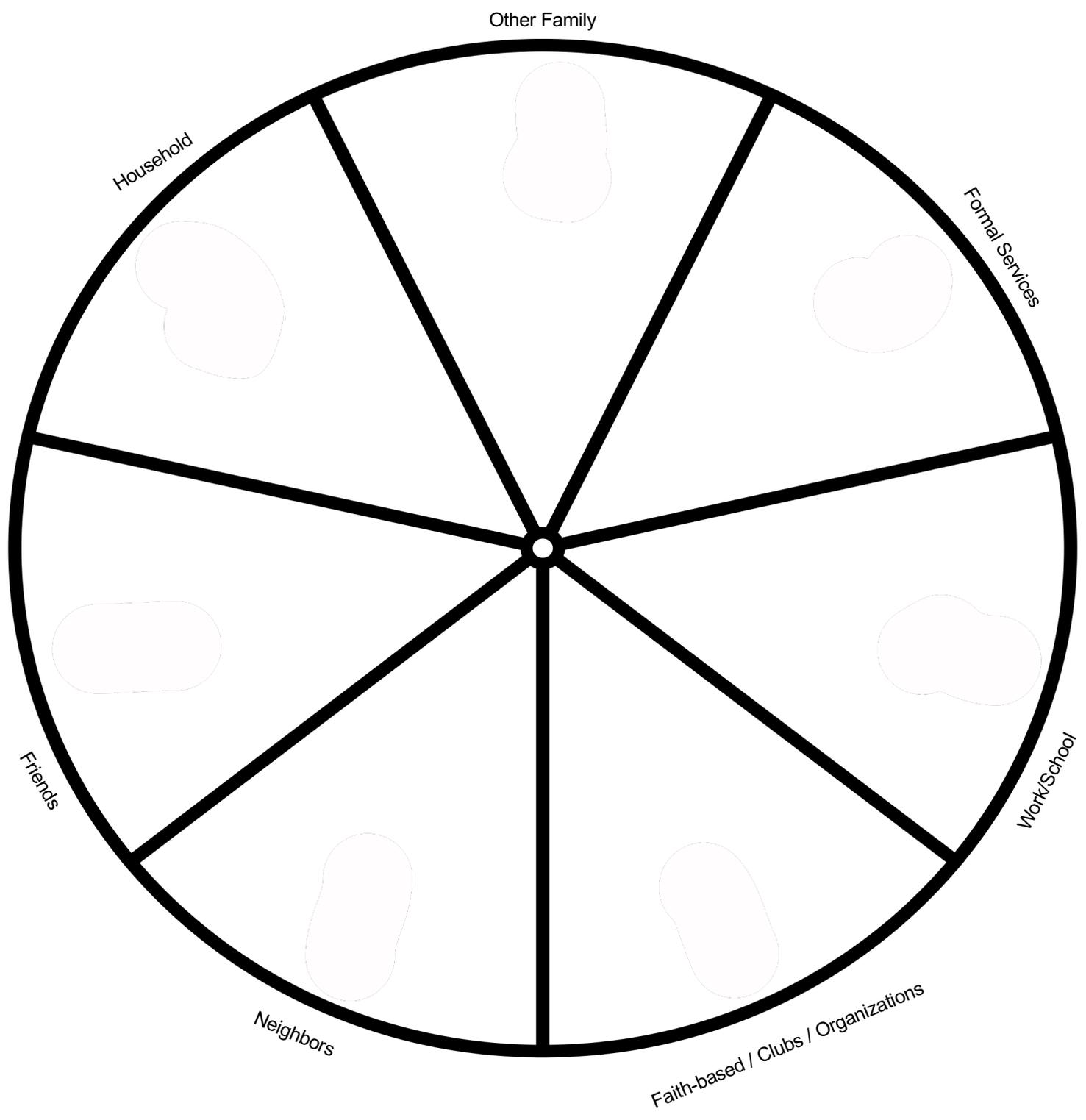
- You face **unique emotional and logistical challenges**
- You may prioritize helping others while neglecting your own needs
- A support map serves as a **grounding, proactive wellness tool**

**Tip:** Revisit your map regularly and update it as your circumstances or relationships change. Think of it as a living document—just like your health and well-being.



# 04

## Social Network Map



# 04

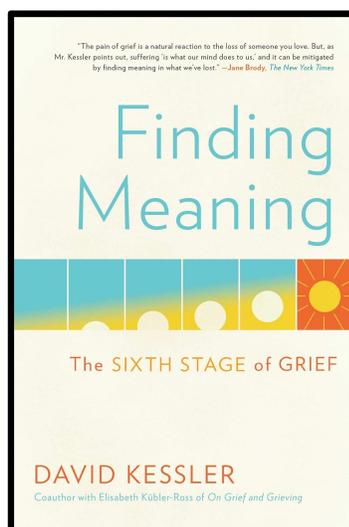
## Engage



Here's the deal. The human soul doesn't want to be advised or fixed or saved. It simply wants to be witnessed — to be seen, heard and companioned exactly as it is. When we make that kind of deep bow to the soul of a suffering person, our respect reinforces the soul's healing resources, the only resources that can help the sufferer make it through.

Aye, there's the rub. Many of us "helper" types are as much or more concerned with being seen as good helpers as we are with serving the soul-deep needs of the person who needs help. Witnessing and companioning take time and patience, which we often lack — especially when we're in the presence of suffering so painful we can barely stand to be there, as if we were in danger of catching a contagious disease. We want to apply our "fix," then cut and run, figuring we've done the best we can to "save" the other person.

Parker J. Palmer



But we also tell stories to ourselves, and when we do, the way we frame them has the power to change our feelings.

David Kessler, p. 51



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