



Recognizing and Building Resilience

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

01

STRESS & MENTAL HEALTH

How does stress impact mental health?

02

BURNOUT

What are the signs of burnout?

03

RESILIENCE

What is resilience?

04

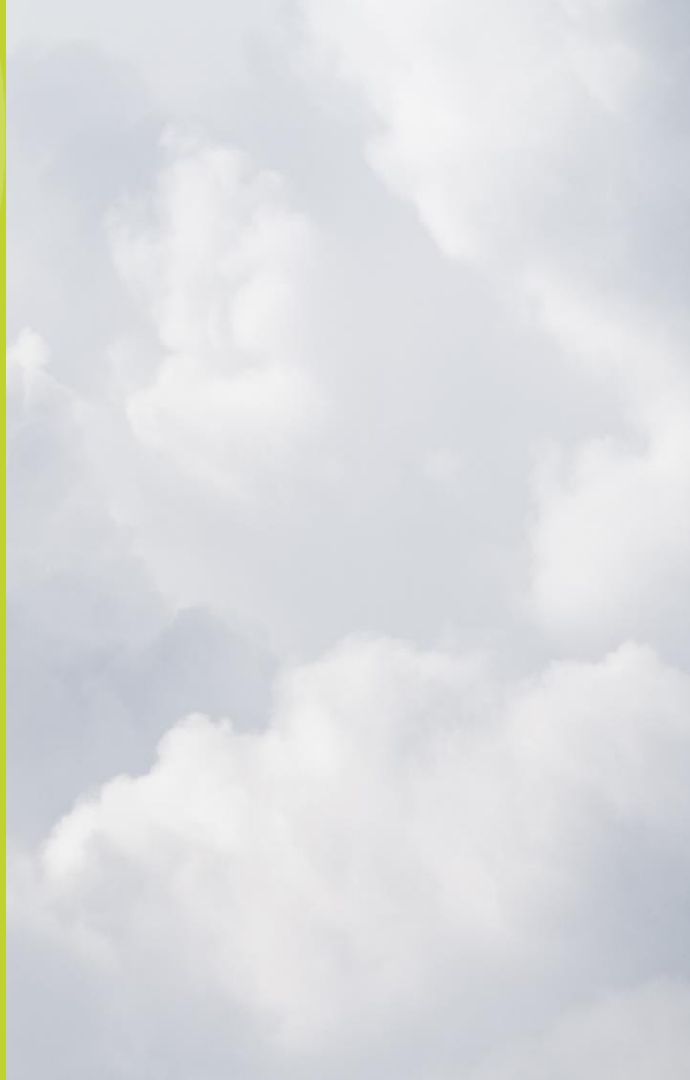
MANAGING ADVERSITY

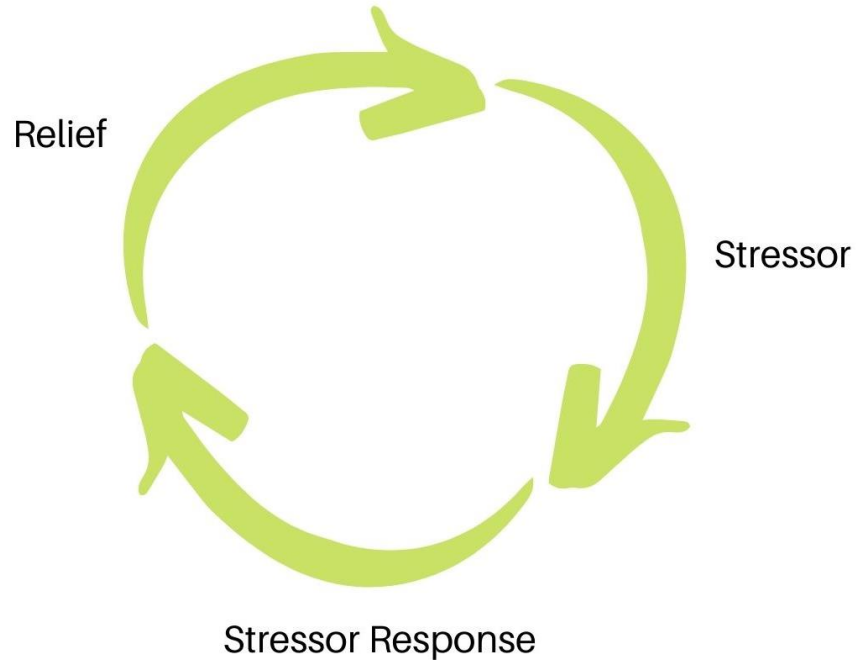
How can we cope with adversity?



STRESS & MENTAL HEALTH

How does stress impact our mental health & wellbeing?



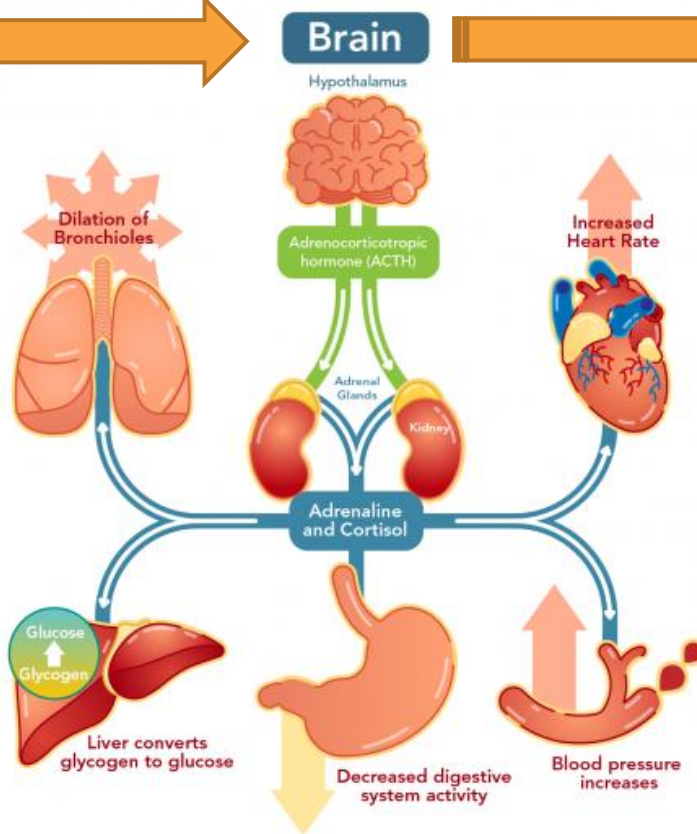


THE STRESS CYCLE

STRESS RESPONSE SYSTEM

STRESSOR

Internal or external experience
Interpreted by nervous system as a threat



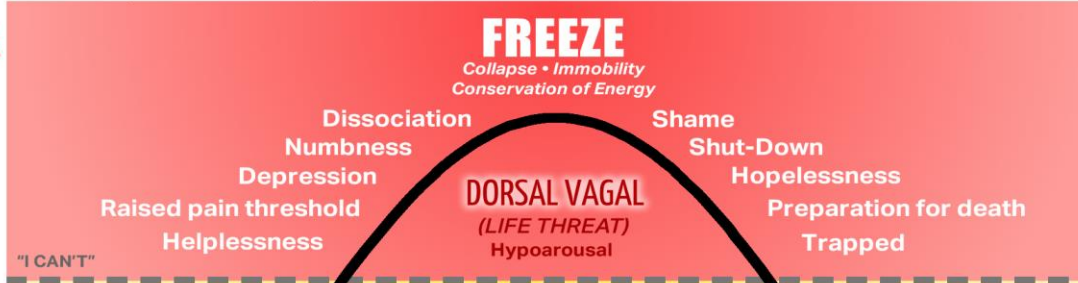
STRESS RESPONSE

Physiological & chemical shifts preparing us for action
Evolutionary response designed for survival

ACTION FIGHT/FLIGHT

POLYVAGAL CHART

The nervous system with a neuroception of threat:



PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM DORSAL VAGAL COMPLEX

Increases

Fuel storage & insulin activity • Immobilization behavior (with fear)
Endorphins that help numb and raise the pain threshold
Conservation of metabolic resources

Decreases

Heart Rate • Blood Pressure • Temperature • Muscle Tone
Facial Expressions & Eye Contact • Depth of Breath • Social Behavior
Attunement to Human Voice • Sexual Responses • Immune Response

SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

Increases

Blood Pressure • Heart Rate • Fuel Availability • Adrenaline
Oxygen Circulation to Vital Organs • Blood Clotting • Pupil Size
Dilation of Bronchi • Defensive Responses

Decreases

Fuel Storage • Insulin Activity • Digestion • Salivation
Relational Ability • Immune Response

The nervous system with a neuroception of safety:



PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM VENTRAL VAGAL COMPLEX

Increases

Digestion • Intestinal Motility • Resistance to Infection
Immune Response • Rest and Recuperation • Health & Vitality
Circulation to non-vital organs (skin, extremities)
Oxytocin (neuromodulator involved in social bonds that allows immobility without fear) • Ability to Relate and Connect
Movement in eyes and head turning • Prosody in voice • Breath

Decreases

Defensive Responses

Relief

You survived the stress

You “shake it off”

You weep, hug, celebrate with others

You exhale

This purges the chemical and physiological leftovers in your body.



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Types of stress responses

POSITIVE



A normal and essential part of healthy development

EXAMPLES
*getting a vaccine,
first day of school*

TOLERABLE



Response to a more severe stressor, limited in duration

EXAMPLES
*loss of a loved one,
a broken bone*

TOXIC



Experiencing strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity

EXAMPLES
*physical or emotional abuse,
exposure to violence*

<https://kaboom.org/resources/play-research/toxic-stress-and-caring-adults>

Stress response designed for short-termed events. This allows time for nervous system to COMPLETE THE STRESS CYCLE and return to homeostasis once the stressor is gone.

BUT

Oftentimes, the stressor remains.

We do not complete the stress cycle.

Physiological and chemical leftovers remain in our bodies.

Resulting in long-term stress.



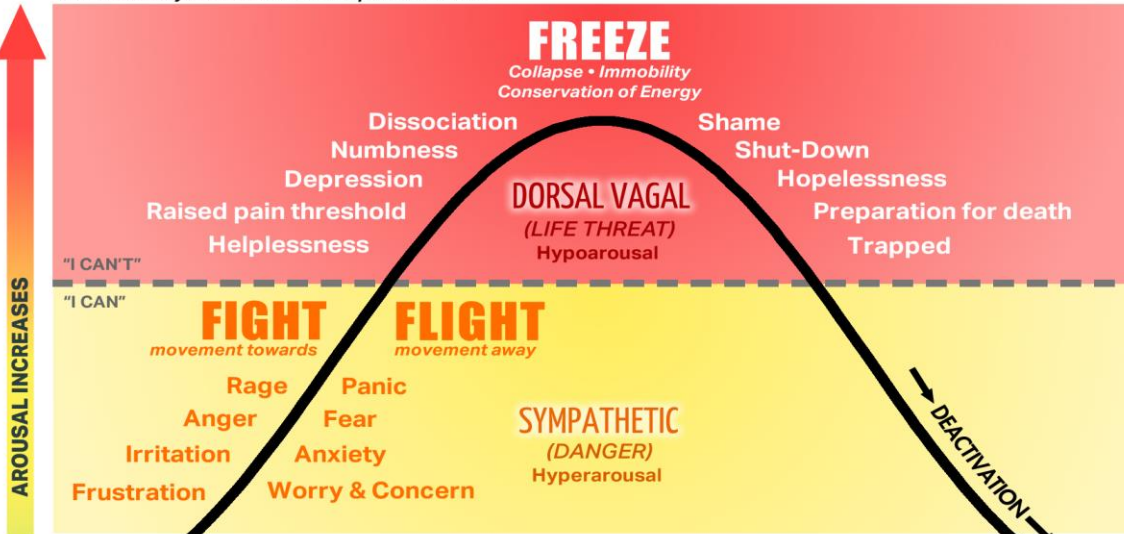
BURNOUT

What are signs of burnout?



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Decreases

Defensive Responses

VVC is the beginning and end of stress response.
When VVC is dominant, SNS and DVC are in transient blends which promote healthy physiological functioning.

**Emotional
Exhaustion**

**Decreased sense of
accomplishment**

Depersonalization

Emotional Exhaustion

Physical fatigue
Brain fog
Cynicism and
pessimism
Physical pains
Digestive problems

Decreased sense of accomplishment

Depersonalization

Emotional Exhaustion

Decreased sense of accomplishment

Sense of futility
“Nothing will make a
difference”
Hopelessness
Lack of motivation

Depersonalization

**Emotional
Exhaustion**

**Decreased sense of
accomplishment**

Depersonalization

Depleted empathy
Depleted compassion
Depleted caring

How many can you check off?

Emotional Exhaustion

- Physical fatigue
- Brain fog
- Cynicism and pessimism
- Physical pains
- Digestive problems

Decreased sense of accomplishment

- Sense of futility
- “Nothing will make a difference”
- Hopelessness
- Lack of motivation

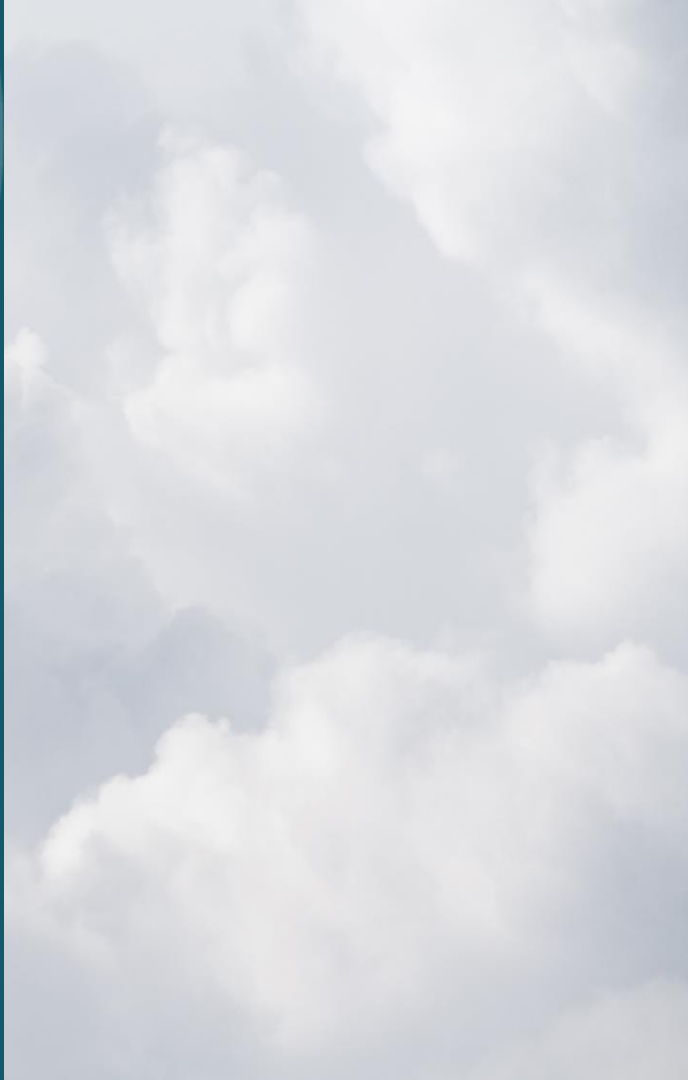
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RESILIENCE

What is resilience?



What is Resilience?

Ability to respond and adapt effectively to life's events

Helps people bounce back from setbacks and disappointments

It is not extraordinary—many people are resilient

Contributors to Resilience

Personal Factors

- Personality (openness, extraversion, agreeableness)
- Cognitive flexibility
- Optimism
- Emotional Regulation

Biological Factors

- Harsh vs nurturing early environments shape brain development
- Subsequent impact on nervous system and sensitivity to threat/stress

Environmental & System Factors

- Social support (family, extended family, peers, schools, community)
- Socioeconomic forces
- Social policy

"Resilience is more available to people curious about their own line of thinking and behaving."

Brene Brown



— —

MANAGING ADVERSITY

How can we cope with adverse events?



Complete the Stress Cycle

These strategies help to flush out the leftover stress chemical in the body.

The stressor might still be present, but you have managed the stress of the moment.



Planful Problem Solving

Effective for stressors we can control

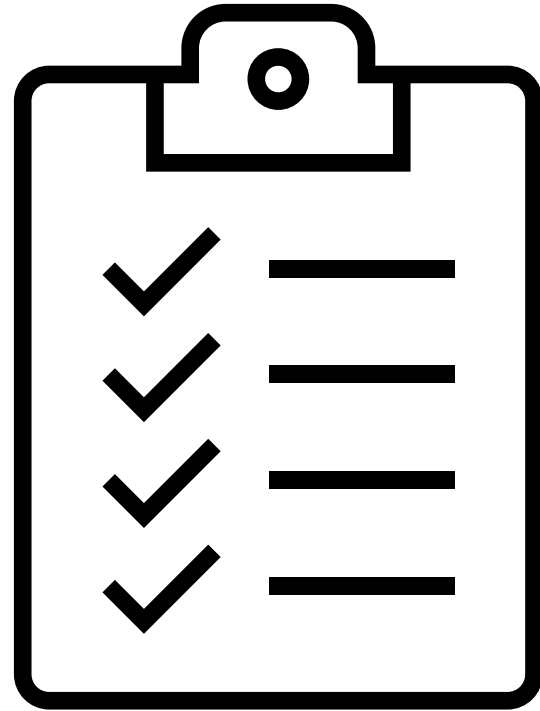
Anticipate problems ahead of time

Generate options and solutions

Maintain flexibility

Break larger tasks into smaller, discrete steps

Include strategies to complete the stress cycle!



Radical Acceptance

For stressors you cannot control

Completely and totally accepting with our mind, body and spirit that we cannot currently change the present facts, even if we do not like them.

Keeps us from getting stuck in the “Why me? Why us?”

Keeps us from fighting with reality.

Keeps our pain from turning into suffering.

It is what it is.

Redefine winning & failing

Focus on the process, not the outcome

Set small goals, and celebrate small successes

Re-examine your expectations

Focus on what you can learn

Treat yourself with kindness and compassion



Focus on Meaning

“Meaning”... is the nourishing experience of feeling like we’re connected to something larger than ourselves. It helps us thrive when things are going well, and it helps us cope when things go wrong...”

(Nagoski & Nagoski, 2019, p. 58)

Know Your Values

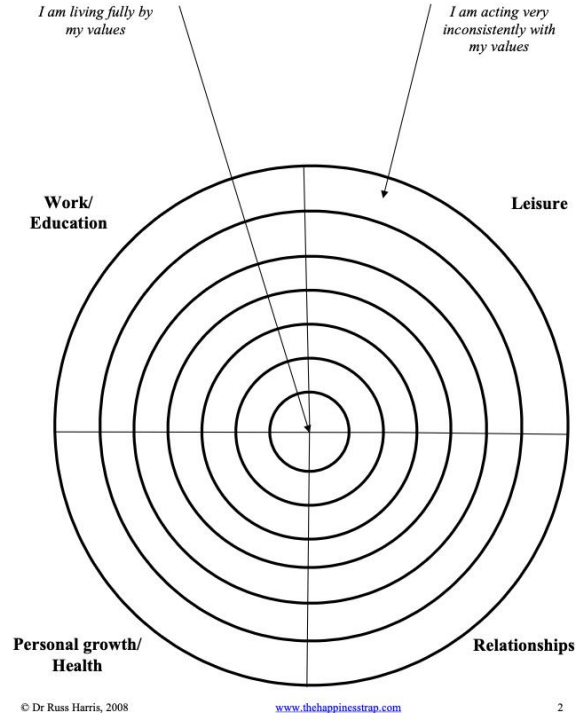
Explore and understand your values

“Evaluate” how aligned your decisions and actions are with your values

Knowing we are acting according to our values helps us cope with disappointment

THE BULL'S EYE: Read through your values, then make an X in each area of the dart board, to represent where you stand today. An X in the Bull's Eye (the centre of the board) means that you are living fully by your values in that area of life. An X far from Bull's Eye means that you are way off the mark in terms of living by your values.

Since there are four areas of valued living, you should mark **four Xs** on the dart board.



http://thehappinesstrap.com/upimages/Long_Bull's_Eye_Worksheet.pdf

“Origin Story”

Rewrite your story of adversity into lessons learned about your strengths and abilities

1. What parts of the adversity were uncontrollable by you?
2. What did you do to survive the adversity in the moment?
3. What resources did you leverage to continue surviving after the adversity had passed?
4. When else have these resources supported you overcome another difficulty?

Adapted from Nagoski & Nagoski (2019).

Plant & Water your SEEDS

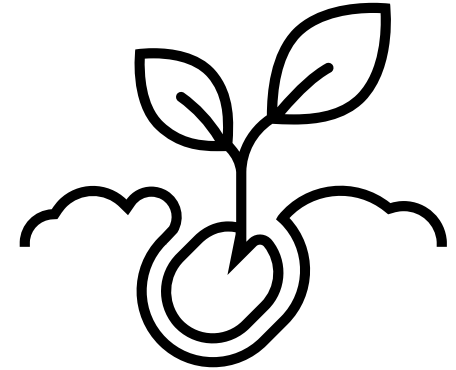
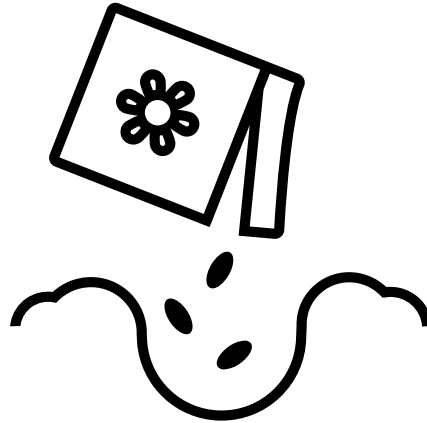
Social Connectivity

Exercise

Education

Diet

Sleep





THANK YOU!

Questions?



References

Herrman, H. & et al. (2011). What Is Resilience? *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 56, 258-265.

Nagoski, E., & Nagoski, A. (2019). *Burnout: the secret to unlocking the stress cycle*. New York: Ballantine Books.