

BUILDING CAREGIVER RESILIENCE

“Put Your Oxygen Mask On First!!!”

01

Learn to recognize stressful situations and develop strategies to minimize them

02

Learn skills that enable caregivers to retain and build upon strengths which result in resilience

03

Feel appreciated for all you do to help individuals in your care

OBJECTIVES FOR TODAY

STRESS -

WE ALL HAVE
IT, RIGHT?

What is stress?

- *Your body's reaction to a challenge or demand*

What typically causes stress?

- *Anger*
- *Frustration*
- *Anxiety*
 - *What things create stress in your life?*

STRESS INVENTORY

Using the chat feature, share what things
create stress in your life...

CHRONIC STRESS

IT'S NOT A GOOD THING...

Typically, periods of chronic stress changes our brain functionality – so we're more prone to react emotionally and less likely to use our reasoning skills.

STRESS

WE ALL HAVE IT, RIGHT?

- **What is the effect of stress?**
 - Short term stressors can be beneficial – like providing motivation to act.
 - Longer term, or chronic stress, has significant impact on our lives.

CHRONIC STRESS

IT HAS AN IMPACT ON OUR BRAINS

- Chronic stress can increase the size of the amygdala – the part of the brain that produces the fight or flight response
- If that's what is happening much of the time, the prefrontal cortex – that part of the brain that is productive in managing our lives – gets smaller
- The solution is to manage stress in our lives to keep us productive

STRESS INOCULATION

Prescribe for yourself:

- Play
- Recreation
- Entertainment
- Exercise that's enjoyable
- Fun times
- Friends and family interactions...

RESILIENCE, WHAT IS IT ANYWAY?

Resilience is:

- The ability to withstand adversity and bounce back from difficult life events...
- Resilient people tap into their strengths and support systems to overcome adversities, helping them to work through challenges

LIVES IN BALANCE





Information Gathering & Prioritizing



Problem-Solving



Positive Activities



Managing Reactions



Helpful Thinking



Social Support

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PROTECTIVE FACTOR

Gathering information

Intentionally taking time to review and assess where we are in our lives...

WHY GATHERING INFORMATION IS IMPORTANT:

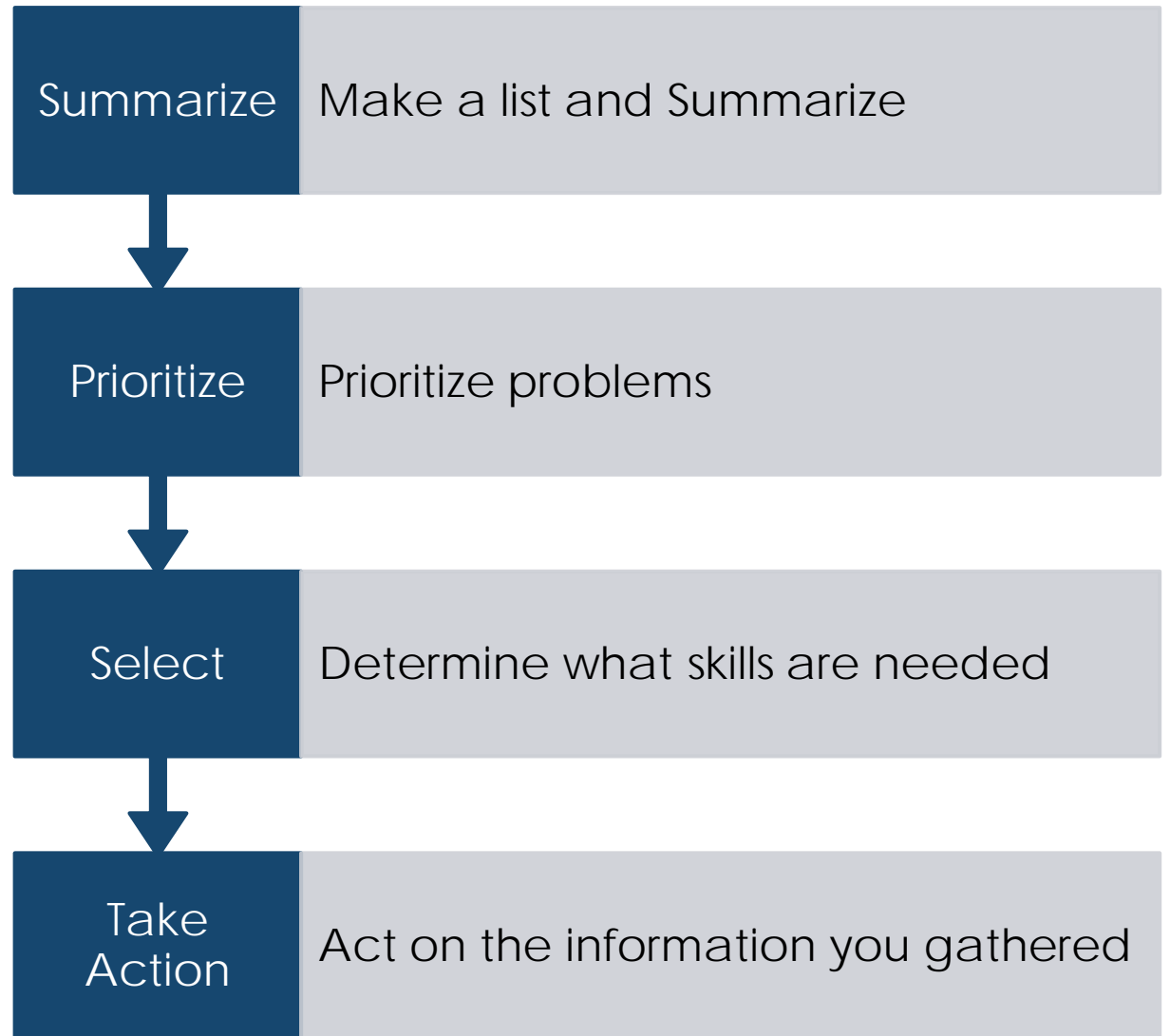
After periods of sustained stress and/or disasters, individuals often feel distressed because of negative experiences and losses

Gathering information helps us identify and prioritize our current needs and concerns

IDENTIFY PROBLEM AREAS:

- Physical Health
- Mental Health
- Safety
- Basic Necessities
- Substance Use/Abuse
- Emotional Distress
- Current Adversities
- Role Functioning
- Interpersonal Life
- Personal, Family, and Community Development
- Religious/Spiritual Issues

AFTER GATHERING INFORMATION:



FOCUS ON PROBLEMS THAT:



You most want to address



You think are most significant



Are causing serious distress or impairment



Need to be addressed sooner



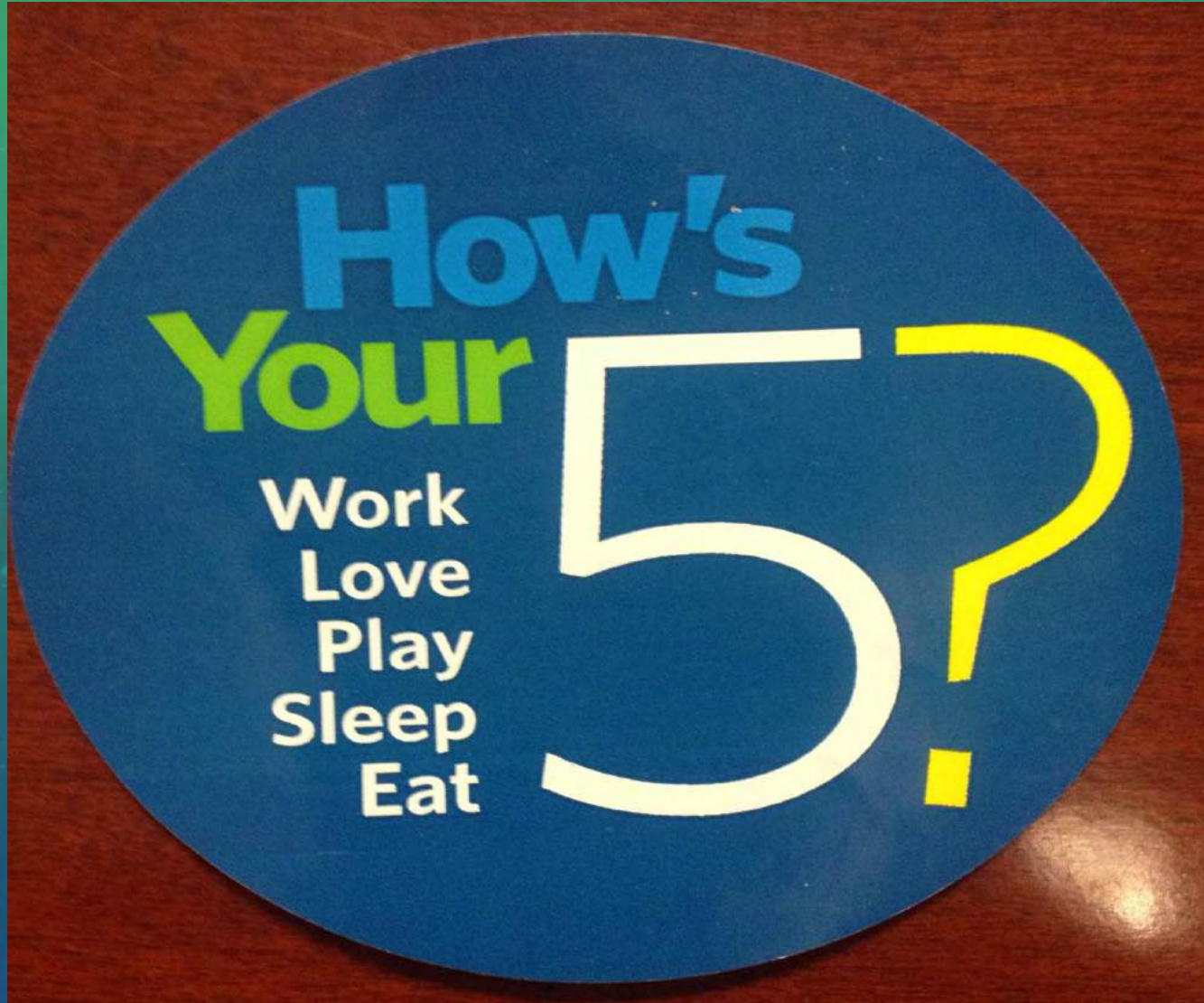
Are worsening over time



Will reduce other problems if addressed

PRIORITIZATION OF TARGET STRESSORS

Problem List	Significance			
	Most Troublesome	Moderate	Minimal	Least Troublesome



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PROTECTIVE
FACTOR

Problem Solving Skills

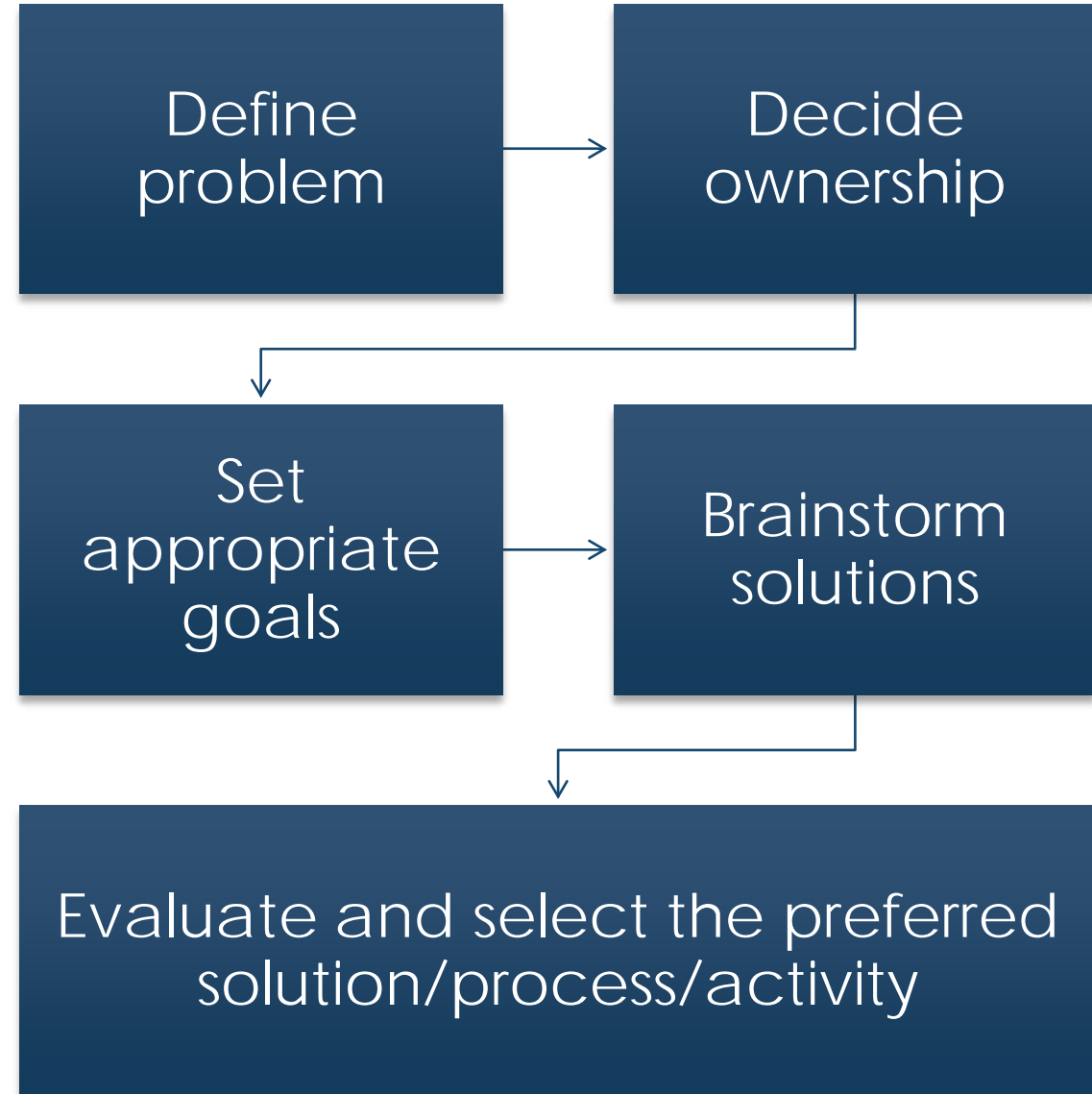
PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS

- **Focus on the problem actively**
 - Think of ideas that might help resolve or reduce significance
 - What actions might be required?
 - Plan to act or go forward
 - Act – put strategies into action

UNDERSTANDING STRESS-INDUCED CHALLENGES

- **Unresolved stressors result in:**
 - Diminished life quality
 - Can add to the stress level of others in the family or workplace
 - Reduction in willingness for self-care
 - Continuation of traumatic stress reactions

STEPS FOR PROBLEM SOLVING ACTIVITIES



DEFINING THE PROBLEM

- What bothers me the most right now?
 - How often does it happen?
 - Who is involved?
 - How does it make you feel?
 - How does it impact you?

HOW DO I DECIDE OWNERSHIP?

“Is this something that is happening between me and someone else?”

OR...

“Is this problem mainly happening to someone else or between other people?”

SET AN APPROPRIATE AND ACHIEVABLE GOAL



Specify needs, in a concrete way



Consider what can *actually* be accomplished



Break down complex problems into chunks

BRAINSTORM POSSIBILITIES

- Identify as many solutions as you can and write them down
- If it's difficult for you to identify a solution, think about how someone else might handle the problem
- Think through each solution for potential outcomes and unwanted consequences
- Stop brainstorming when you have a number of practical options

REWARD YOURSELF FOR ALL STEPS TOWARD SOLUTION/S



CONSIDER
WHAT
WORKED WELL



REVIEW STEPS
TAKEN



IF YOU HIT A
SNAG, LOOK
FOR WAYS
AROUND IT



REFLECT ON PROCESS
AND THE OPPORTUNITY
FOR GROWTH

3

PROTECTIVE
FACTOR

Increasing Positive
Activities

LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO PROMOTE POSITIVE ACTIVITIES

- Positive activities help us feel more in control and that life is more *“normal”*
- Help us feel less sad, more hopeful and can even give us more energy
- They encourage us – when we feel overwhelmed - to make time to do things that improve our general health and well-being.

**WE STOP
DOING
REWARDING
THINGS
BECAUSE:**

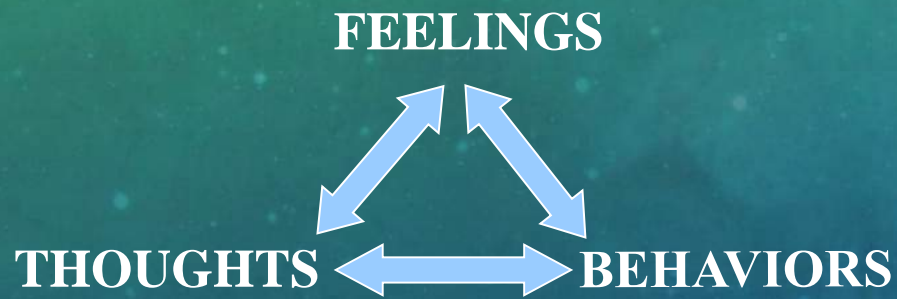
We are too busy coping with other priorities

We just don't feel like it anymore

We avoid reminders of all the negative things that have or are happening.

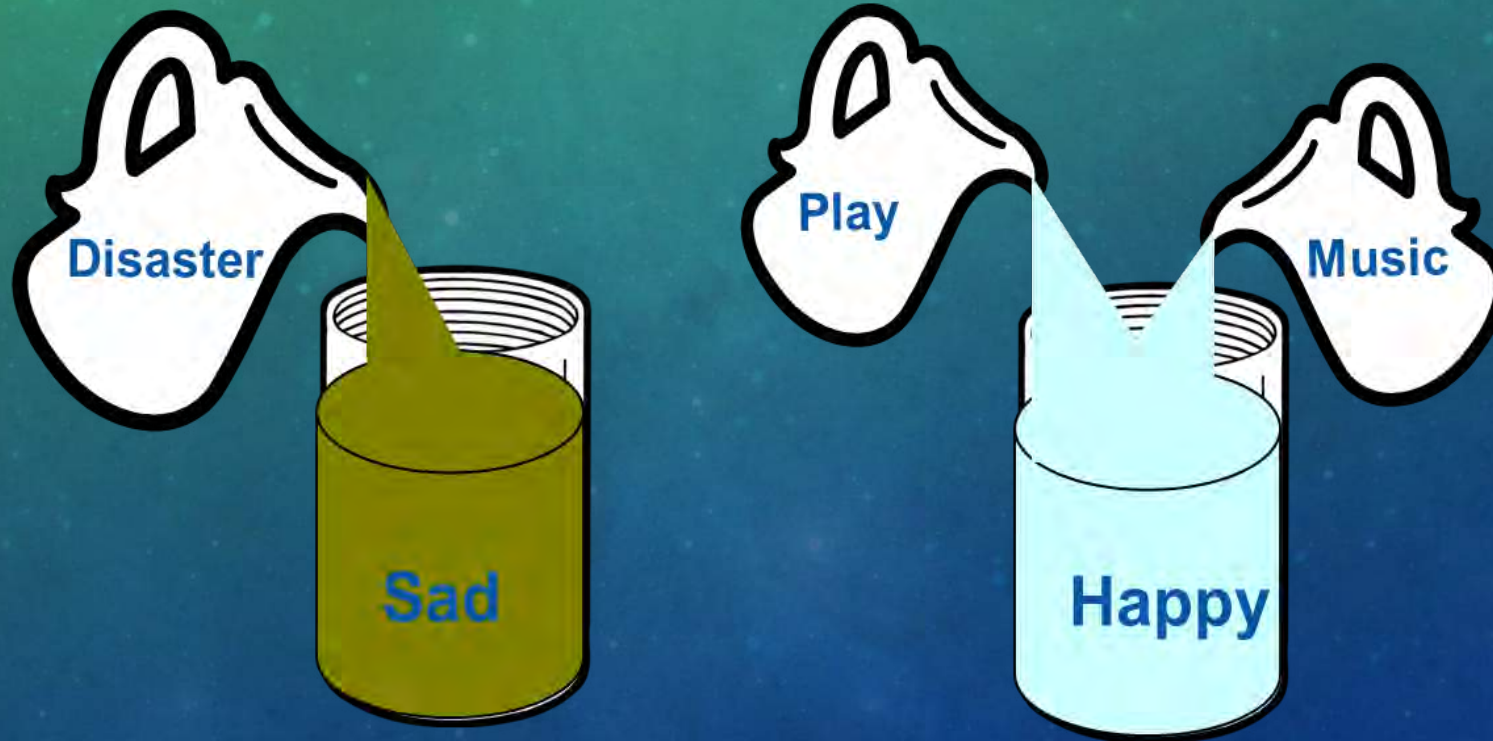
People become sad, down or apathetic when they no longer do rewarding or meaningful activities.

PROBLEMS WITH FOCUSING ON CHANGING FEELINGS:



- Feelings are very difficult to change
- Telling yourself to feel good does not work
- It is easier to change your behaviors, which will change feelings

POSITIVE VS NEGATIVE

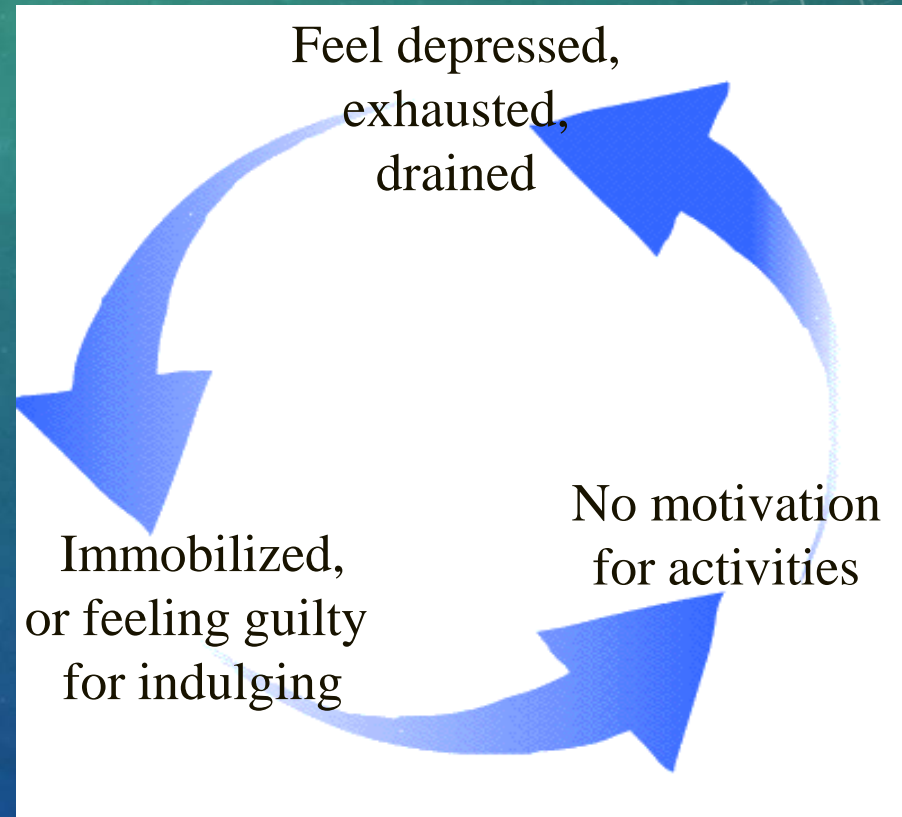


HOW CAN I DO THIS?

- Identify and plan one or more activities
- Schedule it in a calendar

SCHEDULE ACTIVITIES IN A CALENDAR

- It's not uncommon to get "stuck" in a cycle
- Use the calendar & make a concrete plan so you don't get caught up in this cycle



BE AWARE THAT...

- Activities may not be as enjoyable as before
- It's still important to do them
- Include activities that give a breather from everyday stress
- It can be validating to understand that it has been a trying time by scheduling special family activities

WHAT ACTIVITIES?

Choose activities that:

- ✓ You think you would enjoy
- ✓ You think you would *actually* do (achievable)
- ✓ You can set up fairly easily (practical)



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PROTECTIVE FACTOR

Managing Reactions

MANAGING REACTIONS

- Develop effective skills to calm upsetting physical and emotional reactions
- Learn new strategies to deal with reactions to stressful situations
- Put words to difficult experiences to better understand and manage distress

DISTRESSING REACTIONS:

- Affect our *Mood*
- Affect our *Decision-making*
- Affect our *Relationships*
- Affect our *Daily functioning*
- Affect our *Health*

DISTRESSING REACTIONS

- Posttraumatic Stress Reactions
- Anger and Irritability
- Sleep Difficulties
- Reactions to Chronic Stress
- Depressed Mood
- Post-Disaster Fears
- Grief Reactions
- Aftermath of a Disaster
- Drug and Alcohol Problems

RECOGNIZE AND MANAGE REACTIONS

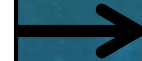
- You may be triggered by many different experiences and situations:
 - Internal: thoughts, memories, feelings, bodily reactions
 - External: stressful situations and reminders
- Learning how to cope with them helps you realize you have some control over your reactions

SKILLS

Recognize the
Trigger Situation



Recognize How
This is Different from
the Actual Disaster
(a reminder)



Identify Strategies
to Use Before,
During, and After a
Trigger

STRATEGIES TO RECOGNIZE AND MANAGE REACTIONS



Tell yourself: this experience is *just* a reminder



Have realistic expectations



Reassure yourself



Put words to strong emotions



Writing often helps to put feelings into words

STRATEGIES, CONTINUED.

- Get support from others if available
- Remind yourself that you have mastered this situation in the past
- Use spiritual or faith-based practices
- Review your personal strengths
- Use humor
- Use relaxation strategies

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PROTECTIVE
FACTOR

Helpful Thinking

PROMOTING HELPFUL THINKING

- Now, we'll look at stress-related thoughts, and how these affect our feelings and behavior
- Practice helpful ways of thinking about stress-related experiences

HELPFUL THINKING ISN'T THE SAME AS POSITIVE THINKING

- “*Positive thinking*” is too simplistic
- Negative thoughts may be accurate
- Helpful thoughts can mobilize and energize
- Consider the effect of thoughts on your feelings and behaviors

WHY HELPFUL THINKING IS IMPORTANT

- Chronic stress often change people's thoughts about the world and themselves
 - World is stressful, unpredictable, or dangerous place
 - Trouble trusting other people
 - See personal situation as hopeless
- People under chronic stress can have thoughts that make their situations even worse by increasing feelings of distress
- It's important to focus on helpful ways of thinking, This can improve mood and adaptive coping

Common Unhelpful Thoughts	Resulting Emotion	Alternate Helpful Thoughts	New Emotional Response
<p>Coping</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I should be coping better” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helplessness • Incompetence • Fear 	<p>“The fact I got here today says I am coping a bit”</p> <p>“Talking to a counselor says I am coping better than many others”</p> <p>“Most people will have trouble after this event”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less fearful • Less helpless • Oriented to seek support/help
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “My reactions mean I am going crazy” • “Something must be really wrong with me” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear • Low self-esteem • Pessimism 	<p>“These reactions are only temporary”</p> <p>“Most people have these reactions after a disaster”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassured • Intact self-esteem
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Other people are dealing with this better than I am, so what’s wrong with me?” • “Only weak people react the way I do” • “I’m damaged goods now” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low self-esteem 	<p>“Most people react this way for a while”</p> <p>“My reaction reflects how big this event was, not how weak I am”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassured • Intact self-esteem

IDENTIFY HELPFUL THOUGHTS

Identify, clarify, and write down alternative helpful thoughts

Consider what might be more helpful thoughts

As helpful thoughts are identified, consider the positive feelings that come with each

PRACTICE HELPFUL THOUGHTS

- Practice focusing on helpful thoughts
- Consider the situations in which unhelpful thoughts occur most often
- Picture some of these situations and practice saying the helpful thought out loud

	Keep the Thought	Change the Thought
Advantages (Pros)	In what ways does <i>holding on</i> to your thought make your life seem more manageable, safer, or easier to handle? Does the thought provide you with a sense of control, security, or predictability?	How could <i>changing</i> your thought improve your life? Consider whether changing your thought would reduce negative feelings and free you up from concerns about past events.
Disadvantages (Cons)	In what ways does <i>holding on</i> to your thought make your life more difficult? Consider the effects of the thought on negative feelings that prevent you from doing things you would like to do.	What are the possible disadvantages or costs of <i>changing</i> your thought? Would changing the thought lead to your feeling less control, security, or predictability?

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PROTECTIVE
FACTOR

Rebuilding Social
Connections

REBUILDING HEALTHY SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

- Increase connections to positive relationships and community supports
- Individuals may feel isolated due to:
 - Social isolation
 - Fatigue and other things caregivers may typically experience
 - Sadness, fear, and lack of motivation

REVIEWING AND REBUILDING SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

1. Develop a Social Connections Map
2. Review the Social Connections Map
3. Make a Social Connections Plan

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

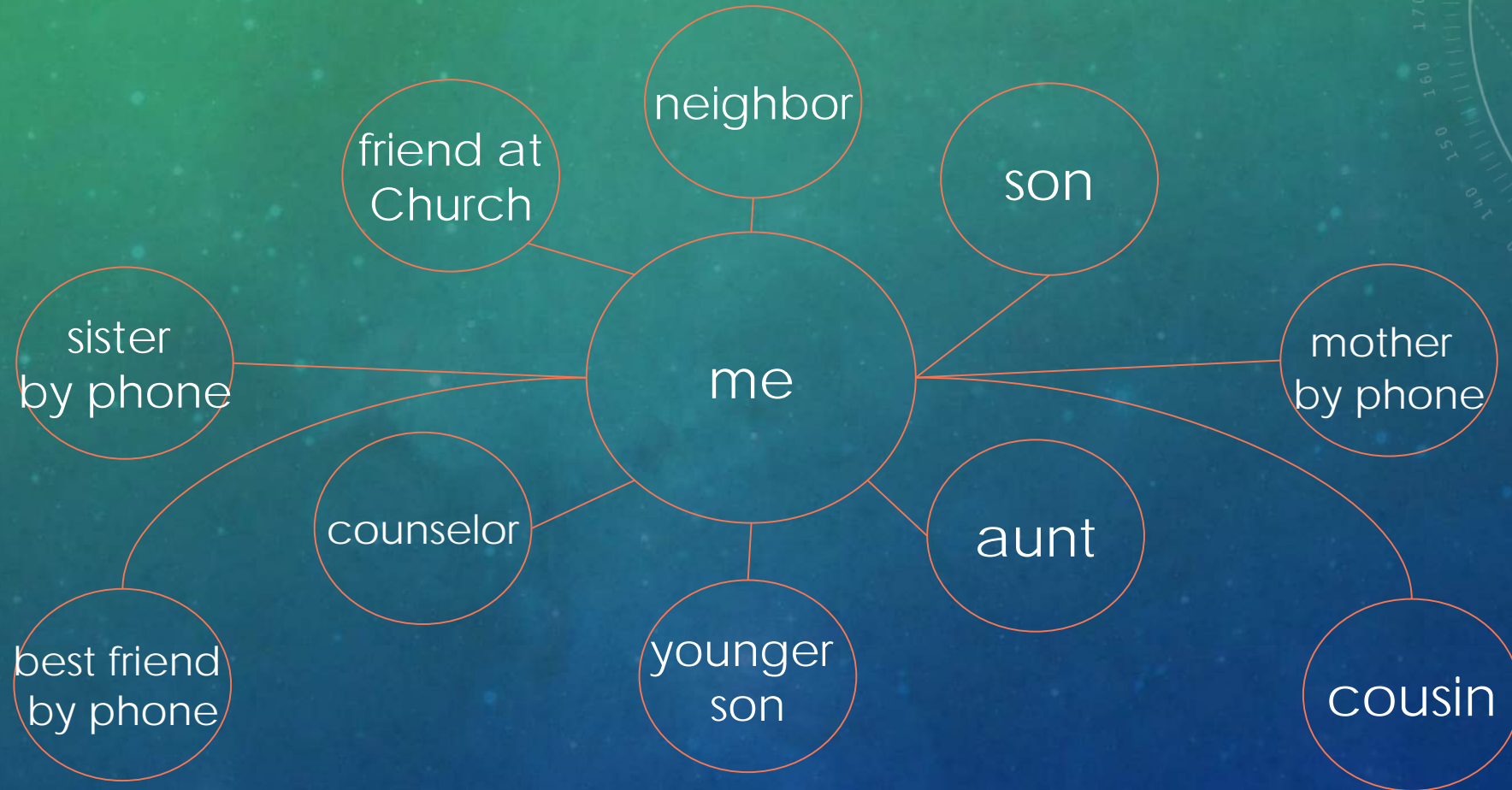
Identify who's in your network

Who's available?

Who's missing?

Look at your "big picture" of your social connections

EXAMPLE OF SOCIAL CONNECTIONS MAP



REVIEW YOUR SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

- Who are your most important connections?
- Who can you share your feelings with?
- Who can you get advice from?
- Who do you want to spend time with?
- Who might need your help or support?

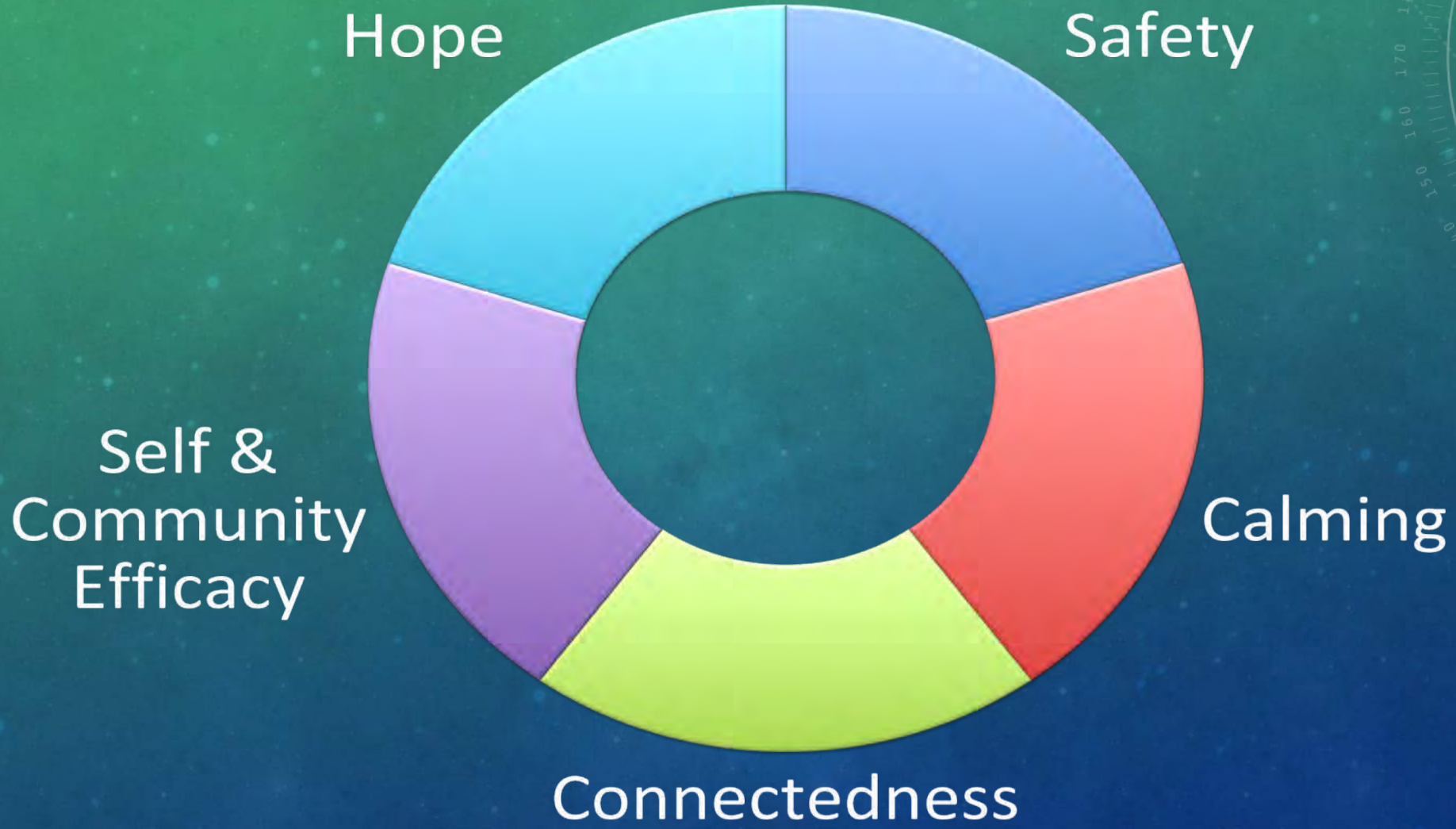
SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

- Are there types of supports that are missing?
- Are there those you are not connected with but want to be?
- Who do you want to spend more time with?
- Who do you want to spend less time with?
- Are there relationships that you want to improve?
- What ways do you want to help others?
- Do you want to join a community group?



SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

- Identify one area to change
- Make a plan that is concrete and specific
- Take Action to fill the gap



STRESS AND WELLNESS

- Stress is part of our lives.
- Stress is manageable.
- Awareness is key – dashboard concept can be helpful.
- Monitor your stress loading and make a plan to address.
- Take your emotional health seriously – it's the right thing to do – always put your own oxygen mask on first!!!!
- Thanks for all you do to help others – and know that it's ok to take care of yourself, too.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

ON-LINE RESOURCES:

learn.NCTSN.org

www.NCTSN.org

www.ncptsd.va.gov