

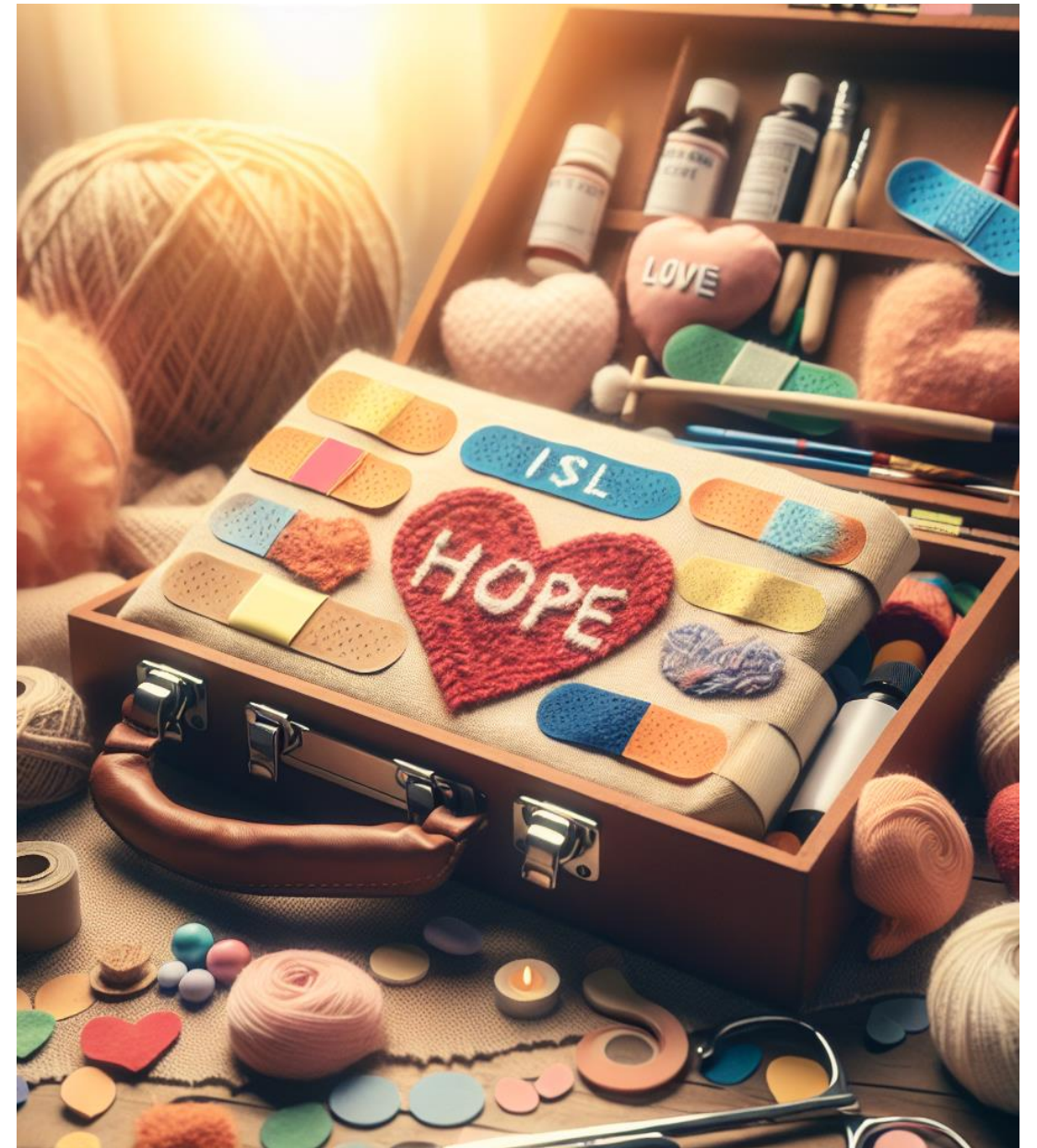


FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING: NURTURING WELL-BEING THROUGH EMOTIONAL FIRST AID, STRESS MANAGEMENT, AND RESILIENCE

By Kody Ramler, LCSW

WHAT IS EMOTIONAL FIRST AID?

Emotional first aid is the concept of providing support for emotional health in the same way that first aid is provided for physical health emergencies. It involves skillsets and practices that can help us take better care of ourselves so we can recover from all types of emotional events.



DR. GUY WINCH

Dr. Guy Winch is a licensed psychologist who has dedicated his career to helping people improve their emotional health and well-being. He coined the term 'emotional first aid' which refers to the skills needed to treat emotional injuries and manage emotional upsets. Dr. Winch wrote the book Emotional First Aid to teach people how to practice emotional hygiene. He provides insightful advice on how to heal from rejection, rumination, failure, guilt and grief. His work aims to improve society's understanding of mental health and reduce the stigma around seeking psychological help.

EMOTIONAL FIRST AID

Healing
Rejection, Guilt, Failure,



GUY WINCH, PH.D.

"The advice Winch offers in this refreshingly useful book is both practical and practicable—down-to-earth techniques that really can bring relief when things feel like they're falling apart."

1 Emotional Events create feelings

2 Human brains categorize emotions

3 Feelings become problematic when they don't match the severity of an event

4 Increased perception of stress



KEY PRINCIPLES

Recognize Emotional Pain

Acknowledge and understand emotional distress, just as you would any physical injuries

Reserve Judgement

Practice empathy and avoid attaching judgment or labels to yourself or others

Be Compassionate

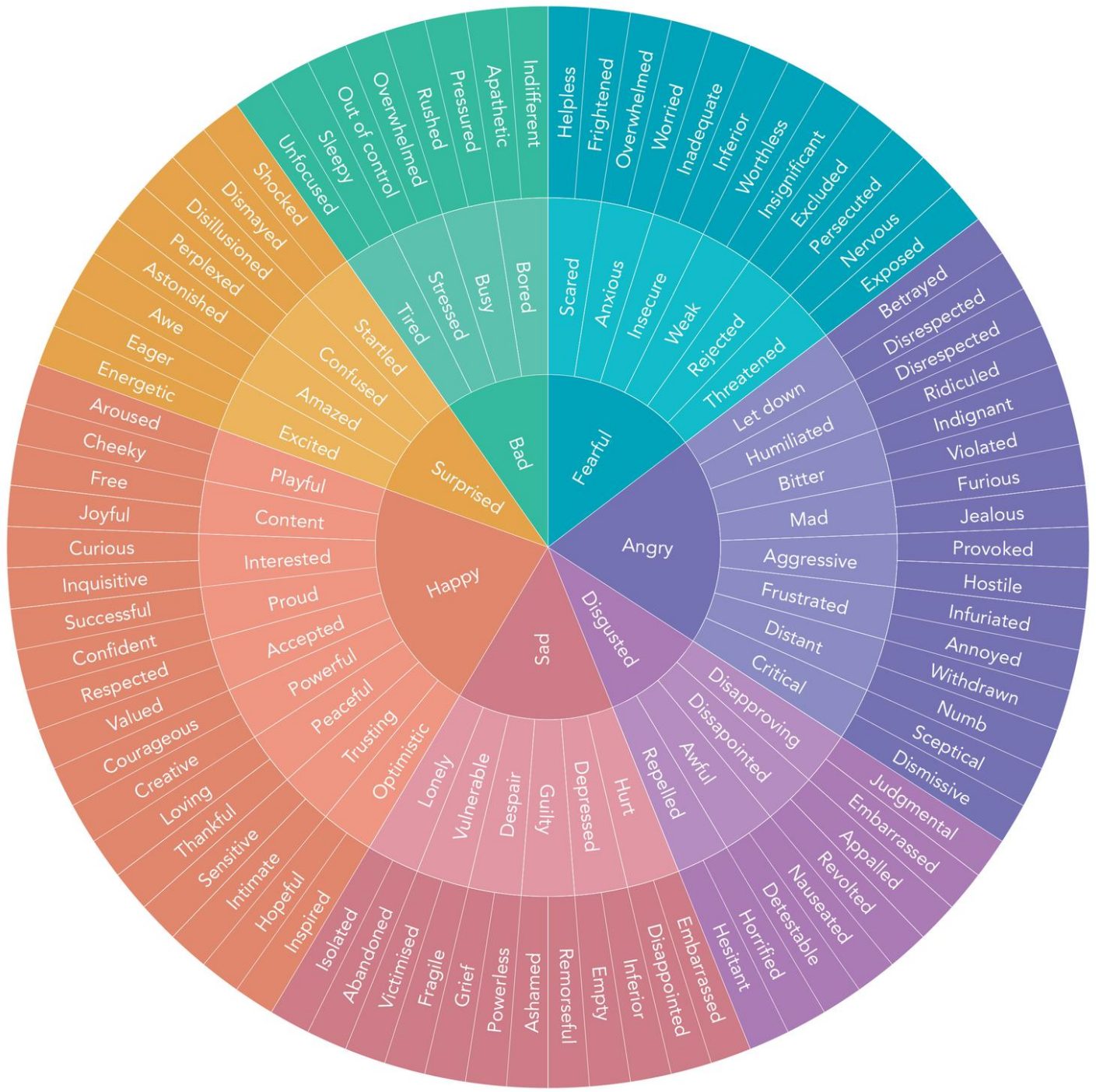
Use self-compassion to treat yourself and others kindly

Avoid Rumination

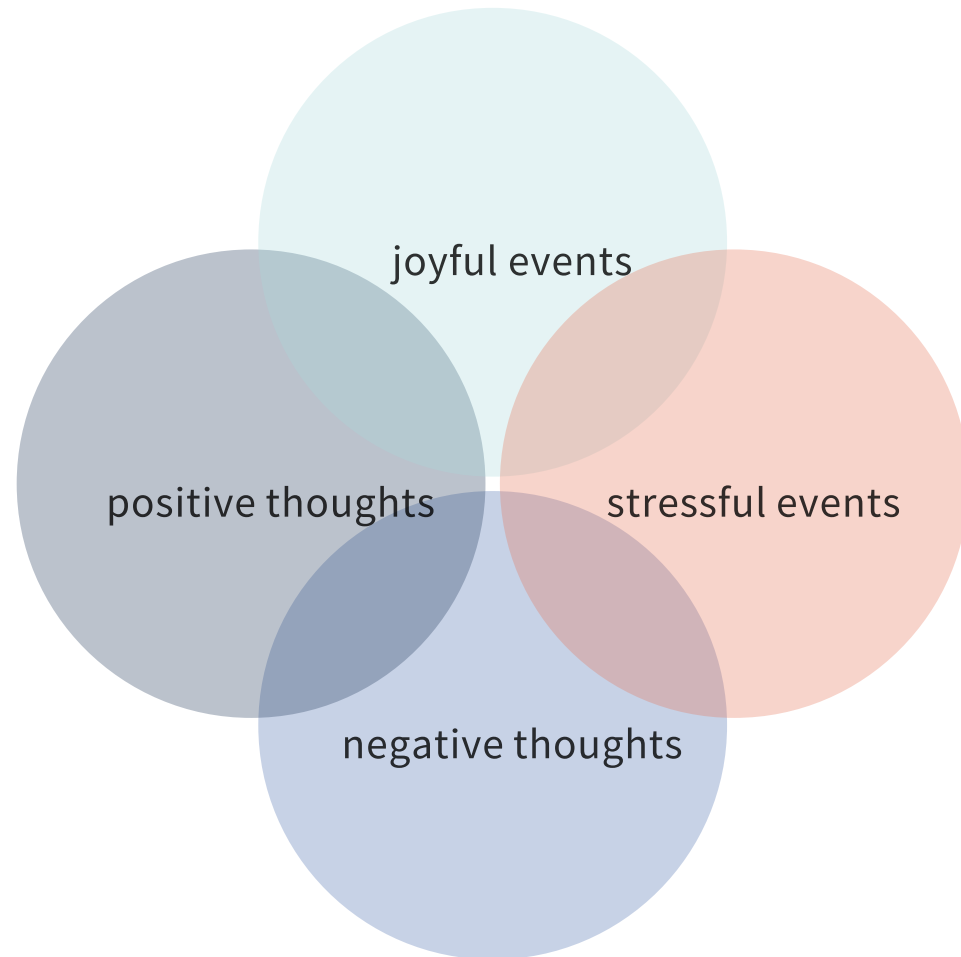
Notice when you are stuck in a negative feedback loop and take action to move forward

Redefine Failure

Engage in self-reflection and choose to operate from a growth rather than fixed mindset

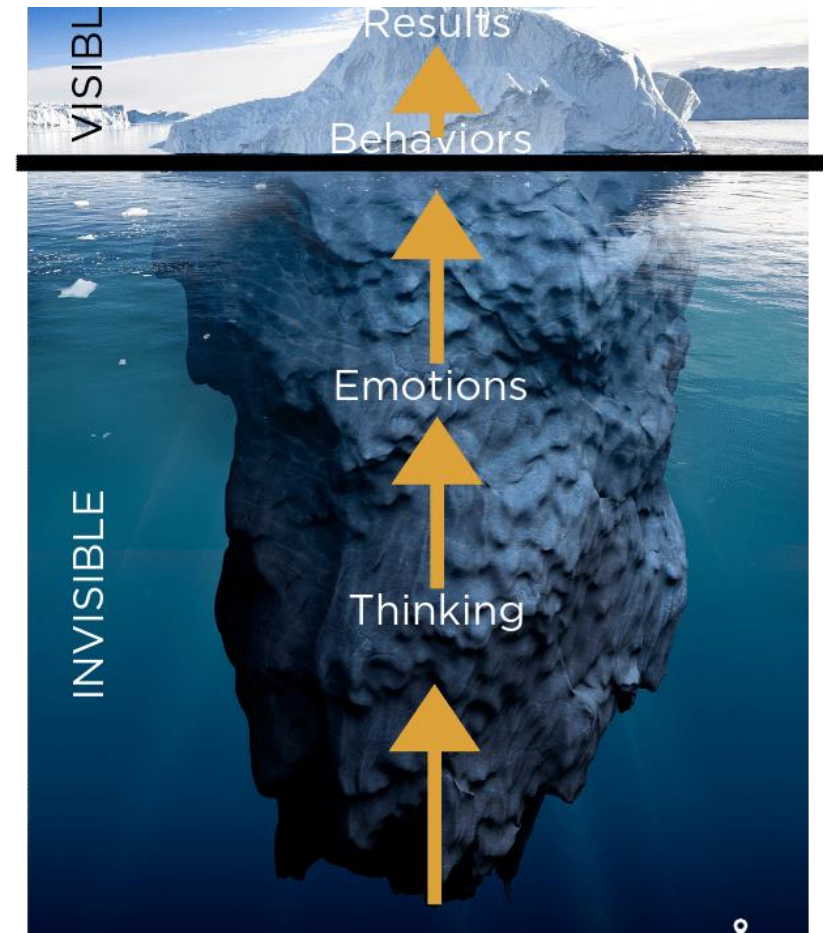


EVENTS + THOUGHTS = FEELINGS



PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

- Check In with yourself
Ask yourself, "What am I feeling right now?"
- Identify the narrative
"What is the story I am telling myself that is causing me to feel ___?"
- Challenge the story
"Is there another version that could be true?"



COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING

Cognitive restructuring involves identifying thoughts that are unrealistic or unhelpful, and replacing them with perspectives that are more realistic and helpful. This technique can reduce stress and anxiety by changing one's thought patterns.

REFRAME NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

Cognitive Restructuring

We often hold irrational thoughts that perpetuate negative core beliefs about ourselves, others, and the world that have little basis in reality and can be debilitating. Use this worksheet to begin challenging irrational thoughts to move towards a better understanding of yourself and the world around you.

1: WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE FOR/AGAINST THIS THOUGHT?

2: AM I BASING THIS THOUGHT ON FACT OR FEELING?

3: IS THIS THOUGHT BLACK AND WHITE, OR MORE COMPLICATED?

4: COULD I BE MISINTERPRETING THE EVIDENCE OR MAKING ASSUMPTIONS?

5: HOW WOULD OTHER PEOPLE INTERPRET THE SITUATION?

MINDFULNESS

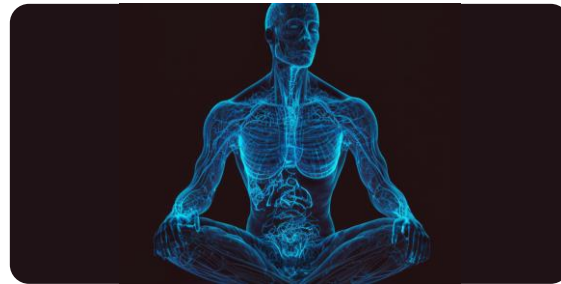
"Find out who you are and do it on purpose."

--Dolly Parton



Anchoring

A practice of noticing when we feel distracted, checked out, or not present and bringing our awareness back to the present



Body Scans

A simple way to gain awareness of yourself through your body



Guided Visualization

An exercise using words and images to help move your attention away from worry, stress and pain to help you find your own inner strength and creativity



Gratitude Practice

Practicing gratitude allows us to develop a deeper understanding of ourselves and our values and helps us be more attuned to our emotions and the impact they have on our thoughts and actions

UNDERSTANDING STRESS



Stress is made up of:

Stressors--anything that may knock us out of balance

Stress-responses--what our body and mind do to try to reestablish balance



Stress affects the body

It increases heart rate, blood pressure, breathing rate and muscle tension. It suppresses the immune system.

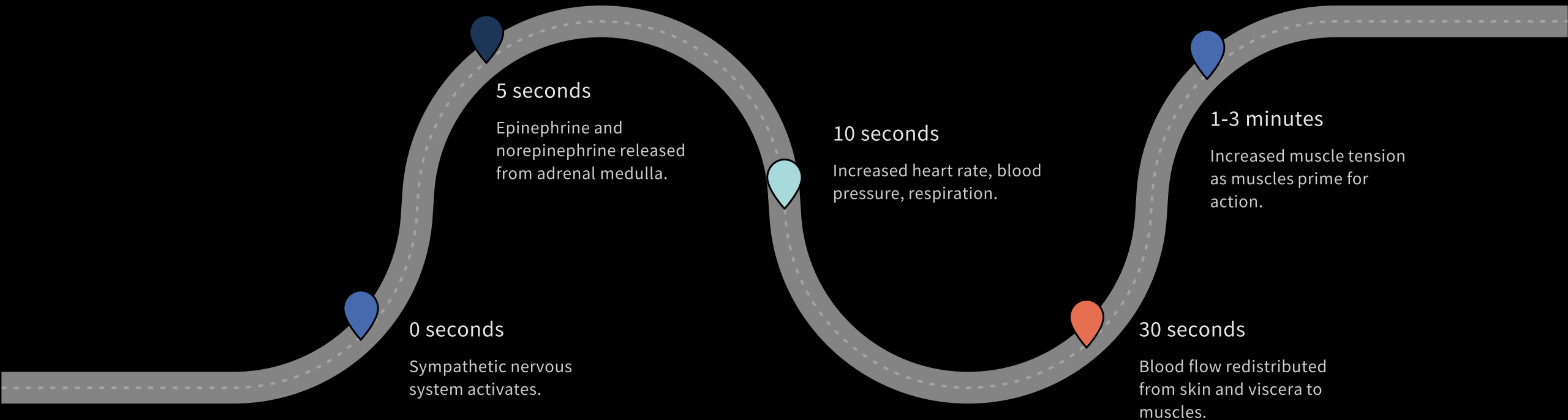


Stress affects thoughts and emotions

It impairs concentration, memory and problem-solving. It can cause anxiety, depression and irritability.

Stress is the body's response to demands or threats. It affects the body physically and impacts thoughts and emotions.

FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE



0 seconds

Sympathetic nervous system activates.

5 seconds

Epinephrine and norepinephrine released from adrenal medulla.

10 seconds

Increased heart rate, blood pressure, respiration.

30 seconds

Blood flow redistributed from skin and viscera to muscles.

1-3 minutes

Increased muscle tension as muscles prime for action.

**“CHRONIC STRESS PUTS OUR BODY INTO
CONSTANT ‘FIGHT OR FLIGHT’ MODE,
WHICH CAN LEAD TO SERIOUS HEALTH
PROBLEMS LIKE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE,
HEART DISEASE, DIABETES, DEPRESSION,
ANXIETY AND MORE.”**

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

THE BELL CURVE OF STRESS



Normal distribution



Low stress

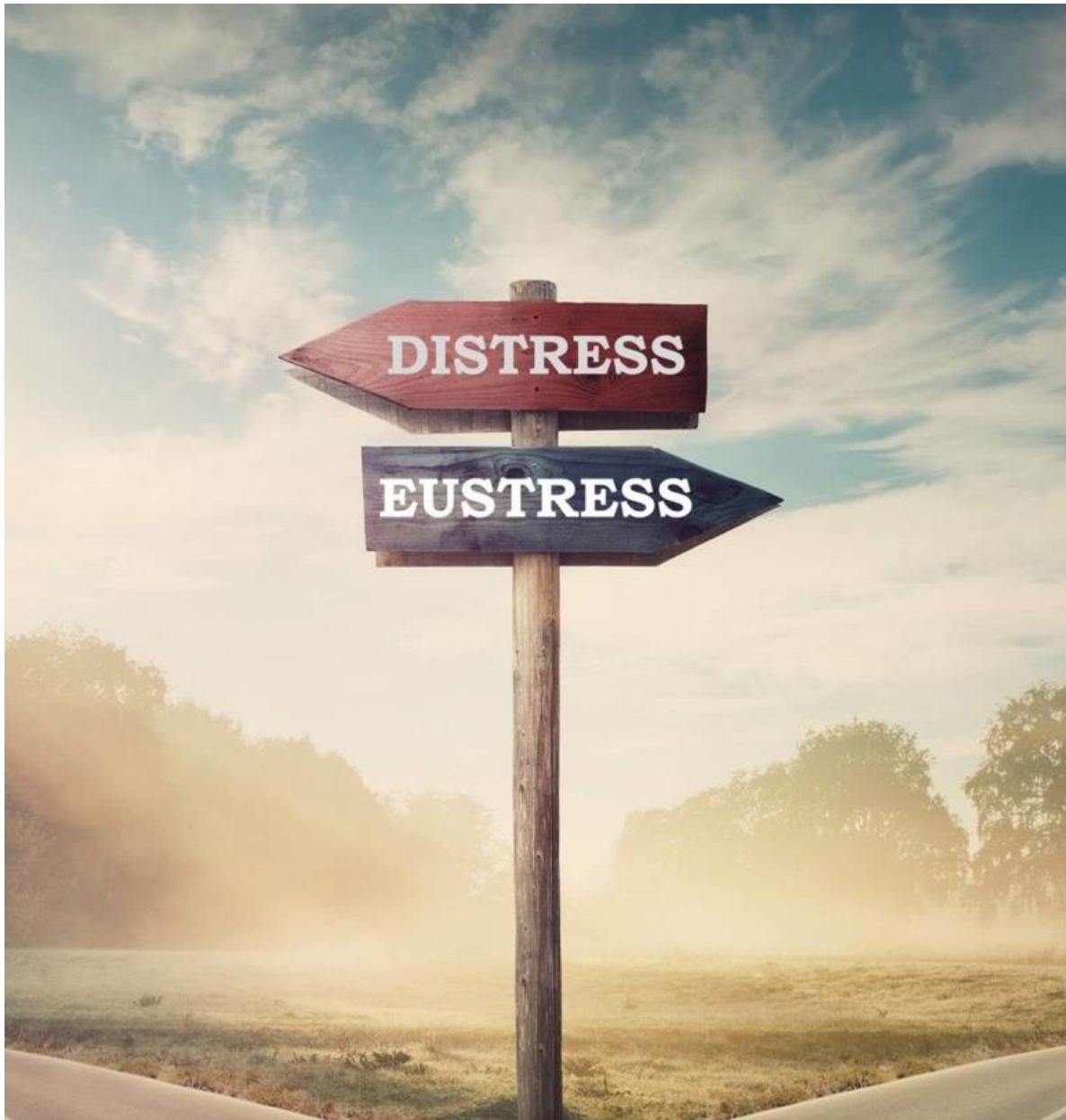


High stress

The bell curve shows a normal distribution of stress levels, with optimal stress in the peak of the curve which can lead to boredom and lack of motivation

The right side shows high stress levels, which can negatively impact health and performance

Understanding the optimal stress zone empowers us to monitor and regulate our stress levels for greater wellbeing.

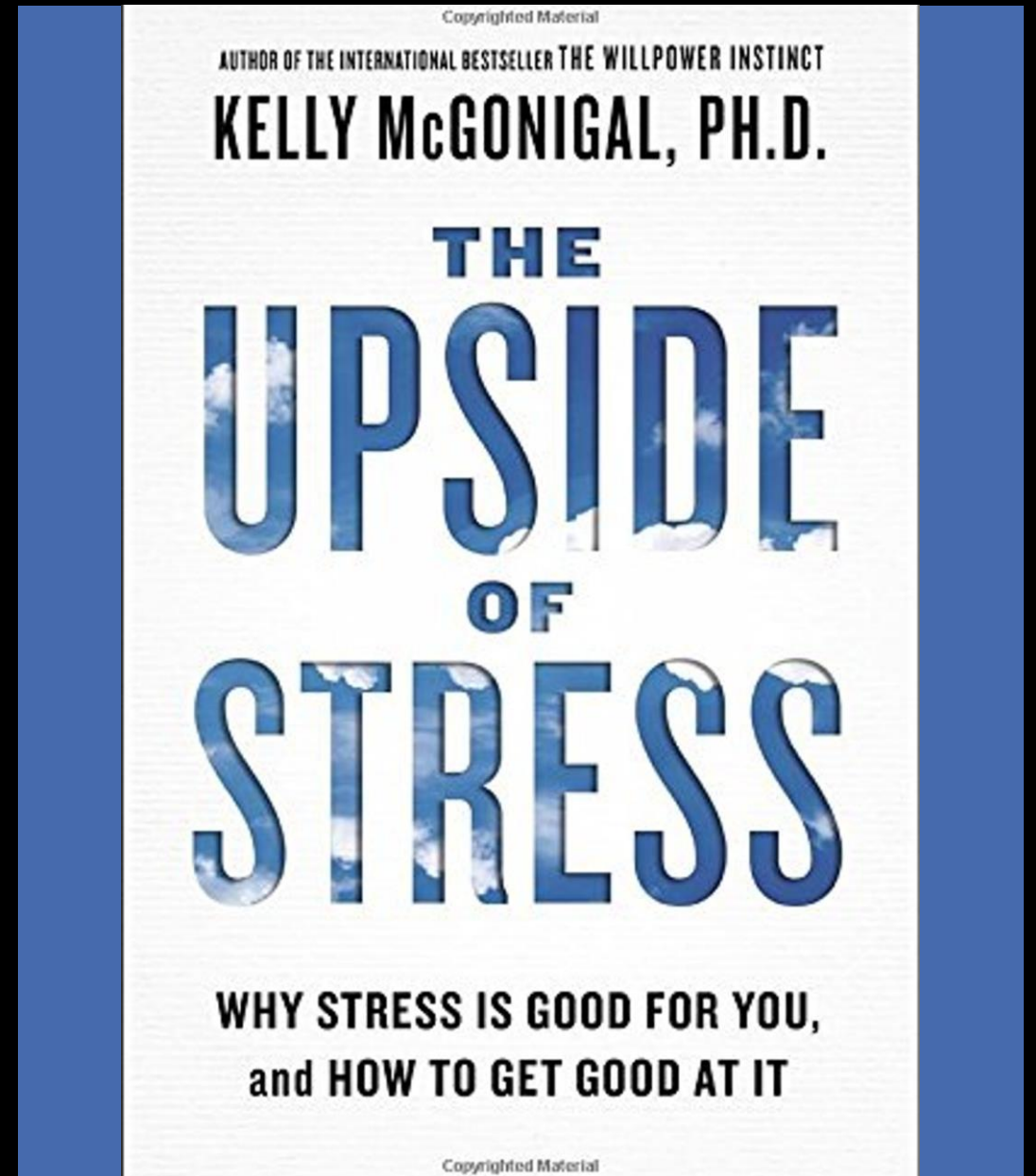


EUSTRESS: THE POSITIVE SIDE OF STRESS

Eustress refers to positive forms of stress that can help motivate and energize. For example, the stress and adrenaline rush from public speaking or competing in a sport can improve focus and performance. Stress becomes harmful when it is excessive, but manageable levels can provide benefits like improved motivation and alertness.

STRESS REDEFINED

Stress is an unavoidable part of life. However, we can redefine our relationship to stress by shifting our mindset and developing healthy coping strategies. Stress itself is not the enemy, our reaction to it shapes its impact. With greater self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and resilience skills, we can learn to harness stress in empowering ways.



STRESS AND VALUES

Living in alignment with your values can reduce stress and improve wellbeing. Identifying your core values and making choices guided by them helps bring meaning and purpose to life.



A MINDSET EXERCISE

- **Identify your core values**

Make a list of your most important values, such as family, integrity, achievement, etc.

- **Rank your values**

Order your values by importance to you.

- **Reflect on a stressor through values-based lens**

Think about a difficult situation you have gone through recently; choose one of your values and consider the stressor as it relates to this value

THE IMPORTANCE OF BOUNDARIES IN STRESS MANAGEMENT



Set limits for yourself

Establishing boundaries around your time and emotional investment helps prevent burnout and stress overload.



Know your priorities

Focusing on your top priorities gives you permission to say no to additional demands and maintain balance.



Communicate your needs

Letting others know what you need in terms of time and space allows them to support your boundaries.



Take breaks

Regularly resting and recharging ensures you have the energy needed to uphold your boundaries long-term.

Establishing and maintaining clear boundaries around your time, energy, and emotional investment is a key part of effective stress management.

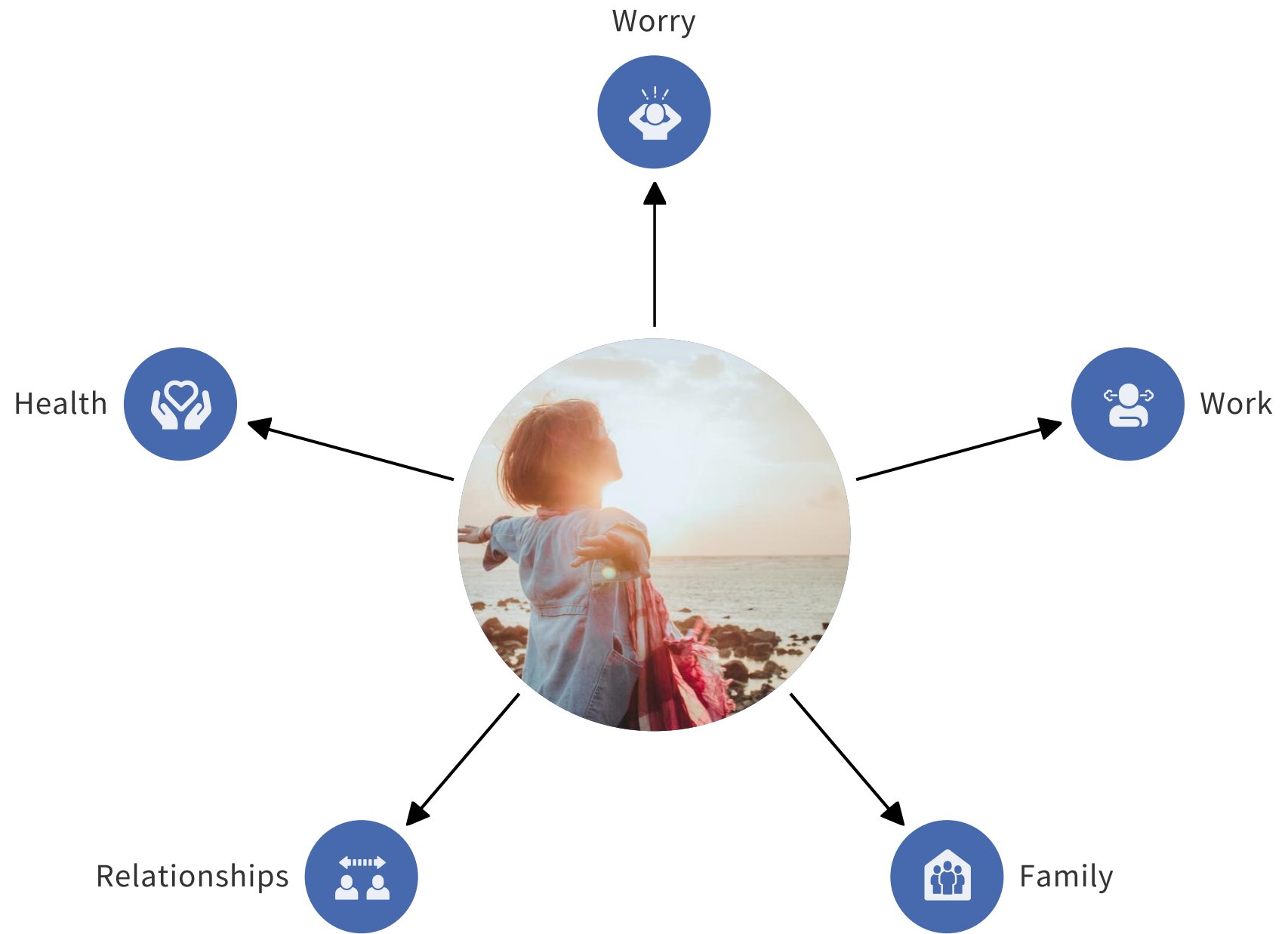
What is causing me unnecessary stress or discomfort?

What do I look forward to each day versus what do I dread?

Who or what gives me energy?

What areas of my life do I feel exhausted by?

What makes me feel safe, supported, and valued?



WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from challenges and stress. It involves having inner strength, flexibility, optimism, and coping skills. Resilient people are able to adapt when facing adversity.



WHY IS RESILIENCE IMPORTANT?



Promotes mental health

Being resilient improves overall wellbeing and satisfaction with life.



Enables effective coping

Resilience provides skills to bounce back from challenges and stressors.



Builds self-confidence

Overcoming obstacles through resilience boosts self-esteem.



Allows one to thrive

Resilience empowers reaching full potential despite setbacks.

Developing resilience is key for successfully navigating life's ups and downs.

WAYS TO BUILD RESILIENCE

- **Cultivate connection**

Build strong connections with family, friends, mentors, and community.

- **Cultivate optimism**

Focus on positive thinking, gratitude, and seeing the good.

- **Learn from experiences**

Reflect on challenges and how you can grow.

- **Maintain perspective**

Take a balanced view of situations without exaggerating.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

FOCUS ON INTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL





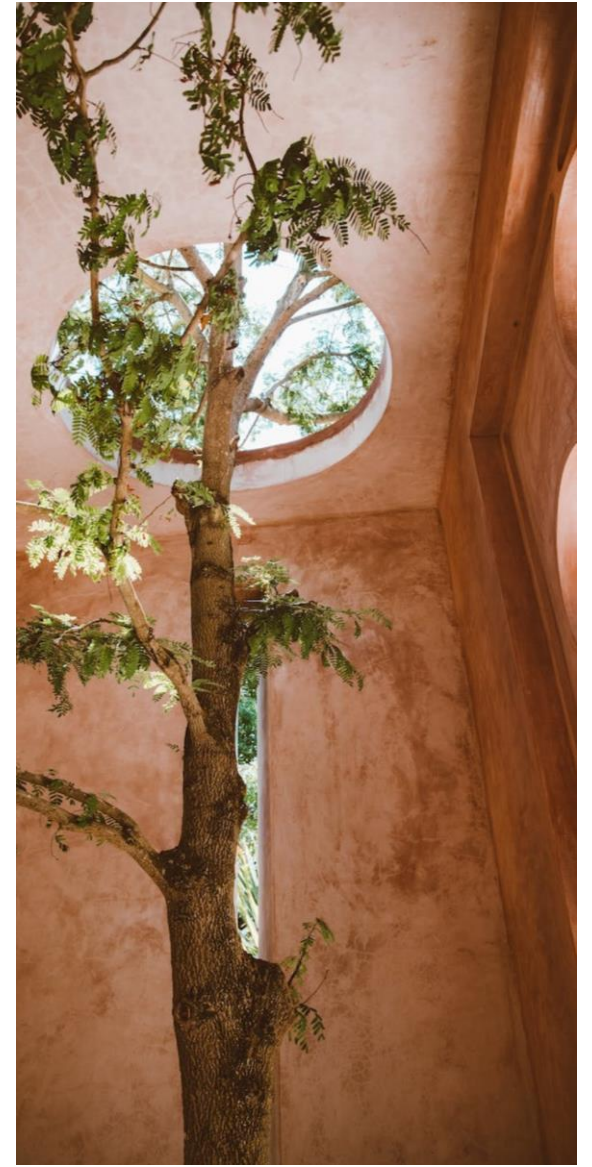
Balance



Prioritize



Self-Care



Adaptability

PERSONAL VALUES



Our Moral Compass

Values are our own individual compass, keeping us in alignment with our true selves.



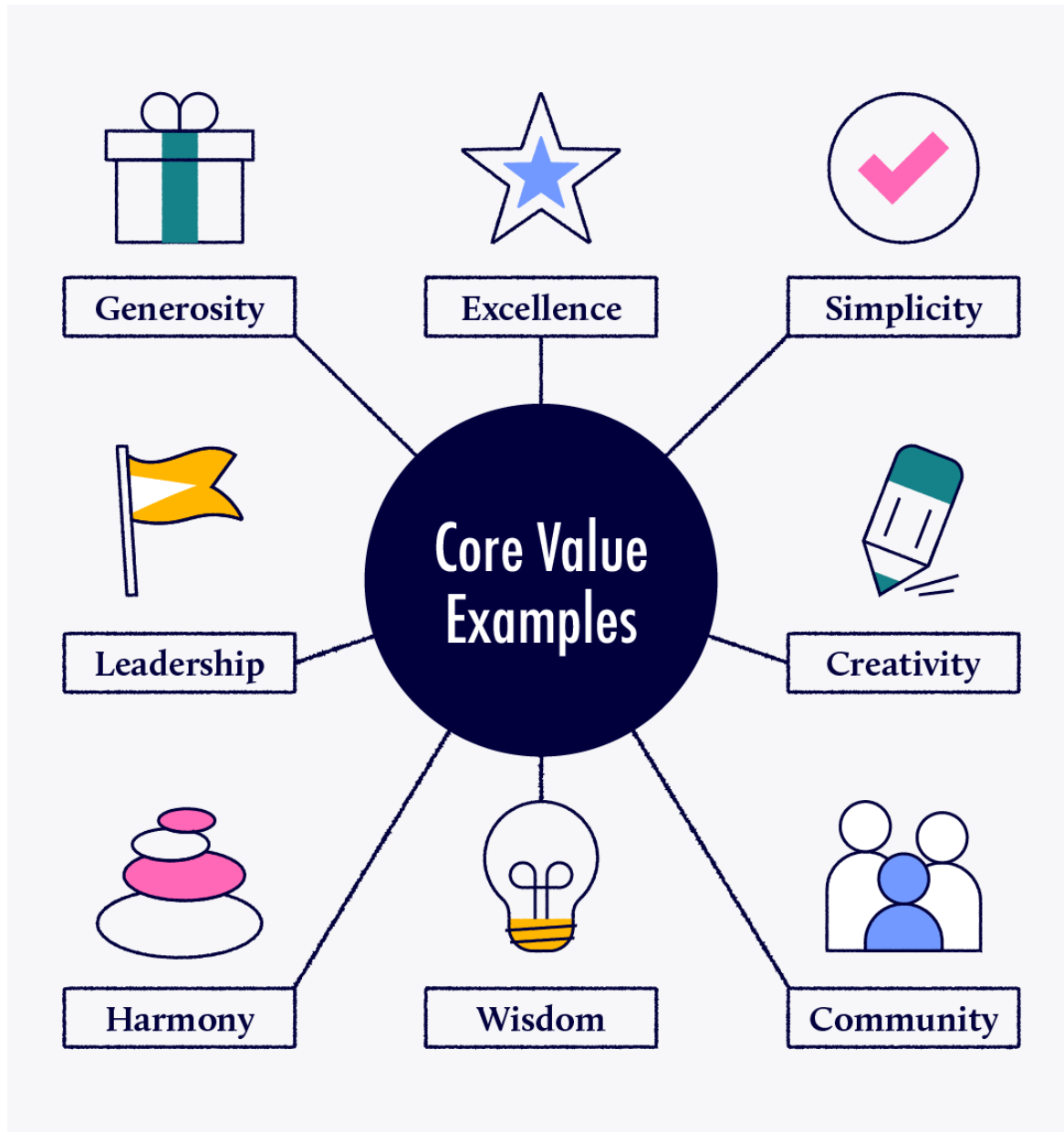
Foundation of Self-Awareness

Enables us to prioritize the things that are important in our lives while letting go of those that don't serve us



Promotes Authenticity

Knowing our values allows us to make decisions and engage in relationships with authenticity



How Values Light the Way

"There are no guarantees in the arena. We will struggle. We will even fail. There will be darkness. But if we are clear about the values that guide us in our efforts to show up and be seen, we will always be able to find the light. We will know what it means to live brave."

1. THE FLAME: What are the 1-2 values that really light the way for me? Draw a flame and put these values in the flame.

The values that help me find my way in the dark are:

2. PROTECTING THE FLAME: All lanterns have devices that protect the flame. What are the specific behaviors that support and protect your values? Who are the people you want to put around you who support and protect your values?

The behaviors and people that support my values are:

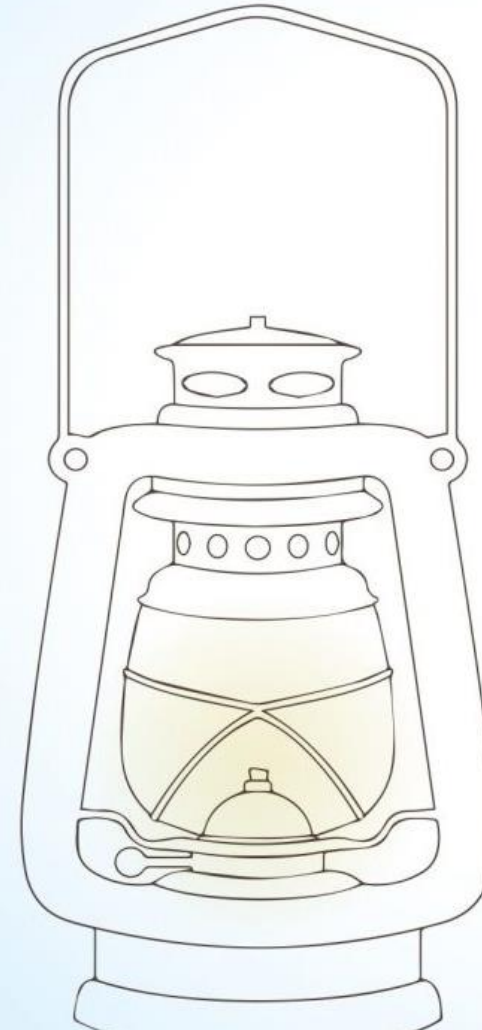
3. THE HANDLE: Sometimes when we're in struggle or feeling overwhelmed we set down the lantern and walk away from it. We feel like we're already carrying so much. But without the light of the lantern (our clarity of values) it can get very dark very quickly. Use the handle to identify the behaviors that can serve as a red flag that you've walked away from your light and your values

I know I'm in trouble when

or I know I've lost my way when

or I know I'm out of alignment with my values when

4. RADIATING LIGHT: When was a time you embodied your most important values?



ROLE MODELS OF RESILIENCE



- Nelson Mandela
Imprisoned for 27 years,
later became President of
South Africa.



- Oprah Winfrey
Abused as a child, built a
media empire.



- JK Rowling
Battled depression and
adversity before publishing
Harry Potter.

These role models overcame adversity and built successful careers through resilience.

ACTION PLAN

1. Take Care of Yourself

Get enough sleep, eat healthy foods, exercise regularly, and give yourself a break.

2. Connect with Others

Spend time with supportive friends and family, join a support group, or volunteer in your community.

3. Challenge Negative Thinking

Don't believe every negative thought. Evaluate it objectively and from a different perspective.

4. Try Something New

Take up a new hobby, travel somewhere new, or take a class to challenge yourself and create new neural pathways in the brain.

5. Practice Mindfulness

Try meditation, yoga, or just taking time to focus on the present moment.

6. Get Professional Help

See a counselor or therapist if you're struggling with an emotional injury, stress, or any other mental health issues.

