

Teaching children to manage stress without distress



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NATIONAL CENTER
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Striving to reduce the level of distress in the lives of our children is an important goal. Helping our children discover their resiliency from their own mastery of stress can increase their awareness of their character strengths and abilities. This workshop will help participants teach their children not only how to identify reduce stress in their lives but also how to develop self-confidence and self-reliance by facing difficult challenges.



Teaching Children & Adolescents

- What is stress?
- Is stress bad?
- What does stress feel like?
- What is stress management?



In response to the wind (stressor) trees feel the pressure (stress) & bend in the wind (coping)



Sometimes an Umbrella is Not Enough!



Stress vs Stressors

Stressor

- Inside of us – we can manage & change (our thoughts)
- Outside of us – harder to manage & change

Stress

- Our body's reaction to stressors
- Based on our appraisal of the threat or demand of the stressors

Stressors

- Chronic (Cumulative) vs. Acute
- Major Events vs. Minor Hassles



Primary Child Stressors

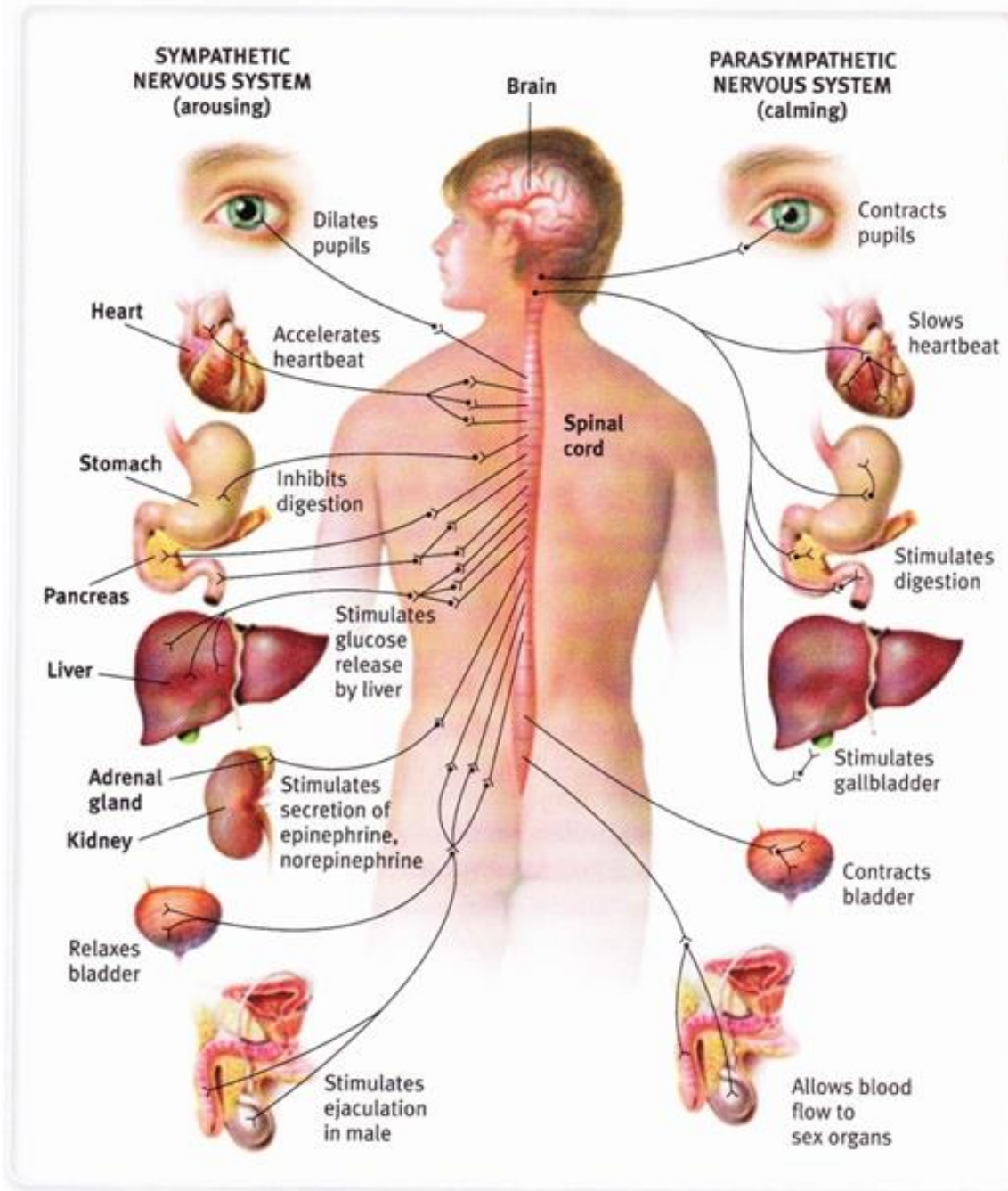
- negative evaluation by peers & adults
- parental conflict & loss
- conflict with an adult
- feeling excluded socially



Extreme Stress Responses

- Flight
- Fight
- Freeze





Autonomic Nervous System

Stress & Emotions

- Stress as the fuel for motivation & behavioral change
- Reducing our stress levels can help us better manage the level of our feelings & life demands

I do not want to study



I do not want to get out of bed



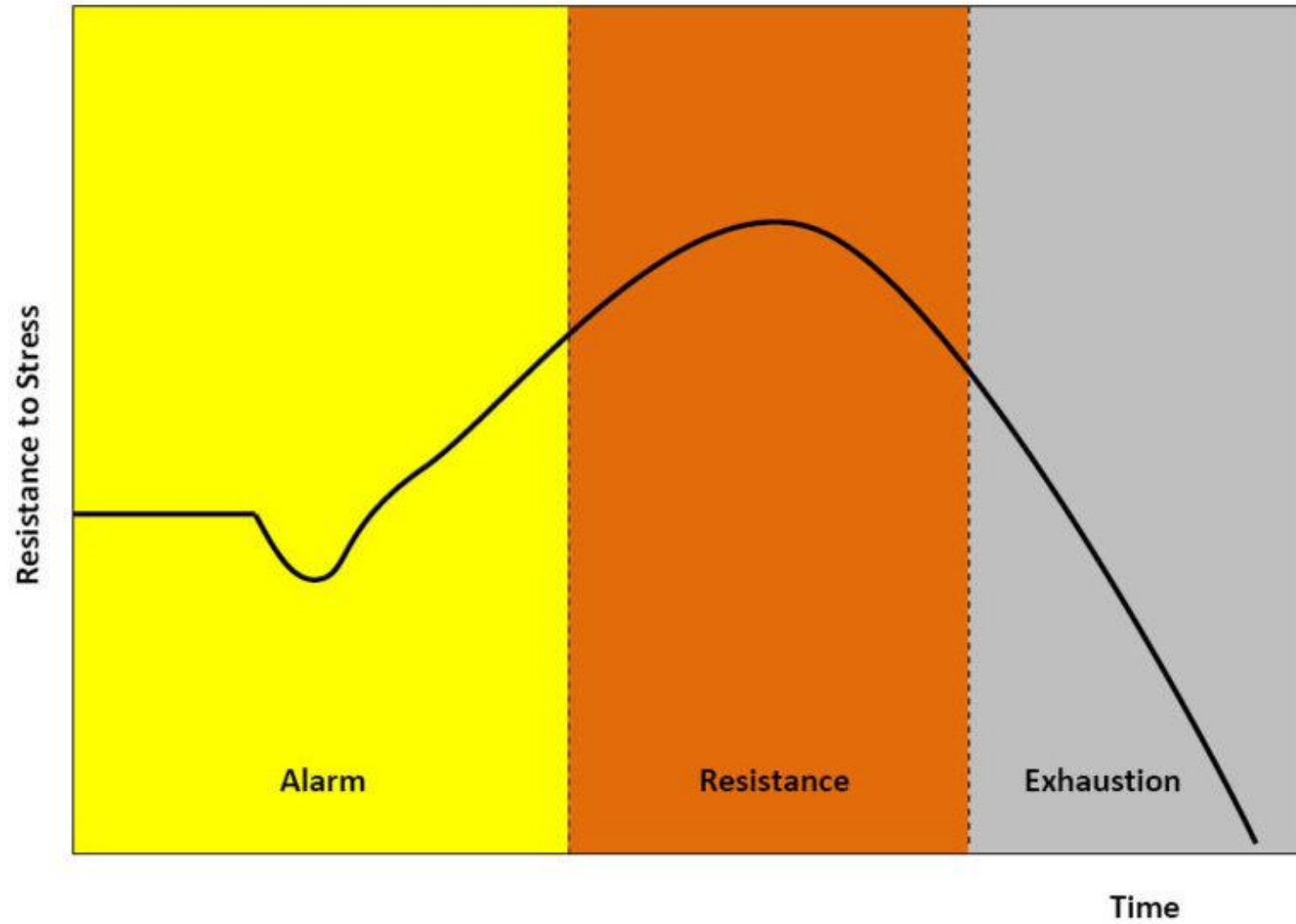
Eustress vs Distress

Eustress – Stress which results because of a positive stressors

Distress – Stress which results because of a negative stressor

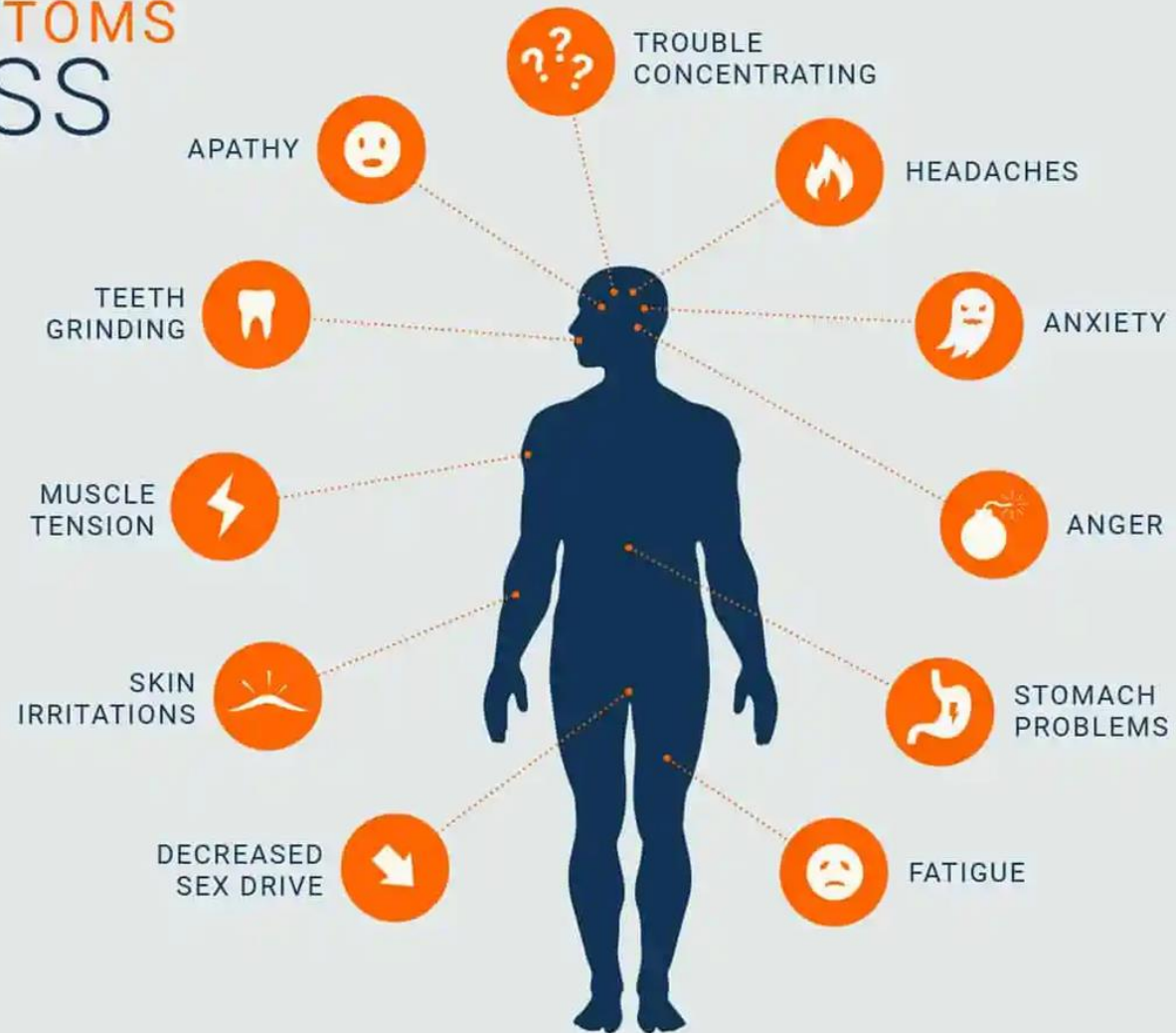


Impact of Chronic Stress



Mind Body Connection & Awareness

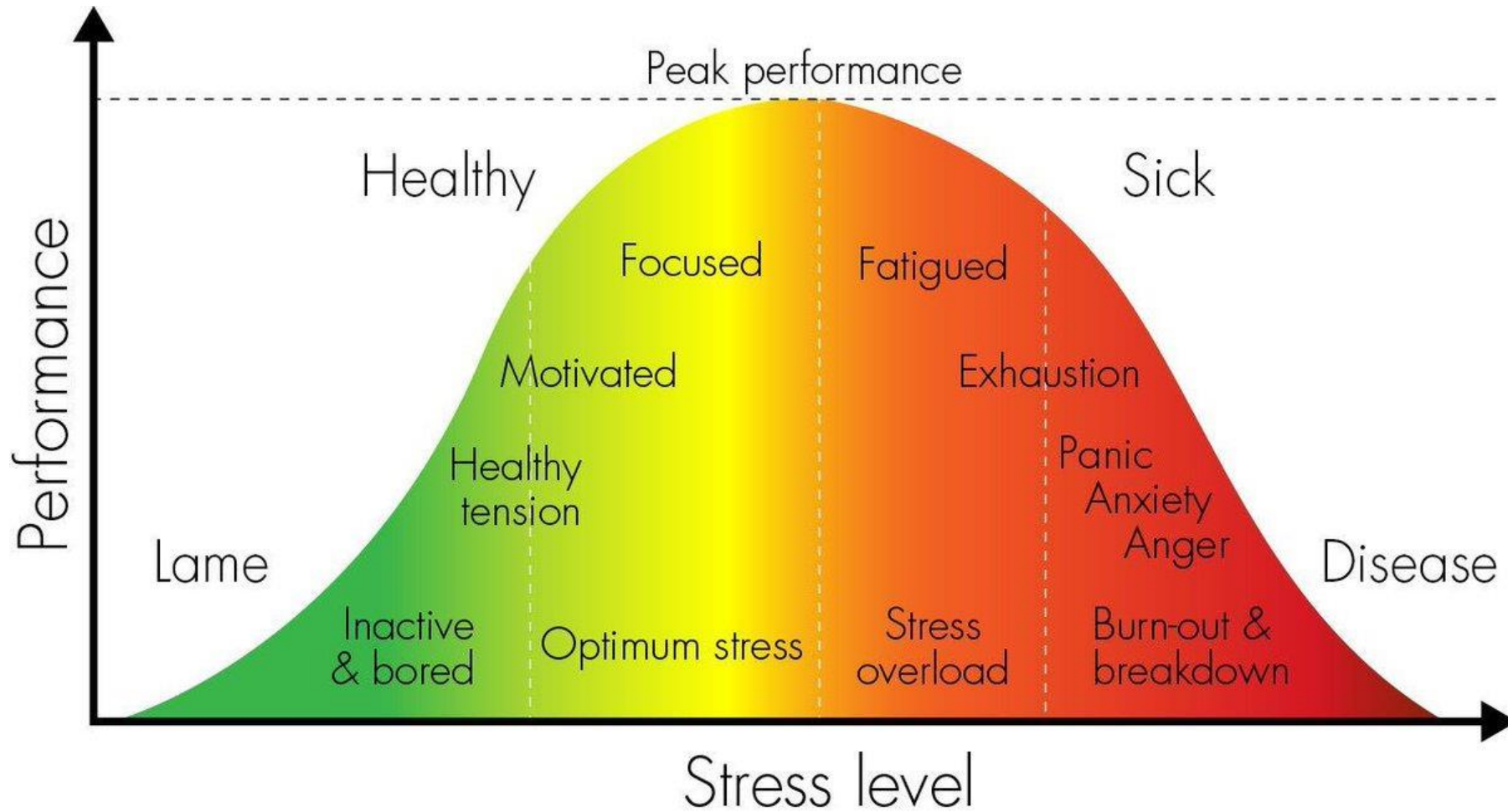
Recognizing
THE SYMPTOMS
of **STRESS**



Problem Thoughts Associated with High Stress

- I am going crazy
- I am having a panic attack
- I think I am imagining things
- I feel out of control / strange
- I cannot calm down
- Others will notice

Finding the Best Level of Stress



Yerkes-Dodson law

Low Adrenaline

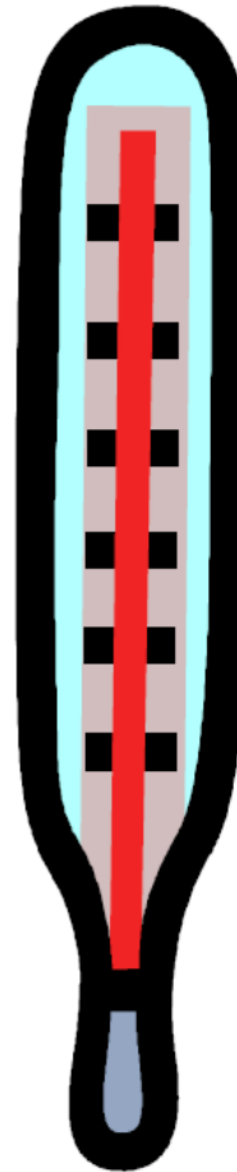


High Adrenaline



**How STRONG or INTENSE is
your stress?**

**How much stress will you
need with this task?**



10 VERY STRONG

9

8 A LOT

7

6

5 MEDIUM

4

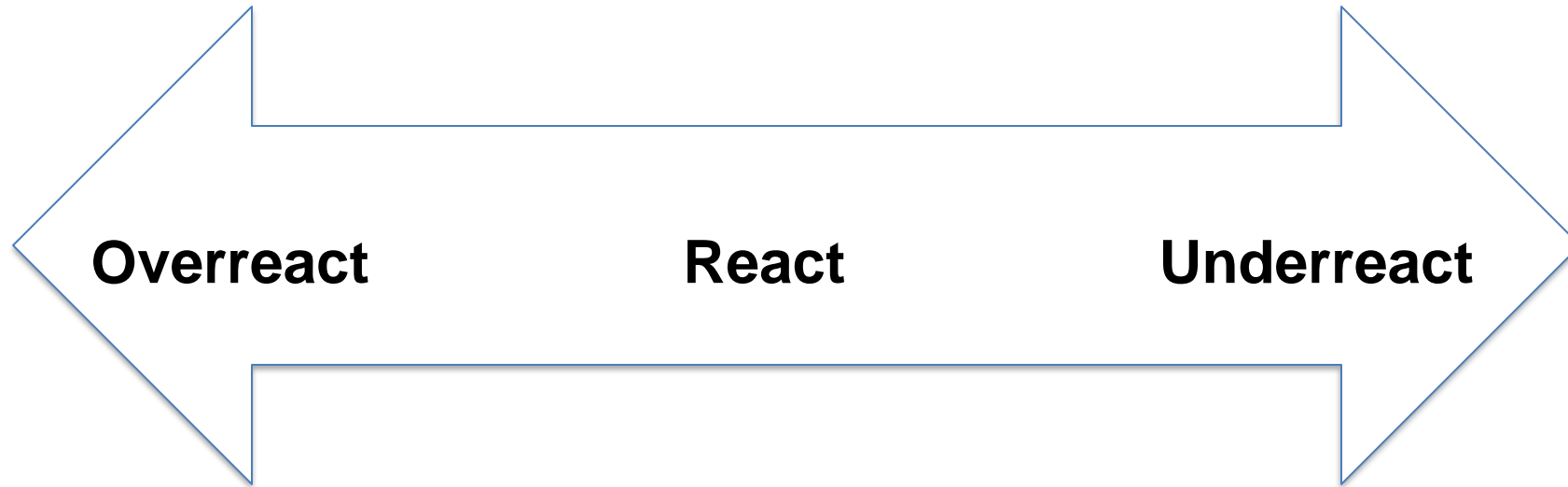
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2 A LITTLE

1

0 NOT AT ALL

Temperament



Stress Management & Coping

Goals

1. Reduce stress levels to improve efficiency
2. Change perception of how threatening or demanding is the stressor
3. Build competency & confidence through experience so the stressor does not seem so threatening (**resilience**)

Gaining Competency & Confidence

1. Reduce stress when handling stressors
2. Planned exposure (approach) to stressors
3. Learning from setbacks
4. Avoidance as a temporary helpful strategy

Where do children learn about stress management & coping?

- Watching how caregivers, friends, teachers & other **role models** handle stressors
- Their success in managing stressors in the past & lowering their stress levels
- Cultural guidance & support about handling stressors

Unhelpful Stress Reduction Habits

- eating
- alcohol
- smoking
- gambling
- internet browsing
- shopping
- television
- social media
- yelling / arguing



- Avoidance
- Numbing
- Blaming others
- Withdrawing
- Risk taking or engaging in dangerous activities
- Dependency or not asking for help



Stress Management Approaches

- “Let me see how I can solve this” vs “I need to calm down first”
(problem-solving vs. emotionally focused)
- “I will deal with this now” vs. “I will deal with this tomorrow”
(approach vs. avoidance)
- “I can handle this” vs. “I cannot handle this alone”
(internal vs. external locus of control)
- “I will take charge” vs. “I will wait and see what happens”
(active vs. passive)



Emotionally Focused

- Validate feelings
- Listen to all concerns
- Offer to be available
- Encourage & compliment



Problem Solving Support

- Present possible coping strategies
- Provide feedback about how they are doing
- Help find alternative solutions to their problems
- Uncover resources that may be helpful

Goals of Coping Techniques



- ❑ Increase amount of happiness & relaxation in life
- ❑ Find best levels of stress for the situation
- ❑ Build skills for the future
- ❑ Enjoy and learn from feelings
- ❑ Feed body / health / wellness
- ❑ Improve relationships / support systems

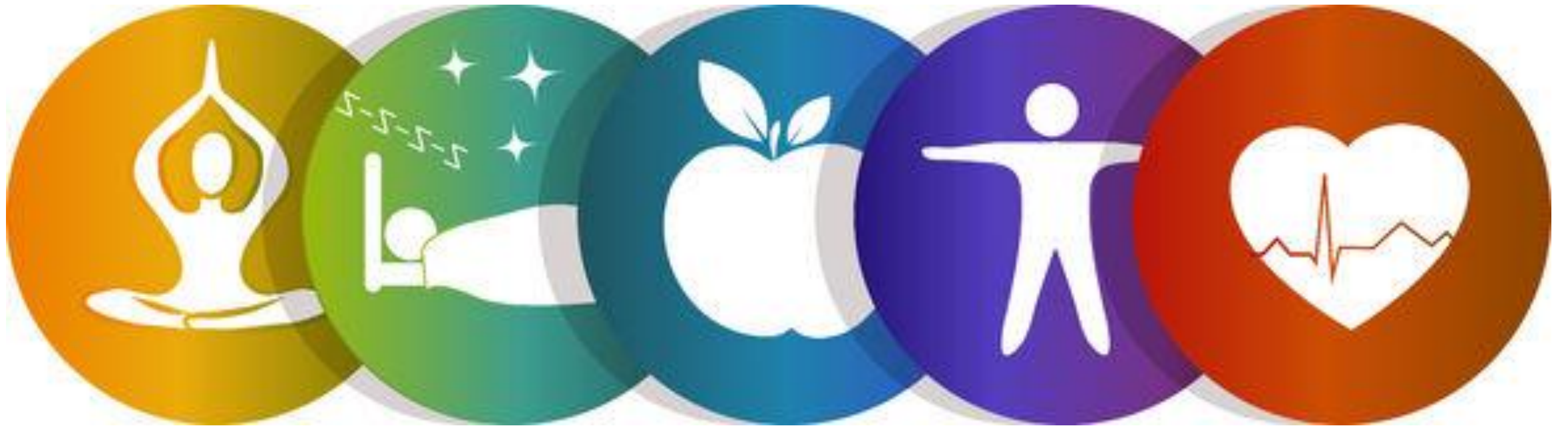
Stress Management / Self-Care Checklist

- Diet / Healthy Eating
- Exercise / Gym / Trainer
- Relaxation / Mindfulness
- Meditation
- Yoga
- Psychotherapy
- Adult education classes
- Spiritual & Religious Activities
- Hobbies
- Travel / Vacation
- Socializing with Friends
- Journaling
- Creative Outlets
- Laughter / Comedy
- Massage / Spa
- Shopping
- Healthy Cooking
- Sufficient amounts of Sleep & Rest
- Reading for Enjoyment
- Sing or Listen to Music
- Romance
- Shopping
- Hot Bath
- Dance
- Movie / Theater / Museum
- Say No to Save Time for Self
- Wear Comfortable Clothing / Update Wardrobe
- Pay for some cleaning / housework help
- Scrapbook / Look at Old Family Photographs
- Turn off Cell Phone, Emails...
- Reconnect with Friends via Facebook, Emails
- Quality Family and/or Partner Time
- Decorate / Remove Clutter
- Prioritize / Time Management

Relaxation Examples

- Focused breathing
- Progressive muscle relaxation, massage
- Exercise, dance
- Guided Imagery / Mindfulness
- Pleasurable experience (e.g. take a bath, listen to music)
- Meditation / Prayer
- Hobbies / Creativity
- Yoga, Tai Chi
- Warmth (e.g. bath, sun bathe)

Body Wellness



Feed Body Wellness

- Make sure you remain mindful about your body's needs
- Exercise, sleep and a healthy diet are an important part of helping your body feel energized, gain a sense of control and reduce stress
- Include more relaxation and mindfulness activities with doses of planned distraction and personal words of encouragement to lower tension



**What's
Your
Excuse?**

**What are Barriers
to Improving Stress
Management
Skills?**

Stress Management Barriers Checklist

- Not enough time
- School requirements
- Perfectionism
- Family needs / obligations
- After school activities
- Worries / Thoughts / Images that come into my head if do not stay busy
- Lack of personal space
- Appointments
- Too complicated to plan
- Not worth the time
- Procrastination
- Low self-esteem (e.g. I am not worth the time)
- Social obligations
- Personal or family problems
- Exhaustion & Fatigue
- Worry what people will think (e.g. she is selfish)



RESILIENCE

Perseverance, no matter what the odds



Walt Disney

Overcame poverty

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES



Louis Zamperini

Overcame PTSD

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES



Abraham Lincoln

Overcame chronic depression

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES



Winston Churchill

Overcame learning challenges

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES



Stephen Hawking

Overcame ALS

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES



Franklin D. Roosevelt

Overcame polio and paralysis



Hellen Keller

Overcame loss of sight and hearing

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES



Oprah Winfrey

Overcame childhood abuse

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES



Benjamin Franklin

Overcame poverty

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES



<https://www.learningliftoff.com/9-inspiring-stories-of-overcoming-obstacles/#comments>

What obstacles or challenges have you overcome in your life which you can share with your children?



Resiliency

- No special learning is required as we are born with this ability
- Successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences; especially highly stressful or traumatic events
- “Bounce back from a negative experience or even significant adversity, through flexible adaptation to the ever changing demands of life

Resiliency Development Requires Exposure & Risks



Parenting Tips on Resiliency

- **Allow Mistakes & Support Recovery**
- Help Identify **Lessons Learned**
- **Listen First** then Ask Questions Later
- Encourage **Problem Solving** Instead of Fixing All Problems

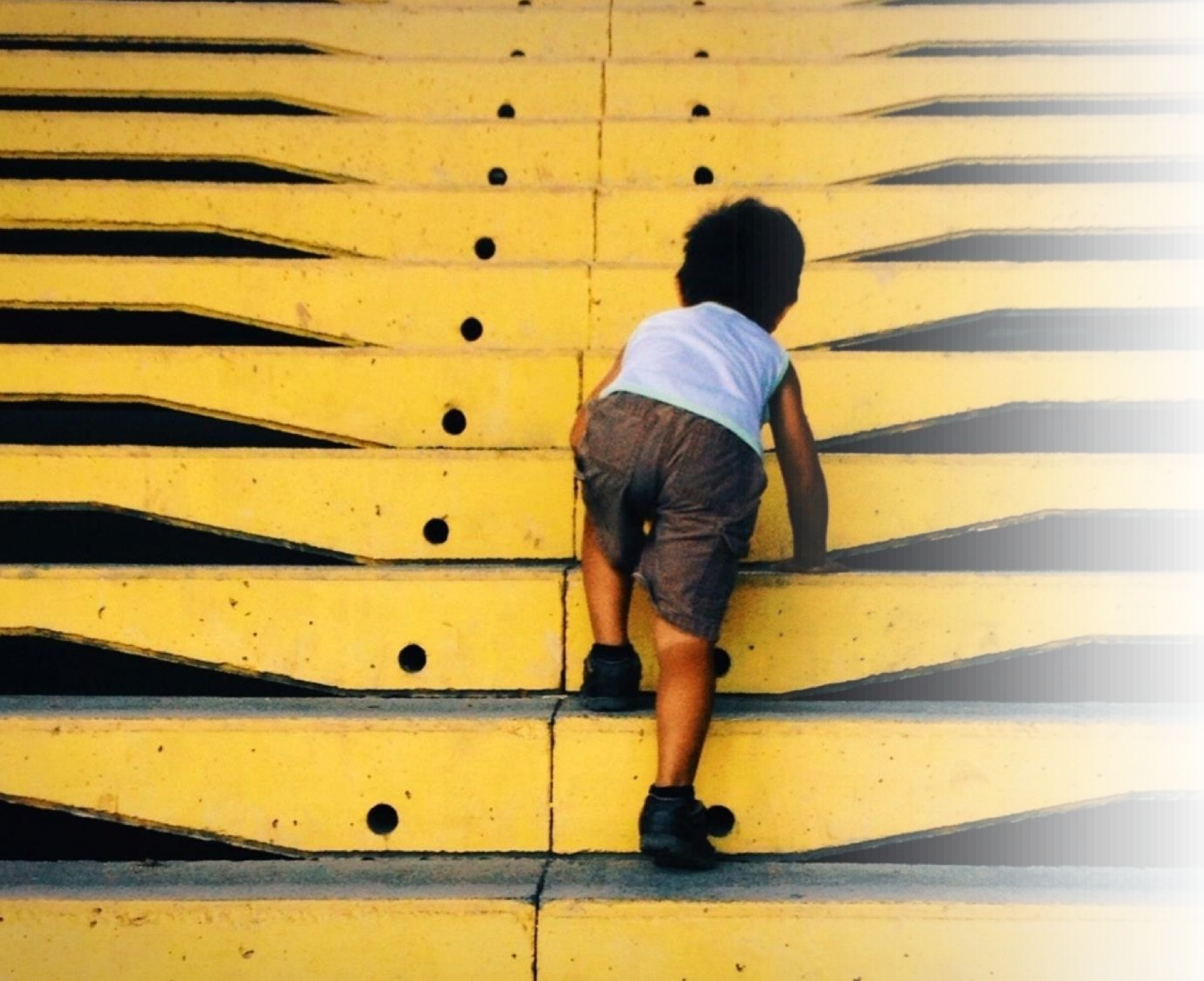
- **Teach** About Personal Decision Making & Problem Solving
- **Allow** Your Child to Try their Own Ideas & Take Risks
- Share that their Successes & Failures are **Not About You**
- **Encourage** Independence a Positive Goal but **Feed** when Necessary
- Understand Children are Always **Watching You**

Model Support and Not Fear



Allow More Freedom if Earn More Trust





**Encourage
Your Child to
Face Fears
One Step at
a Time and
not All at
Once**

Parent Involvement in Peer Interactions: When to Become Involved?



Parent is a Consistent & Non-Critical Listener during Difficult Times Who Helps with Problem Solving if Requested



Trap of Giving Advice to Children

It is All Your Fault



**Why Should I be Happy
You Told Me What to Do**



Motivators & Demotivators



Demotivating Comments

- When I was your age ...
- Do what I say not as I do
- We are greatly disappointed in you
- Kids today do not know how easy they have it
- Because I said so
- I have never seen someone so lazy
- You must be stupid if you don't see what to do
- I am busy now can we speak about this later
- Text me every 10 minutes when you are not at home

Resiliency Signs in Children

- Focus on Personal Growth – I have learned a lot!
- Share Positive Emotions
- Optimistic
- Act as their Own Cheerleader – I can do this!



- Find Satisfaction in Personal Mastery / Achievement –
I did this!
- Make Sense of What Happens to Them – “meaning making”
- Using Effective Coping Skills in Dealing with Stress
- Connect to Competent & Caring Adults in the Family &
Community if Need Assistance

- View Crisis as Challenges which can be Mastered
- Embrace Change & Loss as a Part of Life
- Accept that Disappointments & Mistakes are Part of Learning

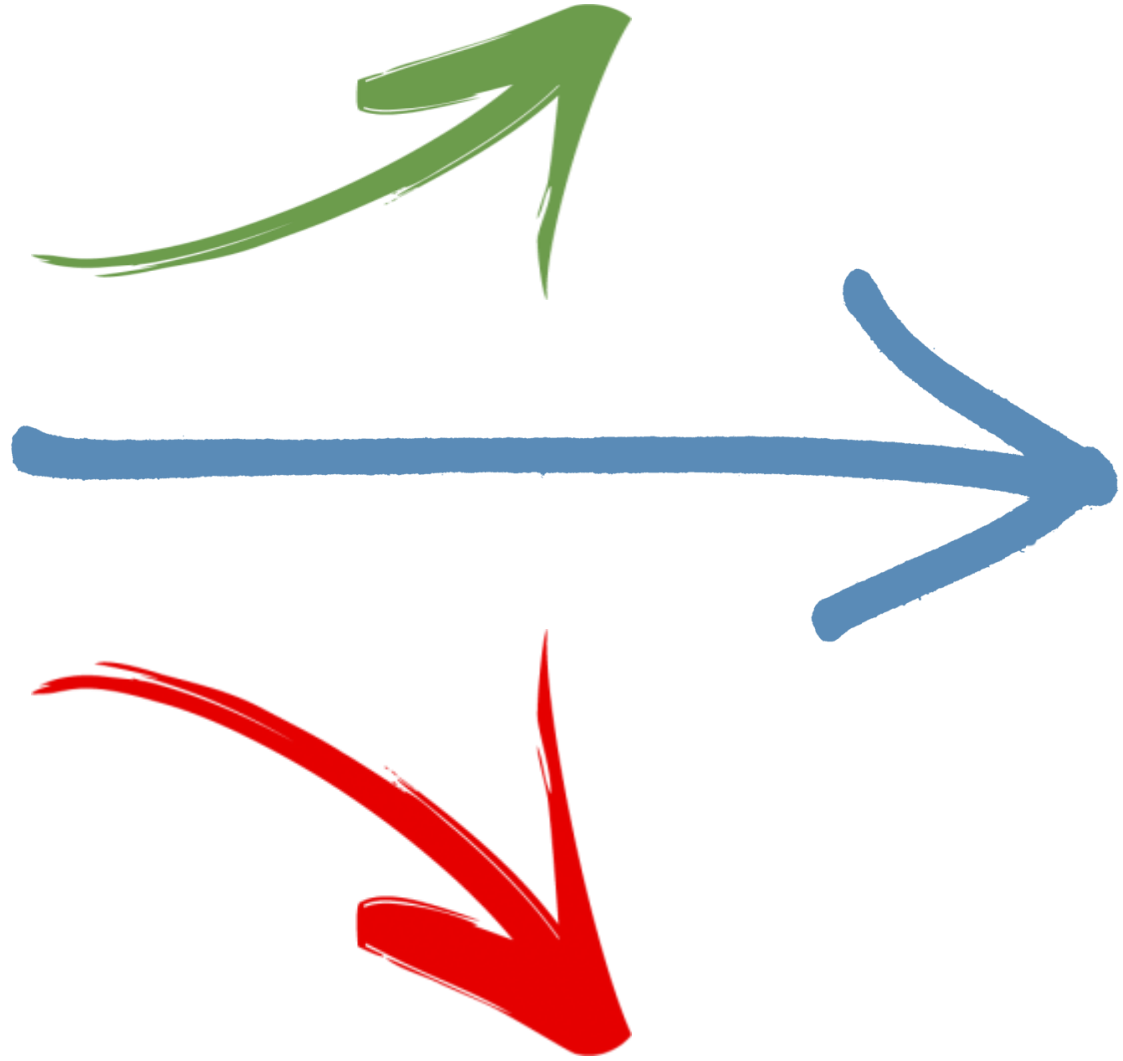


- Make Informed Decisions & Adjust Plans Based on Feedback
- Set Realistic Goals in Small Steps
- Accept Imperfection in Themselves, Others & the World
- Believe in Hope & New Possibilities Even if Today Seems Hopeless

What is Post Traumatic Growth?

Positive change experienced as a result of the struggle with a major life crisis or a traumatic event







Post Traumatic Growth Categories

- Relating to others (greater intimacy & compassion for others)
- New possibilities (new roles & new people)
- Personal strength
- Spiritual change
- Deeper appreciation of life