

# Supporting Staff Well-Being During and After the Pandemic

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## Topics

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Compassion fatigue and burnout

Guilt and survivor guilt

Trauma-informed care

Biological stress response

Emotional intelligence

Self awareness of overwhelm

Connection between feelings and needs

Resource development

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## Poll: Who's In the Room?

- NF/SNF - Executive Director or Administrator
- ALF/RCF – Executive Director or Administrator
- NF/SNF - Department Manager
- ALF/RCF – Department Manager
- NF/SNF – Staff Member
- ALF/RCF – Staff Member

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What is one important value  
that describes why you do  
this work?

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## Healthcare Professionals Values: Strengths and Vulnerabilities

| Strength                                     | Value                        | Vulnerability  |
|--|------------------------------|--|
| Place other's needs over own                 | Selflessness/ Other-Oriented | Fail to ask for help when it's needed                      |
| Deeply committed to the work and to patients | Loyalty/ Commitment          | Attachment-> Complicated bereavement, resistance to change |
| Value doing the right thing                  | Strong moral compass         | Easily frustrated when others fail                         |
| High achieving, high standards               | Excellence                   | Shame if unable to help                                    |
| Steady                                       | Calm in face of crisis       | Unaware of own symptoms                                    |
| Compassionate                                | Empathy                      | Poor boundaries- fatigue/ burnout                          |

Adapted from Stress First Aid (Watson, Westphal & Gist, 2020)

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**It Hurts.**

- Moral Distress** – I know what to do but I am restrained from doing it
- Moral Injury** – I witness or engaged in behavior against moral norms
- Vicarious/secondary trauma** – Others' trauma may impact us

Definitions courtesy of Carla Cheatham, MA, MDiv, PhD, TRT

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## Burnout and Compassion Fatigue: *What's the Difference?*

### **Burnout:**

work overload  
 lack of control\* (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001)  
 lack of reward  
 lack of community  
 lack of fairness  
 value conflict

### **Compassion Fatigue:**

more care going out than coming in; it can be acute or chronic

Definitions courtesy of Carla Cheatham,  
 MA, MDiv, PhD, TRT

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## Word of Caution

Emphasis on 'self-care' has become commonplace, yet the framework and systems to support staff to engage in self care are lacking.

If what staff are experiencing is burnout, telling them to 'practice self-care' is essentially blaming them when it is the system that needs repair.



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When Staff Feel Like This...

Caring for themselves and others is very difficult

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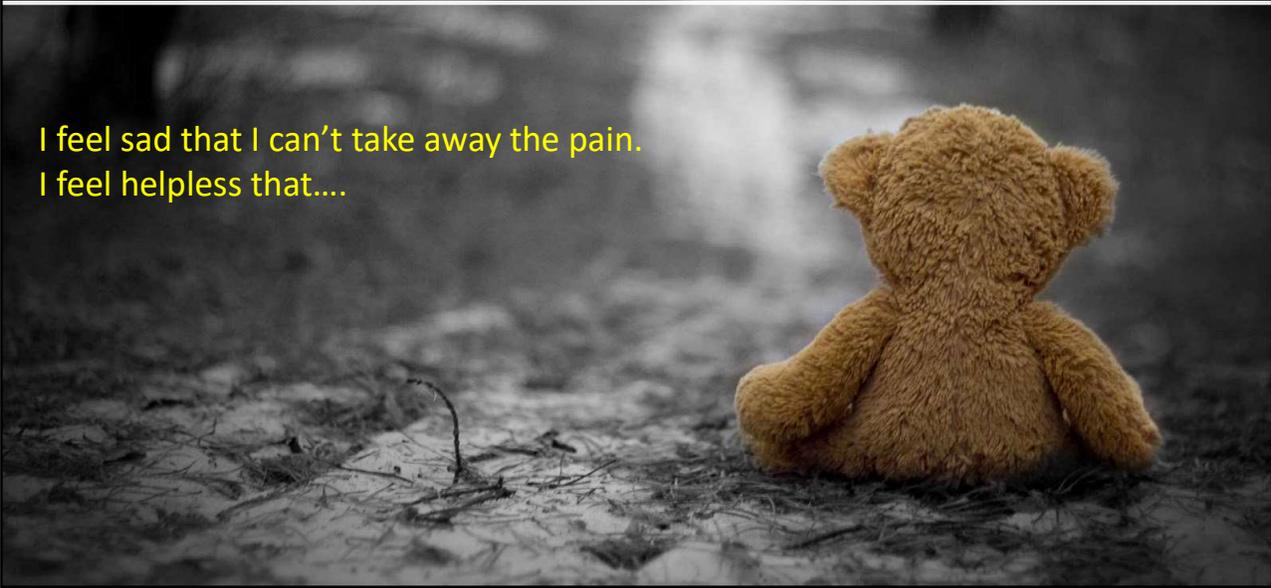
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Do you ever say, “*I feel guilty that...*”?

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Reframe as an experience of sadness or helplessness, not guilt.

I feel sad that I can't take away the pain.  
I feel helpless that...



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## Survivor Guilt

Emotional repercussions as people struggle to understand events and find meaning.

Survivor guilt around COVID-19 may sound like this:

- I feel guilty that I haven't gotten sick.
- I feel guilty that I got well.
- Why did I live, and others died?



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### Supportive Facility Culture is Critical

- Create a safe place for staff to talk about feelings, to express emotions like survivor guilt.
- Normalize feelings, "I can hear the pain in your voice (see it on your face). Thank you for talking with me about these difficult feelings."
- Name it. Survivor Guilt.
  - Often when people have a name for something they're struggling with, it becomes more manageable.
- Let staff know that if they are experiencing survivor guilt, they are not alone.
- Help is available.

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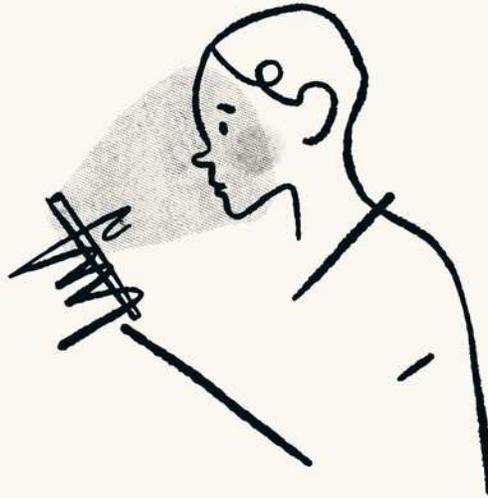


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Get professional help if needed



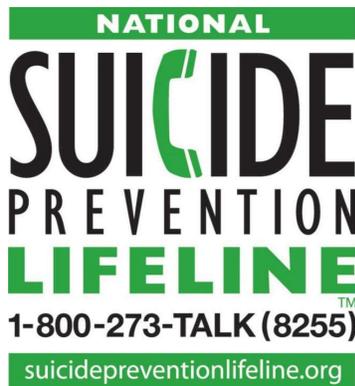
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## Important Resources



**1-800-799-7233**

Or, if unable to speak safely,  
text LOVEIS to 22522



**1-800-662-4357**

For help finding treatment

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## Trauma Definition

Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

*(SAMHSA, 2014)*

CMS uses this definition of trauma

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## Emotional and Psychological Trauma

“Result of **extraordinarily stressful events** that shatter your sense of security, making you feel **helpless** in a dangerous world. Often involve a threat to life or safety, but any situation that leaves you **feeling overwhelmed** and **isolated** can result in trauma, even if it doesn’t involve physical harm. The more **frightened and helpless** you feel, the more likely you are to be traumatized.”

(emphasis added)

Emotional and Psychological Trauma

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/ptsd-trauma/coping-with-emotional-and-psychological-trauma.htm>

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**Dr. Van der Kolk**  
Psychiatrist, trauma researcher, and author of *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*

## The Virus is a Pre-Traumatic Condition: Two Core Variables

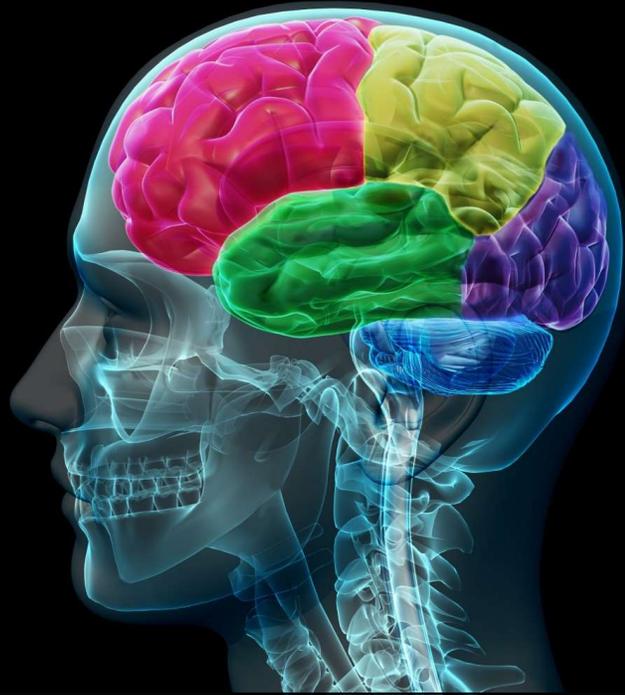
1. **Immobilization** – cannot move (quarantine, shelter-in-place)
2. **Unpredictability** – not knowing what is going to happen next, cannot say tomorrow will be a different day or the day after

When the world is unpredictable and you cannot move, then the vulnerability to become traumatized is very great.

Lifelines: How COVID-19 Creates 'Pre-Traumatic Conditions' in the Brain  
By ALEX MCOWEN & PETER BIELLO • MAY 4, 2020

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## Stress Response & Our Body



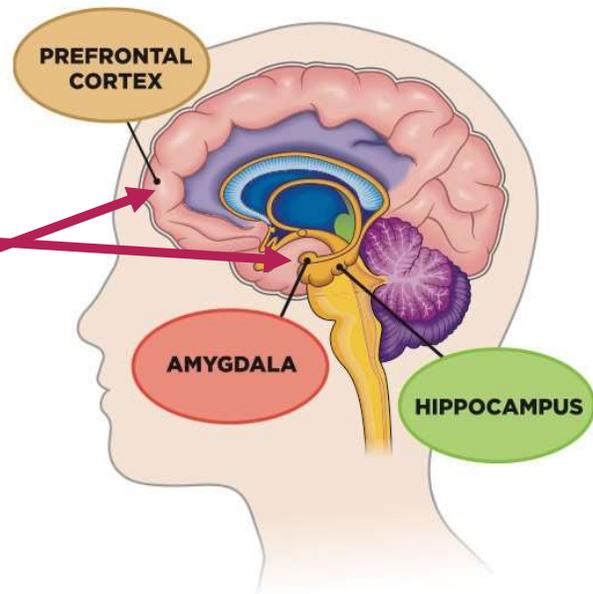
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### AMYGDALA

The part of our brain that keeps us safe. It is considered our emotional brain and when we are stressed, anxious or angry, it TAKES OVER. It turns on flight, fight or freeze states. You CAN'T control it!

### PREFRONTAL CORTEX

The logical part of our brain that helps us with decision-making. But, it goes "off-line" when the amygdala is in charge. It SHUTS down!



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Amygdala  
“Reptilian Brain”

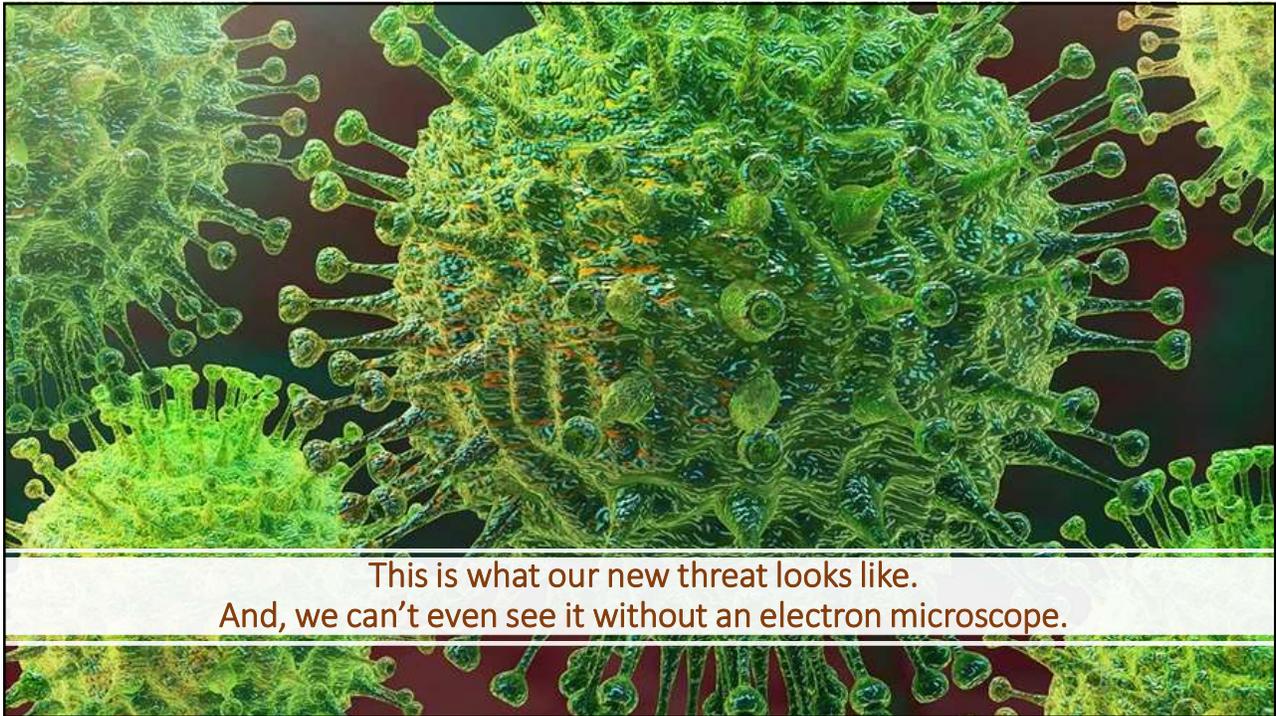
Very simple.  
Main purpose is to  
keep us safe.

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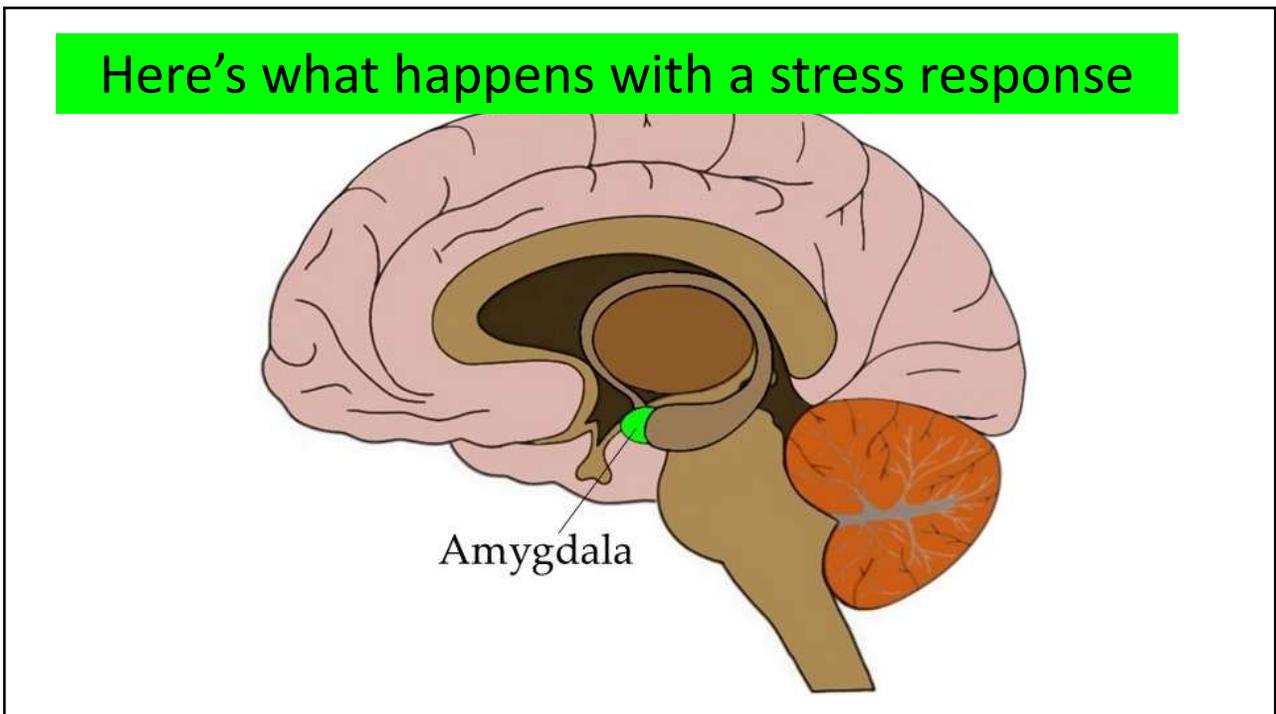


We may not be fighting for our lives from this threat...

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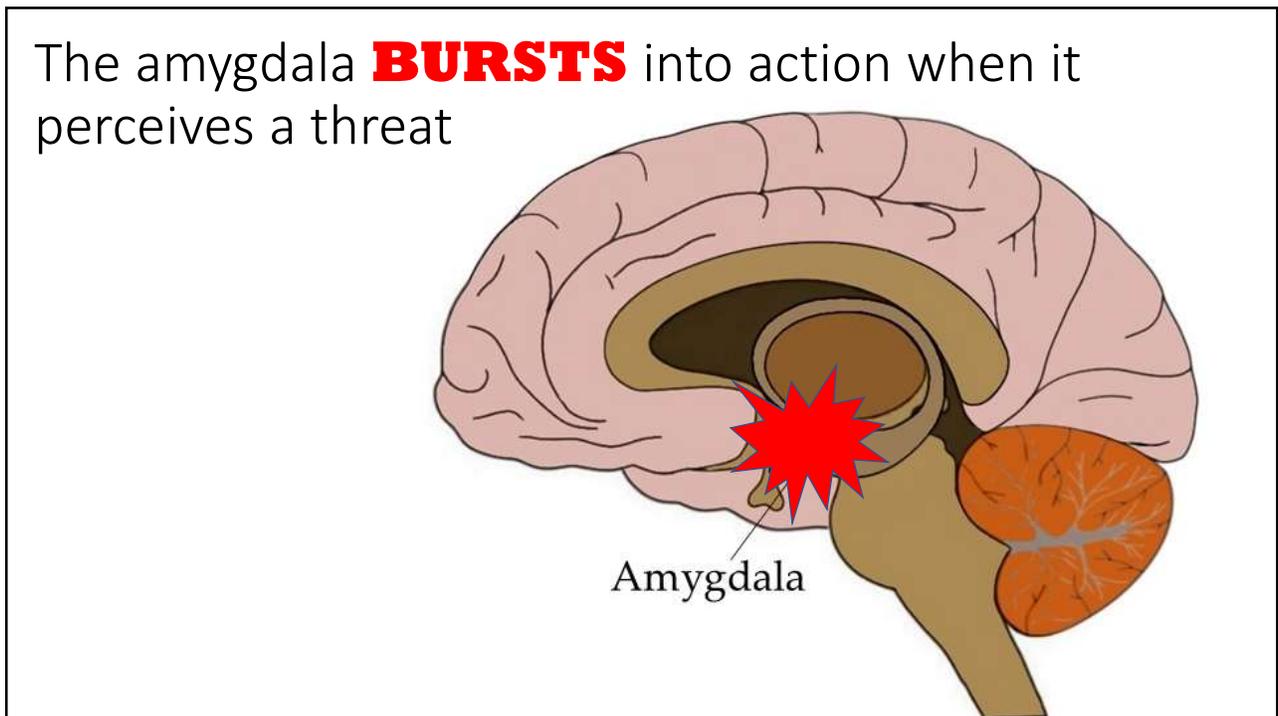
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The image contains three panels illustrating different stress responses. The first panel shows a man with glasses and a white shirt, looking angry with his fists clenched. The second panel shows a person in a red jacket running away from the viewer down a long, dark tunnel. The third panel shows a deer with large, white, circular eyes, representing a 'freeze' response.

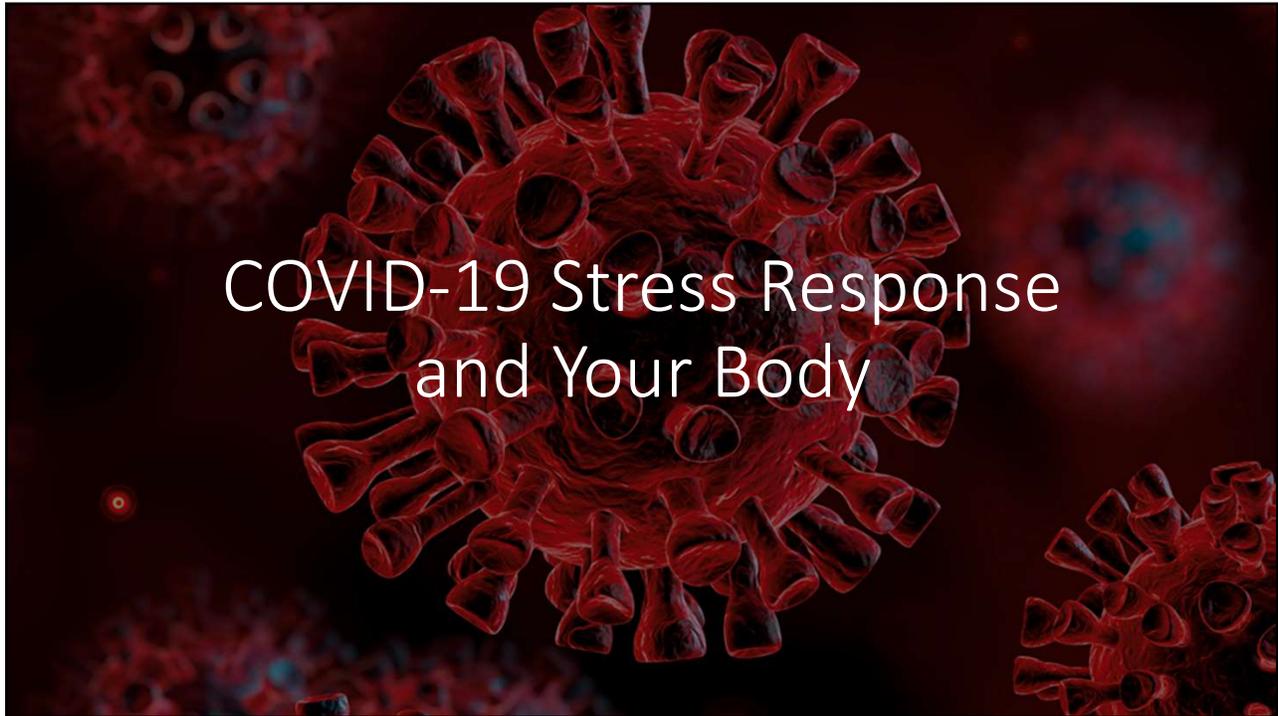
**Fight**                      **Flight**                      **Freeze**

Our Biology Picks One of These

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Our Biology **REACTS** the **SAME**,  
*no matter if the threat is perceived or real.*

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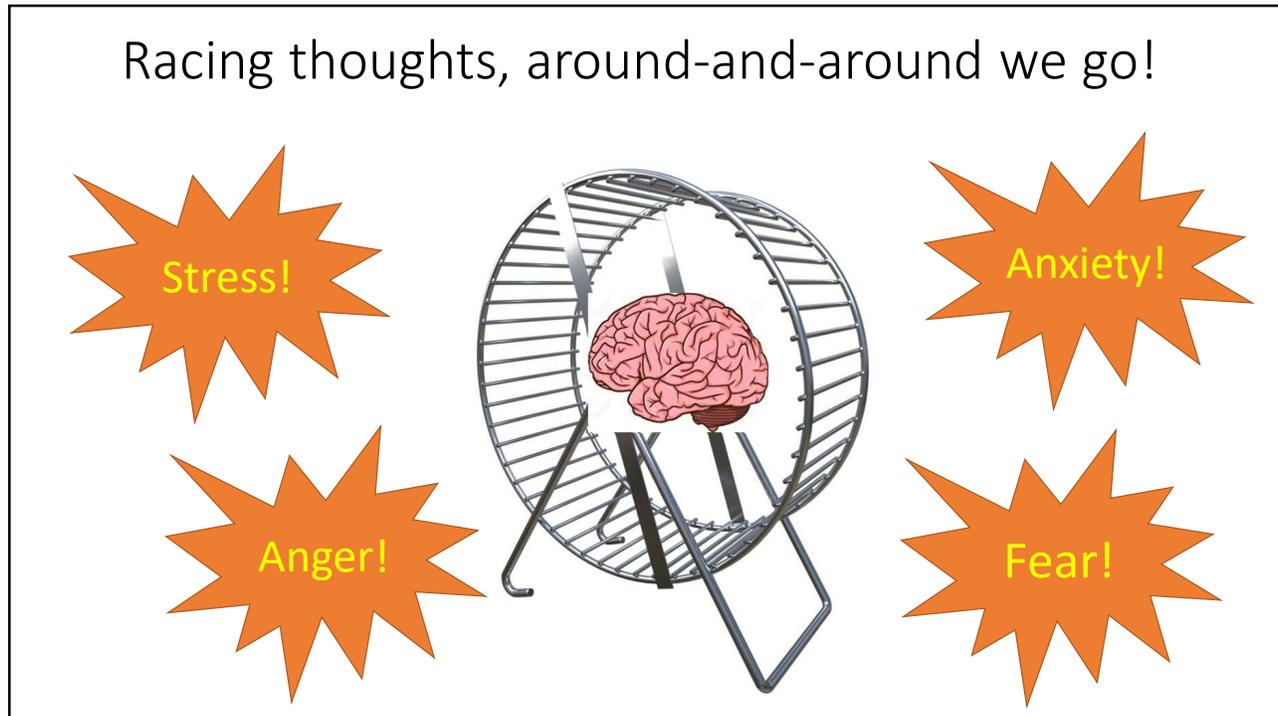


# COVID-19 Stress Response and Your Body

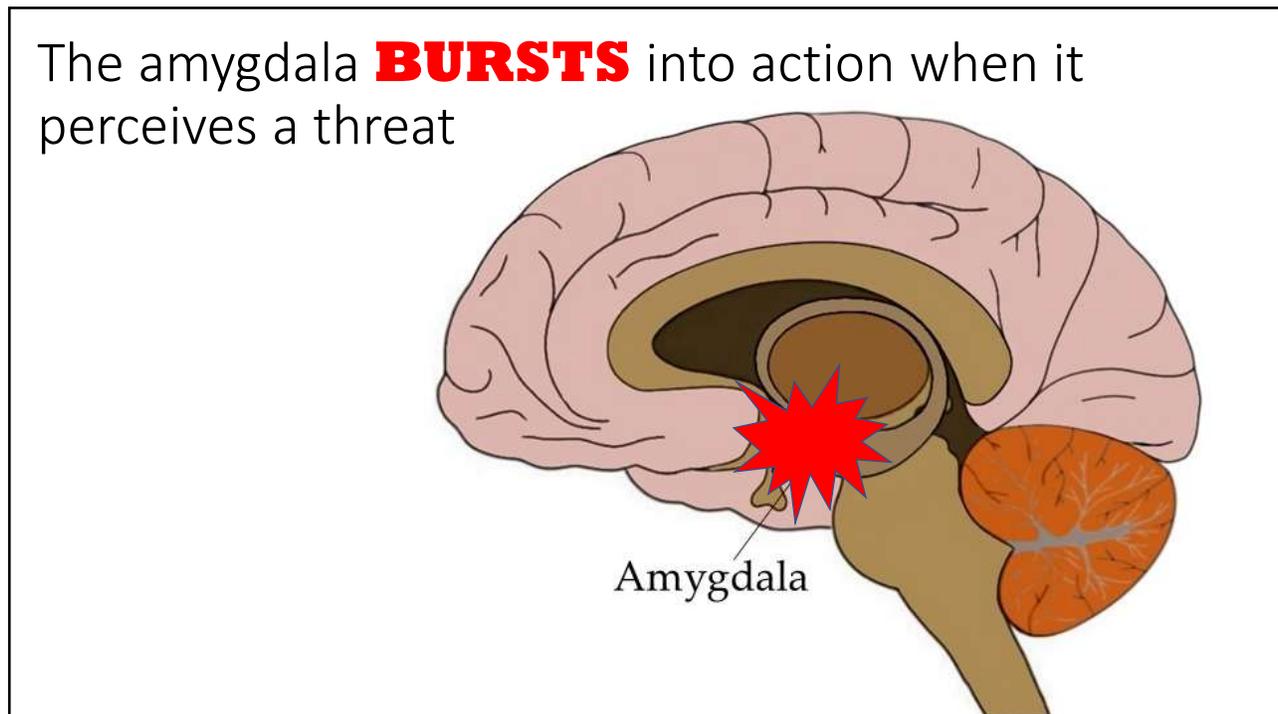
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**Fight**                      **Flight**                      **Freeze**

Our Biology Picks One of These

37

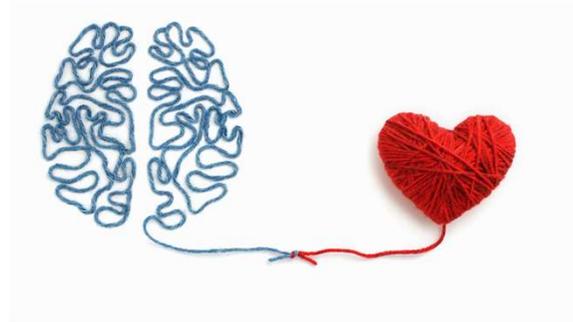
Our Biology **REACTS** the **SAME**,  
*no matter if the threat is perceived or real.*

Anxiety causes a mis-trigger which essentially means the amygdala is stuck in the “on” mode

COVID-19 Anxiety Workbook  
<https://health.uark.edu/coronavirus/caps-covid-19-resources-anxiety-workbook.pdf>

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## What is Emotional Intelligence?



- The ability to understand and manage your own emotions.
- The ability to communicate, read and navigate social situations and conflicts.

7 Tips to Raise Your Emotional Intelligence  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/liking-the-child-you-love/202101/7-tips-raise-your-emotional-intelligence>

What You Need to Know About Emotional Intelligence,  
<https://www.healthline.com/health/emotional-intelligence>

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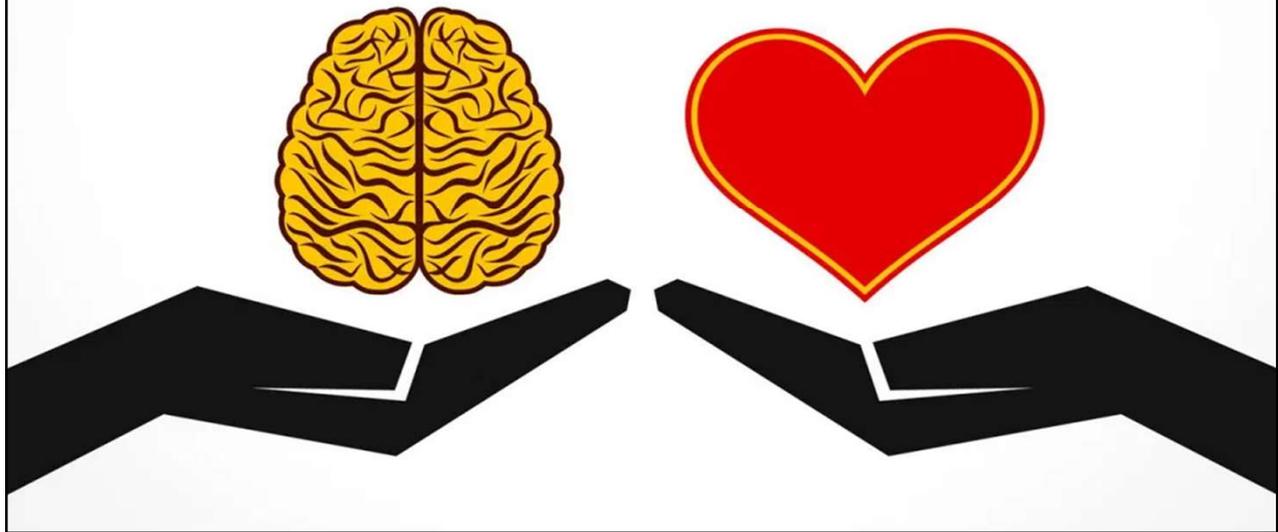
### Emotional Intelligence Includes...

- **Self-awareness** - Being conscious of your emotions, how they affect you and others
- **Mood-management** – consider consequences before acting, reacting appropriately
- **Empathy** – able to listen deeply, not judge, understand needs/wants of others, seek to understand ‘why’
- **Social skills** – ability to collaborate, demonstrate leadership skills and ability to be present in relationships



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How do we increase our emotional intelligence?



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## Intentional Noticing

Where is the discomfort showing up?



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## Self Awareness – How Does YOUR Body Communicate Overwhelm?

### Physical

- Shallow breathing
- Increased heart rate
- Clenched teeth
- Upset stomach, nausea
- Headache
- Shoulders at “your ears”
- Creased facial expression
- Tense muscles

### Behavioral and Emotional

- Anger
- Blame
- Fearful
- Irritability
- Frustration, impatience
- Exhaustion
- Hopelessness
- Edgy, jittery

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## Cognitive Symptoms of Anxiety (Overwhelm)

- Fear of losing control, being unable to cope
- Fear of physical injury or death
- Fear of “going crazy”
- Frightening thoughts, images, or memories
- Poor concentration, confusion, distractibility
- Narrow attention, hypervigilance for threat
- Poor memory
- Difficulty in reasoning

COVID-19 Anxiety Workbook  
<https://health.uark.edu/coronavirus/caps-covid-19-resources-anxiety-workbook.pdf>

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## HALT: hungry, angry, lonely, tired

- Being in one of those states clouds the decision-making process, causing *reaction* rather than the preferred *response*
- When you realize (“catch”) that you are experiencing one of those states, HALT!
- Do. Not. React.
- Stop what you are doing and tend to you own needs
- “I cannot respond right now. I will get back to you.”

H.A.L.T. 4 Signs to STOP for Self-Care & How to Refuel  
<http://www.pathofpresence.com/practice/4-signs-to-halt-for-self-care-and-how-to-refuel-you-need-to-know>

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## Signs of HUNGER

- Feeling of emptiness in stomach
- Gurgling, rumbling or growling in stomach
- Dizziness, faintness or light-headedness
- Headache
- Irritability, easily agitated
- Lack of concentration
- Nausea



H.A.L.T. 4 Signs to STOP for Self-Care & How to Refuel

<http://www.pathofpresence.com/practice/4-signs-to-halt-for-self-care-and-how-to-refuel-you-need-to-know>

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## Signs of ANGER

- Clenching your jaws or grinding your teeth
- Headache
- Stomachache
- Increased and rapid heart rate
- Sweating, especially your palms
- Feeling hot in the neck/face
- Shaking or trembling
- Dizziness



H.A.L.T. 4 Signs to STOP for Self-Care & How to Refuel

<http://www.pathofpresence.com/practice/4-signs-to-halt-for-self-care-and-how-to-refuel-you-need-to-know>

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## Signs of LONLINESS (*lack of meaningful connection*)

You would do anything rather than being alone.

When you are alone, you distract yourself from being with your thoughts and feelings.

You are always connected (wi-fi, social media).

You feel panicky at the thought of being alone.



H.A.L.T. 4 Signs to STOP for Self-Care & How to Refuel

<http://www.pathofpresence.com/practice/4-signs-to-halt-for-self-care-and-how-to-refuel-you-need-to-know>

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## Signs of Feeling TIRED

Headache, Dizziness, Blurry vision

Sore or aching muscles

Slowed reflexes and responses

Appetite loss

Moodiness, such as irritability

Impaired decision-making and judgment, low motivation

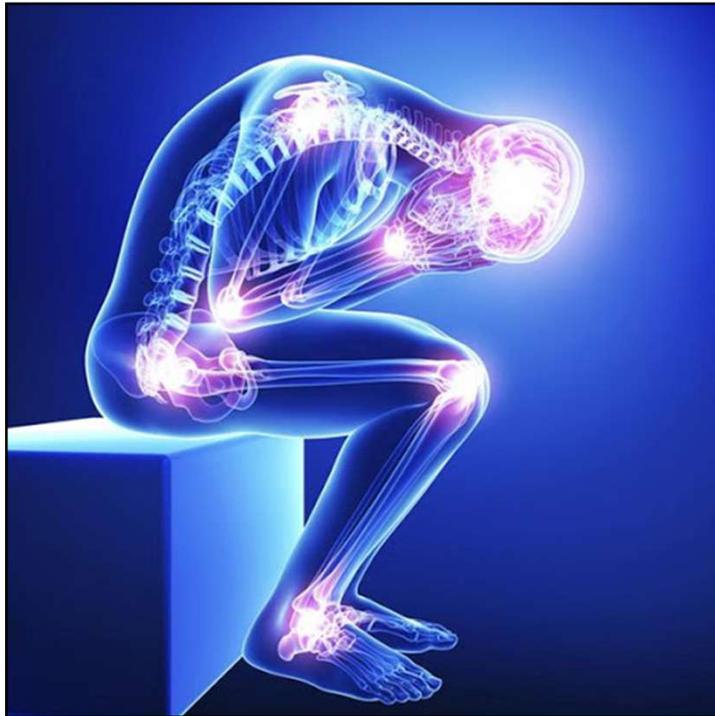
Reduced ability to pay attention to the situation at hand



H.A.L.T. 4 Signs to STOP for Self-Care & How to Refuel

<http://www.pathofpresence.com/practice/4-signs-to-halt-for-self-care-and-how-to-refuel-you-need-to-know>

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What is the function  
of physical pain?

Bielak-Smith P. *Dementia Together*. Encinitas, CA: Puddle  
Dancer Press; 2020.

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What is the function  
of *feelings*?

- Inform you something within isn't okay (out of balance)
- Something requires attention
- Point you in the direction of what you need
- Feelings keep you informed!



Bielak-Smith P. *Dementia Together*. Encinitas, CA: Puddle Dancer Press; 2020.

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# Being Curious and Increasing Awareness

## How am I feeling?

- I'm scared.
- I'm confident.
- I'm irritable.
- I'm relieved.
- I'm exhausted.
- I'm compassionate.
- I'm disappointed.

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**Needs**

|   |   |  |  |  |   |
|---|---|--|--|--|---|
| <p><b>Physical well-being</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>air</li> <li>food</li> <li>water</li> <li>shelter</li> <li>protection (emotional)</li> <li>safety</li> <li>movement</li> <li>rest</li> <li>sleep</li> <li>touch</li> <li>sexual expression</li> <li>health</li> <li>comfort</li> <li>warmth</li> </ul> | <p><b>Harmony</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>peace</li> <li>tranquility</li> <li>relaxation</li> <li>beauty</li> <li>order</li> <li>ease</li> <li>predictability</li> <li>familiarity</li> <li>stability</li> <li>balance</li> <li>completion</li> <li>wholeness</li> </ul> | <p><b>Power</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>self-esteem</li> <li>confidence</li> <li>dignity</li> <li>inner power</li> <li>empowerment</li> <li>competence</li> <li>effectiveness</li> </ul>      | <p><b>Connection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>collaboration</li> <li>reciprocity</li> <li>communication</li> <li>company</li> <li>to belong</li> <li>durability</li> <li>continuity</li> <li>to give</li> <li>to receive</li> <li>to see / to be seen</li> <li>to hear / to be heard</li> <li>to understand</li> <li>to be understood</li> </ul> | <p><b>Meaning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to learn</li> <li>growth</li> <li>to contribute</li> <li>to enrich life</li> <li>hope</li> <li>creativity</li> <li>inspiration</li> <li>purpose</li> <li>clarity</li> <li>awareness</li> <li>liberation</li> <li>transformation</li> <li>to matter</li> <li>participate</li> <li>to be present</li> <li>simplicity</li> </ul> | <p><b>Love and attention</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>love</li> <li>compassion</li> <li>care</li> <li>attention</li> <li>acceptance</li> <li>appreciation</li> <li>reassurance</li> <li>affection</li> <li>trust</li> <li>involvement</li> <li>respect</li> <li>care</li> <li>support</li> <li>nearness</li> <li>intimacy</li> <li>tenderness</li> <li>softness</li> <li>sensitivity</li> <li>friendliness</li> </ul> |
|   | <p><b>Autonomy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>choice</li> <li>freedom</li> <li>time</li> <li>space</li> <li>independence</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Pleasure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to celebrate</li> <li>to mourn</li> <li>flow</li> <li>humor</li> <li>laughter</li> <li>vitality</li> <li>challenge</li> <li>stimulation</li> </ul> | <p><b>Liveliness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to discover</li> <li>adventure</li> <li>passion</li> <li>spontaneity</li> <li>play</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Authenticity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>honesty</li> <li>integrity</li> <li>transparency</li> <li>openness</li> <li>self-expression</li> </ul>   |   |



[www.cupofempathy.com](http://www.cupofempathy.com)

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# What do I need?

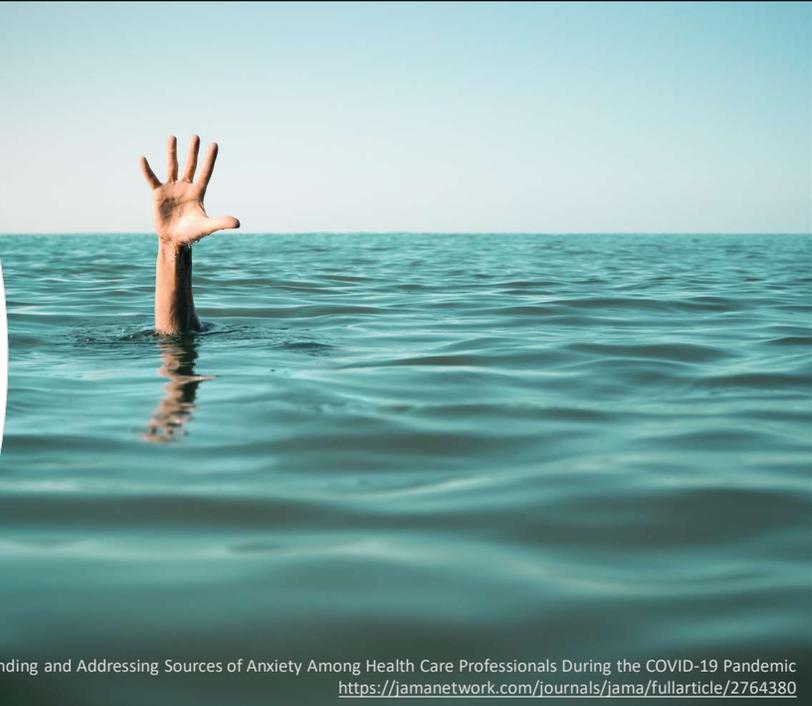
- I'm feeling irritable. I need time alone and a snack.
- I'm feeling scared. I need more information.
- I'm feeling overwhelmed. I need trust that I can ask for help and receive it.

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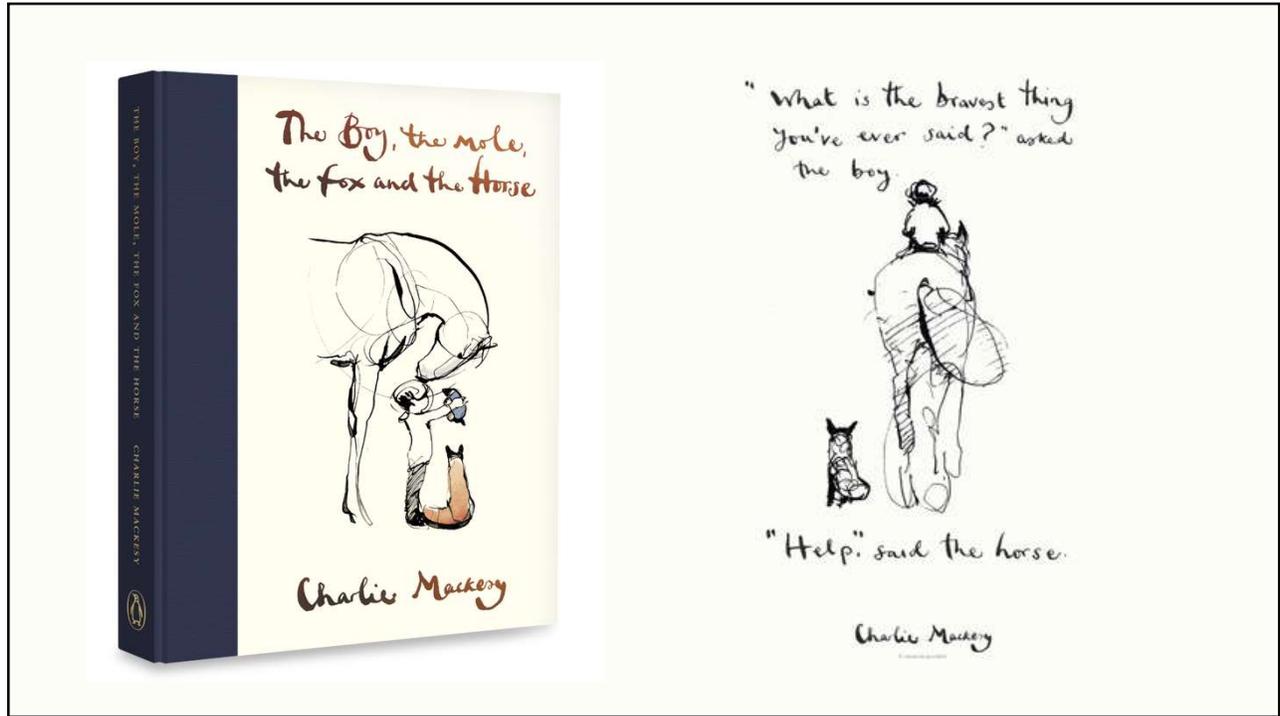
## Healthcare professionals struggle with asking for help

- Help them prioritize
- Give permission to defer less important activities
- Help determine when delegation is appropriate
- Support them and help them make these decisions

Understanding and Addressing Sources of Anxiety Among Health Care Professionals During the COVID-19 Pandemic  
<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2764380>



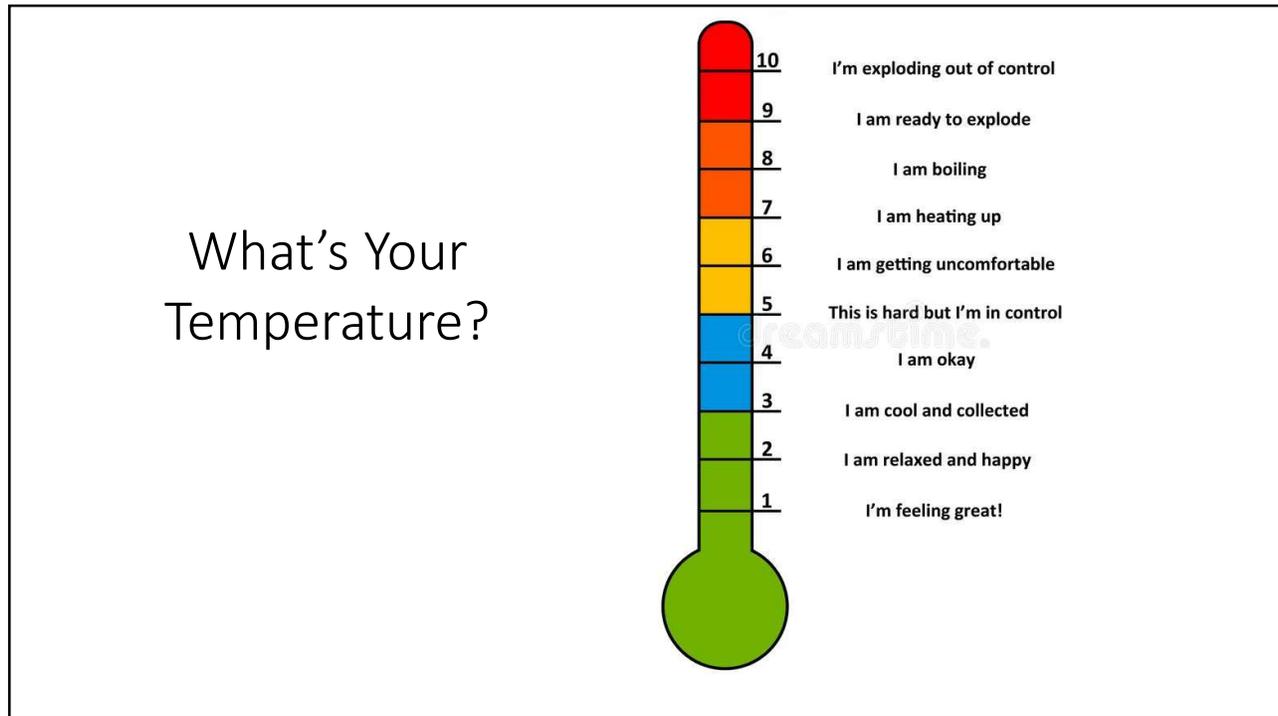
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We do not have to be therapists  
to be therapeutic.

60

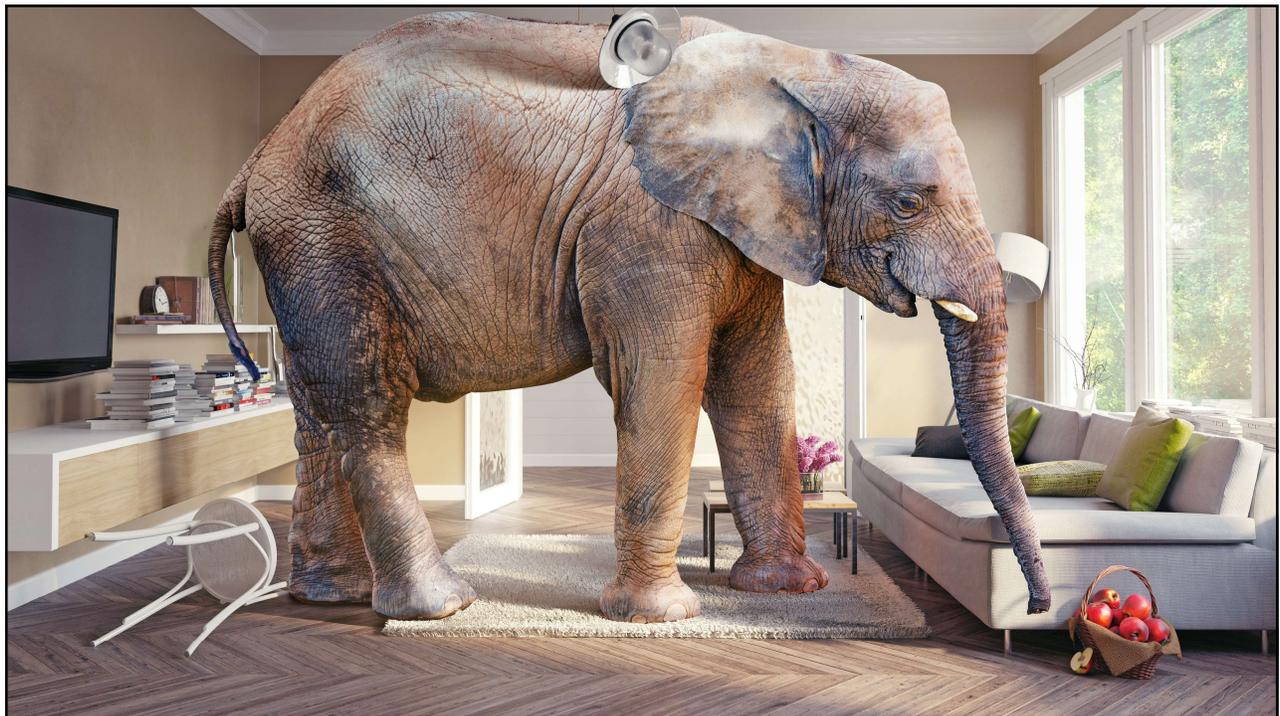
# Resilience

Adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress.

American Psychological Association  
<https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience>



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## Selfishness or *Self Care*?

I will do for me *at the expense of you.*



I will take care of me so *that I can bring my best self to you.*



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### Give yourself grace

You are doing everything you can given these extraordinary circumstances.

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## Focus on what you *ARE ABLE* to do

. . .rather than what you aren't able to do

- Help an individual with daily care
- Offer a smile, a kind word
- Listen and communicate clearly
- Connect a family with their loved one
- Be present
- Get through the day

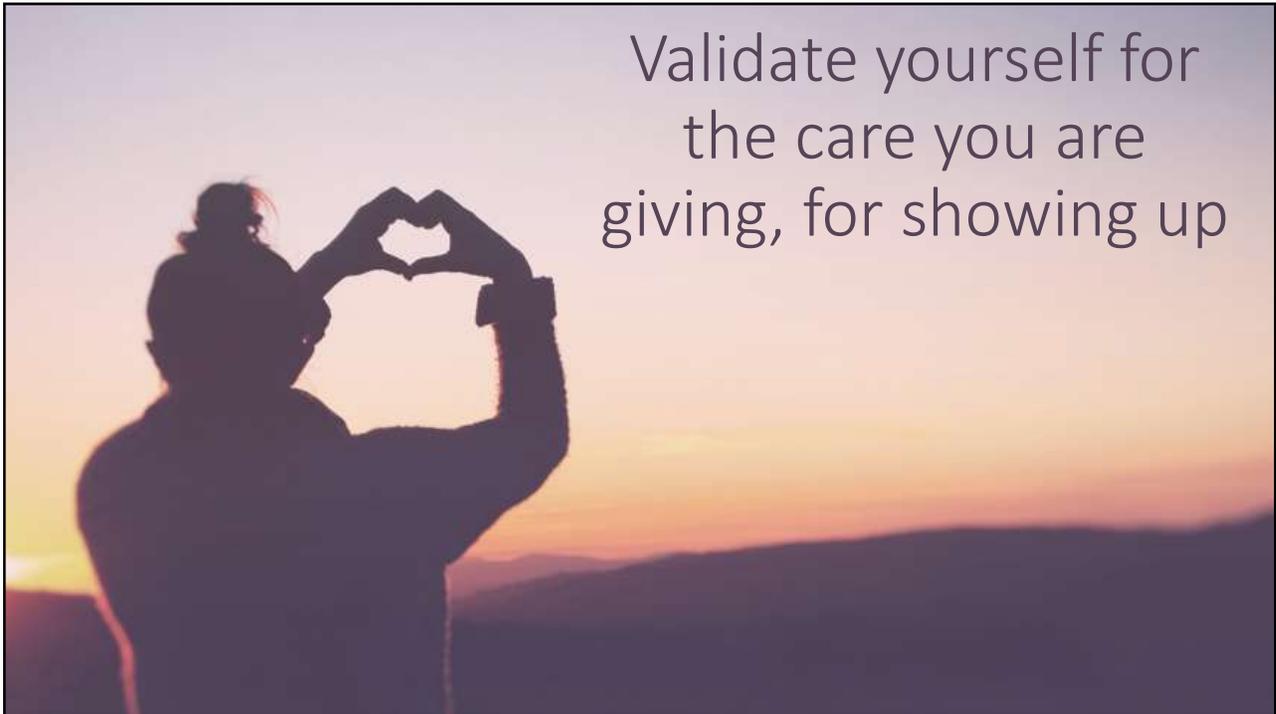
Moral Injury in Health Care and COVID-19, Scott Janssen

[https://www.socialworktoday.com/archive/exc\\_040620.shtml](https://www.socialworktoday.com/archive/exc_040620.shtml)



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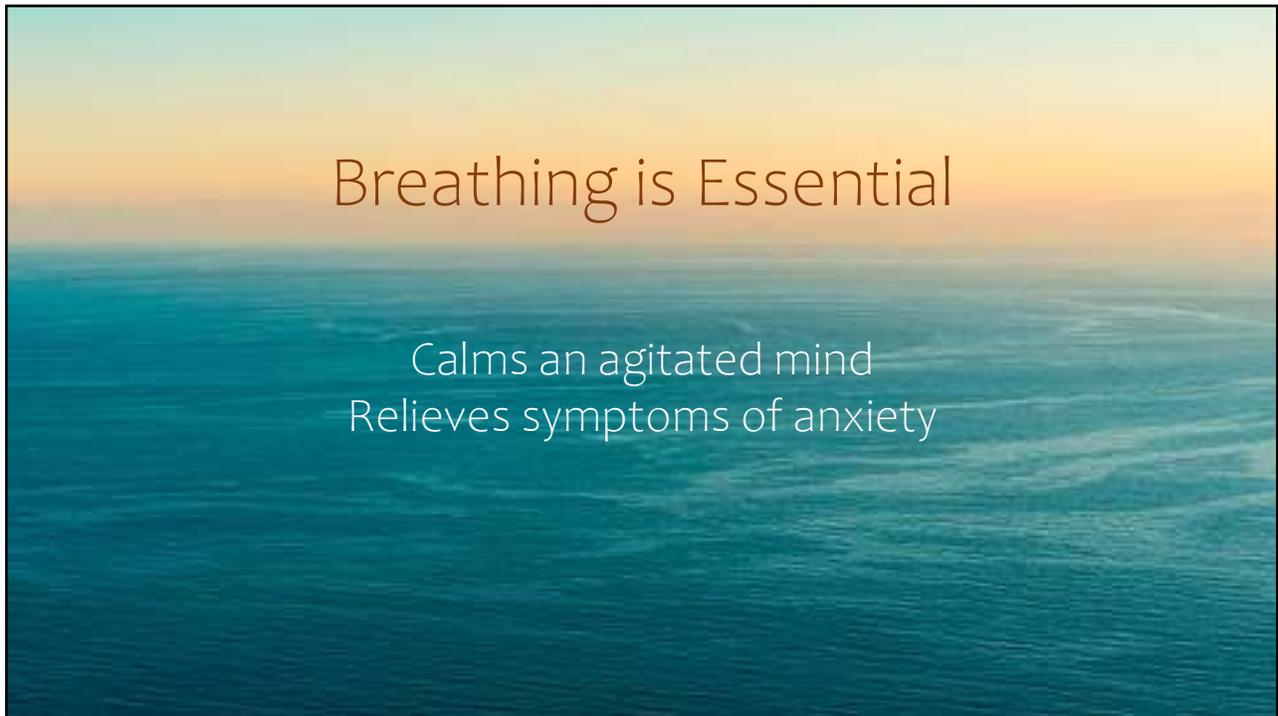
Validate yourself for  
the care you are  
giving, for showing up



66



67



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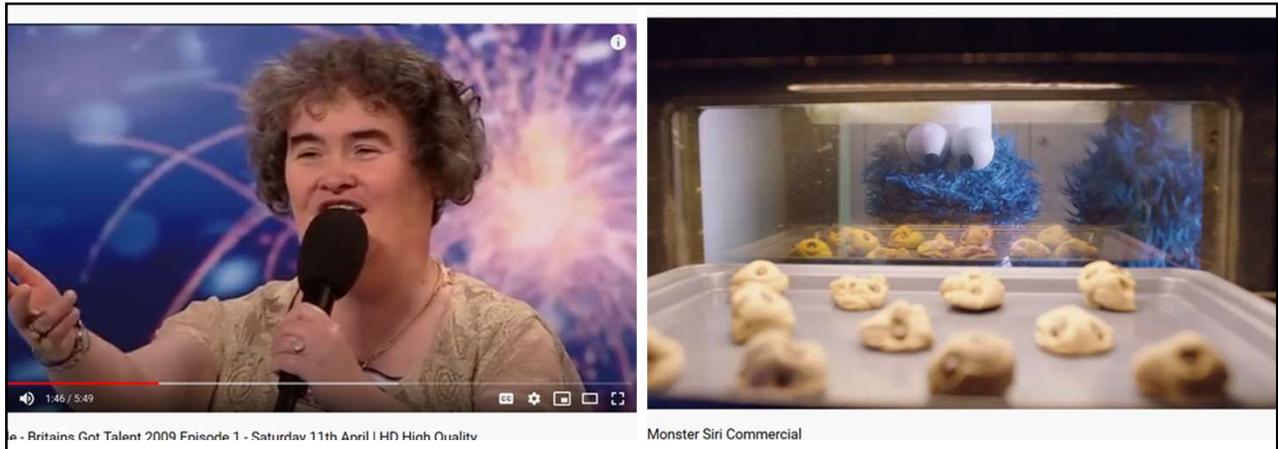
69

## Move your body!

Wiggle your bum, feel the chair beneath you  
Move your feet, feel the floor beneath you



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The image contains two video thumbnails. The left thumbnail shows a woman with curly hair singing into a microphone on a stage with a blue and purple background. The right thumbnail shows a monster in a nest with cookies. Below the thumbnails is a dark grey box with white text.

Britains Got Talent 2009 Episode 1 - Saturday 11th April | HD High Quality

Monster Siri Commercial

What touches your soul and allows you to cry and laugh?

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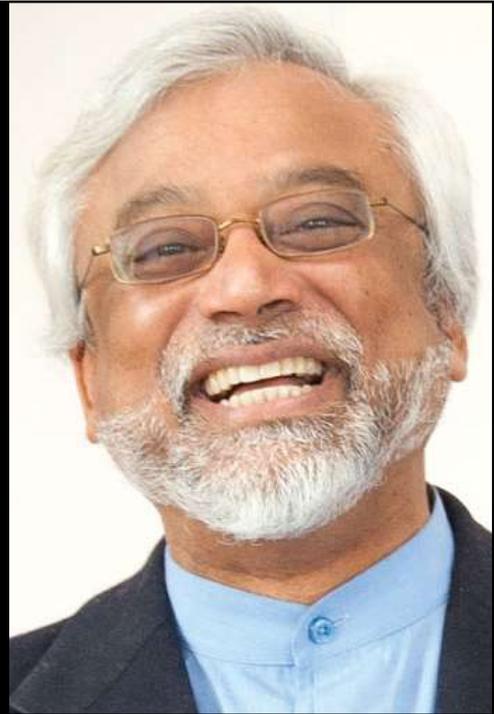


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## Compassionate Self Talk

- Create mercy and gentleness with self-talk
- Place your hand over your heart (can even gently pat your chest)
- Express kindness to yourself as you would to others
- Recite words directed at *yourself*
  - “Oh, Paige, your soul is aching for peace and comfort today. It’s okay, it’s okay.”

Imam Jamal Rahman, 2016



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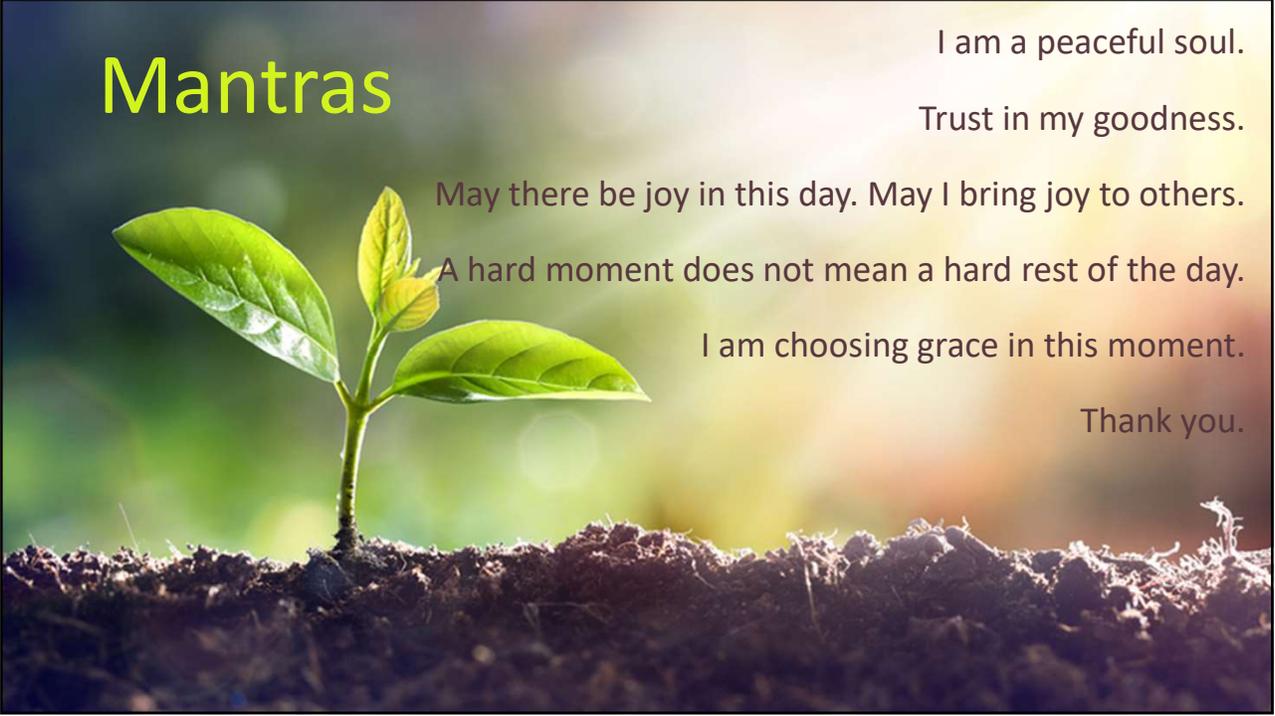
## Practice of Blessing Others

Bless others (strangers and acquaintances) quietly, secretly

*“May you be at peace. May you be safe.”*

Feel the blessing move through your body as you offer it

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# Mantras

I am a peaceful soul.  
Trust in my goodness.  
May there be joy in this day. May I bring joy to others.  
A hard moment does not mean a hard rest of the day.  
I am choosing grace in this moment.  
Thank you.

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## My Personal Safety Plan

**Community and Trauma Counseling**

---



**Jefferson**  
Philadelphia University +  
Thomas Jefferson University  
HOME OF SIDNEY KIMMEL MEDICAL COLLEGE

**My Personal Safety Plan**

**When I am feeling overwhelmed, I will:**

1. 3-2-1 Grounding Exercise
2. 4-7-8 Breathing
3. Doodle
4. Take a walk

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## Check-in Board – Cultivating Awareness



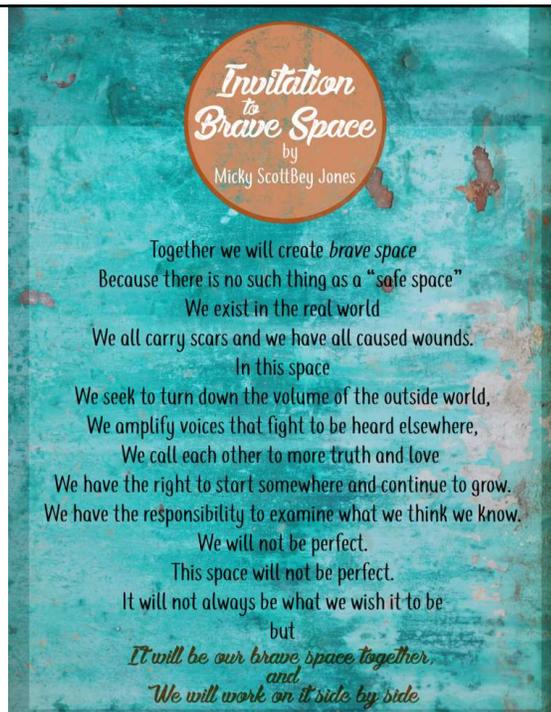
Stress First Aid (Watson, Westphal & Gist, 2020)

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## Invitation to Brave Space



Micky ScottBey Jones  
"The Justice Doula"



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# Process Improvement

- Commit to becoming a trauma-informed culture that upholds principles of safety, trust, peer support, and empowerment.
- Provide brief articles on survivor guilt, include information in facility communications.
- Create a list of questions/topics and dedicate a reasonable amount of time on meeting agendas for staff to share their feelings and experiences.
- Find ways to connect with staff who do not attend meetings.
- See if staff want to organize peer support groups.
- Partner with a mental health provider in your community to lead discussion groups with staff (residents, too!).
- Be alert for staff who might be suffering but who will not readily ask for help. Connect with them.
- Offer the quiet presence to listen and reflect their feelings, to validate, and to normalize them.

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## Identify Next Steps (for Action)

By next Monday, I will...

I will share this information with...



"Engaging Adult Learners, Delivering a "Wow Worthy" Presentation", Center for Excellence in Educational Leadership,  
[https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cocase.org/resource/resmgr/Professional\\_Learning/CASE\\_PresentationPlanningWor.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cocase.org/resource/resmgr/Professional_Learning/CASE_PresentationPlanningWor.pdf)

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*May you trust the ripple effect of empathy and compassion  
bestowed upon yourself.....*

*Thank you,  
Paige*