

THERAPY NOTES

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COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

1. Polarized Thinking

Distortion: When you have an “All or Nothing” thinking pattern. There is a desire to be perfect, otherwise a complete failure.

Challenge: Avoid thinking in extremes (black or white). You don’t need to choose either/or extremes that are presented to you. Identify how you can be less extreme or what you can do to be more flexible. Try to think in shades of gray and identify the middle ground.

Example Thought: I received an A- on an exam when I am typically used to receiving A+ grades only, I feel like a failure.

Reframed Thought: I didn’t do as well on the exam as I had hoped. But an A- is still a really good grade and I am grateful for it.



2. Mental Filtering

Negative Mental Filtering

Distortion: When a person filters out positives, magnifies negative details, and dwells on those feelings.

Challenge: It is easy to get caught up in a single negative aspect of your thoughts. Focus on all the positives that occurred during the situation. Reflect on the entire situation and try to identify not only the negative aspects but the positive ones as well.

Example Thought: I received my employee performance review but I can't stop thinking about one negative comment my manager made about me.

Reframed Thought: Although I was lacking in one area of my performance review, I performed well in other aspects of my job and my manager did praise me for my great work ethic.



Disqualifying the Positive

Distortion: Acknowledges the positive experiences but refuses to accept it. Invalidates and ignores the positives while finding excuses to turn it into a negative one.

Challenge: Value the positive aspects as much as you value the negative aspects.

Take pride in your accomplishments. Embrace any compliments or positive feedback you received no matter how small it may seem; cultivate an attitude of gratitude.

Example Thought: I received a good mark on my assignment, but it's probably a mistake. I'm pretty sure it was just luck or fluke, I don't normally get good grades.

Reframed Thought: I received a good mark on my assignment. I am grateful to receive this grade and am proud of what I accomplished.



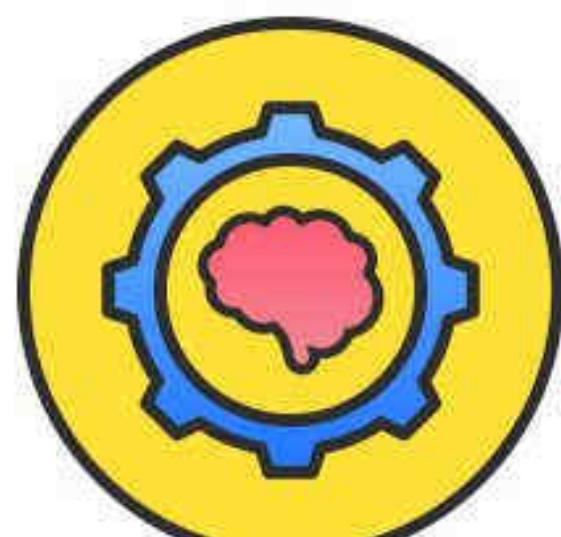
3. Overgeneralization

Distortion: Focusing on a single event that has occurred and incorrectly concluding all similar events going forward will result in the same failure or negative experience.

Challenge: Take that single negative event and believe you can create a different outcome in the future. Reflect on times where a single negative had a long-lasting outcome as you are expecting this one will. Identify any evidence that suggests this single negative event will impact all future events.

Example Thought: I failed this exam, I feel like such a failure. I don't think I am smart enough to take this class, I will probably just fail it.

Reframed Thought: I didn't pass this one exam, but in the past, I have always found a way to come back from a failed exam. I will work harder and try again the next time.



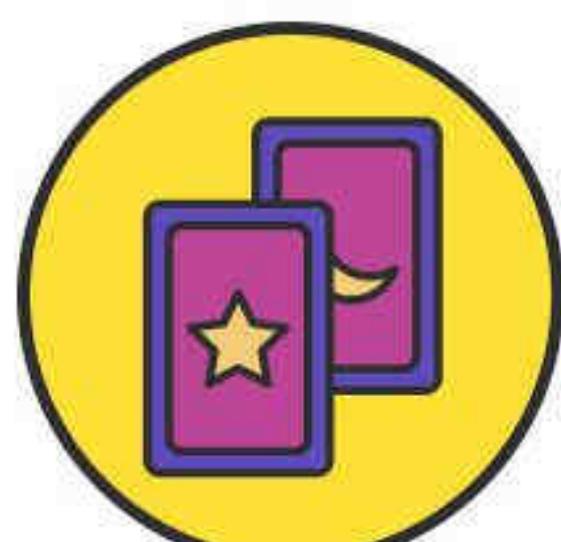
4. Jumping to Conclusions Mind Reading

Distortion: Knowing what the other person is thinking. Assumptions of reasons or intentions are taken as the only valid reasoning.

Challenge: Ask yourself if you are sure you actually know what someone is thinking. Investigate your assumptions and try to identify logical reasons, based on evidence, that may have contributed to the situation that has occurred.

Example Thought: I visit a friend, but her expression seems negative towards me. She doesn't want to see me and goes into her bedroom. She claimed she was sick but I feel like she is avoiding me.

Reframed Thought: She could really be sick and just wants to rest. There are many reasons why she wouldn't want to see me, such as being self-conscious about her appearance or even worried she might be contagious.



Fortune Telling

Distortion: Making conclusions and predictions based on little or no evidence. Predictions are generally arbitrary and have negative outcomes.

Challenge: Ask yourself how do you know what will actually happen. Is there any evidence to suggest that what you think will occur will actually happen? Think about how often you have been accurate with your predictions in the past.

Example Thought: I'm going to have a bad day today.

Reframed Thought: Today may have some challenges, but I will overcome them and have a good day.



5. Catastrophizing Magnification

Distortion: An over-exaggeration of a thought which leads to worries escalating quickly and becoming the worst-case scenario.

Challenge: Take the negative event for what it is. Don't try to make it any more than it is. Reframe the situation by looking at opportunities rather than the catastrophic event you make it out to be.

Example Thought: There is a lot of traffic on my way to work and I'm never going to get there on time.

Reframed Thought: I may be late but I will get there safely, in the meantime I can enjoy the radio.



Minimization

Distortion: Minimizing positive experiences. The importance of positive qualities is diminished.

Challenge: Take the positive experience for what it is. Try not to diminish the importance by focusing on the positive qualities rather than turning it into a negative. Embrace the positive experience and take pride in your accomplishments.

Example Thought: As an athlete, I win an award but it doesn't seem like I accomplished much as others have already won this award.

Reframed Thought: I won an award, I am proud of what I accomplished and grateful for how far I have come in my athletic career.



6. Personalization

Distortion: Takes things personally which causes a direct and personal reaction to everything others do or say even if unrelated to them.

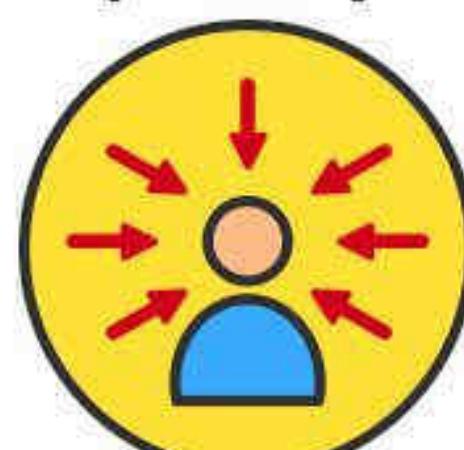
Challenge: Identify why you feel responsible and determine if it was really in your control. Acknowledge that things are rarely one person's fault.

Brainstorm logical reasons rather than unnecessarily blaming yourself if you feel excluded or targeted. Look at things from an outsider's perspective.

Example Thought: My partner and I show up late to a dinner party at a friend's.

When we arrived, it seemed like everyone was mad and not having a good time because we showed up late. I should have made us leave earlier so this wouldn't have happened.

Reframed Thought: Even though we were late to the dinner party, I cannot control how people feel if they aren't having a good time. There could be other factors that contributed to people not enjoying the party before I arrived.



7. Blaming

Distortion: Blames others and plays a victim role while holding others responsible for their pain.

Challenge: Avoid playing a victim role by trying to see the situation from the other person's perspective. Recognize that blame does not always fall on one person's shoulders. Take responsibility and apologize for any role you may have played in the situation. Identify solutions and move forward as best you can.

Practice empathy and focus on understanding the other person. Picture yourself walking in their shoes and get rid of the right-wrong mentality.

Example Thought: I blame my significant other for the relationship issues we experienced. Why am I always treated this way, only if they put more effort into our relationship.

Reframed Thought: A relationship takes two people to make it work. I am equally responsible for any issues we may have. I should apologize for my mistakes and try to move forward as best we can.



8. Labeling

Distortion: Assign judgment to yourself or others solely based on one negative incident. The label is generally exaggerated.

Challenge: Remember labels are a result of an error or mistake. Attribute the error to the event instead of yourself or others. One failed attempt does define you, separate these from the negative labels. Remind yourself that nobody is just one thing.

Example Thought: Someone at work made a mistake that had severe consequences for other tasks including the ones I am working on. Why are they so stupid for making those mistakes, now I have to redo everything.

Reframed Thought: I understand that mistakes can happen to any of us. Unfortunately, this mistake occurred. We will have to spend some extra effort to fix it, but it is not the end of the world. They made a mistake and I know they are capable of doing a better job next time.



9. Always Being Right

Distortion: Always having the need to be right. Internalize opinions as facts and will put others on trial to prove they are correct.

Challenge: Understand that it is acceptable to be wrong sometimes. Nobody is perfect and gets everything right all the time. You are allowed to make mistakes. Be open-minded to other's suggestions. Try and identify if your thoughts are facts or actually opinions.

Example Thought: At work, I didn't agree with the way a task was being performed by a colleague. I told them the right way to do it and I don't know why they wouldn't listen to me. I know I am right and it should be done my way.

Reframed Thought: Maybe my way isn't the best way to perform the task. I don't really know which method is better until I try it for myself. Maybe we can go with their method this time and see how it works out.



10. Should Statements

Distortion: “Should” do, “must” do, or even “shouldn’t” do statements. The statements are rules enforced on themselves or others.

Challenge: Identify how the “should” statements make you feel. These statements should be motivating rather than making you feel conflicted or even paralyzed. Try to use the word prefer in place of should.

Example Thought: I should stop being lazy and exercise today.

Reframed Thought: I would prefer to exercise today. But I’m not feeling up for it today. If I don’t exercise today, I can exercise the next day.



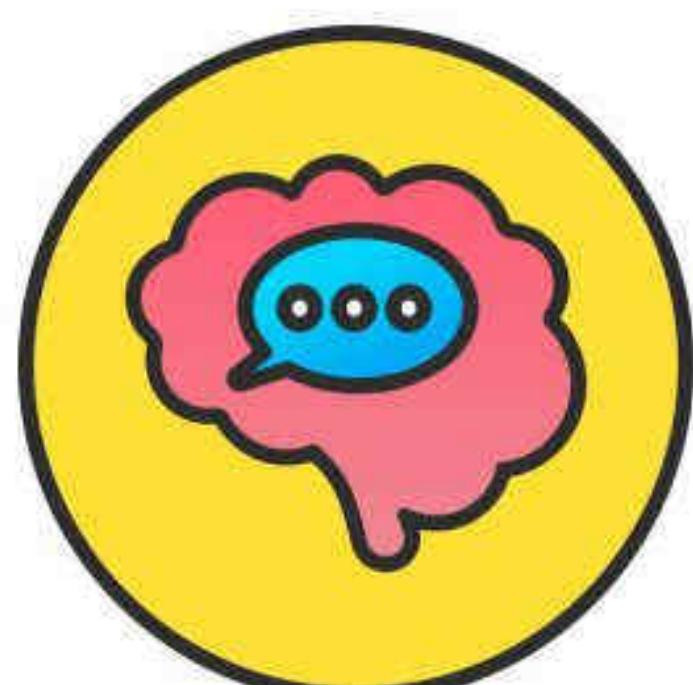
11. Emotional Reasoning

Distortion: Any feeling must be true. The emotion is accepted as fact because all logical reasoning is blocked out.

Challenge: Let yourself feel your emotions but don't let it consume you. Be mindful of your emotions without judgment. Remember emotions can change quickly. Avoid letting your emotion transform into truths. Challenge the validity of what you are feeling and identify whether it is based on emotions or facts.

Example Thought: I feel alone and uncared for because my partner does not want to spend time with me and instead is working overtime.

Reframed Thought: My partner is working overtime because they are busy at work. Not because they do not care for me. Usually, when they are not busy they will spend time with me.



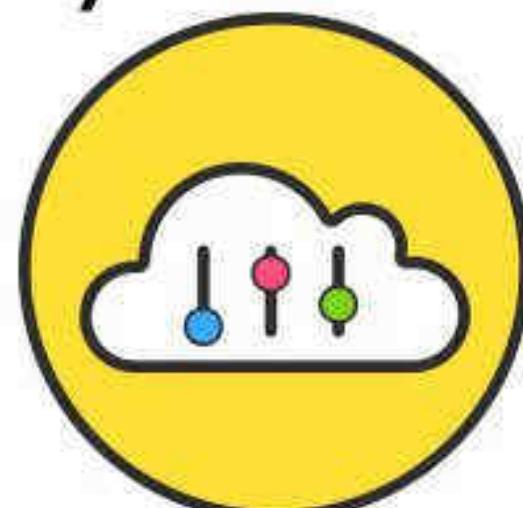
12. Control Fallacy External Control Fallacy

Distortion: Life is completely controlled by external factors and fate has already been decided.

Challenge: Look for opportunities in small changes before making big changes. Recognize you may not be able to control everything that goes on in your life. Understand you can still control personal decisions that may have an effect on others around you. Identify things that are in your control and things that are out of your control.

Example Thought: I feel overwhelmed and anxious due to the coronavirus pandemic. I feel like I have no control to protect myself or my family from the virus.

Reframed Thought: I recognize that I cannot control how the virus spreads but I can reduce the risks by protecting myself with the necessary protective equipment, such as face masks and washing my hands regularly.



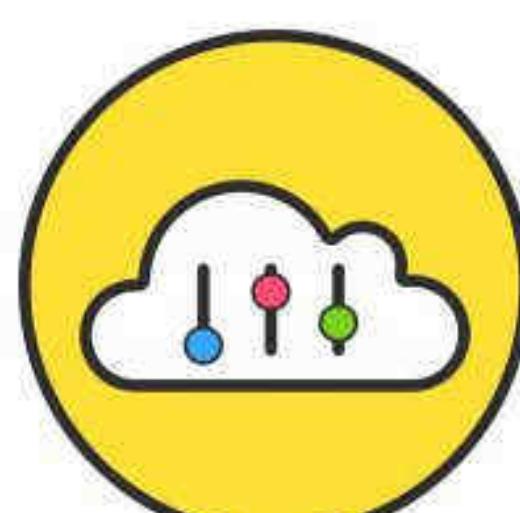
Internal Control Fallacy

Distortion: Has complete control of themselves and their surroundings. Feels responsible for the pain and happiness of others.

Challenge: Recognize that you cannot control everything that goes on around you. Think about whether your actions actually contributed to the situation that occurred. Is there someone else in the situation that needs to take responsibility for their own behavior or choices?

Example Thought: My daughter failed her exam. I blame myself because I should have spent more time helping her study.

Reframed Thought: Maybe she failed her exam because it was really difficult, not because I am a bad parent. I can offer to help her study next time, but it is her decision to put more effort into her studies.



13. Fallacy of Change

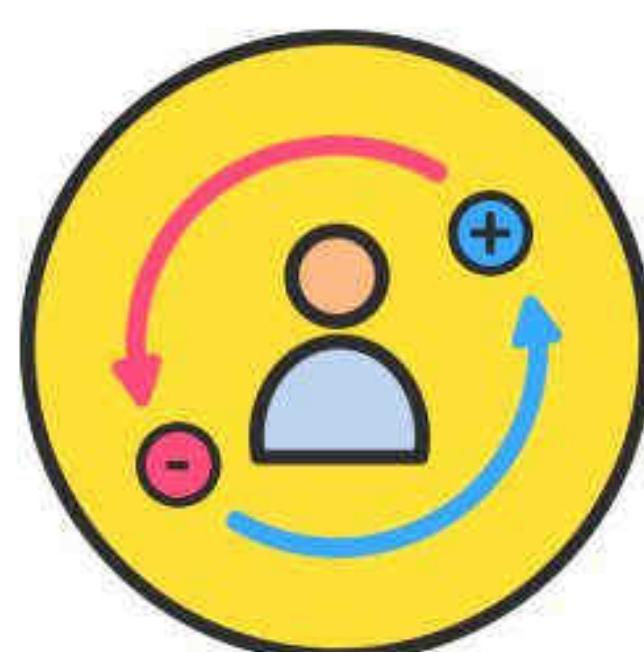
Distortion: Others should change to suit your own interests. Pressure's others to change because they feel the change will bring them happiness.

Challenge: Try to recognize that no one is responsible for your own happiness.

Separate the change from your own happiness. Your happiness depends on yourself and the decisions or actions you make.

Example Thought: I feel my partner is perfect in every other way except these few minor things. If I make them change those things, it will make me so happy.

Reframed Thought: I can suggest those changes to my partner, but I understand that it is not necessary to make me happy. If they choose not to change I will still be happy with the way they are.



14. Fallacy of Fairness

Distortion: All things in life should be applied and measured based on fairness and equality.

Challenge: State your feelings as a preference rather than an expectation.

Try to identify that you may not have control over the situation. Consider other factors you are unaware of that may have influenced the situation. Be grateful for what you do have and not what you don't have.

Example Thought: A friend of mine makes a lot more money at their job doing something similar to me. Why don't I make the same amount, it's not fair they get paid more.

Reframed Thought: I might not make as much money as my friend, but I am grateful for the job I have. There could be many reasons why I don't make as much such as the company I work for doesn't generate as much profit.



15. Heaven's Reward Fallacy

Distortion: If we lived in a fair world we would be rewarded fairly. Should be rewarded based on how much you sacrificed.

Challenge: Recognize that not every sacrifice you make will be rewarded as life isn't always fair. Change your feelings as a preference rather than an expectation and separate it from the sacrifice. Consider whether your sacrifice is the only factor that may have played a role in being rewarded.

Example Thought: A colleague was promoted over me, but I believe I worked harder and deserved that promotion.

Reframed Thought: It would have been nice to get that promotion, but I don't always have control over other's decisions. Perhaps I can make my boss aware of all the effort and hard work I have been putting into my job and maybe I will be considered next time.



COMMON SELF-DEFEATING BELIEFS

ACHIEVEMENT

1. Performance Perfectionism. I must never fail or make a mistake.
2. Perceived Perfectionism. People won't love or accept me if I'm flawed or vulnerable.
3. Achievement Addiction. My worth as a human being depends on my achievements, intelligence, talent, status, income, or looks.

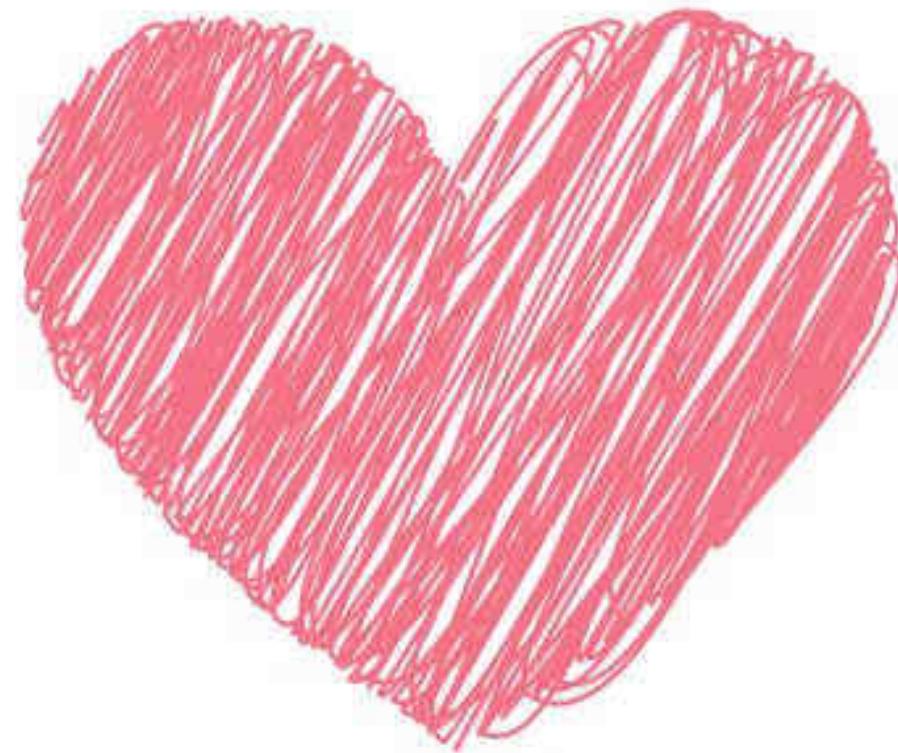


LOVE

4. Approval Addiction. I need everyone's approval to be worthwhile.

5. Love Addiction. I can't feel happy and fulfilled without being loved. If I'm not loved, then life is not worth living.

6. Fear of Rejection. If you reject me, it proves that there's something wrong with me. If I'm alone, I'm bound to feel miserable and worthless.



SUBMISSIVENESS

7. Pleasing Others. I should always try to please you, even if I make myself miserable in the process.
8. Conflict Phobia. People who love each other should never fight or argue.
9. Self-Blame. The problems in my relationships are bound to be my fault.



DEMANDINGNESS

10. Other-Blame. The problems in my relationships are always the OTHER person's fault.

11. Entitlement. You should always treat me in the way I expect.

12. Truth. I'm right and you're wrong.



DEPRESSION

13. Hopelessness. My problems could never be solved. I could never feel truly happy or fulfilled.

14. Worthlessness/Inferiority. I'm basically worthless, defective, and inferior to others.



ANXIETY

15. Emotional Perfectionism. I should always feel happy, confident, and in control.

16. Anger Phobia. Anger is dangerous and should be avoided at all costs.

17. Emotophobia. I should never feel sad, anxious, inadequate, jealous, or vulnerable. I should sweep my feelings under the rug and not upset anyone.



18. Perceived Narcissism. The people I care about are demanding, manipulative, and powerful.

19. Brushfire Fallacy. People are clones who all think alike. If one person looks down on me, the word will spread like brushfire and soon everyone will.

20. Spotlight Fallacy. Talking to people is like having to perform under a bright spotlight. If I don't impress them by being sophisticated, witty, or interesting, they won't like me.

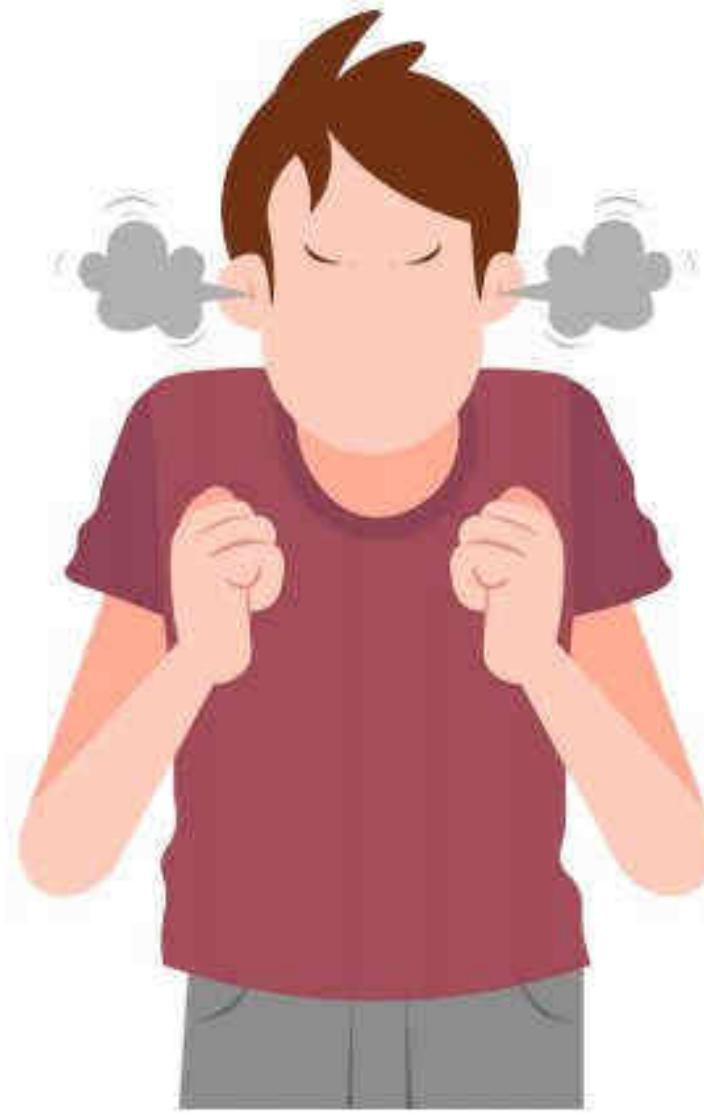
21. Magical Thinking. If I worry enough, everything will turn out okay.



OTHER

22. Low Frustration Tolerance. I should never be frustrated. Life should always be easy.

23. Superman/Superwoman. I should always be strong and never be weak.



40 WAYS TO DEFEAT YOUR FEARS

40 WAYS TO DEFEAT YOUR FEARS

COGNITIVE TECHNIQUES

1. Uncovering Techniques

The Downward Arrow Technique will help you identify the Self-Defeating Beliefs that make you vulnerable to depression and anxiety.

1. Downward Arrow Technique: Draw a downward arrow under a negative thought and ask yourself, "If this thought was true, why would it be upsetting to me? What would it mean to me?" A new negative thought will come to mind. Write it down underneath the arrow and draw another arrow under it. Repeat this process several times. Now look at the negative thoughts you generated and review the list of Self-Defeating Beliefs on this page so you can pinpoint the underlying beliefs at the core of your suffering.

2. What-If Technique

This will help identify the fantasy at the root of your fears. Draw a downward arrow under a negative thought and ask, "What's the worst thing that could happen if that were true?" A new negative thought or fantasy will come to mind. Write it down under the arrow and repeat the process several times. Then ask yourself, "How likely is it that this would happen? And could I live with it if it did?"

Compassion-Based Technique

3. Double- Standard Technique

Instead of putting yourself down, you can talk to yourself in the same compassionate way you'd talk to a dear friend who was upset. Ask yourself, "Would I say such harsh things to a friend with a similar problem? What would I say to him or her?"

Truth-Based Techniques

4. Examine the Evidence

Instead of assuming that a negative thought is true, ask yourself, "What's the evidence for this claim?"

5. Experimental Technique

Ask yourself, “How could I test this thought to find out if it’s valid?” For example, if you have panic attacks because you tell yourself you’re on the verge of going crazy, you could try to drive yourself crazy by screaming incoherently, rolling around on the floor, and acting insane. That way, you can find out if your concerns are realistic.

6. Survey Technique

Do a survey to test your negative thought. For example, if you think that your shyness is weird or shameful, you could ask several friends if they’ve ever felt shy. You’ll probably discover that most people feel shy at times.

Truth-Based Techniques

7. Reattribution

If you're anxious or depressed, you may beat up on yourself relentlessly and blame yourself for your shortcomings. When you use Reattribution, you think about all the factors that contributed to the problem and focus on solving it or learning from it, instead of blaming yourself and ripping yourself to shreds.

Semantic Techniques

The Semantic Method is especially helpful for Should Statements and Labeling.

8. Semantic Method

You simply substitute language that's less insulting and emotionally loaded.

9. Let's Define Terms

When you label yourself as “a fool” or “a neurotic,” ask yourself what those labels really mean. You’ll see that there’s no such thing as “a fool” or “a neurotic.” Foolish and neurotic behavior exists, but fools and neurotics do not.

10. Be Specific

When you use Be Specific, you stick with reality and avoid global judgments about reality. Instead of thinking of yourself as “a failure,” you can pinpoint your specific strengths and weaknesses.

Logic-Based Techniques

11. Thinking in Shades of Gray

Instead of thinking about your problems in black and white extremes, you evaluate them more realistically, in shades of gray.

12. Process versus Outcome

Evaluate your performance based on the process— the effort you put in— rather than the outcome. Your preparation and hard work are always within your control, but the outcome usually isn't.

Quantitative Techniques

13. Self-Monitoring

You can keep track of your negative thoughts and fantasies by counting them on a 3×5 card or wristcounter like the ones golfers use to keep track of their scores. At the end of the day, record the total number of thoughts on your calendar and set the counter back to zero. If you keep this up for several weeks, often the negative thoughts diminish or disappear completely.

Quantitative Techniques

14. Worry Breaks

This is a paradoxical technique. You schedule specific times to feel depressed, anxious, or guilty. For example, if constant worrying prevents you from studying effectively for an exam, you might want to schedule a two-minute Worry Break each hour. During each Worry Break, you can tell yourself that you're sure to flunk. Rip yourself to shreds and make yourself as anxious as possible. Don't try to fight the feelings. You can use the rest of the hour to study and prepare for the exam. If you start to get nervous, remind yourself that you can postpone your worrying until the next Worry Break.

Humor-Based Techniques

15. Shame- Attacking Exercises (This technique is great for people who suffer from shyness.)

Instead of struggling to look “normal,” you intentionally do something foolish in public, like loudly announcing the time in a crowded department store or riding a bus and shouting the name of the street at each stop. You’ll discover that the world doesn’t come to an end, after all. Although this technique requires great courage, it can be very liberating and enlightening. Shame- Attacking Exercises are also a form of Interpersonal Exposure.

16. Paradoxical Magnification

Instead of struggling with your negative thoughts, you exaggerate them. Paradoxically, often they'll begin to seem absurd.

17. Humorous Imaging

When you feel consumed with anxiety or anger, it sometimes can help to visualize something humorous. A depressed woman obsessed about the fact that she'd gotten screwed in her divorce settlement. She could barely make ends meet, and became furious every time she fantasized about her ex-husband cavorting with his new trophy wife on his yacht and living in the lap of luxury. The constant feelings of anger and resentment were making her miserable. She found that picturing him at a board meeting in his underpants made her giggle. This was a useful antidote to the feelings of anger and resentment that were eating away at her.

Role-Playing Technique

You and another person take turns playing the role of your negative thoughts and the role of your positive thoughts. The person playing the negative thoughts attacks, using the second-person “You,” and the person playing the positive thoughts defends, using the first-person “I”.

18. Externalization of Voices

Use rolereversals when you get stuck.

Several other techniques that also work well in a role-playing format include the Double-Standard Technique, the Acceptance Paradox, the Devil’s Advocate, the Feared Fantasy, Flirting Training, and the David Letterman Technique.

Spiritual Technique

19. Acceptance Paradox (this page)

You accept your shortcomings with tranquility and a sense of humor. The Acceptance Paradox is based on the Buddhist principle that when you defend yourself, you create a state of war. If you're defending against your own self-criticisms, you'll end up at war with yourself. In contrast, when you find the truth in a criticism, you'll take the wind out of the critic's sails. Of course, you're the critic in this case, so you end up befriending

yourself. This is the most important and powerful technique of all, but it can be difficult to grasp at first.

It only comes to life when you combine it with a Role-Playing Technique, such as the Externalization of Voices, or the Feared Fantasy.

Motivational Techniques

List all the advantages and disadvantages of a negative thought.

20. Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA)

negative thought ("I'm such a loser"), Self- Defeating Belief ("I should always try to be perfect"), feeling (anger, guilt, or anxiety), or habit (drinking, using drugs, overeating, or procrastinating). You can also list the advantages and disadvantages of blaming the other person for the problems in your relationship with him or her. Ask yourself, "What are the advantages and disadvantages of this thought, belief, feeling or habit? How will it help me, and how will it hurt me?" After you list all the advantages and disadvantages you can think of, balance them against each other on a 100-point scale. Ask yourself whether the costs or the benefits seem greater, and put two numbers that add up to 100 in the two circles at the bottom of the CBA form.

21. Paradoxical Cost-Benefit Analysis

List only the advantages of a negative thought or feeling. This will make you aware of the powerful forces that keep you stuck or feeling anxious. Now ask yourself, "Given all the advantages of this attitude or feeling, why would I want to change?" Once you expose all the hidden rewards, often they'll lose their power to defeat you. List all the tempting thoughts you have just before you give in to the urge to drink, overeat, procrastinate, or date the wrong person. Give the 22. Devil's Advocate list to a friend and ask him or her to play the role of the devil who tempts you to give in. Your friend should be as seductive as possible and say things like, "Why don't you go ahead and eat that chocolate. Mmmm, it would taste so good!" Your job is to talk back to the tempting thoughts and defeat the devil.

Anti-Procrastination Techniques

23. Pleasure- Predicting Sheet

Schedule activities with the potential for pleasure, learning, or personal growth.

Predict how satisfying and rewarding each activity will be from 0% (not at all) to 100% (the most). After you complete each activity, record how satisfying it turned out to be, using the same scale.

Often you'll discover that many activities are more satisfying than you predicted. You can use this technique to test certain Self-Defeating Beliefs, such as "I need love to feel happy and worthwhile. If I'm alone, I'm bound to be miserable."

24. Little Steps for Big Feats

Instead of feeling overwhelmed by a huge task, break it down into small parts. Then you can tackle them one step at a time.

25. Anti- Procrastination: Break a large task down into small steps and predict how difficult and how satisfying you think each step will be on a scale from 0% to 100%. After completing each step, record how difficult it was and satisfying it actually turned out to be, using the same scale. Often You'll discover that each step is far easier and more rewarding than you expected.

26. Problem-Solution List

Select a specific time you're willing to get started on a task you've been putting off. Draw a line down the middle of a piece of paper, and label the two columns "Problems" and "Solutions." List all the barriers to getting started in the Problems column. Then write down how you're going to solve each problem in the Solutions column.

EXPOSURE TECHNIQUES

27. Gradual Exposure

When you use Gradual Exposure, you expose yourself to the thing you fear in small steps, so that it won't be so terrifying. For example, if you have an elevator phobia, you can get on an elevator, go up one floor, and get off. Once you're comfortable with that, you can ride the elevator for two floors, and gradually increase the time you spend in the elevator. You can use Gradual Exposure for any phobia, such as the fear of heights, needles, or dogs, as well as other forms of anxiety, such as shyness or obsessive-compulsive disorder. You can also create a Fear Hierarchy, listing the least threatening situation as 1 and the most threatening as 10. You can record the type and amount of exposure you perform each day, as well as how anxious you felt (between 0% and 100%).

Classical Exposure

28. Flooding: When you use Flooding, you expose yourself to the thing you fear all at once. For example, if you have an elevator phobia, you can force yourself to get on an elevator and ride up and down, no matter how anxious you feel, until the fear disappears.

Flooding is more frightening than Gradual Exposure, but it works more rapidly. Both approaches have been used successfully in the treatment of anxiety, so you can use the approach that appeals to you.

29. Response Prevention

You refuse to give in to your compulsive rituals. For example, if you have a powerful urge to check the mailbox after you drop a letter in to make sure it didn't get stuck, you could force yourself to walk away without checking it. Your anxiety will get worse temporarily, but if you refuse to give in to the urge, eventually the anxiety will disappear. This is like withdrawing cold turkey from an addiction.

30. Distraction

If you feel anxious, you can distract yourself from your upsetting thoughts. For example, if you're feeling panicky during an airplane flight, you can concentrate on a crossword puzzle or engage the passenger next to you in conversation. This technique works best when paired with an Exposure Technique such as Flooding.

Cognitive Exposure

31. Cognitive Flooding

Sometimes you can't expose yourself to the thing you fear in reality. For example,

if you have a fear of flying, you can't very easily crash an airplane in order to overcome your fear!

However, you can confront this fear in your mind's eye using Cognitive Flooding.

Visualize being in a plane crash. Make yourself as anxious as possible and try to endure the anxiety for as long as you can. Don't fight the anxiety. Instead, try to make it as bad as possible. Surrender to it. Eventually the anxiety will burn itself out.

32. Image Substitution

Substitute a more positive or peaceful image for a frightening one.

If you're afraid of flying, you may visualize the plane crashing in a ball of flames.

This image will create feelings of intense anxiety. Instead, you can imagine landing safely and enjoying a wonderful vacation with your family.

Cognitive Exposure

33. Memory Rescripting If you've been a victim of a horrifying or traumatic event, you may be haunted by vivid flashbacks and painful memories of what happened. You can edit these images in much the same way that a movie director edits a scene in a movie. For example, if you have humiliating memories of being raped or abused, you can picture the event in your mind's eye until you feel extremely anxious. Then you can enter the scene as a powerful adult and punish the person who abused you. You may also want to talk to the child who was being abused so you can comfort him or her. Of course, in this case, your loving, adult self is really having a conversation with the child inside of you who feels hurt, betrayed, frightened, and unlovable.

34. Feared Fantasy

You enter an Alice-in-Wonderland nightmare world where your worst fears come true. You meet an imaginary Hostile Critic who rips into you in the worst possible way, attacking all your weaknesses and flaws. You can use Self-Defense, and argue with the critic, or the Acceptance Paradox, so you can take the wind out of the critic's sails. You can also mix the Self-Defense Paradigm with the Acceptance Paradox. Although the Hostile Critic appears to be another person, he or she is really the projection of your own worst self-criticisms. You can do the Feared Fantasy as a Role-Playing Technique with the help of a therapist or friend, or you can write out a Feared Fantasy dialogue on paper.

Interpersonal Exposure (Anti-Shyness Techniques)

35. Smile and Hello Practice

Force yourself to smile and say hello to at least ten strangers every day. You'll usually discover that people are much friendlier than you expected.

36. Flirting Training

You learn to flirt with people in a lighthearted, affectionate manner rather than coming across as overly serious, sincere, or heavy. This makes you seem far more playful, mysterious, and exciting.

37. Rejection Practice

If you're afraid of rejection, you can try to accumulate as many rejections as possible so you can discover that the world doesn't come to an end. For example, instead of actually trying to get a date, you could make it your goal to get rejected ten times in one week. When I was in medical school, a friend and I went out and tried this together in Palo Alto. It was frightening at first, but turned out to be very liberating. Of course, you might end up getting a date in the process, but your goal is to collect as many rejections as possible.

Interpersonal Exposure

38. Self- Disclosure: Instead of shamefully hiding your feelings of shyness or nervousness, you disclose them in a relaxed, open way. The idea behind this technique is that the real problem is the shame you feel, not the shyness. Without the shame, shyness can be an asset, because it makes you appear more charming and vulnerable.

39. David Letterman Technique

You learn to make light, casual conversation with anyone, anywhere, using the same skills that successful talk-show hosts like David Letterman and Jay Leno use. You learn to focus on the other person, using the Disarming Technique, Thought and Feeling Empathy, Inquiry, and Stroking. You put the other person in the spotlight rather than trying to impress him or her by talking about yourself. If you do this in a friendly and admiring way, the person usually will end up feeling positive about you.

Hidden Emotion Technique

40. Hidden Emotion Technique: This technique is based on the idea that only nice people develop anxiety. In fact, niceness is the cause of anxiety. As a result, when you feel angry or upset, you may sweep your feelings under the rug so quickly that you don't even realize what the problem is. You push the problem out of conscious awareness. Pretty soon, you're struggling with feelings of worry, anxiety, or panic, and you don't even know why. When you're anxious, ask yourself, "Am I focusing on my anxiety to avoid something upsetting? What's the real problem that's bothering me? Do I secretly resent my spouse, a friend, or a colleague? Am I unhappy about my job or career path? How do I really feel about what's going on in my life?"

Once you bring the problem to conscious awareness, you can express your feelings or work to solve the problem that's bugging you. Often this leads to a reduction or complete elimination of the anxiety. The Hidden Emotion Technique can be invaluable for people struggling with hypochondriasis, chronic pain, dizziness, fatigue, or other medical complaints that seem to have no organic basis.

Five Secrets of Effective Communication (EAR)

E = Empathy 1. The Disarming Technique (DT).

Find some truth in what the other person is saying, even if it seems totally unreasonable or unfair.

2. Empathy. Put yourself in the other person's

shoes and try to see the world through his or her eyes.

- Thought Empathy (TE). Paraphrase the other person's words.
- Feeling Empathy (FE). Acknowledge how the other person probably is feeling, based on what he or she said.

3. Inquiry (IN). Ask gentle, probing questions to learn more about what the other person is thinking and feeling.

A = Assertiveness

4. "I Feel" Statements (IF). Express your own

ideas and feelings in a direct, tactful manner. Use "I Feel" Statements,

such as "I feel upset," rather than "you" statements, such as

"You're wrong!" or "You're making me furious!"

R = Respect

5. Stroking (ST). Convey an attitude of respect,

even if you feel

frustrated or angry with the other person.

Find

something genuinely positive to say to the other person, even in the heat of battle.

25 COPING SKILLS

'25 Coping Skills Everyone Needs'

"A 'coping skill' is any characteristic or behavioral pattern that enhances a person's adaptation." Meaning that if we feel stress all the time, we can create those "defense mechanisms" or "coping skills" to help us better manage or lessen the stress.

Two types of coping skills -- those distraction techniques as well as the process

(A) Distraction techniques

Number one: going for a walk.
number two: painting your nails.

Number three: blowing bubbles.
Number four: read a good book or
listen to a wonderful audio book.

Number five: exercise.

Number six: Deep breathing or
breathing techniques.

Number seven: watching your
favorite show or video series.

Number eight: draw or doodle.

Number nine: color.

Number ten: do a crossword
puzzle, or, really, any puzzle that
you like.

Number eleven: writing down some
positive or motivational quotes and
sticking them up all over the
house.

Number twelve: cleaning your
house!

Number thirteen: playing music or
even creating new playlists.

(B) Processing techniques

Number one is: to write a friend a nice card.

Number two: call or text a friend.

Number three: "impulse logs."

Number four: Use "feelings charts."

Number five: Journaling.

Number six: "Feeling-Word Collages."



Feeling word collage

Number seven: write down two to three things that you like about yourself and your situation.

Number eight: talking to a therapist.

Number nine: taking stock of how an emotion feels in our body. You may ask to tell how your neck feels -- "is it tight? Is it loose?

number ten: write a letter to your younger or older self.

Number eleven: write letters to those who are upsetting us still -- but never send them!

Number twelve: do a random act of kindness.

@survivorandco

COPING SKILLS TOOLBOX

SELF-SOOTHE

(Soothing yourself using five senses)

1. **sight** (paintings)
2. **touch** (furry pet, blanket, or doll)
3. **smell** (candle)
4. **sound** (music)
5. **taste** (favorite food, dessert, or drink)

AWARENESS

(Becoming aware of and expressing emotions.)

- e.g.** naming emotions with the emotional chart, journaling thoughts and emotions, or blogging about struggles

DISTRACTIONS

(Distracting yourself from distressing feelings)

- Pleasurable activities (**e.g.** reading a novel, watching funny TV, meeting a friend)

MINDFULNESS

(Being mindful of the present moment and your body)

- Five senses
- Naming thoughts
- Mindful breathing
- Mindful walking
- Mindful eating
- Self-compassion

ACCEPTANCE

(Radically accepting rather than rejecting reality.)

- Turning the mind from rejection to acceptance
- Half-smile
- Willing hands
- Meditations

JOURNALING

(reminding positive things in life.)

- e.g.** 5 things you are proud of, gratitude journal, changing negative to positive beliefs, things I like, my strengths, my values, my goals

SENSATIONS

(distress tolerance skills with tension, temperature, and relaxation)

- e.g.** splashing cold water on face, holding ice, intense exercise, progressive muscle relaxation

OPPOSITES

(doing the opposite action from how you feel)

1. Reading positive affirmations.
2. **e.g.** Going to work or a meet-up even if you want to isolate yourself.

AFFIRMATIONS FOR DIFFICULT DAYS

Sana Powell, M.A., LPC @curly_therapist



"I am still strong and capable even on my worst days."



"I'll stay present and take it one day at a time."



"I will get through this. This too shall pass."



"I'll ask for help when I need it. I'm not alone in this."



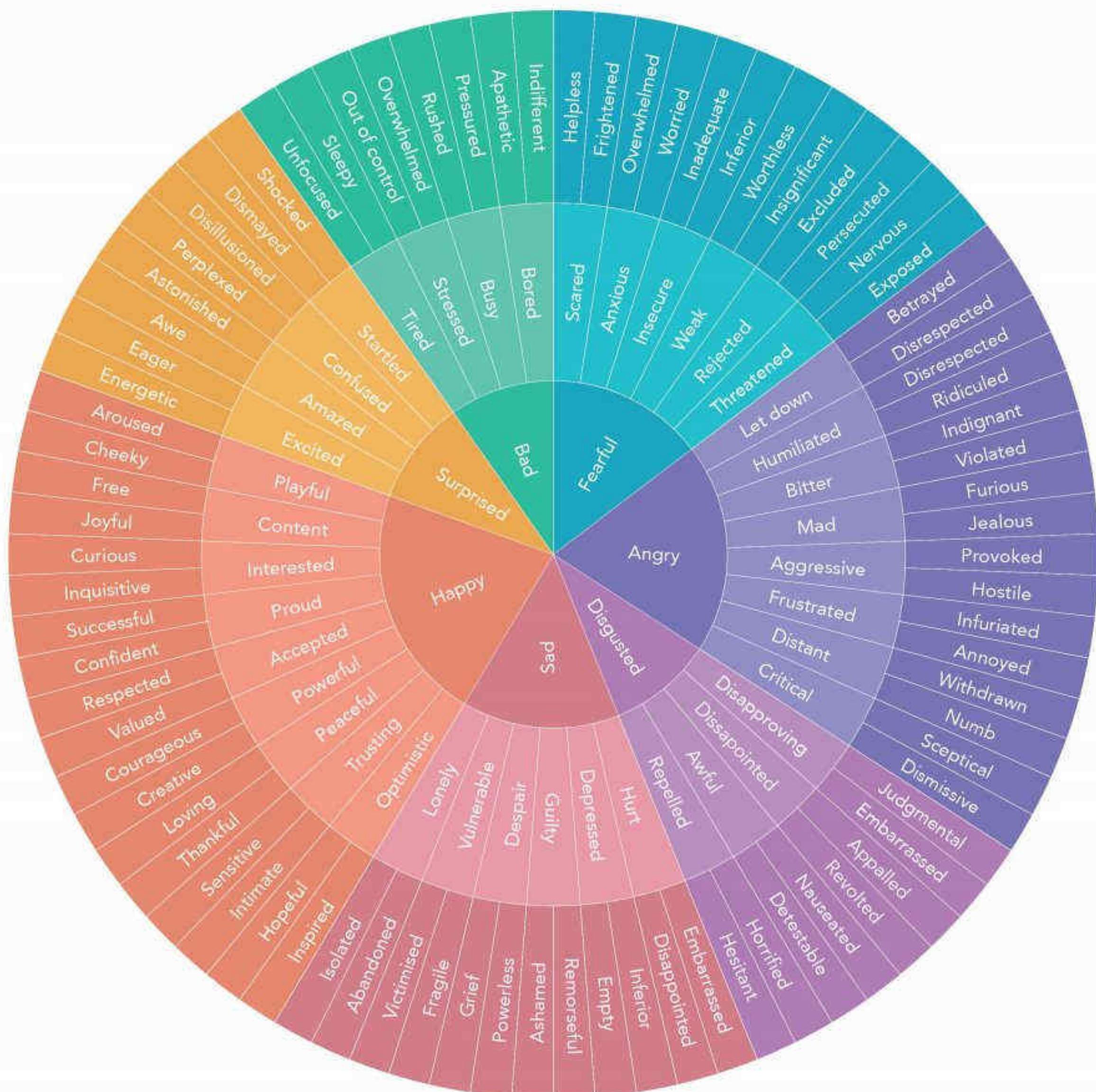
"I'll focus on what I can control & let go of the rest."



"I've survived 100% of my worst days so far."



The Feelings Wheel



Originally created by Dr. Gloria Wilcox

Angry

Let down

Humiliated

Bitter

Mad

Aggressive

Frustrated

Distant

Critical

Betrayed

Disrespected

Disrespected

Ridiculed

Indignant

Violated

Furious

Jealous

Provoked

Hostile

Infuriated

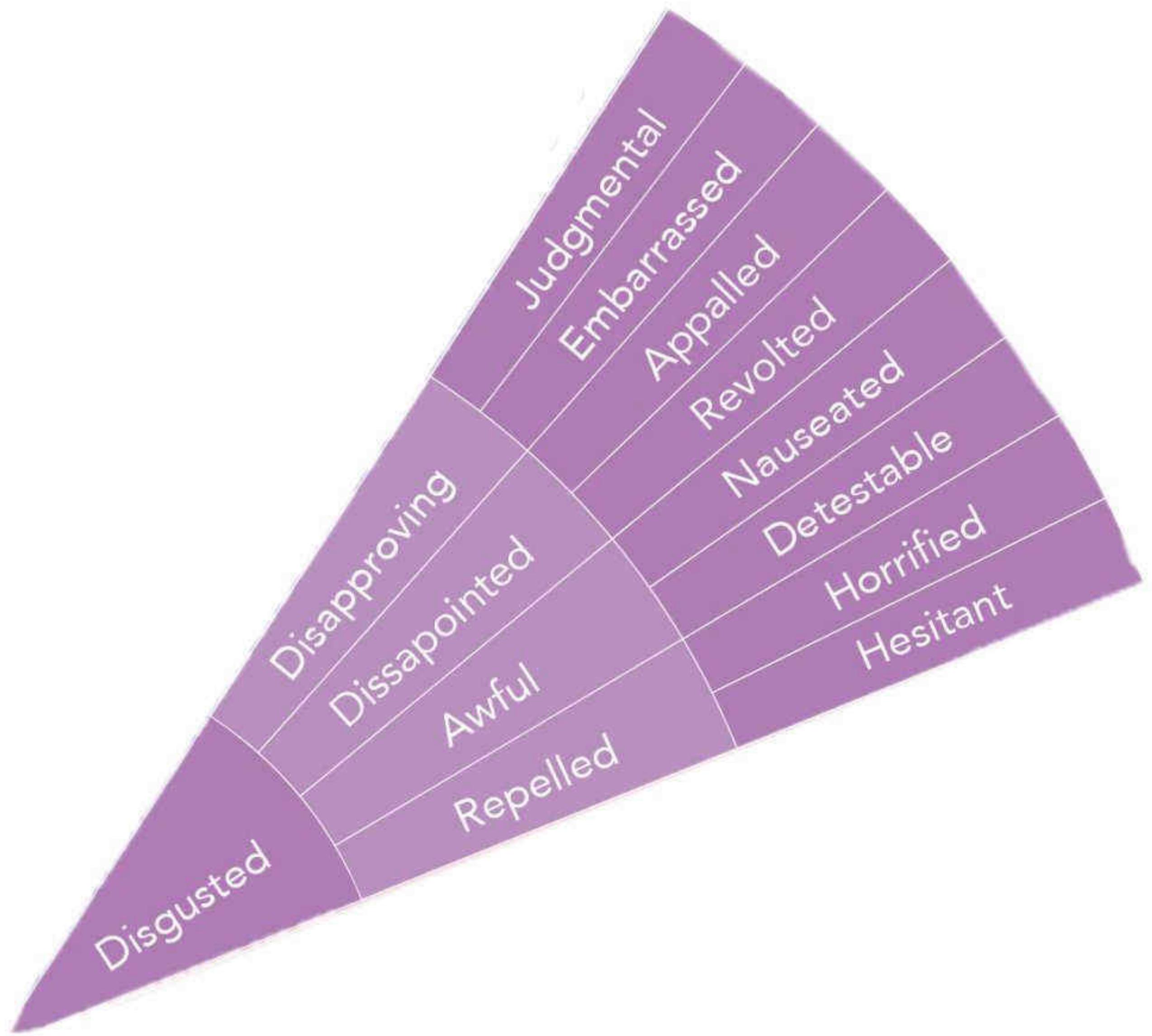
Annoyed

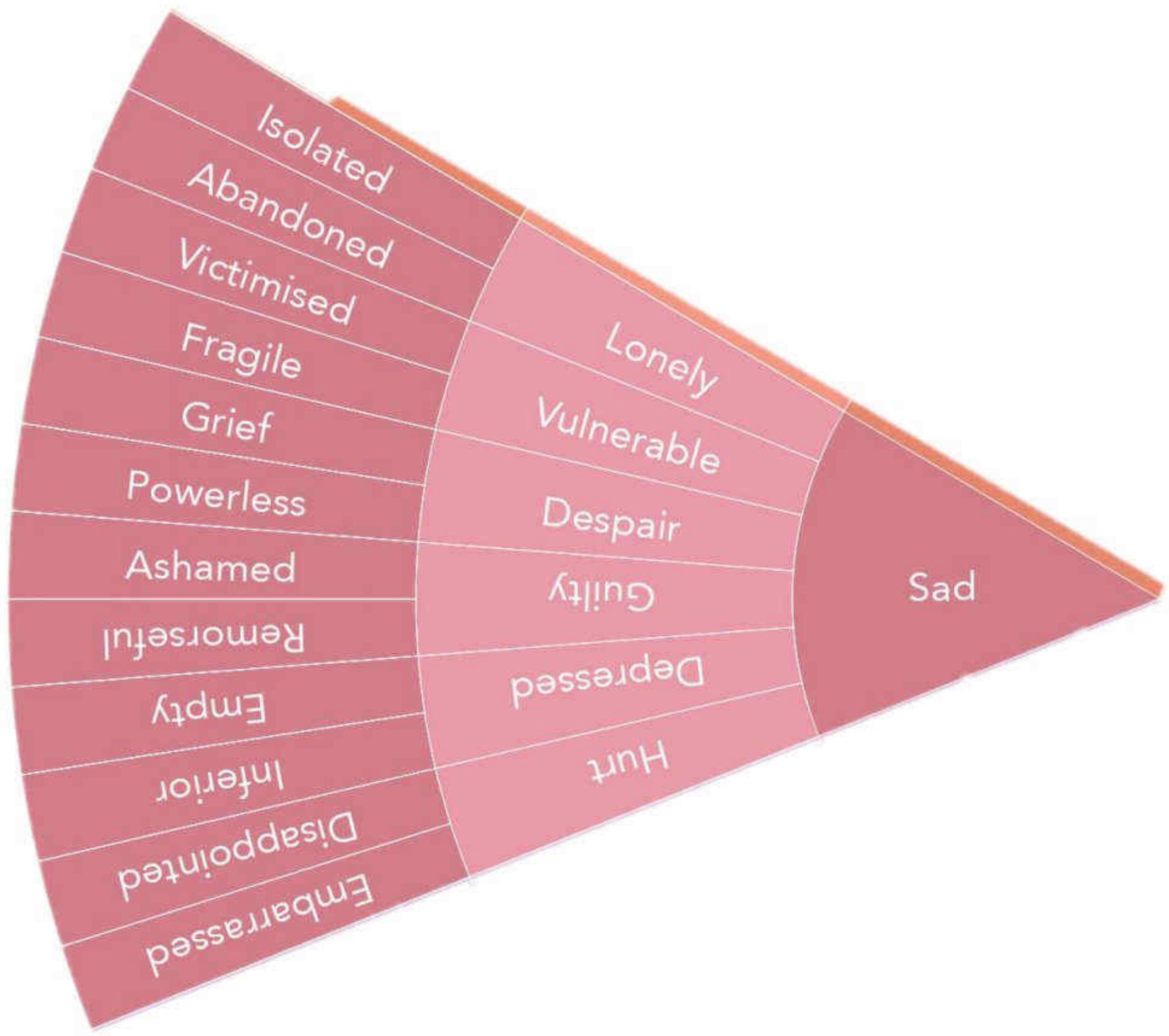
Withdrawn

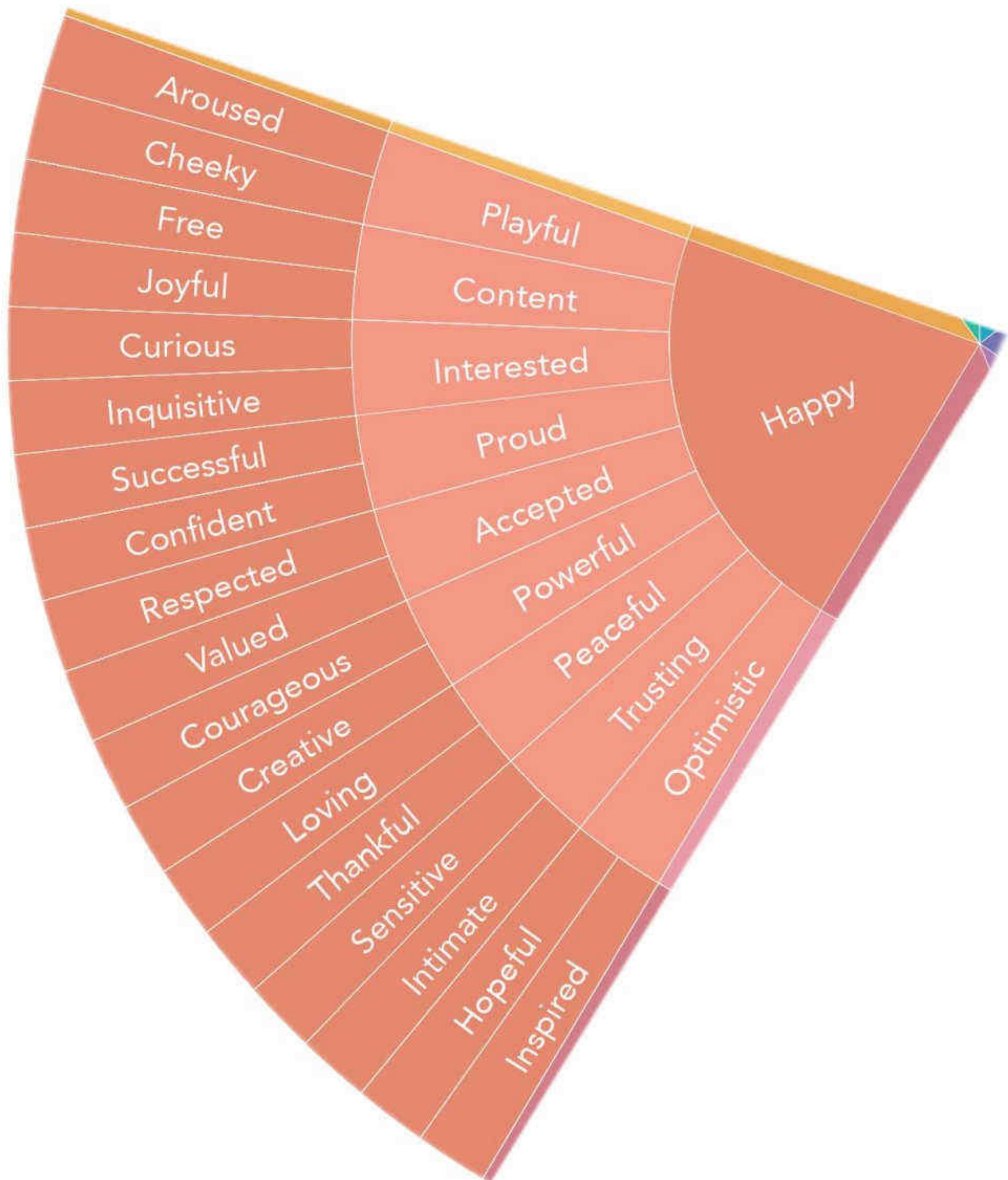
Numb

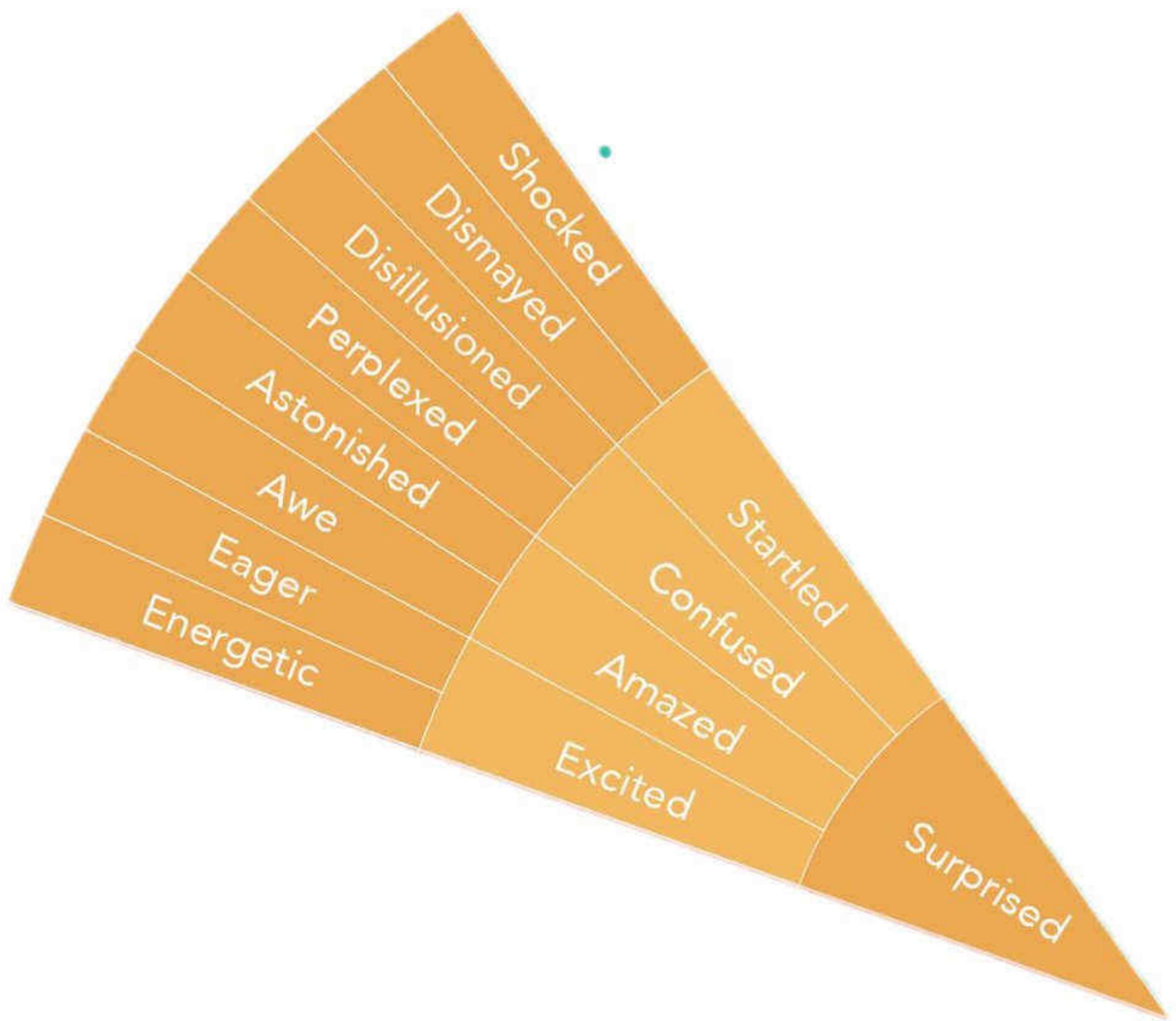
Sceptical

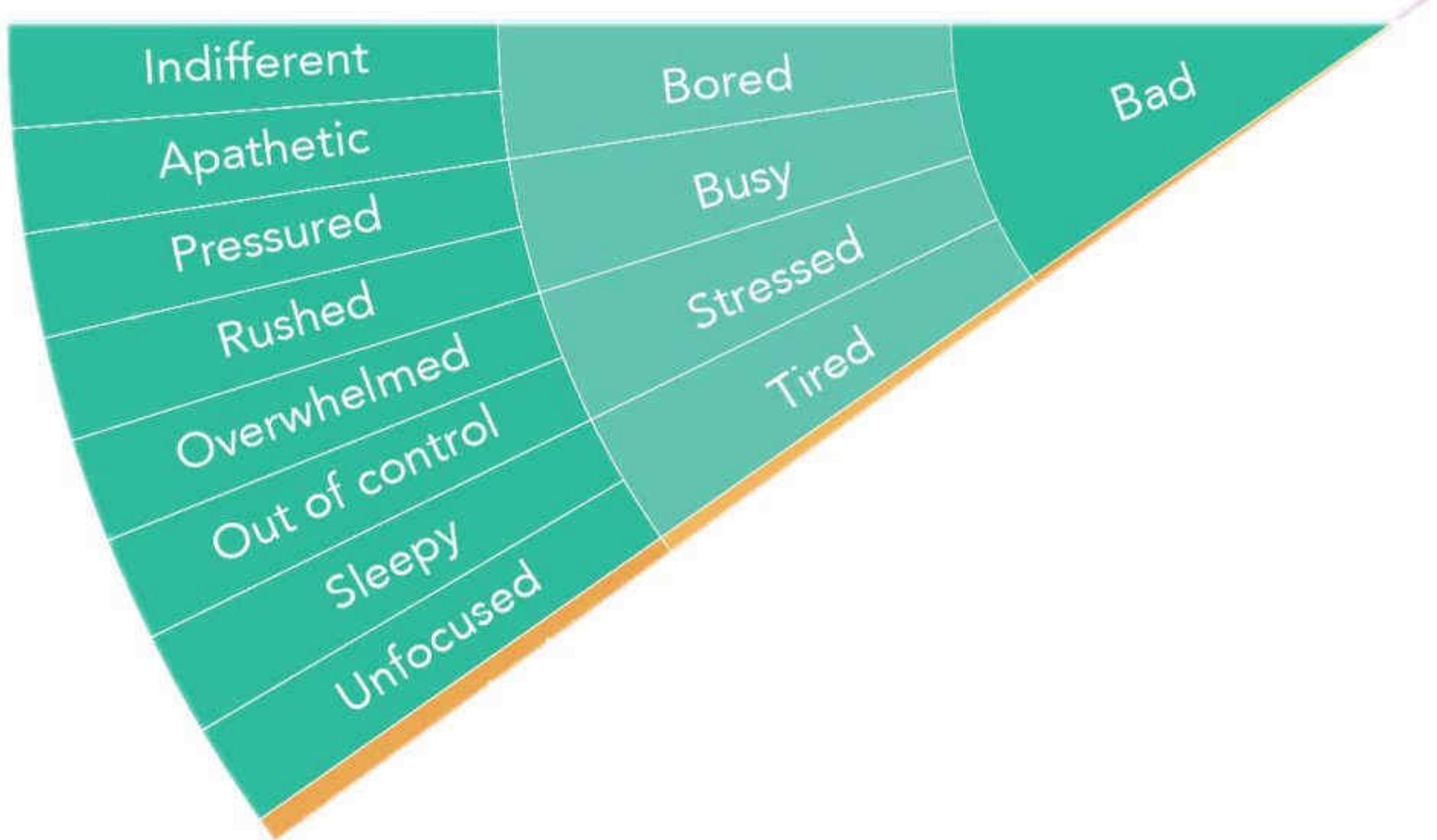
Dismissive











Fearful

Scared

Anxious

Insecure

Weak

Rejected

Threatened

Helpless

Frightened

Overwhelmed

Worried

Inadequate

Inferior

Worthless

Insignificant

Excluded

Persecuted

Nervous

Exposed

Understanding Automatic Negative Thoughts

Most of our thoughts occur automatically. This is good for doing daily general tasks such as brushing your teeth, eating a meal, getting dressed.

However, it can be a bad thing because it is habitual and automatic since we do not pay much attention to it.

It is important to understand how automatic negative thoughts occur and how they affect us so we can be prepared to challenge them.

What Are Automatic Negative Thoughts

Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs) are negative beliefs that occur habitually. They are involuntary responses to certain situations that are based on core beliefs you hold about yourself, others, or the world.

ANTs can lead to self-doubt, anger, irritability, depression, and anxiety. They have a strong influence on our mood and the difference between accepting or ignoring them will impact how happy our lives could be.

You cannot directly control these automatic thoughts. But you can indirectly alter your beliefs in a positive way.

It is important to recognize that all automatic negative thoughts are:

Always negative

Makes you feel bad about yourself

Self-sabotaging and tend to stop you from helping yourself

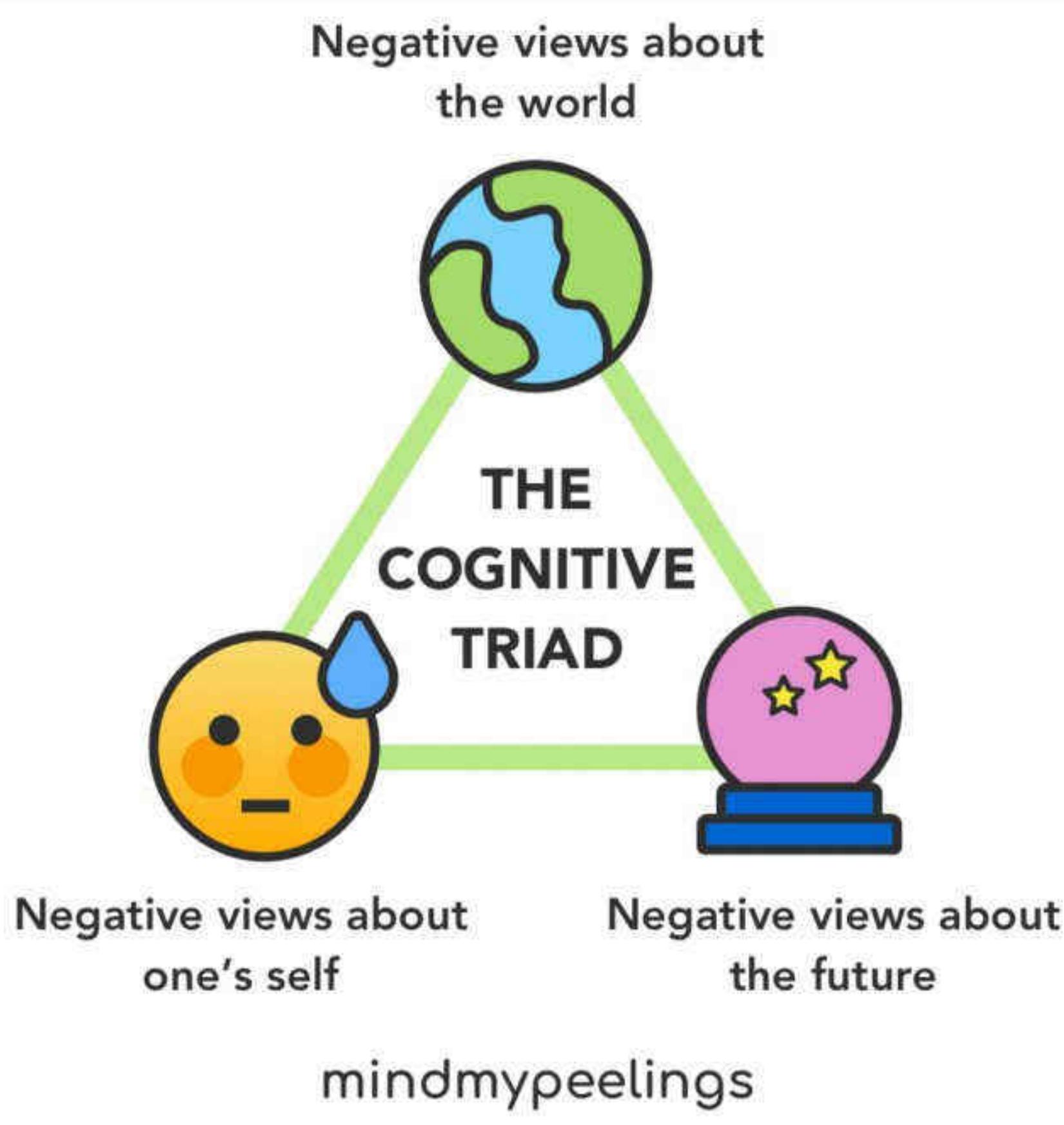
Uninvited and judging you when you least expect it

Believable because you are stuck in a negative thinking trap

Biased because you are experiencing a distorted perception of reality

Aaron Beck's Cognitive Triad

The automatic negative thoughts are categorized into three perspectives of one's belief. This was first proposed by Aaron Beck in 1976 and is known as the Negative Triad.



The triad involves automatic,
uncontrollable negative thoughts
about:

1. One's Self: "I'm worthless and hate myself"
2. The World or Environment: "Why does no one care about me"
3. The Future: "Things will never get better"

Why Do I Have Negative Thoughts

It is completely normal to experience both positive and negative thoughts daily. So you can stop worrying, it's okay to have negative thoughts.

Negative thoughts are an evolutionary trait to help keep you safe. It is meant to identify threats, learn from mistakes, and solve problems.

90% of all thoughts are repetitive. And if you repeat something often enough, it creates a neural pathway in the brain. So if your negative thoughts get repeated enough, they become habitual.

Effects of Negative Thinking

Negative thinking is normal and is there to keep you safe. However, when you have a negative experience, your brain will remember it.

The next time you have a similar experience, your brain triggers a response thinking it is being threatened. This negative response is what makes you feel agitated, angry, depressed, or even anxious.

It can trigger a downward spiral which leads to a cycle of negative thoughts, emotions, and unhelpful behaviors. Thankfully, there is a simple 6 step process for challenging automatic negative thoughts.

How to Stop Negative Thinking in 6 Steps

Negative Automatic Thoughts affect many of us due to our habitual tendency towards irrational thinking patterns.

This Cognitive Behavioral Therapy technique can be achieved in 6 steps by reframing negative thoughts and over time your thoughts will be replaced with more rational thinking.

Recognize and Isolate the Thought

Write Down the Thought

Identify the Distress Level

Identify the Cognitive Distortion

Challenge & Reframe Your Thoughts

Reevaluate the Distress Level

1. Recognize and Isolate the Thought

Recognizing that you are experiencing a thinking error is a very important first step. This provides an awareness that allows you an opportunity to challenge and refute those thoughts.

When you experience an automatic negative thought:

pause for a moment

try and recognize what you are thinking isn't quite right

isolate and focus on that irrational thought

recognize how it makes you feel

Try to separate the thought from who you are. Think about what you are thinking about. Once you have an external view of your thought you have an opportunity to try to refute it.

This is known as Metacognition and occurs when your brain realizes, "Wait my thinking isn't quite right." It is a deeper level of thinking that allows you to think about what you are thinking. This awareness provides an opportunity to allow you to understand, adapt, change, control, and use your thought process in a positive and healthy way.

2. Write Down Your Thought

Writing down your thought might seem like a really simple step. But it is much more complex and beneficial than you realize.

When you are experiencing an automatic negative thought, it can be difficult to pull yourself out of the thinking trap and write down what you are thinking about.

Writing your thought enables you to have that higher level of thinking because you have to focus and think about what the thought was really about. This is again the metacognition mentioned previously.

Writing helps you process your thoughts and emotions by:

clearing your thoughts and unloading all your emotions

giving you clarity and focus to process your feelings

creating positive self-dialogue with your mind

reducing stress and increases gratitude

When you are finished writing you will feel a sense of relief that your mind has been emptied of that clutter. This will give you a sense of a clearer picture of what really happened because your mind can use that free space to focus.

3. Identify the Distress Level

Identify the distress level your automatic thoughts make you feel. This will help rank the severity the negative thought is causing you.

The distress level is ranked between 0 and 10. Zero meaning you are calm and peaceful with no distress at all. Ten means that the distress is at its extreme and is paralyzing.

Rank the distress level based on how you feel; consider your emotions and any physical distress you may experience.

4. Identify the Cognitive Distortion

Cognitive distortions are common thinking patterns that influence irrational negative thoughts and feelings. These negative thinking traps cause a distorted perception of reality in an inaccurate way.

There are 15 common cognitive distortions that most people will experience. These styles of distorted thinking influence our thoughts in different ways.

Go through the list of cognitive distortions and identify the one that applies to your negative automatic thought.

5. Challenge & Reframe Negative Thinking

Challenging cognitive distortions can be accomplished by evaluating the evidence, focusing on positive thoughts, and avoid thinking in extremes.

Each of the distorted thinking styles requires a unique solution to overcome negative thinking.

You can overcome negative thoughts by:

Challenging and refuting negative thoughts

Modifying our language and internal dialogue

Replacing negative distortions with positive healthy thoughts

Writing down the more reasonable reframed thought

How to challenge each of the cognitive distortions is explained below. Examples of reframing negative thoughts for each distortion is provided. This will help you understand how to reframe your negative thoughts.

6. Reevaluate the Distress Level

After you have challenged and reframed the distorted thought, reevaluate the distress level to see if this exercise has helped.

If your distress level has decreased and you are feeling better emotionally and physically after the exercise, then you have successfully altered your negative thought.

If you don't feel like your distorted thought has been corrected you can repeat the exercise again.

You may not always be able to correct your thinking, but with practice, you will be able to automatically recognize the negative thinking traps while altering your mindset from negative to positive.

Assertive Communication

Communicating assertively means clearly and calmly expressing what you want without either being too passive or too aggressive. Learning to communicate assertively doesn't guarantee you will have your needs met but it makes it more likely, and it can improve your relationships with other people.

Tips for communicating assertively

Use "I" statements.

Be clear and direct:

"I would like you to give me a refund
"think what you have done is good, but I
would like to see more of..

Describe how another person's behaviour
makes you feel.

This makes other people aware of the
consequences of their actions:

"When you raise your voice it makes me
scared ... I would like you to speak softly"
"When you don't tell me what you are feel
it makes me confused"

Stick to your guns- the broken record
technique.

This involves thinking about what you want,
preparing what you might say, then
repeating it as necessary:

"I would like a refund...Yes, but I would still
like a refund ...I've heard what you
have said but I still want a refund"

Socratic Questions

Thoughts are like a running dialogue in your brain. They come and go fast. So fast, in fact, that we rarely have the time to question them. Because our thoughts determine how we feel, and how we act, it's important to challenge any thoughts that cause us harm.

Spend a moment thinking about each of the following questions, and record thorough responses. Elaborate, and explain "why" or "why not" in your responses.

Thought to be questioned:
Might other people have different interpretations of this same situation?
What are they?
Am I looking at all the evidence, or just what supports my thought?
Could my thought be an exaggeration of what's true?
Am I having this thought out of habit, or do the facts support it?
What is the evidence for this thought?
Against it?
Am I basing this thought on facts, or on feelings?
Is this thought black and white, when reality is more complicated?
Could I be misinterpreting the evidence?
Am I making any assumptions?
Did someone pass this thought / belief to me? If so, are they a reliable source?
Is my thought a likely scenario, or is it the worst case scenario?

Core Beliefs

Everyone looks at the world differently.

Two people can have the same experience, yet have very different interpretations of what happened. Core beliefs are the deeply held beliefs that influence how we interpret our experiences. Think of core beliefs like a pair of sunglasses. Everyone has a different “shade” that causes them to see things differently.

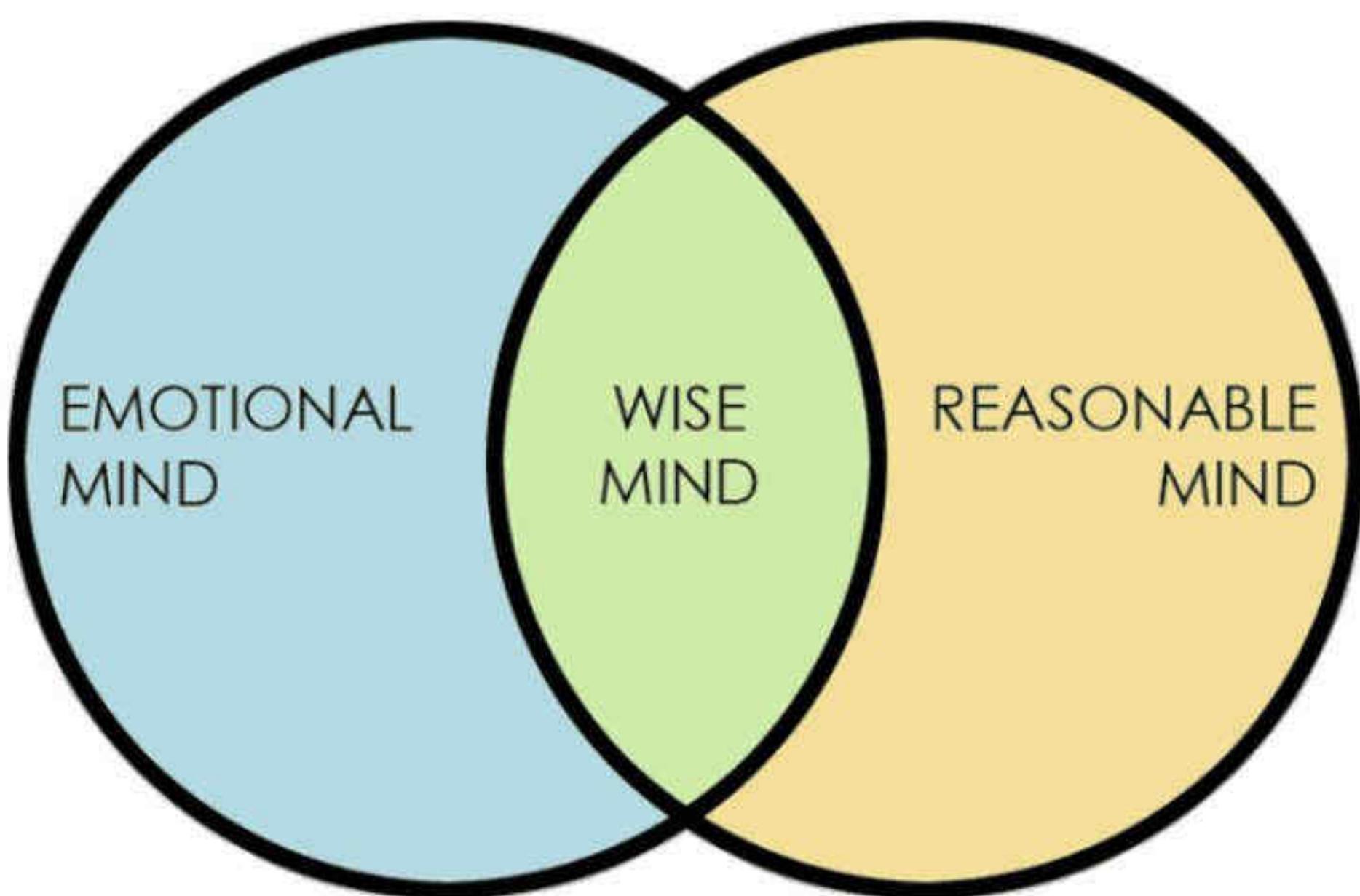


Many people have negative core beliefs that cause harmful consequences. To begin challenging your negative core beliefs, you first need to identify what they are. Here are some common examples:

I'm unlovable	I'm stupid	I'm boring
I'm not good enough	I'm ugly	I'm worthless
I'm a bad person	I'm abnormal	I'm undeserving

The Wise Mind

Your mind has three states: The reasonable mind, the emotional mind, and the wise mind. Everyone possesses each of these states, but most people gravitate toward a specific one most of the time.



The **emotional mind** is used when feelings control a person's thoughts and behavior. They might act impulsively with little regard for consequences.

The **wise mind** refers to a balance between the reasonable and emotional halves. They are able to recognize and respect their feelings, while responding to them in a rational manner.

A person uses their **reasonable mind** when they approach a situation intellectually. They plan and make decisions based on fact.

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness: a state of nonjudgmental awareness of what's happening in the present moment,

including the awareness of one's own thoughts, feelings, and senses.

Components of Mindfulness

Awareness. During a state of mindfulness, you will notice your thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations as they happen. The goal isn't to clear your mind or to stop thinking—it's to become aware of your thoughts and feelings, rather than getting lost in them.

Acceptance. The thoughts, feelings, and sensations that you notice should be observed in a nonjudgmental manner. For example, if you notice a feeling of nervousness, simply state to yourself: "I notice that I am feeling nervous". There's no need further judge or change the feeling.

Benefits of Mindfulness:

Reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety

Improved memory, focus, and mental processing speed

Improved ability to adapt to stressful situations

Greater satisfaction within relationships

Reduced rumination (repetitively going over a thought or problem)

Improved ability to manage emotions

Mindfulness Practice

Note: Mindfulness is a state of mind, rather than a particular action or exercise.

However, without practice, mindfulness is difficult to achieve. These techniques are designed to help you practice.

Mindfulness Meditation

Sit in a comfortable place, and begin paying attention to your breathing. Notice the physical sensation of air filling your lungs, and then slowly leaving. When your mind wanders—which it will—simply notice your thoughts, and turn your attention back to breathing.

Body Scan

Pay close attention to the physical sensations throughout your body. Start with your feet, and move up through your legs, groin, abdomen, chest, back, shoulders, arms, hands, neck, and face. Spend anywhere from 15 seconds to 1 minute on each body part.

Mindfulness Walk

While walking, make a point to practice mindfulness. Start by noticing how your body moves and feels with each step. Then, expand your awareness to your surroundings. What do you see? Hear? Smell? Feel? This technique can also be expanded to other daily activities.

Five Senses

Make a conscious effort to notice the present moment through each of your senses.

5 things you see

1 thing you taste

4 things you feel

1 thing you smell

3 things you hear

RELAPSE PREVENTION PLAN

RELAPSE PREVENTION PLAN

Depression can occur throughout different periods of our lives. It is important to be aware of our warning signs how to respond to this change in mood and helping people we can reach out to for support identifying how to respond to this relapse and implementing these strategies will help you to feel better.



Warning signs (triggers) that symptoms are returning:

- ⚠ Poor sleep or not getting enough sleep,
- ⚠ Loss or grief,
- ⚠ Getting more panic attacks, low mood, body ache, muscle ache
- ⚠ An unpleasant event such as a perceived failure, disappointment or criticism . Other stressful events.
- ⚠ Cognitive or thought signs, like thinking that everything is hopeless or thinking that you aren't appreciated.
- ⚠ Behavioural signs - being silent or quiet.
- ⚠ Starting a new job or school course or taking on new responsibilities, A major holiday or anniversary, Moving or other changes in your home.

Coping strategies I can use to feel better:

taking medications, eating well, hydration, exercise, sleep, self care, nature

identifying cognitive distortions and reframing them, support from friends, family

hobby – doodling, music, writing
slowing down – single task

People I can ask for help (with their contact number):

Measures I am willing to take if I start to feel unsafe:

The one thing that is most important to me and worth living for is:

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

THE 4 FUNDAMENTAL EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE CAPABILITIES

Emotional intelligence – the ability to manage ourselves and our relationships, effectively consists of four fundamental capabilities, each described by their key skills:

1. SELF-AWARENESS

Emotional self-awareness: the ability to read and understand your emotions as well as recognise their impact on others.

Accurate self-assessment: a realistic evaluation of your strengths and limitations.

Self-confidence: a strong and positive sense of self-worth.

2. SELF-MANAGEMENT

Self-control: the ability to keep disruptive emotions and impulses under control.

Trustworthiness: a consistent display of honesty and integrity.

Conscientiousness: the ability to manage yourself and your responsibilities.

Adaptability: the skill to adjust to changing situations and overcoming obstacles.

Achievement orientation: the drive to meet an internal standard of excellence.

Initiative: a readiness to seize opportunities.

3. SOCIAL AWARENESS

Empathy: the skill at sensing other people's emotions, understanding their perspective and taking an active interest in their concerns.

4. SOCIAL SKILL

Visionary leadership: the ability to take charge and inspire with a compelling vision.

Developing others: the propensity to bolster the abilities of others through feedback and guidance.

Communication: the skill at listening and at sending clear, convincing and well-tuned messages.

Change catalyst: proficiency in initiating new ideas and leading people in a new direction.

Conflict management: the ability to de-escalate disagreements and orchestrate resolutions.

Building bonds: proficiency at cultivating and maintaining a web of relationships.

How to Process Emotions

THERAPY
IN A
NUTSHELL



O bserve:

- Notice and Name what you're feeling, be as specific as possible
- Observe your physical sensations
- Don't judge emotions as good or bad, describe them instead ie. "This is uncomfortable"
- Observe thoughts instead of believing them, ie "I'm having the thought that they're judging me"

W illing to Feel:

- Sit with your feelings instead of trying to fix them right away
- Slow down, don't avoid situations or, or run amuck/act rashly
- Grounding Skills- get back into your body, make space for the sensations.
- Nervous system calming- slow breathing, the yawn, shake it out, Progressive muscle relaxation.
- Lean in instead of distracting.
- If sitting/willingness is too hard, do it on paper- Brain Dump

E xplore:

- Make it concrete:
 - Write about it
 - Talk about it
 - Diagram it
- Clarify- Ask if you're in physical danger right now? What message do these emotions have for me? (Are they trying to tell me something, or are they a smoke alarm+bacon)
- Explore Thoughts:
 - What thoughts are making this worse?
 - Cognitive distortions?
 - Underlying Beliefs about yourself or the world?

C hoose:

- Locus of Control Activity- The Serenity Prayer
- Values Clarification

A ct and Accept:

- Act- here's what I'm going to do to make things better/act on my values
- Accept-here's what I can't change- I'll let it go, practice willingness, calm my body, and redirect my energy to what I can change.
- What are 1-2 small actions I could take? Are there any?

N - Because O, WE CAN. you can do this! You can do hard things! You can work through your emotions, resolve them, and get better at feeling!

We create suffering when we either resist the truth of our own responsibility, or take responsibility for things outside of our control.

Remember the serenity prayer:
"Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

Autonomic Nervous System:

Many clients have body sensations which they do not fully understand and subsequently experience as aversive. Others experience automatic body reactions during trauma to which they make attributions concerning responsibility and blame, with a common result being an experience of shame. The Autonomic Nervous System handout is designed to help clients understand their body sensations and reactions as the automatic operation of their nervous system. A proper understanding of the ANS can help to motivate therapeutic activities which stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system.

THE AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

the sympathetic nervous system

Fight or flight

Deals with stress & emergencies

Releases stress hormones: cortisol & adrenaline

Increases heart rate & blood pressure

Inhibits digestion

the parasympathetic nervous system

Rest & digest

Returns body to resting state

Muscles relaxing

Supports homeostasis

Regulates heart rate & relaxes muscles blood pressure

@innergrowththerapy

In summary, the human nervous system is divided into:

The central nervous system (CNS) which consists of the brain and spinal cord), and

The peripheral nervous system (PNS) which consists of the nerves and ganglia outside the spinal cord).

The PNS is subdivided into:

The somatic nervous system (SNS or voluntary nervous system) which is responsible for voluntary control of body movements and our senses such as taste and touch, and

The autonomic nervous system (ANS) which automatically regulates the function of body systems outside of voluntary control.

The autonomic nervous system has three branches:

The sympathetic nervous system which is activated in response to stress. It controls 'fight or flight' responses. The parasympathetic nervous system which is activated during calm times and is often considered the 'rest and digest' or 'feed and breed' system. It promotes growth and energy storage. The enteric nervous system which controls the gastrointestinal system and which is sometimes referred to as the 'second brain'.

INSTINCTIVE TRAUMA RESPONSES

TRAUMA SERIES PART 3

FIGHT RESPONSE



In case of danger, the body and brain can trigger the fight response, which makes you want to attack and be aggressive to fight off the danger

FLIGHT RESPONSE



In case of danger, the body and brain can trigger the flight response, which makes you want to flee the scene to get yourself to safety

FREEZE RESPONSE



In case of danger, the body and brain can trigger the freeze response, which activates the nervous system and freeze the body, unable to fight or flight

FAWN RESPONSE



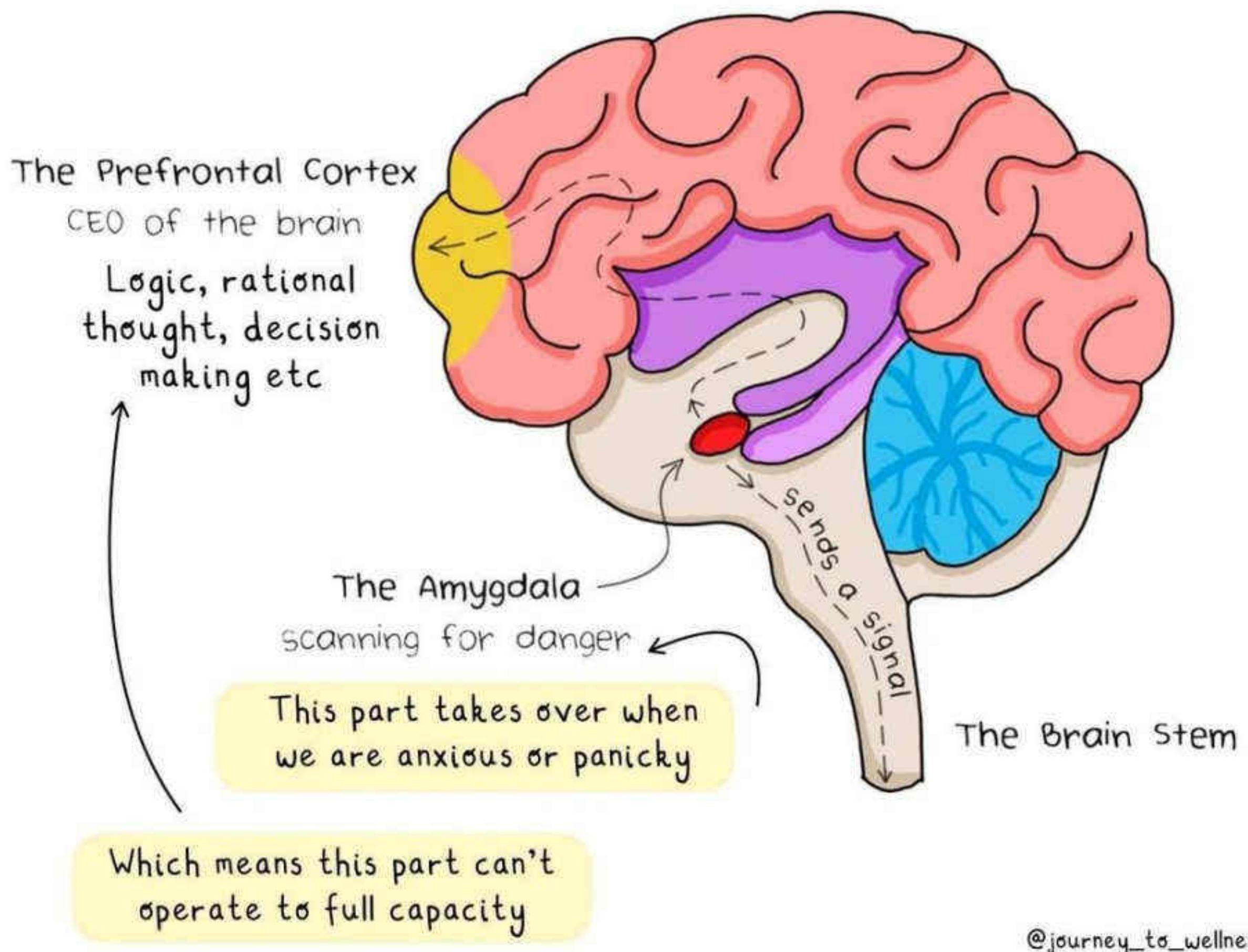
In case of danger, the body and brain can trigger the fawn response, which makes you want to avoid/diffuse conflict through people-pleasing behaviour

@THEPRESENTPSYCHOLOGIST

THE ANXIOUS BRAIN

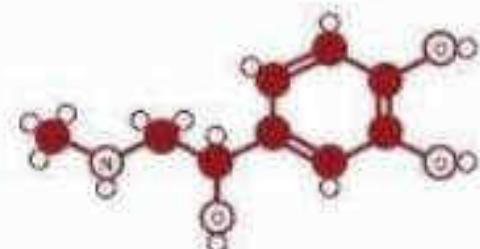
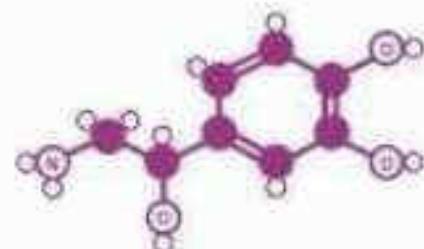
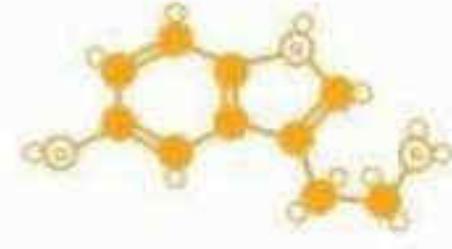
Anxiety is normal!

Learning about the brain can help you understand what you are feeling and WHY.



Which means this part can't operate to full capacity

@journey_to_wellness_

ADRENALINE**NORADRENALINE****DOPAMINE****SEROTONIN**

Fight or flight
neurotransmitter

Concentration
neurotransmitter

Pleasure
neurotransmitter

Mood
neurotransmitter

GABA

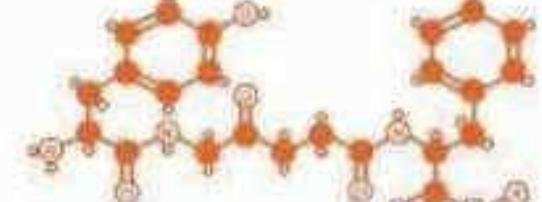
Calming
neurotransmitter

ACETYLCHOLINE

Learning
neurotransmitter

GLUTAMATE

Memory
neurotransmitter

ENDORPHINS

Euphoria
neurotransmitter

COMMUNICATION STYLES

Communication Styles

Passive	Aggressive	Passive-Aggressive	Assertive
When you prioritize the needs, wants, and feelings of others, even at your own expense.	When you express that only your needs, wants, and feelings matter.	When you appear passive on the surface, but at some point, act out in anger in a subtle, indirect way.	When you stand up for your own needs, wants, and feelings, but also listen to and respect the needs of others.

THE 4 BASIC COMMUNICATION STYLES

1

PASSIVE COMMUNICATION



- ✓ Avoid expression
- ✓ Not protecting rights
- ✓ Apologetic
- ✓ No self-defending

2

AGGRESSIVE COMMUNICATION



- ✓ Very expressive
- ✓ Violating other rights
- ✓ Verbally abusive
- ✓ Attack and dominate

3

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION



- ✓ Clear expression
- ✓ Advocate own rights
- ✓ Respectful
- ✓ Want to connect

4

PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE COMMUNICATION



- ✓ Act out indirectly
- ✓ Undermines others
- ✓ Resentful
- ✓ Fake cooperation

@THEPRESENTPSYCHOLOGIST

SYSTEMATIC DESENSITIZATION

Systematic Desensitisation



A hierarchy of fearful situations is created - each step being more fear-provoking than the last



Client is taught deep relaxation techniques



The client learns to associate the relaxation with the least fearful scenario



Once that's achieved the client is encouraged to systematically make step by step progress through the hierarchy

CAUSES OF MENTAL HEALTH

Mental Health

Basic Needs:

Food

Water

Sleep

Mental Health

significant trauma as an adult, such as military combat, being involved in a serious incident in which you feared for your life, or being the victim of a violent crime

Mental Health

Physical health:

1. Nutritional Deficiency:

Vitamin B6, B9, B12, D3,

Certain Minerals like
magnesium, zinc, selenium,
etc.

2. Chronic illness

Mental Health

Safety, security and support:
friendship, family, community
support

Safety needs: personal
security, employment
resources, health, property

Mental Health

Long term stress,
Unemployment, Addiction,
drug misuse, Domestic
violence, Bullying or other
abuse as an adult

Mental Health

Lifestyle factors including
work, diet, drugs and lack of
sleep.

Mental Health

Genetics

Neurotransmitters:
dopamine, acetylcholine,
GABA, noradrenaline
(norepinephrine) and
serotonin

Mental Health

Childhood Trauma, Abuse,
neglect, Loneliness, Social
discrimination, racism, Poverty,
debt, Grief

Mental Health

Hormones: Dopamine,
Serotonin, Endorphins,
Oxytocin

CORE VALUES

Values are the things in life that you feel are most important. While one person might value their family relationships above all else, another person might value their career.

Everyone's values are different, and there's no "correct" set of values.

Instructions: Understanding your values will help you better focus on what's important to you.

Family relations

Ideally, what would your family relationships be like?

What personal qualities would you like to contribute to your family?

Do you feel that you are contributing enough time and effort toward this area of your life? If not, how would you like to improve this area?

Friendships / social relationships

What sort of friend do you want to be?

What friendships is it important to cultivate?

How would you like to act towards your friends?

Employment

What kind of work is valuable to you?

What qualities do you want to bring as an employee?

What kind of work relationships would you like to build?

Education / training / personal growth

How would you like to grow?

What kind of skills would you like to develop?

What would you like to know more about?

Recreation

How would you like to enjoy yourself?

What relaxes you?

When are you most playful?

Spirituality

What does “spirituality” mean to you?

In what ways is spirituality important to
you?

Do you feel that you are contributing
enough time and effort toward this area
of your life? If

not, how would you like to improve?

Community/Citizenship

How would you like to contribute to your
community, or the world?

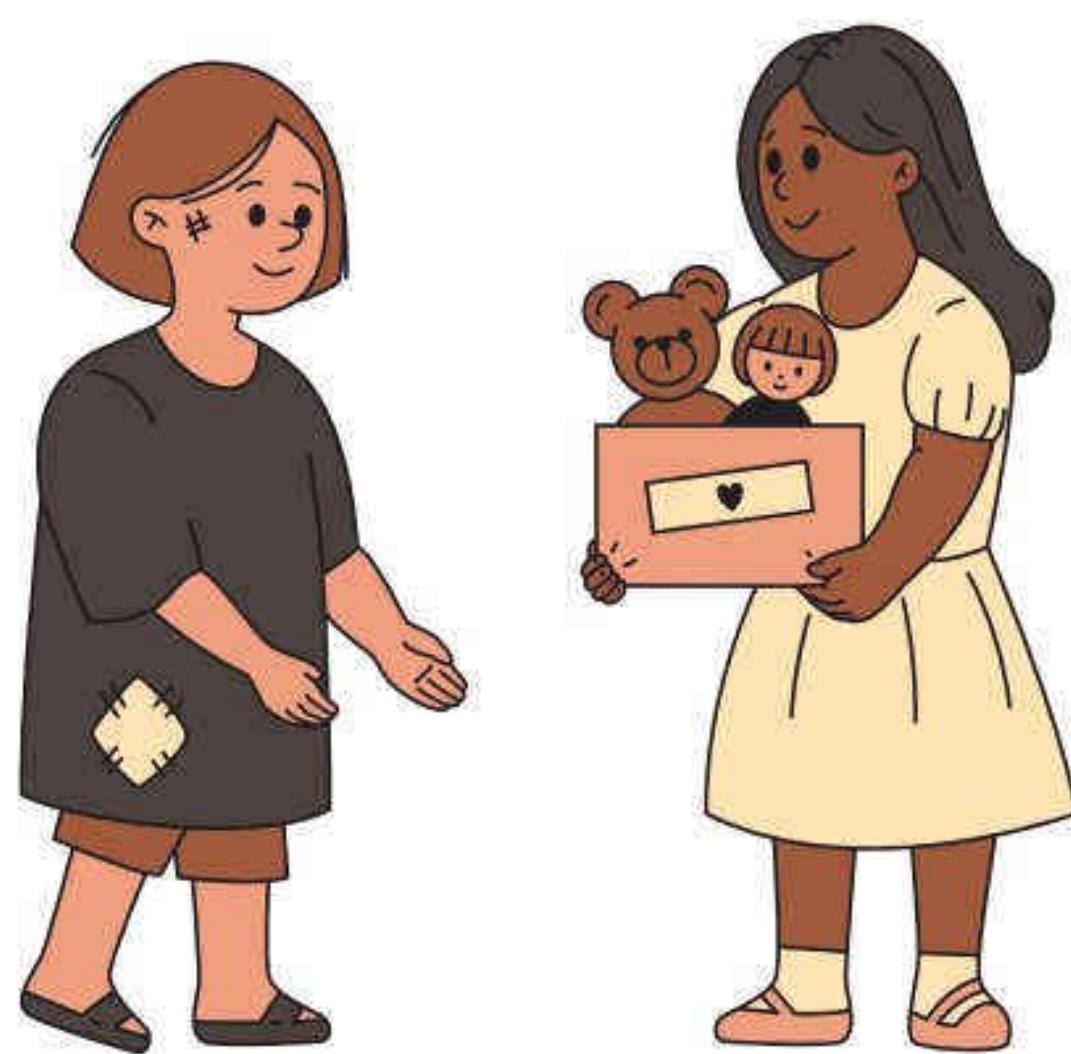
What does it mean to you to be a good
member of your community, or a good
citizen?

Do you feel that you are contributing
enough time and effort toward this area
of your life? If
not, how would you like to improve?

Physical wellbeing

What kind of values do you have regarding your physical wellbeing? How do you want to look after yourself?

For each of these domains write a quick summary of your values. For example "to live a healthy life and take care of my body" (physical wellbeing), or "to be a good friend to people who need me, and to enjoy my time with the people I love" (friendships). Rate each domain for how important it is to you from 0-10 (0 = not important).



CORE VALUES

To discover your **PERSONAL** values, look at the list below of more than 100 personal and work values. Tick your top 25.

NB: This list is by no means exhaustive and can add to it accordingly😊



- Accomplishment
- Achievement
- Accountability
- Accuracy
- Adventure
- Attitude - positive
- Beauty
- Calm
- Challenge
- Change
- Collaboration
- Commitment
- Communication
- Community
- Comfort
- Compassion
- Competence
- Competition
- Connection
- Cooperation
- Coordination
- Creativity
- Decisiveness
- Delight of being, joy
- Democracy
- Discipline
- Discovery
- Diversity
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Empowerment
- Excellence
- Fairness
- Faith
- Faithfulness
- Family
- Flair
- Flexibility
- Focus
- Freedom
- Friendship
- Fun
- Global view
- Good health
- Gratitude
- Greatness
- Growth
- Happiness
- Hard work
- Harmony
- Honesty
- Improvement
- Independence
- Individuality
- Inner peace
- Innovation
- Integrity
- Intuitiveness
- Justice
- Knowledge
- Leadership
- Learning
- Love
- Loyalty
- Management
- Maximum utilization (of time, resources)
- Meaning
- Modelling
- Money
- Openness
- Orderliness
- Passion
- Peace - inner
- Perfection
- Personal Choice
- Pleasure
- Power
- Practicality
- Preservation
- Privacy
- Progress
- Prosperity
- Punctuality
- Purpose
- Recognition
- Regularity
- Relationships
- Reliability
- Resourcefulness
- Respect for others
- Responsibility
- Results-oriented
- Safety
- Satisfaction
- Security
- Self-giving
- Self-reliance
- Self-thinking
- Service (to others, society)
- Simplicity
- Skill
- Solving Problems
- Speed
- Spontaneity
- Standardisation
- Status
- Structure
- Succeed; A will to
- Success; Achievement
- Teamwork
- Techniques
- Timeliness
- Tolerance
- Tradition
- Transformation
- Tranquility
- Trust
- Truth
- Unity
- Variety
- Wealth
- Wisdom

Once you have a list of 25 values, look at them again and then highlight **10 core PERSONAL values** that are most important to you. Write them below:

My 10 Core Personal Values	
1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

GOALS EXPLORATION

Goals Exploration

Meaningful goals can give direction to your life, highlight your most important values, and give a sense of purpose. In this activity, you will think about your goals in seven different areas. Begin by writing a 5-year goal, followed by more specific 1-year and 1-month goals

Social

Social goals may include devoting time to friendships, participating in social activities, or building a social support network.

My 5-year goal:

My 1-year goal:

My 1-month goal:

Career

Career goals may include advancing in your current career, furthering education, starting a business, retiring, or switching careers.

My 5-year goal:

My 1-year goal:

My 1-month goal:

Physical

Physical goals may include exercising regularly, developing healthy habits (e.g. diet and sleep), losing weight, or participating in a sport.

My 5-year goal:

My 1-year goal:

My 1-month goal:

Family

Family goals may include spending more time with children, rekindling relationships with extended family members, trying new family activities, or improving communication.

My 5-year goal:

My 1-year goal:

My 1-month goal:

Leisure

Leisure goals may include finding a new hobby, setting aside time to practice a current hobby, trying new things you enjoy, or finding time to relax.

My 5-year goal:

My 1-year goal:

My 1-month goal:

Personality

Personality goals may include improving your attitude, increasing self-esteem, or reducing unwanted behaviors (e.g. anger outbursts).

My 5-year goal:

My 1-year goal:

My 1-month goal:

Other

Other goals may be anything that did not fit in another category.

My 5-year goal:

My 1-year goal:

My 1-month goal:

Goal Breakdown:

Imagine you want to find a new job. This is a big goal with many time-consuming steps. Such a major goal can be very stressful, or even overwhelming. This is the type of goal that you will always start “tomorrow” or “next week”, but those times never seem to come. Learning to break your goals into small tasks will help you overcome the stress and procrastination they create. For example finding a new job can be broken down like this:

Goal Task	Time Required	Schedule
<input type="checkbox"/> Research job interests and write a list of careers that interest me.	1 hour	Sunday afternoon
<input type="checkbox"/> Revise resume by adding recent job experiences.	1 hour	Monday, after dinner
<input type="checkbox"/> Spend 45 minutes looking at job openings.	45 minutes	Wednesday, after dinner

Tips for Breaking Goals into Tasks

Avoid creating tasks that require longer than one hour, unless absolutely necessary.

If you find a task is difficult to start, it might be too big. See if it can be broken down further. For example, "practice playing guitar" can be broken down to "practice the beginning of a song".

Long tasks that cannot be broken down further should be set to a time limit (e.g. "Spend 45 minutes looking at job openings").

The tasks you create are not set in stone. If a task is more difficult than expected, break it down further or spread it out over more time. If a task is easier than expected, combine it with other tasks.

Protect the time that you schedule for tasks. Turn off your phone, go somewhere with few distractions, and set a timer to keep track of how long you've been working.

S	M	A	R	T
Specific	Measurable	Attainable	Realistic	Time-bound
Do: Set real numbers with real deadlines. Don't: Say, "I want more visitors."	Do: Make sure your goal is trackable. Don't: Hide behind buzzwords like, "brand engagement," or, "social influence."	Do: Work towards a goal that is challenging, but possible. Don't: Try to take over the world in one night.	Do: Be honest with yourself- you know what you and your team are capable of. Don't: Forget any hurdles you may have to overcome.	Do: Give yourself a deadline. Don't: Keep pushing towards a goal you might hit, "some day."

GRATITUDE

Gratitude Exercises

Journal About Gratitude

Take a few minutes every evening to write down five good things about your day. The entries don't have to be major events—they might be as simple as a good meal, talking to a friend, or getting through a difficult challenge.



Write a Letter

Think about someone who has had a major impact on your life, someone who you would like to thank, or someone who you appreciate having in your life. Write a letter with specific details about what it is you appreciate about them, and send it.

Visit Someone who you Appreciate

Write a letter to someone you appreciate as described above, but instead of mailing it, deliver the letter in person. Don't tell them why you're visiting! Read them the letter, and then allow them to keep it as a memento.

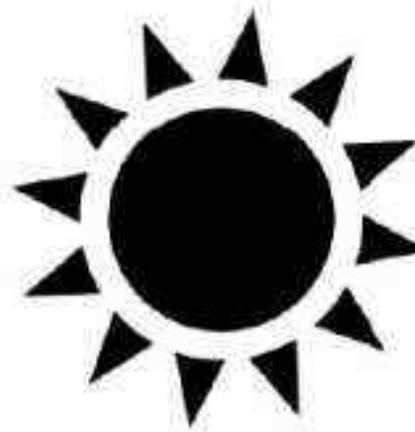


Say "Thank You"

Keep your eyes open throughout the day for reasons to say "thanks". Try to recognize the small actions people do every day that might be overlooked such as a colleague who always goes the extra mile, or a friend who always seems willing to listen.

Take a Gratitude Walk

Go for a walk and make a special effort to appreciate your surroundings. You might notice the smell of flowers, a pretty building, or a soothing breeze. Spend a few minutes focusing on each of your senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch) to find new things you may not have noticed.



RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Relaxation Techniques

When a person is confronted with anxiety, their body undergoes several changes and enters a special state called the *fight-or-flight response*. The body prepares to either fight or flee the perceived danger.

During the fight-or-flight response it's common to experience a "blank" mind, increased heart rate, sweating, tense muscles, and more. Unfortunately, these bodily responses do little good when it comes to protecting us from modern sources of anxiety.

Using a variety of skills, you can end the fight-or-flight response before the symptoms become too extreme. These skills *will* require practice to work effectively, so don't wait until the last minute to try them out!

Deep Breathing

It's natural to take long, deep breaths, when relaxed. However, during the fight-or-flight response, breathing becomes rapid and shallow. Deep breathing reverses that, and sends messages to the brain to begin calming the body. Practice will make your body respond more efficiently to deep breathing in the future.

Breathe in slowly. Count in your head and make sure the inward breath lasts at least 5 seconds. Pay attention to the feeling of the air filling your lungs.

Hold your breath for 5 to 10 seconds (again, keep count). You don't want to feel uncomfortable, but it should last quite a bit longer than an ordinary breath.

Breathe out very slowly for 5 to 10 seconds (count!). Pretend like you're breathing through a straw to slow yourself down. Try using a real straw to practice.

Repeat the breathing process until you feel calm.

Imagery

Think about some of your favorite and least favorite places. If you think about the place hard enough—if you really try to think about what it's like—you may begin to have feelings you associate with that location. Our brain has the ability to create emotional reactions based entirely off of our thoughts. The imagery technique uses this to its advantage.

Make sure you're somewhere quiet without too much noise or distraction. You'll need a few minutes to just spend quietly, in your mind.

Think of a place that's calming for you. Some examples are the beach, hiking on a mountain, relaxing at home with a friend, or playing with a pet.

Relaxation Techniques

Paint a picture of the calming place in your mind. Don't just think of the place briefly—imagine every little detail. Go through each of your senses and imagine what you would experience in your relaxing place. Here's an example using a beach:

- a. Sight: The sun is high in the sky and you're surrounded by white sand. There's no one else around. The water is a greenish-blue and waves are calmly rolling in from the ocean.
- b. Sound: You can hear the deep pounding and splashing of the waves. There are seagulls somewhere in the background.
- c. Touch: The sun is warm on your back, but a breeze cools you down just enough. You can feel sand moving between your toes.
- d. Taste: You have a glass of lemonade that's sweet, tart, and refreshing.
- e. Smell: You can smell the fresh ocean air, full of salt and calming aromas.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

During the fight-or-flight response, the tension in our muscles increases. This can lead to a feeling of stiffness, or even back and neck pain. Progressive muscle relaxation teaches us to become more aware of this tension so we can better identify and address stress.

Find a private and quiet location. You should sit or lie down somewhere comfortable.

The idea of this technique is to intentionally tense each muscle, and then to release the tension. Let's practice with your feet.

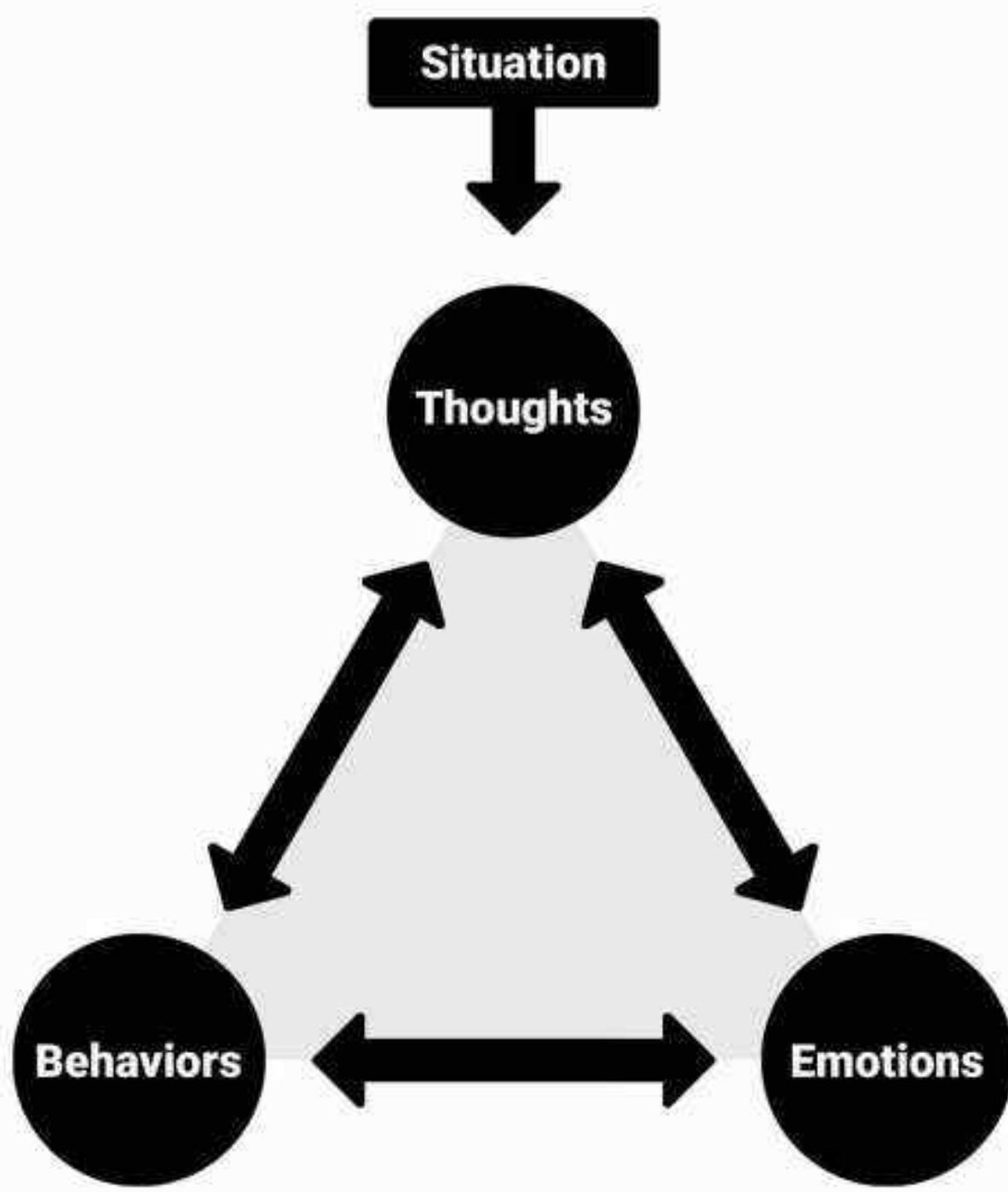
- a. Tense the muscles in your toes by curling them into your foot. Notice how it feels when your foot is tense. Hold the tension for 5 seconds.
- b. Release the tension from your toes. Let them relax. Notice how your toes feel differently after you release the tension.
- c. Tense the muscles all throughout your calf. Hold it for 5 seconds. Notice how the feeling of tension in your leg feels.
- d. Release the tension from your calf, and notice how the feeling of relaxation differs.

Follow this pattern of tensing and releasing tension all throughout your body. After you finish with your feet and legs, move up through your torso, arms, hands, neck, and head.

CBT TRIANGLE

The Cognitive Triangle

The **cognitive triangle** shows how thoughts, emotions, and behaviors affect one another. This means changing your *thoughts* will change how you *feel and behave*.



Situation

A **situation** is anything that happens in your life, which triggers the cognitive triangle.

Thoughts

Thoughts are your interpretations of a situation. For example, if a stranger looks at you with an angry expression, you could think: "Oh no, what did I do wrong?" or "Maybe they are having a bad day."

Behaviors

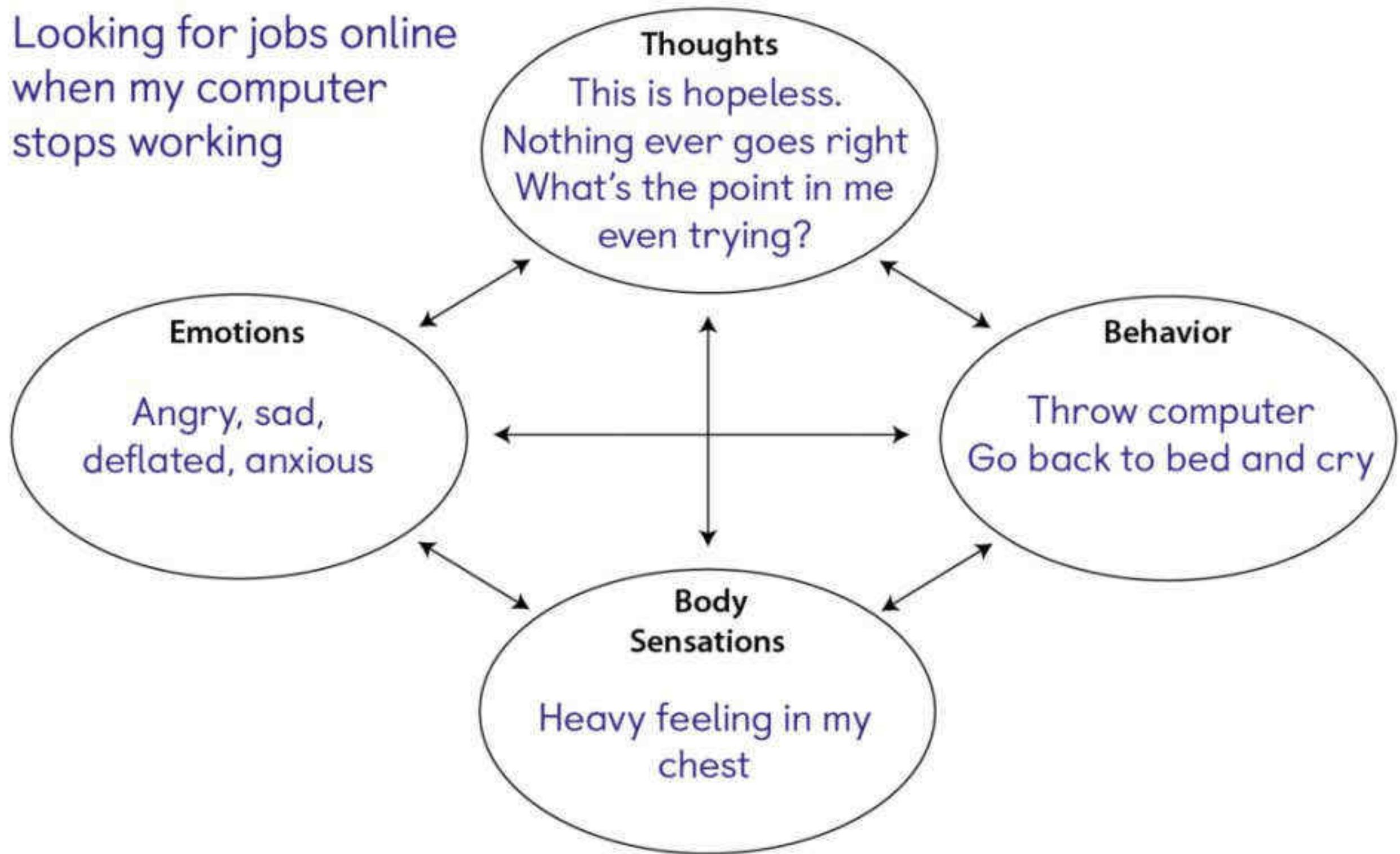
Emotions are feelings, such as happy, sad, angry, or worried. Emotions can have physical components as well as mental, such as low energy when feeling sad, or a stomachache when nervous.

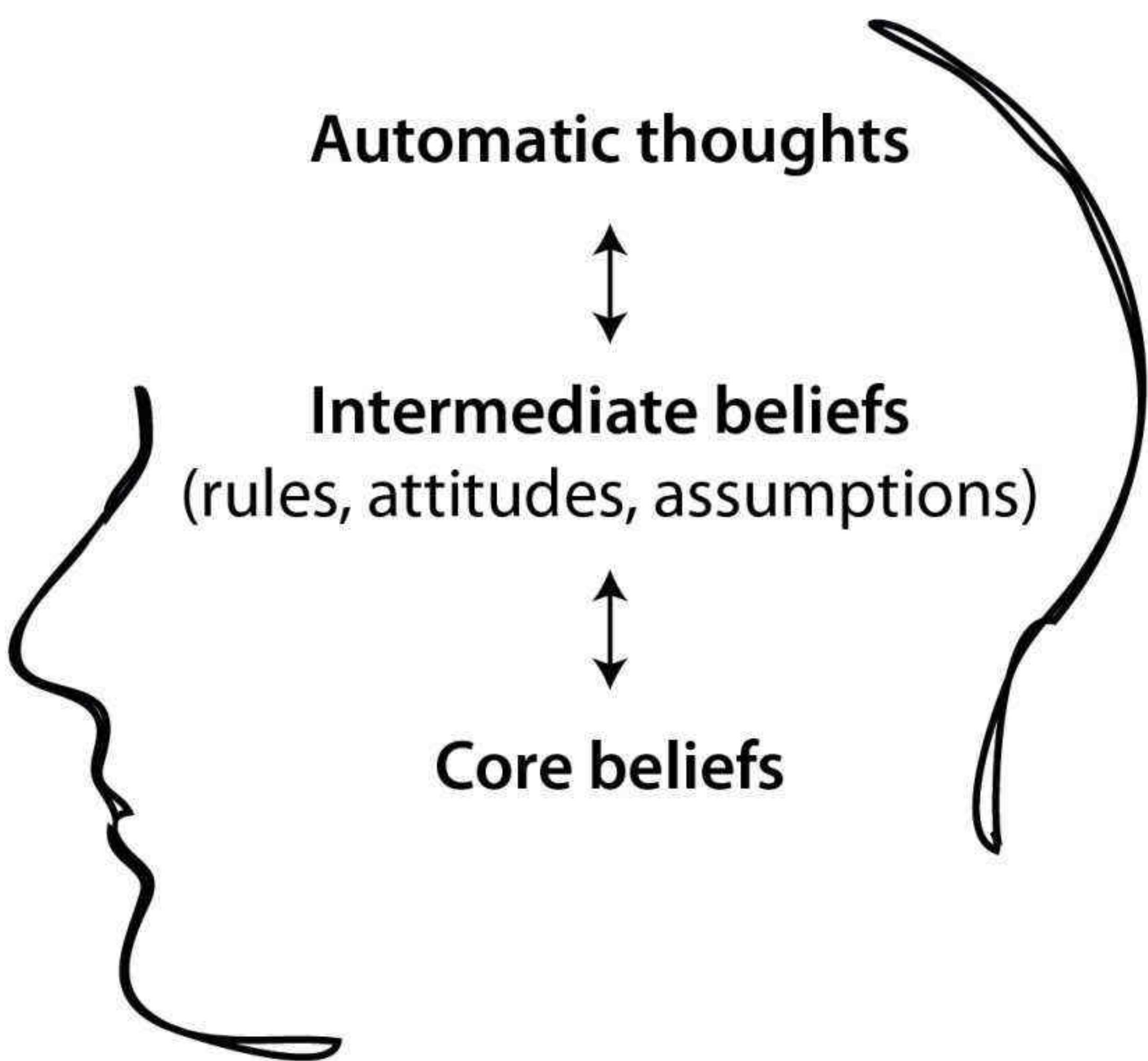
Emotions

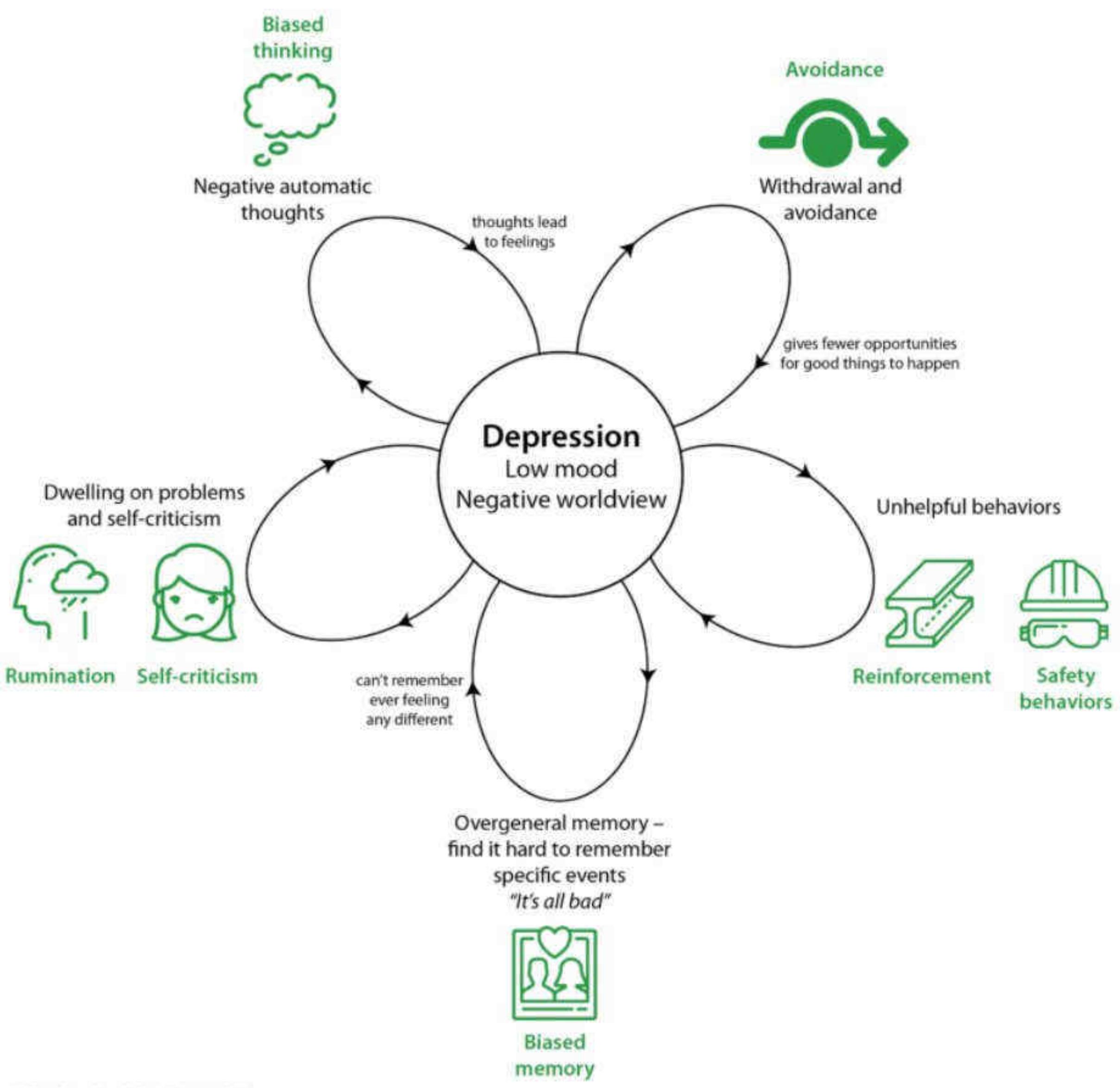
Behaviors are your response to a situation. Behaviors include actions such as saying something or doing something (or, choosing not to do something).

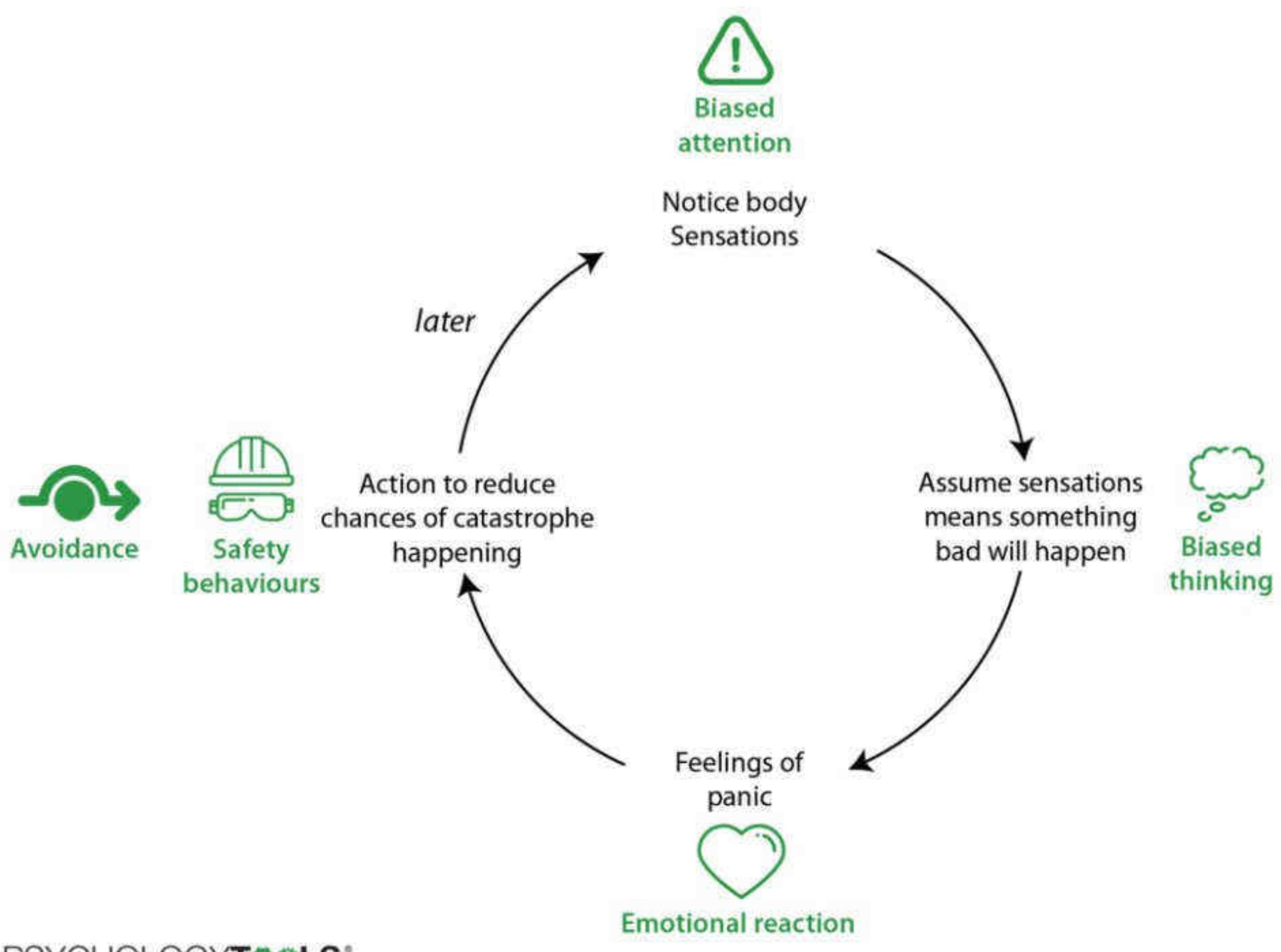
Situation:

Looking for jobs online
when my computer
stops working



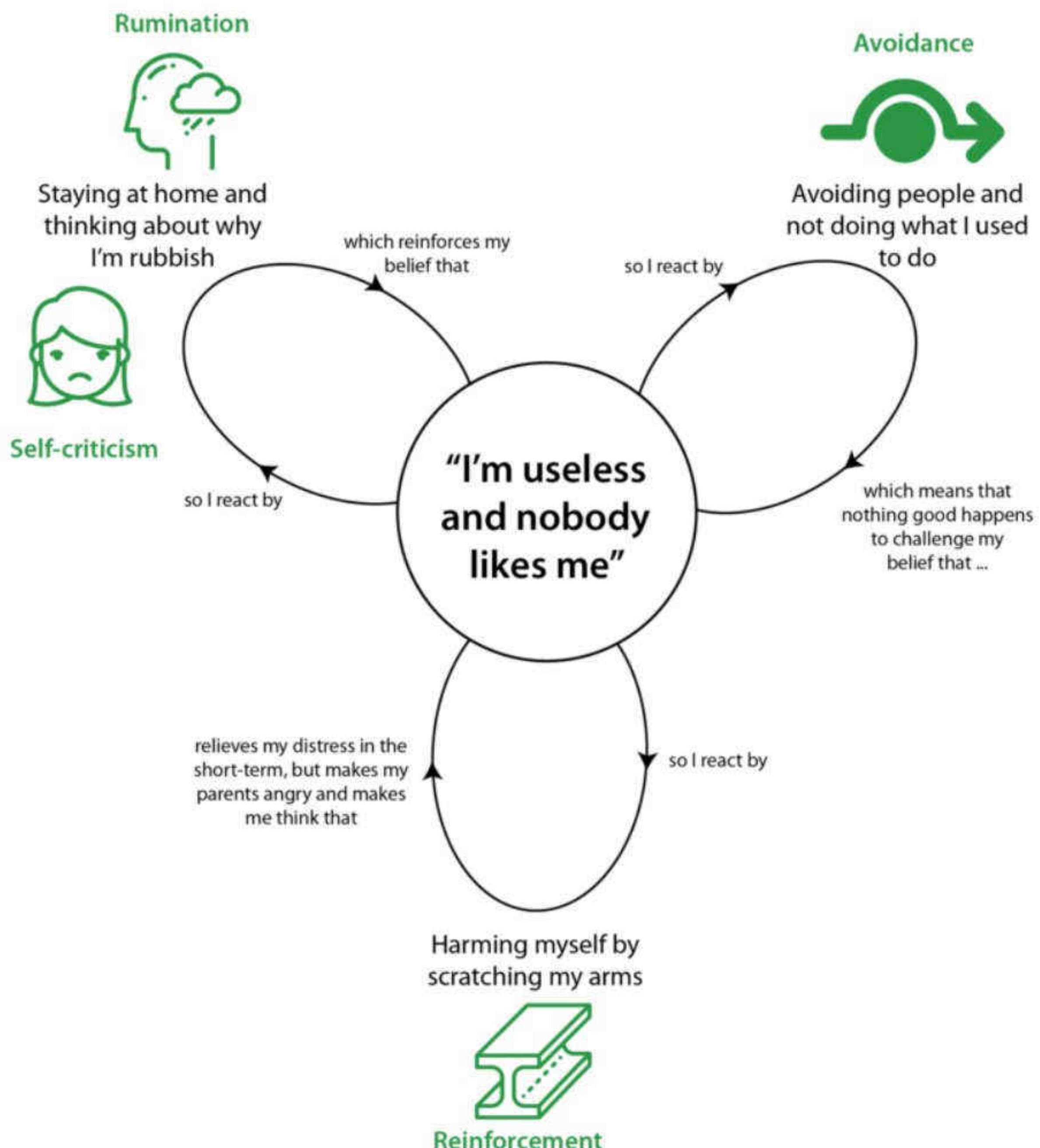






Context: Sally is 14. She has a younger brother who has a severe disability. Her parents are stressed and do not have much time for her.

Trigger: Sally got anxious while doing a presentation at school. This led to her getting teased. One person she thought was a friend joined in with the teasing and is now avoiding her.





Panic escalates

Notice even more body symptoms

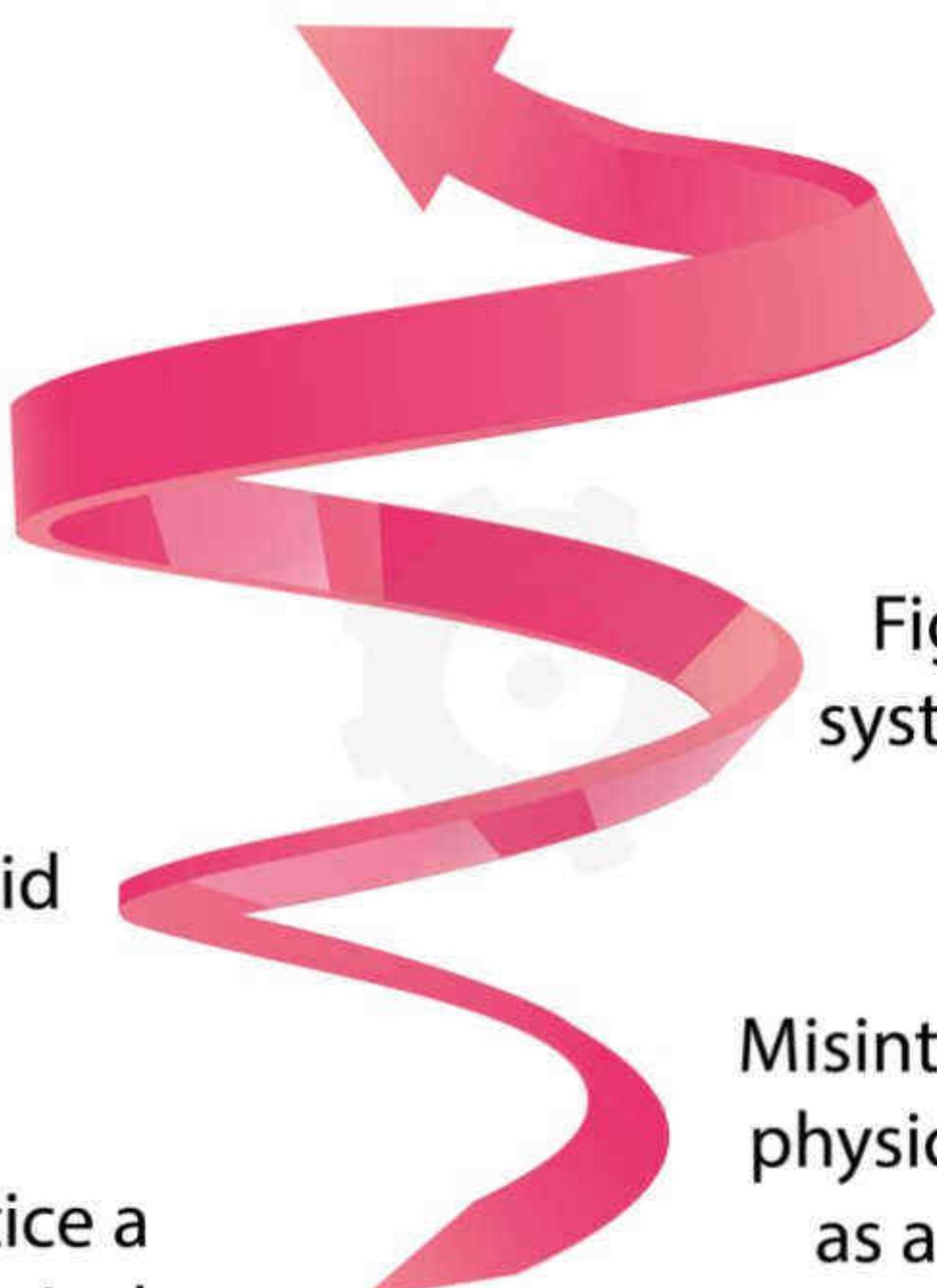
Feel afraid

Notice a physical feeling

Have more catastrophizing thoughts

Fight or flight system activated

Misinterpret the physical feeling as a danger (catastrophize)





DEPRESSION COPING SKILLS

Coping Skills

Depression

Behavioral Activation

Depression saps a person's energy to do just about anything—even activities they enjoy. As a result, people with depression tend to become less active, which causes the depression to worsen. However, even a little bit of activity can help stop this cycle.

1. Choose activities you are likely to complete.

exercise walk, go for a bike ride, weightlift, follow an exercise video, swim, practice yoga

socialize call or text a friend, organize a group dinner, visit family, join a club / group

responsibilities cleaning / housework, pay bills, professional development, homework

hobbies sports, gardening, drawing, playing music, hiking, playing with a pet, cooking

personal care dress up, get a haircut, prepare a healthy meal, tend to spiritual needs

2. Practice your chosen activities. Use the following tips to improve consistency.

start small If needed, break activities into smaller pieces. Some activity is better than none.

make a plan Set an alarm as a reminder, or tie an activity to something you already do. For example, practice a hobby immediately after dinner every day.

bring a friend Including a friend will increase your commitment and make things more fun.

Social Support

Social isolation is a common symptom of depression. Related issues—such as fatigue, lowered self-esteem, and anxiety—exacerbate this problem. Resisting social isolation, and instead leaning on social support, can improve resilience to stress and depression.

Lean on your existing relationships. Make it a priority to socialize with friends or family every day.

✓ If this is proving difficult, or if no one is nearby, plan times to interact remotely. Try cooking together on a video call, playing a game together, or sharing a coffee over the phone.

✓ **Say "yes" to socializing.** Depression makes it tempting to stay home, isolated from friends and family. Make a habit of saying "yes" to social opportunities, even when you're tempted to stay in.

✓ **Join a support group.** Support groups let you connect with others who are dealing with issues similar to yours. You'll benefit from sharing and receiving advice and support.

Coping Skills

Depression

Three Good Things

Negative thinking is a defining feature of depression. Positive experiences are minimized, while negative experiences are magnified. Gratitude helps combat this tendency by shifting focus toward positive experiences, rather than negative ones.

- 1 Write about three positive experiences from your day. These experiences can be small ("The weather was perfect when I walked to work") or big ("I got a promotion at work").

Choose one of the following questions to answer about each of the three good things:

- 2
 - Why did this happen?
 - Why was this good thing meaningful?
 - How can I experience more of this good thing?
- 3 Repeat this exercise every day for 1 week.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness means paying attention to the present moment. It means taking a step back and noticing the world, and one's thoughts and feelings, without judgment. The goal of mindfulness is to simply observe. Mindfulness helps reduce the rumination and worry that often accompany depression.

One way to practice mindfulness is through meditation. During mindfulness meditation, you will simply sit and focus your attention on the sensation of breathing. By focusing on your breathing, you will put yourself in the here-and-now.

Time and Place

Find a quiet, comfortable place where you can practice mindfulness for 15 to 30 minutes every day. Frequent and consistent practice leads to the best results, but some practice is better than none.

Posture

Sit in a chair or lie down in a comfortable position. Close your eyes or let your gaze soften. Let your head, shoulders, arms, and legs relax. Adjust your posture whenever you feel uncomfortable.

Awareness of Breath

Focus on your breathing. Notice the sensation of the air as it travels in through your nose and out through your mouth. Notice the gentle rise and fall of your belly.

Wandering Mind

During meditation, it's normal for the mind to wander. When this happens, gently turn your attention back to your breathing. You may need to do this frequently throughout your practice.

DAILY TODO LIST

DAILY TODO LIST :

set small goals

compliment yourself

walk, stretch, vajrasan

drink water, eat healthy

deep slow breathing

nature, sunlight

rest, sleep

gratitude

guided imagery

affirmations

mindfulness, meditation

**WHAT DOES THESE
EMOTIONS SAY?**

WHAT DOES THESE EMOTIONS SAY?

Anxiety, nervousness, or worry. You tell yourself that you're in danger and that something terrible is about to happen.

Panic. You tell yourself that you're about to die, suffocate, pass out, lose control, or go crazy.

Embarrassment. You tell yourself that you looked like an idiot in front of other people.

Shyness. You tell yourself that other people will see how nervous and insecure you feel and look down on you.

Loneliness. You tell yourself that you're unlovable and doomed to be alone forever.

Depression. You tell yourself that you're a failure or that you've lost something important to your sense of self-esteem.

Hopelessness. You tell yourself that your problems will never be solved and that your suffering will go on forever.

Guilt. You tell yourself that you're a bad person or that you've violated your own value system.

Shame. You tell yourself that other people will see how bad, defective, or flawed you are and look down on you.

Inferiority. You tell yourself that you're not as good as other people or not as good as you should be.

Frustration. You tell yourself that other people or events should be the way you expect them to be.

Anger. You tell yourself that other people are self-centered jerks who are treating you unfairly or intentionally taking advantage of you.

Feeling Trapped. You tell yourself that you have to give in to the demands of your spouse, friends, or family.

Self-Regulation Toolbox

1/3

Nawal Mustafa M.A.  thebraincoach

When I am Feeling...

I will...

Angry

Pause until I am able to think clearly so I can respond rationally instead of reacting.

Overwhelmed

Write down what I need to get done and focus on one task at a time based on importance.

Insecure

I will work on appreciating and accepting myself, flaws and all. I am more than I give myself credit for.

Rejected

I will acknowledge that this feeling sucks but I will not let it consume me. Rejection is redirection.

Discouraged

I will be kind to myself and remind myself of the reason why I am trying. I will use that as my strength.

Self-Regulation Toolbox

2/3

Nawal Mustafa M.A.  thebraincoach

When I am Feeling...

I will...

Stressed

Focus on what I can control and let go of what I cannot control

Down

Acknowledge my feelings and do something for myself that brings me joy

Not Good Enough

Remind myself of my strengths and take baby steps to improve my shortcomings

Lonely

Video call or meet with someone I love and care about

Anxious

Focus on the present moment and take deep breaths to regulate my nervous system

WHAT'S YOUR MINDSET?

Sana Powell, M.A., LPC | @curly_therapist

GROWTH



"I can learn to do anything that I want to."

"Failure is an opportunity to grow and learn from it."

"I'm open to challenges and trying new things."

"My abilities are based on my effort and attitude."

"Feedback is constructive and can help me learn."

FIXED



"I'm either good at it or I'm not. It is what it is"

"Failure is the limit of my capabilities."

@curly_therapist

"I stick to what I know. I don't like challenges."

"My abilities are fixed and unchangeable."

"I don't need feedback or criticism from anybody."

BOUNDARIES

Boundaries

Discussion Questions

- 1** Personal boundaries are the rules and limits you set within relationships. They tell you what's okay, and what's not okay, in a relationship. Think about two people in your life, and describe the boundaries you have with each one. How are they similar, and how are they different?

- 2** Values are the things that are most important to you. Ideally, your boundaries will reflect your values. For example, if you value family time, you might set strict boundaries at work. What are your most important values, and how do your boundaries reflect these values?

- 3** In your opinion, what are the signs of a healthy relationship? What sort of boundaries might you see in a healthy relationship?

- 4** People who are influential in your life act as models for boundary-setting, whether their boundaries are healthy or unhealthy. Think of someone who has helped shape who you are. What has this person taught you about boundaries, whether intentionally or unintentionally?

- 5** When someone has rigid boundaries, they are reluctant to ask others for help, protective of personal information, and avoidant of close relationships. What do you think are the pros and cons of rigid boundaries? Describe an area of life where you've had rigid boundaries.

- 6** When someone has porous boundaries, they overshare personal information, have difficulty saying "no," and are overly concerned with the opinions of others. What do you think are the pros and cons of porous boundaries? Describe an area of life where you've had porous boundaries.

- 7** In some relationships, healthy boundaries seem to form naturally and easily. In other relationships, however, setting healthy boundaries is difficult. What challenges have you faced when trying to set healthy boundaries, and how did you overcome them (or, how could you overcome them)?

Setting Boundaries



Personal boundaries are the limits and rules we set for ourselves within relationships. A person with healthy boundaries can say "no" to others when they want to, but they are also comfortable opening themselves up to intimacy and close relationships.

Know Your Boundaries

Boundaries should be based on your values, or the things that are important to you. For example, if you value spending time with family, set firm boundaries about working late.

Your boundaries are yours, and yours alone. Many of your boundaries might align with those who are close to you, but others will be unique.

Know your boundaries *before* entering a situation. This will make it less likely you'll do something you're not comfortable with.

What to Say

You always have the right to say "no". When doing so, express yourself clearly and without ambiguity so there is no doubt about what you want.

"I'm not comfortable with this"	"Please don't do that"	"Not at this time"
"I can't do that for you"	"This doesn't work for me"	"I've decided not to"
"This is not acceptable"	"I'm drawing the line at ____"	"I don't want to do that"

What to Do

Use Confident Body Language

Face the other person, make eye contact, and use a steady tone of voice at an appropriate volume (not too quiet, and not too loud).

Be Respectful

Avoid yelling, using put-downs, or giving the silent treatment. It's okay to be firm, but your message will be better received if you are respectful.

Plan Ahead

Think about what you want to say, and how you will say it, before entering a difficult discussion. This can help you feel more confident about your position.

Compromise

When appropriate, listen and consider the needs of the other person. You never *have* to compromise, but give-and-take is part of any healthy relationship.

Setting Boundaries

Instructions: Respond to the following practice questions as if you were really in each situation. Think about the language you would use to firmly state your boundary.

✓ Examples

Situation: You notice your roommate has been eating your food in the fridge. You never discussed plans to share food, and don't want them eating what you bought.

Response: "I'd like to keep our food separate. If there's something of mine that you want, please ask me before taking it."

Situation: Your friend calls you at 11 pm to discuss issues she is having with her boyfriend. You need to wake up at 6 am.

Response: "I can tell you're upset. I want to talk to you, but I need to go to bed. Maybe we can talk tomorrow afternoon."

⌚ Practice

Situation: You invited a friend over for the evening, but now it's getting late. You would like to get ready for bed, but your friend seems unaware of how late it is.

Response:

Situation: A good friend asks you out on a date. You are not interested in being more than friends. You would like to let them down clearly, but gently.

Response:

Setting Boundaries

Situation: You missed several days of work due to a medical condition. When you get back, a coworker asks what happened. You feel this information is personal, and do not want to share.

Response:

Situation: Your brother asks if you can watch his two young children on Saturday morning. You already have plans.

Response:

Situation: Your coworker is upset about their recent performance review. They start yelling and slamming their fist on their desk. This is making you very uncomfortable.

Response:

Situation: A salesperson comes to your door during dinner. You try to politely show disinterest, but they keep giving their sales pitch. You want to get back to dinner.

Response:

What are Personal Boundaries?

Personal boundaries are the limits and rules we set for ourselves within relationships. A person with healthy boundaries can say "no" to others when they want to, but they are also comfortable opening themselves up to intimacy and close relationships.

A person who always keeps others at a distance (whether emotionally, physically, or otherwise) is said to have *rigid boundaries*. Alternatively, someone who tends to get too involved with others has *porous boundaries*.

Common traits of rigid, porous, and healthy boundaries.		
Rigid Boundaries	Porous Boundaries	Healthy Boundaries
Avoids intimacy and close relationships.	Overshares personal information.	Values own opinions.
Unlikely to ask for help.	Difficulty saying "no" to the requests of others.	Doesn't compromise values for others.
Has few close relationships.	Overinvolved with others' problems.	Shares personal information in an appropriate way (does not over or under share).
Very protective of personal information.	Dependent on the opinions of others.	Knows personal wants and needs, and can communicate them.
May seem detached, even with romantic partners.	Accepting of abuse or disrespect.	Accepting when others say "no" to them.
Keeps others at a distance to avoid the possibility of rejection.	Fears rejection if they do not comply with others.	



Most people have a mix of different boundary types. For example, someone could have healthy boundaries at work, porous boundaries in romantic relationships, and a mix of all three types with their family.



The appropriateness of boundaries depends heavily on setting. What's appropriate to say when you're out with friends might not be appropriate when you're at work.



Some cultures have very different expectations when it comes to boundaries. For example, in some cultures it's considered wildly inappropriate to express emotions publicly. In other cultures, emotional expression is encouraged.

What are Personal Boundaries?

Types of Boundaries

Physical boundaries refer to personal space and physical touch. Healthy physical boundaries include an awareness of what's appropriate, and what's not, in various settings and types of relationships (hug, shake hands, or kiss?). Physical boundaries may be violated if someone touches you when you don't want them to, or when they invade your personal space (for example, rummaging through your bedroom).

Intellectual boundaries refer to thoughts and ideas. Healthy intellectual boundaries include respect for others' ideas, and an awareness of appropriate discussion (should we talk about the weather, or politics?). Intellectual boundaries are violated when someone dismisses or belittles another person's thoughts or ideas.

Emotional boundaries refer to a person's feelings. Healthy emotional boundaries include limitations on when to share, and when not to share, personal information. For example, gradually sharing personal information during the development of a relationship, as opposed to revealing everything to everyone. Emotional boundaries are violated when someone criticizes, belittles, or invalidates another person's feelings.

Sexual boundaries refer to the emotional, intellectual, and physical aspects of sexuality. Healthy sexual boundaries involve mutual understanding and respect of limitations and desires between sexual partners. Sexual boundaries can be violated with unwanted sexual touch, pressure to engage in sexual acts, leering, or sexual comments.

Material boundaries refer to money and possessions. Healthy material boundaries involve setting limits on what you will share, and with whom. For example, it may be appropriate to lend a car to a family member, but probably not to someone you met this morning. Material boundaries are violated when someone steals or damages another person's possessions, or when they pressure them to give or lend them their possessions.

Time boundaries refer to how a person uses their time. To have healthy time boundaries, a person must set aside enough time for each facet of their life such as work, relationships, and hobbies. Time boundaries are violated when another person demands too much of another's time.

Fair Fighting Rules

Before you begin, ask yourself why you feel upset.

Are you angry because your partner left the mustard on the counter? Or are you angry because you feel like you're doing an uneven share of the housework, and this is just one more piece of evidence? Take time to think about your own feelings before starting an argument.

Discuss one topic at a time.

Don't let "You left dishes in the sink" turn into "You watch too much TV." Discussions that get off-topic are more likely to get heated, and less likely to solve the original problem. Choose one topic and stick to it.

No degrading language.

Discuss the issue, not the person. No put-downs, swearing, or name-calling. Degrading language is an attempt to express negative feelings while making sure your partner feels just as bad. Doing so leads to more character attacks while the original issue is forgotten.

Express your feelings with words.

"I feel hurt when you ignore my phone calls." "I feel scared when you yell." Structure your sentences as "I" statements ("I feel *emotion* when *event*") to express how you feel while taking responsibility for your emotions. However, starting with "I" does not give a license to ignore the other fair fighting rules.

Take turns speaking.

Give your full attention while your partner speaks. Avoid making corrections or thinking about what you want to say. Your only job is to understand their point of view, even if you disagree. If you find it difficult to not interrupt, try setting a timer allowing 1-2 minutes for each person to speak without interruption.

No stonewalling.

Sometimes, the easiest way to respond to an argument is to retreat into your shell and refuse to speak. This is called stonewalling. You might feel better temporarily, but the original issue will remain unresolved and your partner will feel more upset. If you absolutely cannot go on, tell your partner you need to take a time-out. Agree to resume the discussion later.

No yelling.

Yelling does not help anyone see your point of view. Instead, it sends the message that only your words matter. Even if yelling intimidates your partner into giving up, the underlying problem only grows worse.

Take a time-out if things get too heated.

In a perfect world, we would all follow these rules 100% of the time... but it just doesn't work like that. If an argument starts to become personal or heated, take a time-out. Agree on a time to come back and discuss the problem after everyone has cooled down.

Attempt to come to a compromise or an understanding.

There isn't always a perfect answer to an argument. Life is too messy for that. Do your best to come to a compromise (this means some give and take from both sides). If you can't come to a compromise, simply taking the time to understand your partner's perspective can help soothe negative feelings.

Relationship Conflict Resolution

Focus on the problem, not the person.

When a disagreement turns to personal insults, raised voices, or mocking tones, the conversation is no longer productive. Be careful to focus on the problem without placing blame on your partner. If a disagreement becomes personal, you should pause the conversation.

Use reflective listening.

Oftentimes during arguments we focus on getting our own point across rather than listening to our partner. Before responding to your partner, restate what they have said to you in your own words. Continue this process until your partner agrees that you understand. Next, share your side. Your partner should reflect back your ideas in their own words until they too understand. Using this technique will help both individuals feel listened to and understood, even if you disagree.

Use "I" statements.

When sharing a concern, begin your sentence with "I". For example: "I feel hurt when you don't tell me you'll be late". With this sentence format we show that we are taking responsibility for our own emotion rather than blaming our partner. The alternative sentence—"You never tell me when you're going to be late"—will often cause a partner to become defensive.

Know when to take a time-out.

When you and your partner are becoming argumentative, insulting, or aggressive, it's a good idea to take a time-out. Have a plan in place so you or your partner can call for a break when needed. Spend some time doing something alone that you find relaxing. When you've both calmed down, you and your partner can return to solving the problem. Be sure that you do return—it isn't a good idea to leave these issues unaddressed.

Work toward a resolution.

Disagreement is a normal part of a relationship. If it becomes clear that you and your partner will not agree, focus on a resolution instead. Try to find a compromise that benefits both individuals. Ask yourself if this disagreement really matters to your relationship, and let yourself move on if not.

The Four Horsemen & Their Antidotes

The **four horsemen** are behaviors that escalate conflict and damage a relationship. Over time, these harmful behaviors may become a normal part of communication between partners.

Antidotes are skills that replace each of the four horsemen. These skills help resolve conflict and encourage positive feelings between partners.



Four Horsemen

Criticism

Dealing with problems through harsh, blaming, or hurtful expressions of judgment or disapproval.

- Focus is on perceived personal flaws rather than changeable behaviors.
- Often met with defensiveness.

"This kitchen is a mess. You're such a slob."



Antidotes

Gentle Startup

Dealing with problems in a calm and gentle way. The focus is on the problem—not the person.

- Save the discussion for an appropriate time.
- Use warm body language and tone of voice.
- Use "I" statements.

"I feel frustrated when dirty dishes are left in the sink. Could you please do the dishes tonight?"

Defensiveness

Deflecting responsibility for your own mistakes and behaviors, or refusing to accept feedback.

- Making excuses for behavior.
- Shifting blame to your partner.

"It isn't my fault I yelled. You were late, not me!"

Take Responsibility

Own up to your behavior without blaming others.

- Avoid taking feedback personally.
- Use feedback as an opportunity to improve.
- Show remorse and apologize.

"I shouldn't have raised my voice. I'm sorry."

Contempt

Showing anger, disgust, or hostility toward your partner.

- Using putdowns or insults.
- Acting superior to your partner.
- Using a mocking or sarcastic tone.

Share Fondness & Admiration

Foster a healthy relationship by regularly showing each other respect and appreciation.

- Show affection.
- Recognize your partner's strengths.
- Give compliments.

Stonewalling

Emotionally withdrawing, shutting down, or going silent during important discussions.

- Often a response to feeling overwhelmed.
- Used to avoid difficult discussions or problems.
- Underlying problems go unresolved.

Use Self-Soothing

Use relaxation techniques to calm down and stay present with your partner.

- Agree to pause the conversation briefly.
- Use deep breathing.
- Use progressive muscle relaxation (PMR).

How to Apologize

Apologizing means expressing regret for something you did. A sincere apology involves reflecting on your actions, taking responsibility for them, and making changes to improve things in the future. Giving an apology can help repair a damaged relationship while showing care and respect for the other person.

Reflect on your Actions

Think about how your actions contributed to a problem, even if they were not the sole cause.

Even if someone else also contributed to the problem, what was *my* role?

Try taking the other person's perspective. How do my actions look from their side?

As a result of my actions, how might the other person feel?

Take Responsibility

Say "I'm sorry" (or some version of this phrase) and show regret for your actions. It's important to speak clearly and sincerely. In most cases, it helps to identify the actions you are apologizing for.

Example: "I'm sorry for the language I used during our argument. It was disrespectful, and it was wrong."

I'm sorry for...

I apologize for...

I take responsibility for...

It was wrong of me to...

I feel terrible. I shouldn't have...

This was my fault. I should have...

⚠️ Never make excuses or try to justify your behavior (e.g. "I'm sorry, but I was tired!").

Listen and Improve

Give the other person a chance to respond without interruption. Forgiveness may take time and is not guaranteed. Be prepared to discuss changes you will make to avoid repeating the problem.

Myths vs. Reality

Myth: Love means never having to say you're sorry.

Reality: Apologies can be particularly important when you love someone. An apology communicates you care about the other person and want them to feel better.

Myth: Apologizing is as simple as saying "I'm sorry."

Reality: Merely saying the words "I'm sorry" is not a complete apology. An apology requires remorse, an attempt to right the wrong, and taking steps to make sure the problem is not repeated.

Myth: Apologizing will make me look weak.

Reality: An apology shows you are secure enough to admit when you've done something wrong. It also shows you have respect for yourself and the other person.

HOW TO AVOID TOXIC POSITIVITY

INSTEAD OF: JUST STAY POSITIVE

SAY: THAT MUST BE REALLY HARD

INSTEAD OF: EVERYTHING HAPPENS
FOR A REASON

SAY: I'M SORRY YOU'RE GOING
THROUGH THIS

INSTEAD OF: THINGS WILL WORK OUT/
LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

SAY: THIS JUST REALLY SUCKS RIGHT
NOW. IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN
DO TO SUPPORT YOU?

@avamariedoodles

toxic positivity

being negative
won't help you

good vibes only

you'll get over it

other people have
it a lot worse

smile, crying
won't help

just stay
positive

Genuine optimism

it's important to let it out.
is there anything i can do to
make this easier for you?

i love you through all your
emotional states

you are so resilient, and your
strength will get you through it

you are not alone, and there
is support to help you

it's okay to cry, we all do. can
i get you a tissue or a hug?

things are tough right now.
do you wanna talk about it, or
do something lighthearted?

@crazyheadcomics

GASLIGHTING FEELS LIKE:

"I never said that"

"You are so dramatic"

"You need help"

"You are over reacting again"

"You sound crazy"

"You're acting insane"

"You are making stuff up"

"It's your own fault
you feel that way"

am I crazy? maybe this is my fault
can I trust reality?
help sos



@letstalk.mentalhealth



4 THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

GASLIGHTING

This entails a person manipulating you by making you question the validity of your emotions and lived experiences. For example, they might hurt you and then deny the hurt they caused, and eventually make you question whether the hurt you felt was real. Over time, you might have difficulty trusting your own emotions and perceptions.



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HEALTHY VENTING VS. **EMOTIONAL DUMPING**

- Does not blame others 
- Sticks to one topic
- Owns up to their mistakes
- Does not self-victimize
- Works on a solution together
- Open to constructive feedback
- Does not repeat the same issue over and over
- Does not take up unnecessary time
- Listens and acknowledges other's perspective
- Feels beneficial

- Blames others 
- Overwhelms the other person with multiple issues
- Does not own up to their mistakes
- Plays the victim
- Not open to finding a solution
- Defensive to constructive feedback
- Repeats the same issue over and over
- Inconsiderate of time
- Does not respect or listen to other's perspective
- Feels toxic

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Strengths Exploration

Those who know their strengths and use them frequently tend to have more success in several areas. They feel happier, have better self-esteem, and are more likely to accomplish their goals.

To use your strengths effectively, it's important to have a clear idea of what they are, and how they can be used. Some of your greatest strengths might be easy to recognize, while others go unnoticed because they feel ordinary to you (even if they aren't).

In this worksheet you will identify your strengths and ways in which you are already using them. Additionally, you will explore new ways to use your strengths to your advantage.

Circle your strengths from the choices below, or add your own at the bottom.

Wisdom	Artistic Ability	Curiosity	Leadership
Empathy	Honesty	Open Mindedness	Persistence
Enthusiasm	Kindness	Love	Social Awareness
Fairness	Bravery	Cooperation	Forgiveness
Modesty	Common Sense	Self-Control	Patience
Gratitude	Love of Learning	Humor	Spirituality
Ambition	Creativity	Confidence	Intelligence
Athleticism	Discipline	Assertiveness	Logic
Optimism	Independence	Flexibility	Adventurousness