



Recognizing and
Soothing

ANXIETY

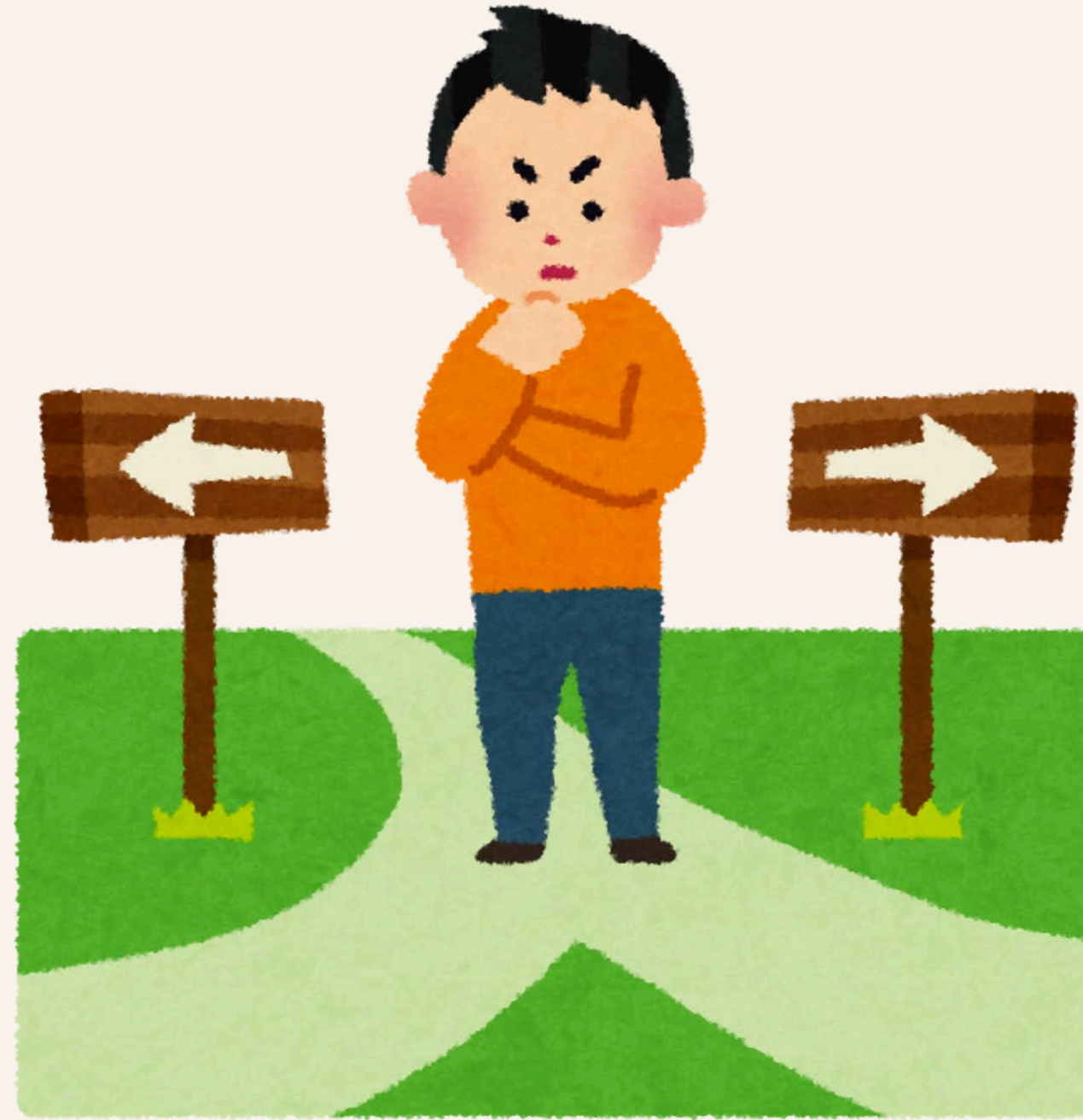
Presented to
Community Leadership Academy

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BUT FIRST...

DOES SEEKING COUNSELING CONTRADICT MY FAITH?

“Bear ye one
another’s burdens,
and so fulfill the law
of Christ”
Galatians 6:2



“Where no counsel is,
the people fall: But in
the multitude of
counselors there is
safety
Proverbs 11:14–15



COMMON MYTHS

1. Mental illness or seeking therapy is a sign of weak faith
2. Christians should not struggle with mental health.
(Elijah: 1 Kings 18-19; David: 1 Samuel 17; Jeremiah)
3. Seeking professional help is a sign of weakness
(Proverbs 15:22, 1 Corinthians 12:26)
4. Mental illness is a punishment for sin -Job's friends are rebuked for suggesting his suffering is a consequence of sin, and Jesus also clarifies this later regarding physical ailments.
5. It is unholy to struggle in our emotions. Jesus himself said "I'm troubled within my soul" in John 12, Mark 14

STRESS OR ANXIETY?

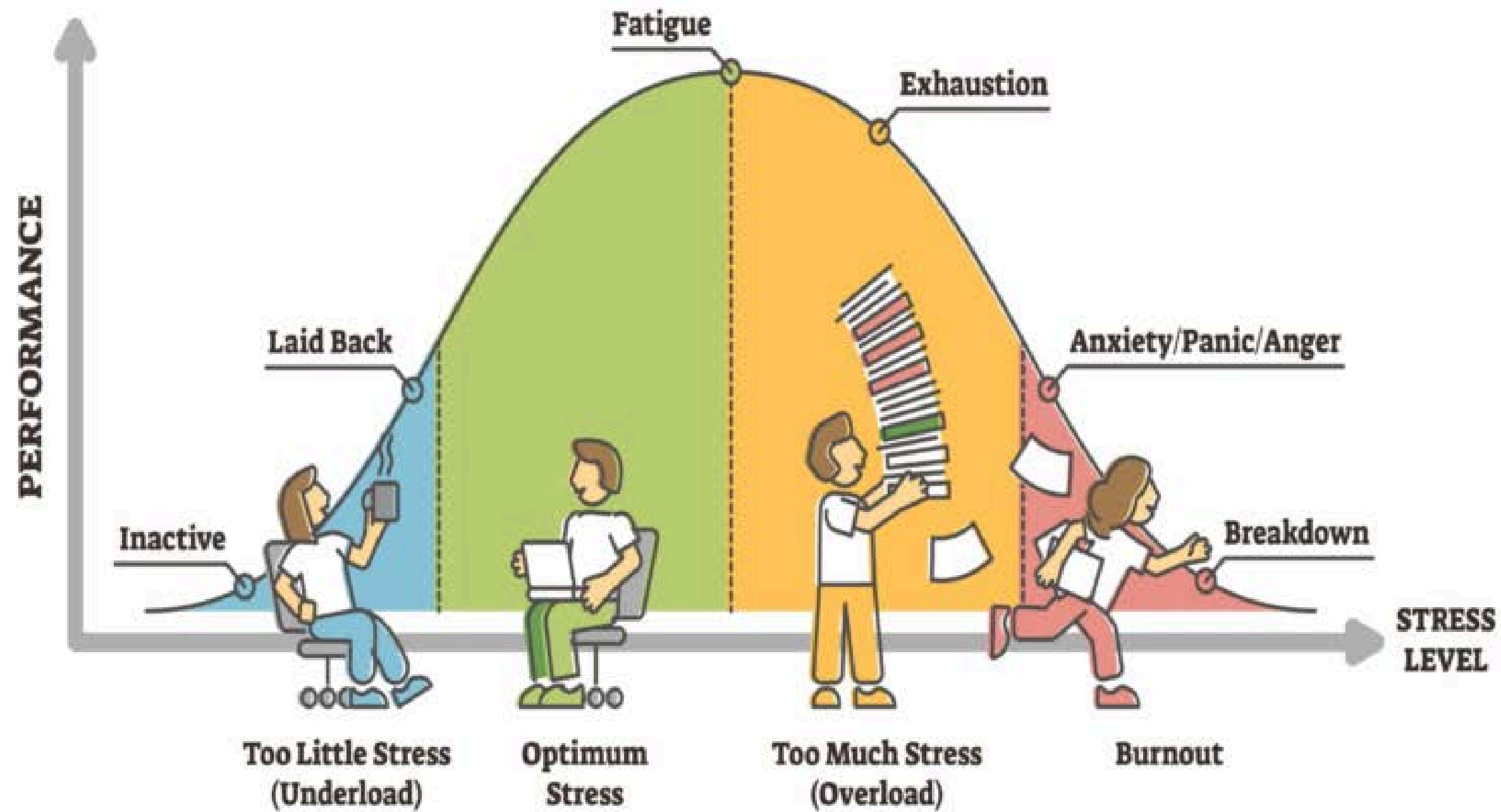
“High Strung...Scaredy Cat... Nervous... Shy... Easily Stressed... Overwhelmed... Worry Wart...etc”

HEALTHY STRESS & THE EMOTION OF ANXIETY

- The feeling of stress influences our motivation
- Conquering stressors increases our self-esteem and sense of capability
- Healthy Anxiety reveals what is important to us and motivates us to prepare
- Anxiety in small amounts can make us socially aware of how what we do impacts others
- Fear protects us from danger



STRESS OR ANXIETY?



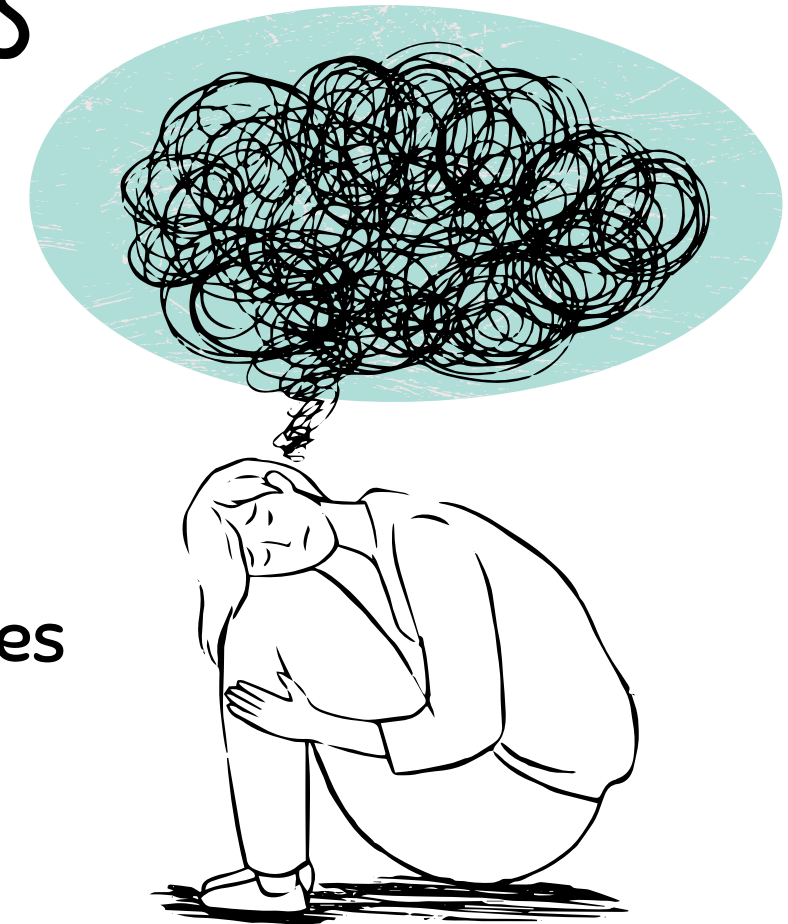
STRESS OR ANXIETY?

STRESS

- Sleep difficulty
- Tension
- Restlessness
- Indigestion
- Hyper-focus thoughts on the stressor
- Distracted by the stressor
- Environmental factors
- Goes away when stressor is resolved
- Motivates action

ANXIETY SYMPTOMS

- Disrupted Sleep
- Tension
- Restlessness
- GI Difficulties—appetite loss or increase
- Unwanted intrusive thoughts
- Uncontrollable worry about a variety of themes
- Racing heart
- Rapid Breathing
- Sweating, feeling numb or faint
- Specific stressor or unidentified and pervasive
- persists beyond end of stressor
- Out of proportion response
- Avoidance leads to temporary relief but reinforces anxiety
- Not Motivational
- Significant Distress & Impairment in Functioning



ANXIETY DISORDERS DIAGNOSES

THEMES

- Social
- Seperation
- Illness
- Generalized
- Panic Disorder



CONSISTENT AND PERVASIVE
OUT OF PROPORTION
SIGNIFICANT DISTRESS
IMPAIRED FUNCTIONING
COGNITIVE SYMPTOMS
PHYSIOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS
AVOIDANCE OR
COMPENSATORY BEHAVIORS



DIFFERENTIALS

- Normal Stress response
- Adjustment
- PTSD/ Acute Stress
- OCD
- Autism Spectrum
- ADHD
- Medical Illness or Medication side effect

CURRENT SCIENTIFIC UNDERSTANDING

FOR SAFETY

The Sympathetic Nervous System

Heart racing

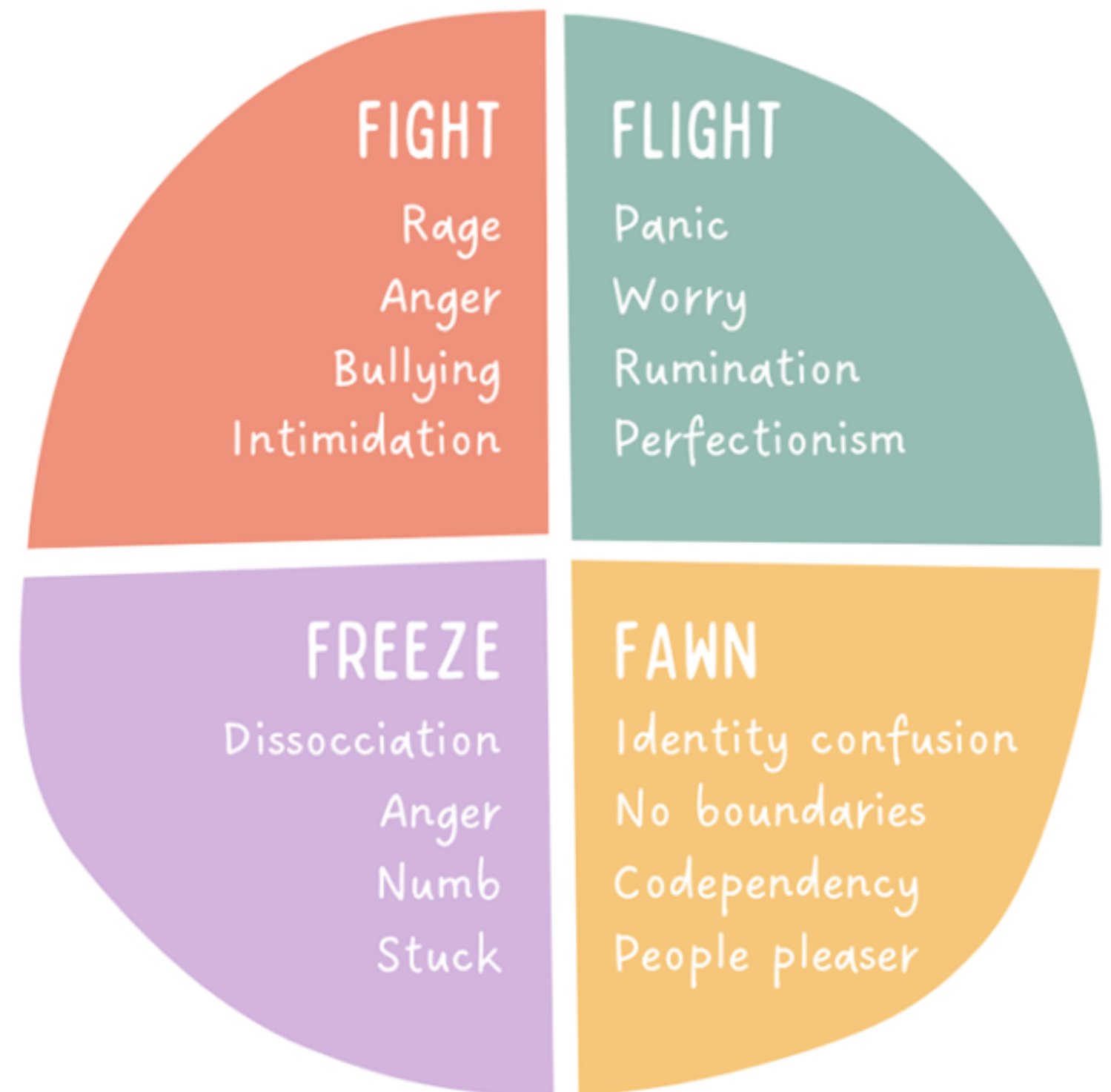
Rapid breathing

Pupils expand

Digestion slows

Blood to extremities

Energy expended



CURRENT SCIENTIFIC UNDERSTANDING

FOR RECOVERY

The Parasympathetic Nervous System

Heart slows and steadies

Breath full and slow

Pupils shrink

Gut activity returns

Increased blood to core organs

Energy Conservation



MODERN THREATS

PHYSICAL

Illness
Accident
Injury
Intentional Harm

SOCIAL

Exclusion
Rejection
Embarrassment
Loneliness

MENTAL

Loss of control
Doubt or Confusion
Failure or Perfection
Existential fears

SPIRITUAL

Disbelief & doubt
Confusion
Hypocrisy
False teaching

Small and
Inconsequential

Large and
Life threatening





A SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING



- God designed the body to protect itself
- Anxiety may be learned as a consequence of the sins of others when harm has been done
- Bodies & brains are subject to frailty and sickness
- Anxiety may also not be a direct consequence of sin or failure on the part of the individual, but evidence of the brokenness of our physical bodies

Jesus & Paul understand Anxiety

Matthew 6: 25-27 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?”

Phillipians 4:6-7. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”



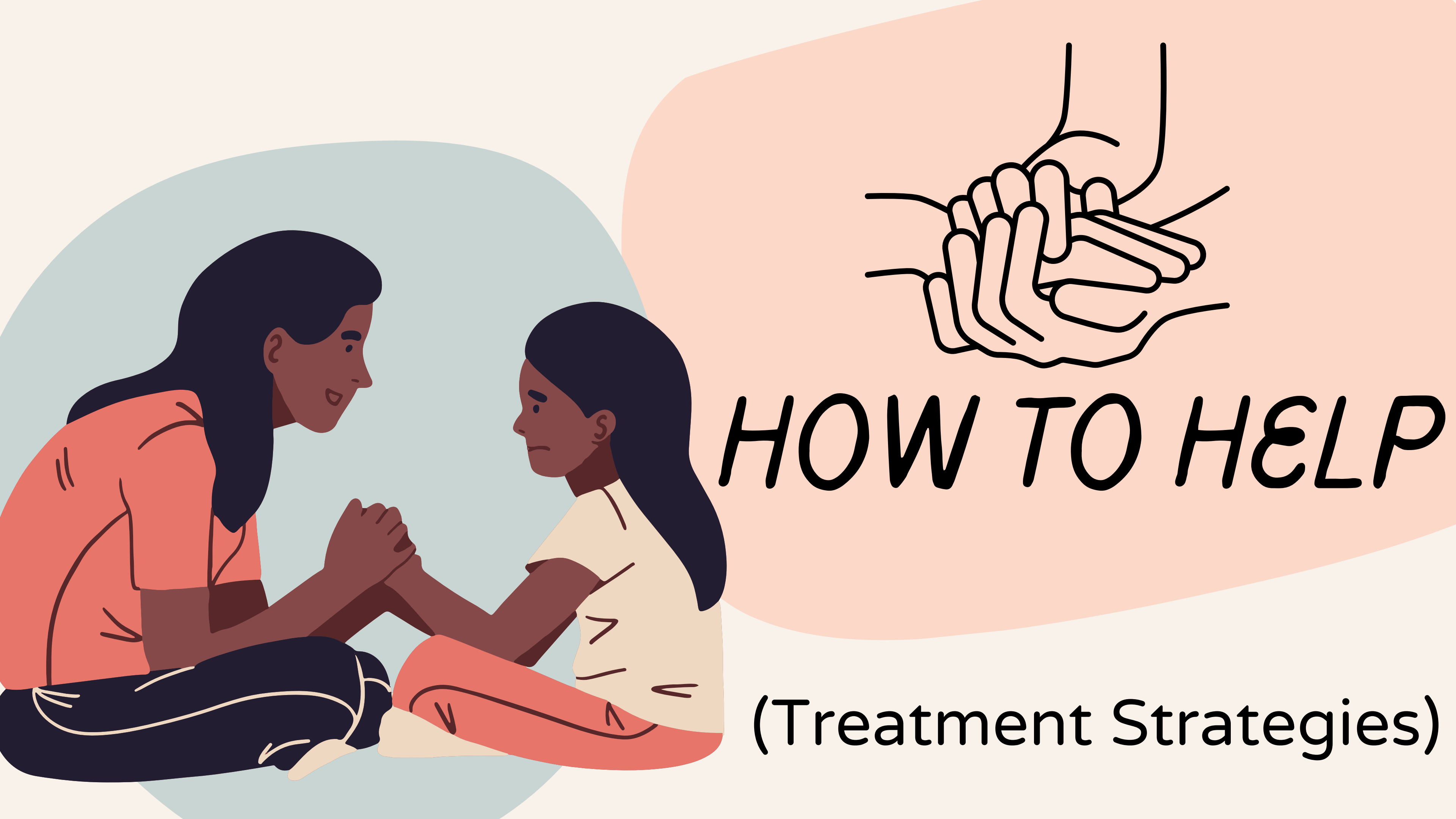
Self-Esteem
Thought habits
Learned
patterns

Over-taxing
inherent coping
Substance Use or
other side-effect

Biology
Stress
Circumstance

***MANY POSSIBLE
CAUSES***

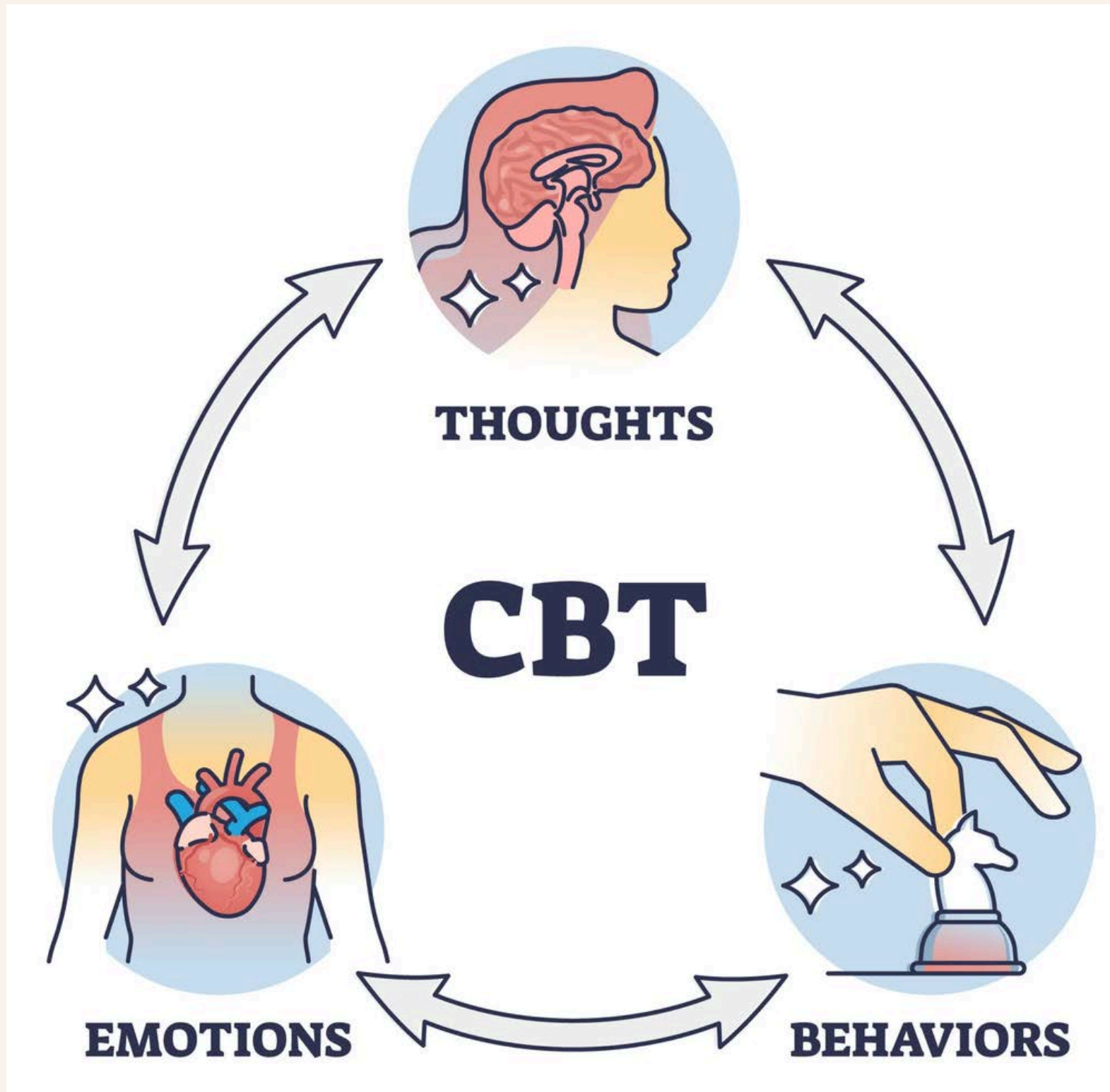




HOW TO HELP

(Treatment Strategies)

ONE MODEL: CBT Cognitive Behavioral Therapy



- Automatic Thoughts can be intentional and conscious or unconscious
- Our thoughts influence our emotions
- The combination of thought and emotion produces behaviors
- The behaviors we choose reinforce or alter our thoughts and emotions



UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES

ALL OR NOTHING THINKING



Sometimes called “black & white thinking”.

“If i’m not perfect, I have failed”
“Either I do it right or not at all”

OVERGENERALIZING

“EVERYTHING IS ALWAYS TERRIBLE”

“NOTHING GOOD EVER HAPPENS”

Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw.

MENTAL FILTER



Only paying attention to certain types of evidence.

Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes

DISQUALIFYING THE POSITIVE



Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another.

“That doesn’t count”

JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS



There are two key types of jumping to conclusions:

- Mind Reading
(imagining we know what others are thinking)
- Fortune telling
(predicting the future)

MAGNIFICATION & MINIMIZATION



Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophising), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important.

SHOULD MUST

Using critical words like ‘should’, ‘must’, or ‘ought’ can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed.

If we apply ‘shoulds’ to other people the result is often frustration.

PERSONALIZATION



Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn’t completely your fault. Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault.

EMOTIONAL REASONING



Assuming that because we feel a certain way, what we think must be true.

“I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot”

LABELING



Assigning labels to ourselves or other people.

“I’m a loser”
“I’m completely useless”
“They’re such an idiot”

Tummy Ache/
Heart Racing

"I'm sick, something's wrong...
I'm about to have a panic attack!"

"I'm Hungry or
Excited"

"They must be
busy or
distracted
I should check
in later"

Said hello
and friend
didn't respond

"They must be mad at me!
They don't like me anymore"

When responding to triggers and automatic thoughts, try to pursue a broader perspective.

Choose what to pay attention to, and alter thoughts in a way that is realistic and believable.

It doesn't have to be a drastic change, just one that can progressively reduce distress and changes behavior





SOOTHING PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

Healthy Sleep Habits

Adequate Nutrition

Exercise, activity and movement

Breathing Exercises

Grounding Techniques

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Imagination & Creativity

Prayer & read the Bible

Talk with a friend, parent or
loved one



DEEP BREATHING EXERCISES



- Bubble breaths
- Pinwheel Breaths
- Raise a stuffed animal
- Feather Ride
- Triangle Breathing
- Square Breathing
- Darth Vader Breathing
- Slow Snake Hiss
- Angel Wings
- Smell and Cool the Hot Cocoa

GROUNDING

Ephesians 3:16–19 16

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.



GROUNDING TECHNIQUES

- 5-4-3-2-1 Senses Grounding
- Alphabetical Animals
- Change your Temperature
- Self-Hug or Tangle-up
- Rainbow spotting
- 4-Elements
- Verse and Reference Recall
- Coloring, cutting/gluing or other tactile craft



PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION



Progressive Muscle Relaxation for Kids

Squeeze and release tension in the body to feel the difference between being tense/firm and relaxed/soft

Firm

Vs.

Soft

Uncooked Noodles



Cooked Noodles



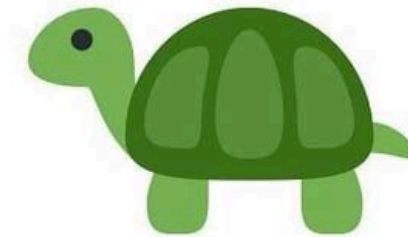
- 1 Starting at the feet, inhale and squeeze the muscles in your feet (like an uncooked firm noodle), then exhale as you let go and relax your feet (like a soft, cooked noodle)
- 2 Next, inhale and squeeze the muscles in your legs for 5 counts, then exhale and relax, letting the legs feel heavy and soft. Notice the difference between tight muscles and soft muscles in your body.
- 3 Continue this as you work your way up the body squeezing and relaxing your belly, hands, shoulders, face, and jaw.

Can you think of a time when you might want to feel soft versus tight?

Squeeze & Release



Squeeze oranges



Go into your
turtle shell



Show off your
muscles



Scrunch your face



Bury your toes
in the sand



Pull your legs up
like a puppet

Relaxation Script for Younger Children

Hands & Arms

Pretend you are squeezing a whole lemon in your left hand. Squeeze it hard. Try to squeeze all the juice out. Feel the tightness in your hand and arm as you squeeze. Now drop the lemon and relax. See how much better your hand and arm feel when they are relaxed. Repeat with other hand.

Arms and Shoulders

Pretend you are a furry, lazy cat. You want to stretch. Stretch your arms out in front of you. Raise them up high over your head. Way back. Feel the pull in your shoulders. Stretch higher. Now just let your arms drop back to your side. Okay kitten, stretch again. Repeat.

Shoulder and Neck

Now pretend you are a turtle. You're sitting out on a rock by a nice, peaceful pond, just relaxing in the warm sun. It feels nice and warm and safe here. Oh-Oh! You sense danger. Pull your head into your house. Try to pull your shoulders up to your ears and push your head down into your shoulders. Hold in tight. It isn't easy to be a turtle in a shell. The danger is past now. You can come out into the warm sunshine and once again you can relax and feel the warm sunshine. Watch out now. More danger. Hurry pull your head back into your house and hold it tight. Repeat.

Jaw

You have a giant jawbreaker bubble gum in your mouth. It's very hard to chew. Bite down on it. Hard! Let your neck muscles help you. Now relax. Just let your jaw hang loose. Notice how good it feels just to let your jaw drop. Okay, let's tackle that jawbreaker again now. Repeat.

Face and Nose

Here comes a pesky old fly. He has landed on your nose. Try to get him off without using your hands. That's right, wrinkle up your nose. Make as many wrinkles in your nose as you can. Scrunch your nose up real hard. Good. You've chased him away. Now you can relax your nose. Oops here he comes back again. Repeat.

Stomach

Hey! Here comes a cute baby elephant. But he's not watching where he's going. He doesn't see you lying there in the grass, and he's about to step on your stomach. Don't move. You don't have time to get out of the way. Just get ready for him. Make your stomach very hard. Tighten up your stomach muscles real tight. Hold it. It looks like he is going the other way. You can relax now. Let your stomach go soft. Let it be as relaxed as you can. That feels so much better. Oops, he's coming this way again. Get ready. Repeat.

Legs and Feet

Now pretend that you are standing barefoot in a big, fat mud puddle. Squish your toes down deep in to the mud. Try to get your feet down to the bottom of the mud puddle. Push down, spread your toes apart, and feel the mud squish up between your toes. Now step out of the mud puddle. Relax your feet. Let your toes go loose and feel how nice that is. It feels good to be relaxed. Repeat...

References: Carkhuff, R.R. Helping and human relations, Vol. 1, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969.

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CHANGING THOUGHTS USING VERSES

I am scared, but God goes before me.

(From Deuteronomy 31 & Isaiah 41)

I feel lonely, but God is always with me. (From Psalm 23)

I feel bullied, but God always loves me. (From Psalm 69:13)

I feel small, but God is bigger and will protect me.

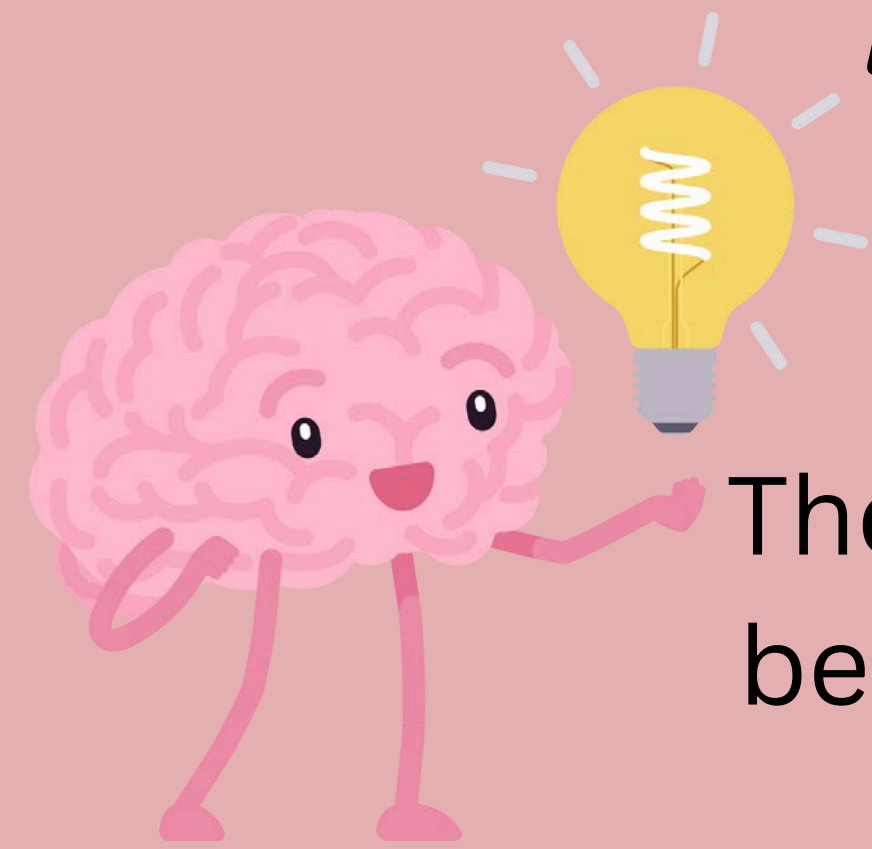
(From 2 Thessalonians 3: 3)

I feel like no one hears me, but God is always listening.

(From 1 Peter 3:12)



THINGS TO REMEMBER



Children don't choose anxiety on purpose

Their reactions may be out of proportion but it's because they need help regulating, not because "they are just seeking attention?"

Improvement in symptoms includes a healthy balance between 1. learning to soothe, 2. reducing avoidance, 3. increasing exposure to triggering situations while using self-soothing and new mindsets

Medication can be helpful and doesn't have to be permanent or lifelong. It helps with factors we cannot control with behavior like brain structure and chemistry.

THANK YOU

Feedback Survey and Follow-up Options



THANK YOU

For a copy of this presentation and additional resources, please visit:

www.wayfindcounseling.com/cla



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