

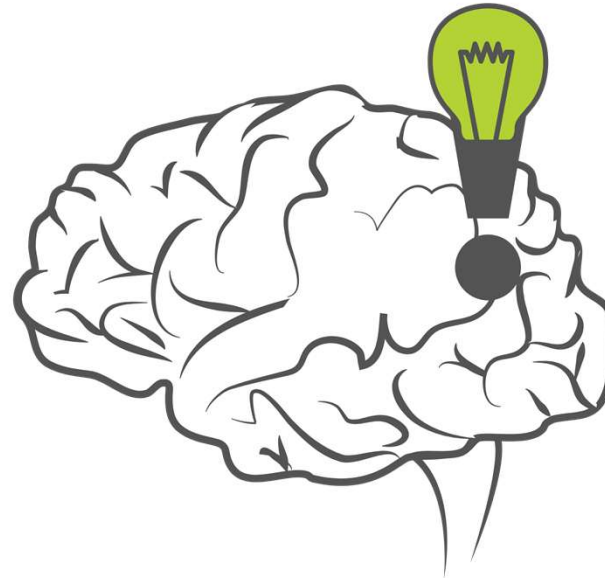
# Stress and Healthy Coping

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1. There is no such thing as “good stress”?
2. I can identify my own internal and external stressors?
3. I know where I can go for help with my stress levels?

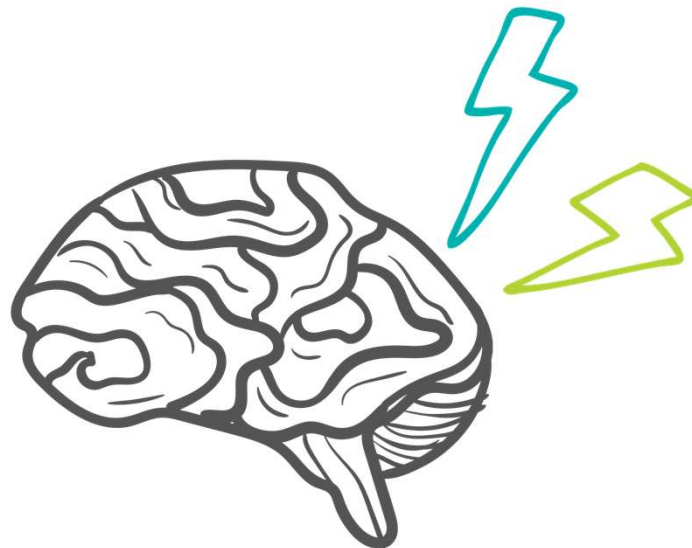


- What is Stress?
- Perception of Stress
- Eustress
- Stress Response
- Internal vs External Stressors
- Healthy Coping
- Seeking Help



# What is Stress?

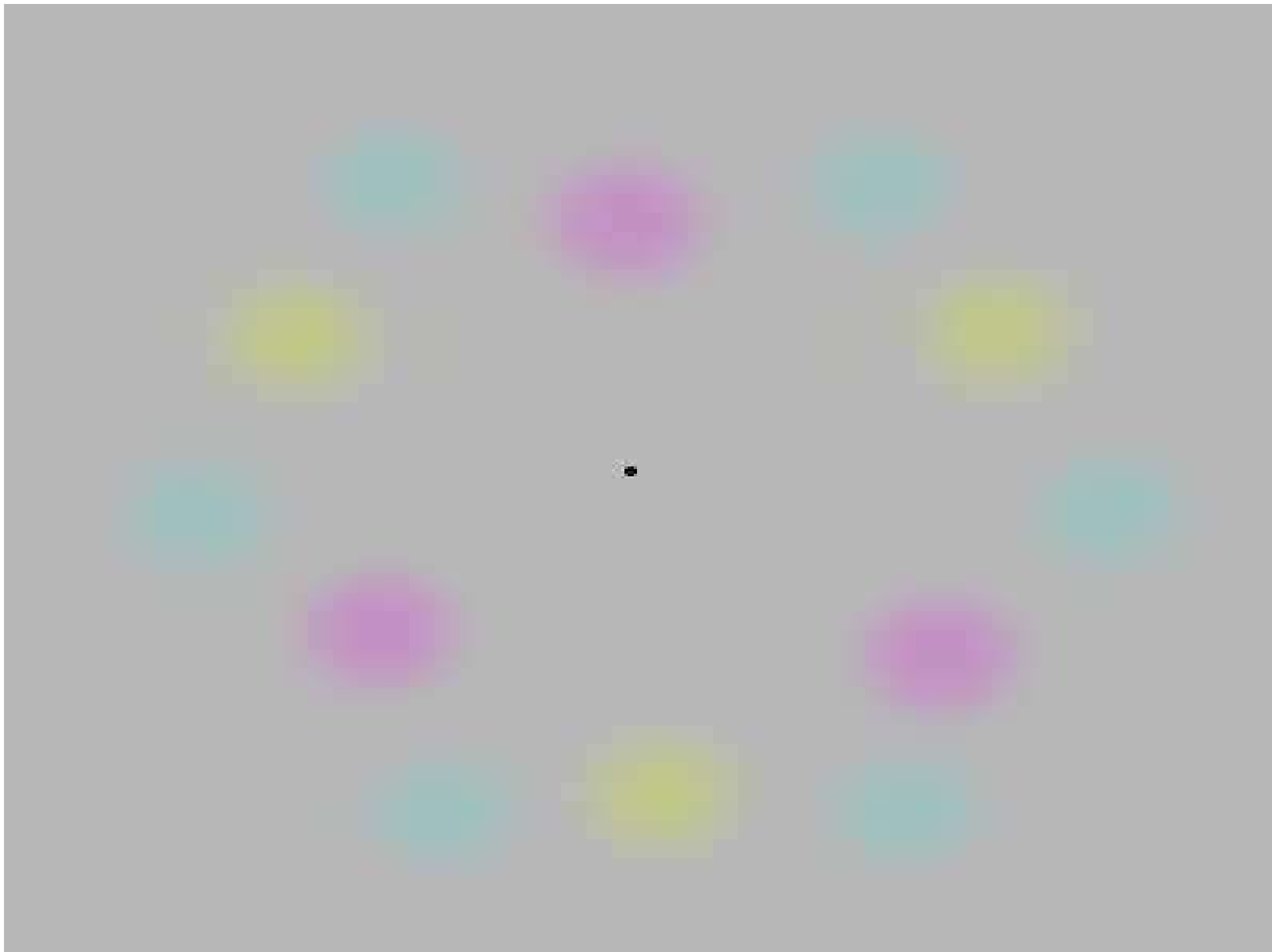
- Stress is a normal reaction to the demands of life
- We feel a threat whenever we are placed in situations where the demand outweighs our resources or ability to successfully cope
- When our brain perceives a threat, our bodies release a burst of hormones to fuel a fight/flight/freeze response
- When the threat is gone, the body returns to normal



# Perception of Stress

- When an event is perceived as a threat, we respond to it differently than if it's seen as a challenge
- **Threats** tend to elicit a greater stress response and create greater levels of anxiety
- **Challenges**, on the other hand, can be exciting, and even enjoyable to overcome
- By focusing on the resources we have to handle these challenges rather than focusing on what *may* go wrong we can better cope with stressors





# Eustress = Positive Stress

- Moderate or normal psychological stress interpreted as being beneficial
- Motivational, short-term, increases performance
- Empowers growth in the **three following areas:**



## Emotionally

Can result in positive feelings of contentment, inspiration, motivation, and flow.

## Psychologically

Can result in positive feelings of contentment, inspiration, motivation, and flow.



## Physically

Can result in positive feelings of contentment, inspiration, motivation, and flow.

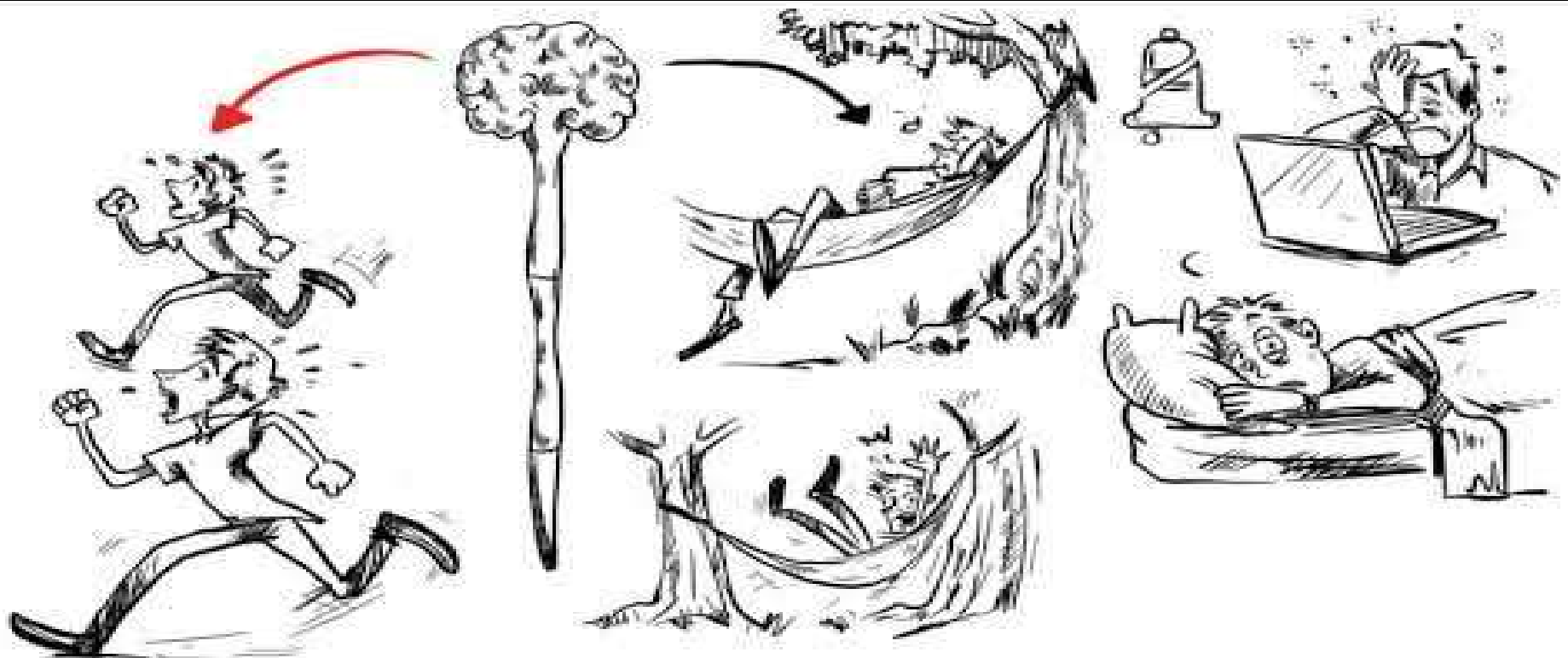


# How Stress Affects the Brain

Stress

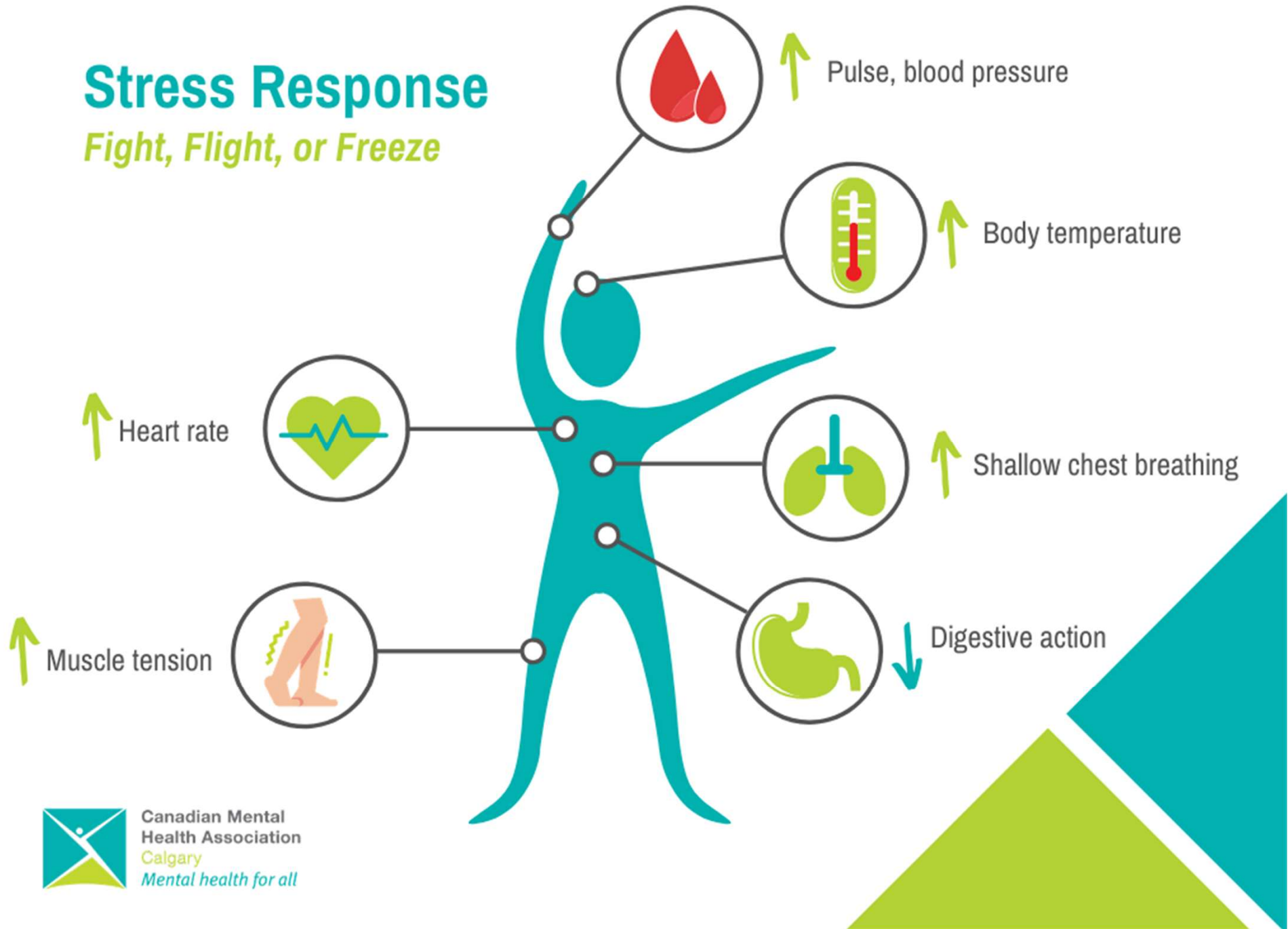


# Stress Response



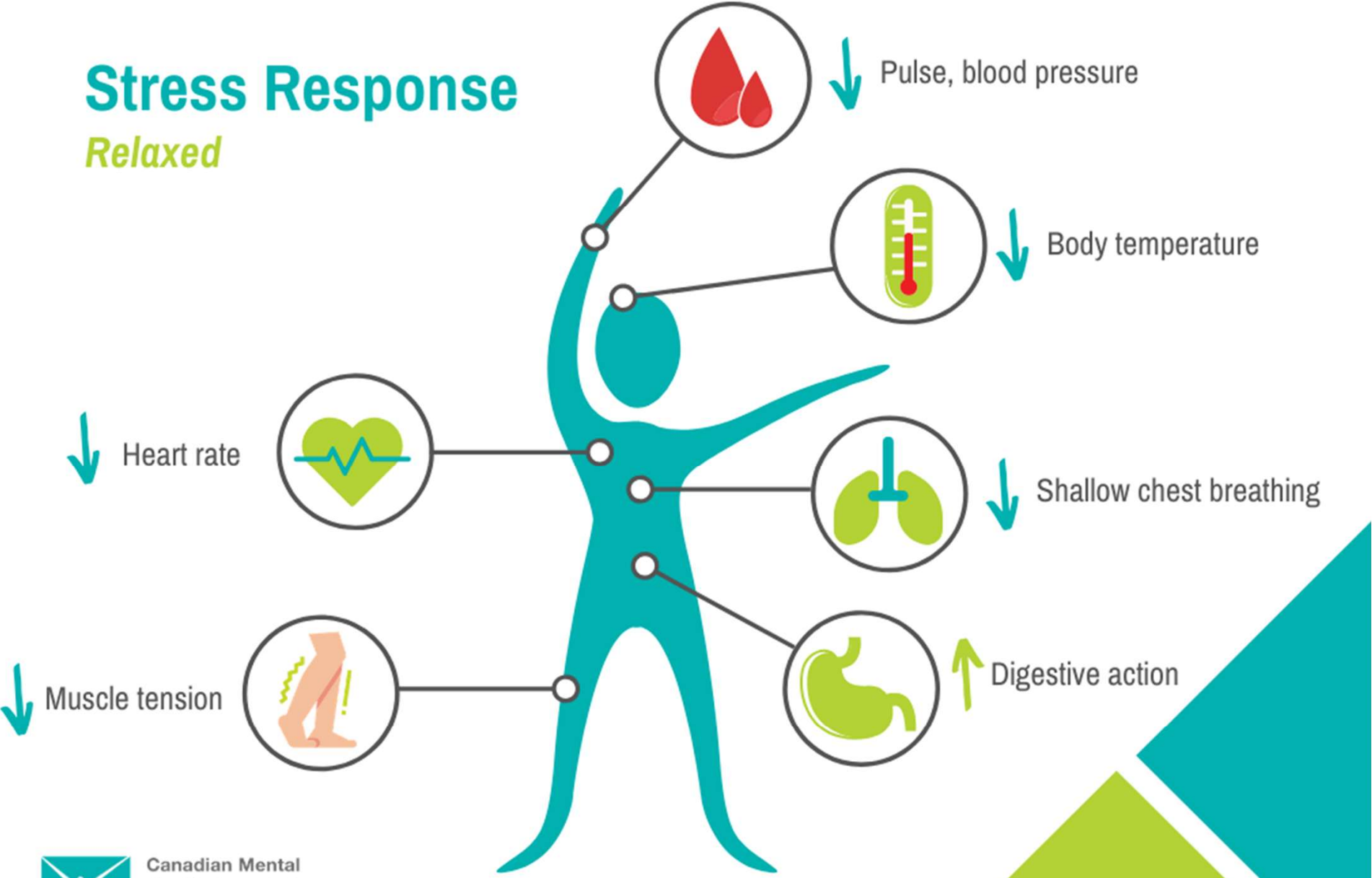
# Stress Response

*Fight, Flight, or Freeze*



# Stress Response

*Relaxed*



# Types of Stress

*External Stressors: arise from the environment and events taking place around us*

## Routine Stressors:

Traffic and transit

Weather

Public humiliation

Harassment

Arguments with loved ones

Trouble with co-workers

Exams, due dates, assessments

Technology

Minor illnesses

Crowded or noisy environments

Pressure to excel

Finances



# Types of Stress

*External Stressors: arise from the environment and events taking place around us*

## Major Stressors:

Death

Traumatic events

Divorce or separation

Change in employment

Abuse/Assault

Moving to a new country

Significant financial concerns

Problems with the legal system

Chronic physical or mental illness

Change in the health of a loved one

Natural disasters

Global pandemic

Loss of a pet



# Types of Stress

*Internal Stressors: originate from within ourselves*

Thoughts, feelings, reactions to external stressors

Procrastination

Unhealthy eating

Choosing to not get enough rest

Focusing on the problem

Pressure to succeed

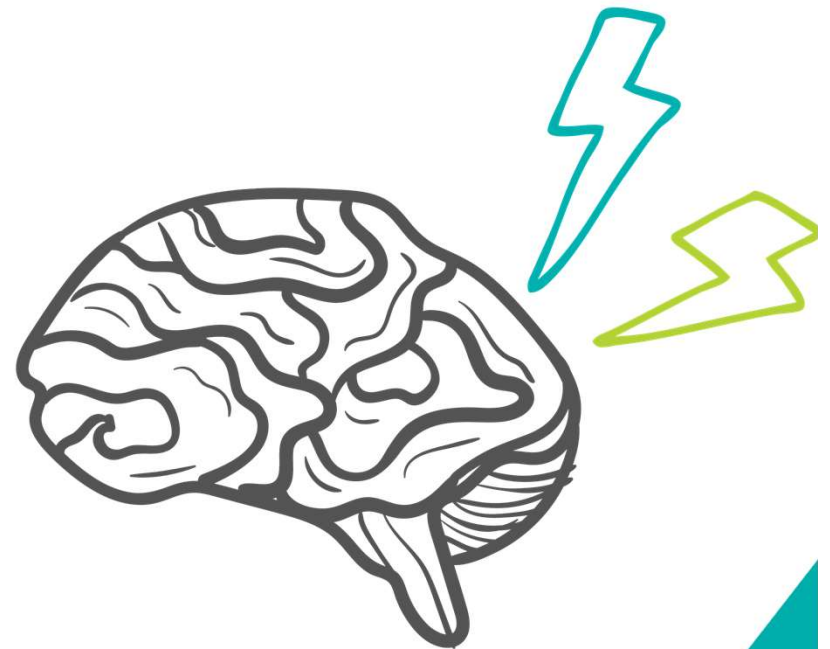
Avoidance

Negative or overthinking

Predicting the future, mindreading

Feeling disorganized, being unprepared

Overall health and fitness levels



# Effects of Stress

Stress effects most individuals in the following four key areas:



Emotions



Thoughts



Physical Body



Behaviours



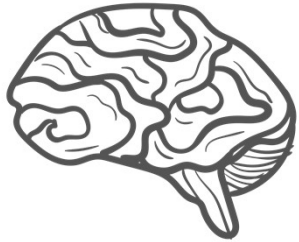


# Emotions

## *Effects of Stress*

- Unhappy/depressed
- Uncomfortable
- Panicked
- Out of control
- Angry
- Agitated
- Short tempered
- Overwhelmed
- Nervous
- Anxious
- Worried
- Frustrated
- Mood swings
- Loss of motivation, confidence





# Thoughts

## *Effects of Stress*

- Inability to concentrate
- Indecisiveness
- Easily confused
- Lost sense of humour
- Racing thoughts
- Exaggeration of issues
- Over-analyzing
- Negative self-talk
- Jumping to assumptions
- Memory lapses





# Physical Body

## *Effects of Stress*

- Sleep disturbance
- Irregular digestion
- Difficulty breathing
- Dizziness
- Changes in appetite
- Headaches
- Aches and pains
- Inflammatory response
- Lowered immunity
- Mental illness
- High blood pressure
- Chest pains
- Stroke\*
- Heart attacks\*





# Behaviours

## *Effects of Stress*

- Emotional outbursts
- Aggressive responses
- Procrastination/avoidance
- Unhealthy eating habits
- Social withdrawal
- Fidgeting, pacing
- Increased rate of speech
- Frequent caffeine use
- Increase in smoking/vaping
- Increase alcohol or drug consumption
- Unusual risk-taking



# Mental Strategies



- Mental strategies are designed to pause the spiral of negative, anxious, or worrying thoughts in order to give the body a chance to slow the heart rate, reduce muscle constriction and unlock the logic centers of the mind.
- While done in conjunction with deep breathing it can help reset the Sympathetic Nervous System, helping slow or stop the fight, flight, or freeze response.



# Mental Strategies

## Mindfulness

- Breathing exercises
- Grounding techniques
- Meditation
- Are you draining your emotional, cognitive resources bank?
- Gratitude work
- Positive self talk



# Mental Strategies

## Stop Process

- **S**top, **T**ake a breath, **O**bserve, **P**roceed
- **S**top and notice what it feels like to stop moving, to stop doing.
- **T**ake a breath or two and feel what it's like to be alive and breathing. How does it feel to inhale and exhale?
- **O**bserve thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations, with as much openness and curiosity as possible.
  - What is bubbling to the surface for you? Is there tension in your body, are you hungry, thirsty, tired?
  - Are there thoughts floating in the mind? Are you caught in a story about something that happened earlier today or perhaps planning for what's next?
- **P**roceed



# Mental Strategies

## Write it Down

- The process of writing it on paper will help slow the thought processes
- After writing it down, take a 5 minute wellness break, come back and cross out all irrational thoughts
- Some find tearing up the paper to be very effective
- Also a helpful technique for racing thoughts when trying to go to sleep



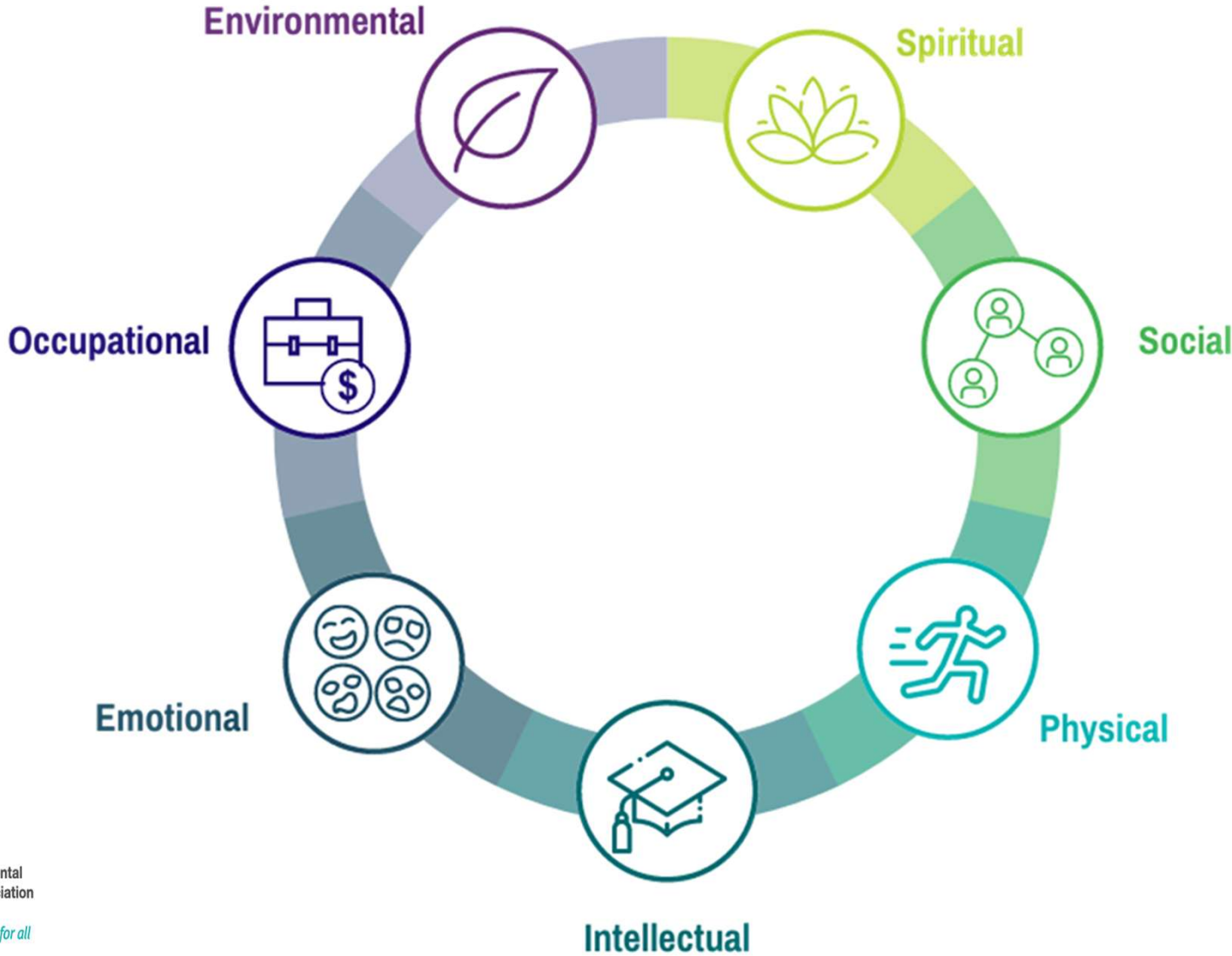
# Mental Strategies

## What Advice would you Give a Friend?

- Think if a friend was in the same situation. What ways would you suggest they cope, change their reaction, or try to look at the situation differently
- We often do a better job cognitively solving issues for others that are very emotional to us



# Healthy Coping Using the 7 Dimensions of Wellness



# Finding Physical Wellness

- Ensure to get enough sleep and rest
- Take movement breaks throughout the day
- Set up a daily routine to ensure you are meeting physical activity needs
- Deep breathing, meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, yoga, stretching
- Eat healthy, drink water
- Hot showers/baths
- Exercise, walk, run, play sports
- Have time alone
- Take medications as prescribed



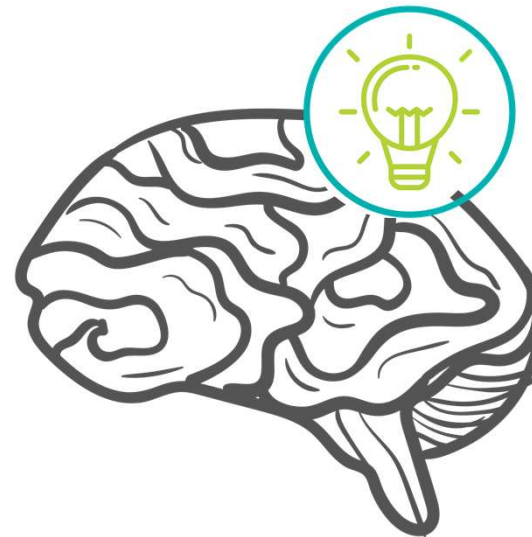
# Healthy Foods to Combat Stress

- **Dark leafy greens like spinach:** folate = increases serotonin and dopamine levels
- **Fermented foods:** good, beneficial bacteria = healthy gut and brain
- **Blueberries:** antioxidants = increases dopamine levels
- **Nuts:** lowers vascular constriction during stress
- **Dark chocolate:** releases anandamide temporarily blocks feelings of pain and depression
- **Seeds:** magnesium = increases serotonin levels
- **Avocado:** potassium, vitamin E, B vitamins, and folate
- **Banana:** potassium and magnesium = increases serotonin levels
- **Apples and carrots:** hard crunch foods can release stress and aggression through the physical act of chewing



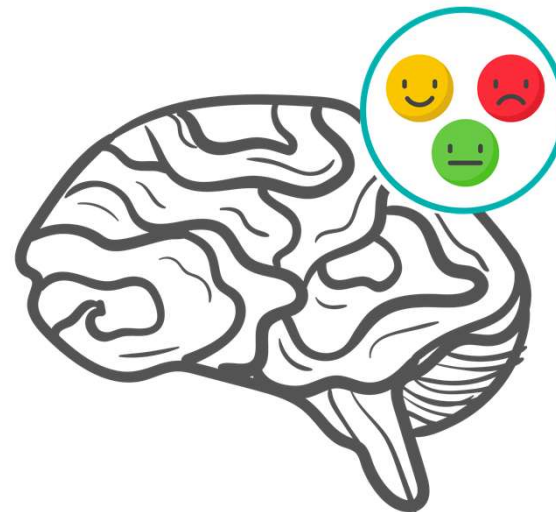
# Finding Intellectual Wellness

- Learn something new that you want to
- Read or write
- Problem solve
- Set realistic goals
- Look for new areas to grow
- Create
- Puzzles/games
- Podcasts



# Finding Emotional Wellness

- Set time for yourself
- Allow yourself to feel all emotions
- Listen to music, read, watch a movie, gaming
- Be creative, draw, play and instrument, poetry
- Journal
- Keep a sense of humour
- Thinking positively
- Self-esteem challenge
- Meditation
- Grounding exercises



# Finding Occupational Wellness

- Talk with colleagues, supervisor, team
- Use day timers and calendars
- Balance work and leisure activities
- Learn new study strategies
- Join a club, team, or activity
- Ask for help
- Take breaks/vacation time
- Eat lunch away from workspace



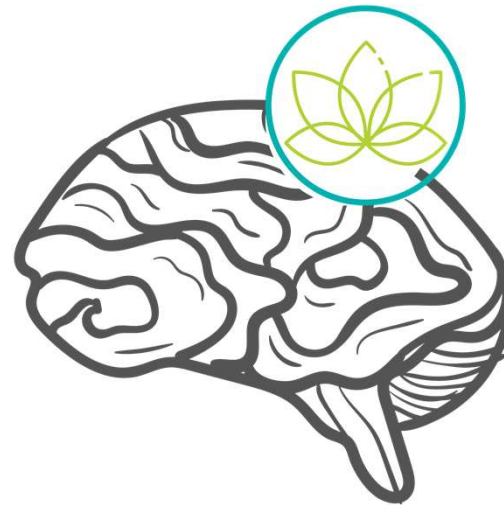
# Finding Environmental Wellness

- Creating home and work environments that are safe and clean
- Get outside for fresh air and sunlight
- Surround yourself with supportive positive people
- Find a place at work to take breaks
- Grow plants, recycle, and compost
- Garden
- Hike
- Spend time in nature
- Walk, ride a bike, public transit



# Finding Spiritual Wellness

- Enhance the things that give purpose to life
- Practice religious or spiritual beliefs
- Be grateful for something every day
- Do what you believe is ethical and right
- Read a religious or spiritual text
- Yoga
- Smudging
- Meditation
- Think positively



# Finding Social Wellness

- Learn how to be assertive yet respectful, establish and maintain boundaries
- Join a club, team, community group, volunteer
- Spend time with people you connect with virtually or in person
- Ask for help to problem solve and/or mediate conflict
- Spending time on your own helps you to reboot and unwind
- Honor your needs in regards to time spent with others and alone
- Be around pets



# Why Mindfulness is a Super Power



# Stress Management

## *Unhealthy Coping Strategies*

- Drugs, alcohol, smoking, vaping
- Unhealthy food
- Caffeine, energy drinks
- Not talking about feelings
- Venting
- Avoiding friends, family, responsibilities
- Physical violence
- Not saying "no" to others in an attempt to avoid conflict



# Where to Get Help

CMHA Calgary	403-297-1700
CMHA Peer Support	403-297-1402
Distress Centre	403-266-4357
Access Mental Health	403-945-1500
Health Link	811
Calgary Community Services	211
Addictions Helpline	1-866-332-2322
Eastside Family Centre	403-299-9696
Calgary Counselling Centre	403-265-4980
The Alex	<a href="http://www.thealex.ca">www.thealex.ca</a>
AHS Mental Health Line	1-877-303-2642
AHS Mental Health Website	<a href="http://www.ahs.ca/helpintoughtimes">www.ahs.ca/helpintoughtimes</a>



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# Questions?

