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FREE WEBINAR

HEALTHCARE WORKERS


Learn how to protect your mind during this unprecedented time

Reframe, challenge and distance yourself from negative thoughts.

HEALTHCARE WORKERS DURING DANGEROUS TIMES

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A person in a light blue long-sleeved shirt and tan pants stands with their back to the camera on a rocky mountain peak. They are looking out over a vast, hazy mountain range under a soft, golden sunset sky. The scene is serene and contemplative.

Within you is the absolute
power to rise above any
situation or struggle, and
transform it into the
strongest and most
beautiful version of you
ever.

-Unknown

A photograph of yellow cosmos flowers on thin green stems, set against a clear blue sky. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some fully open and others as buds. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

Part One Objectives

Understand State-Dependent Brain Functioning to enhance self-awareness and coping.

Apply Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) approaches to further cope with negative thoughts and emotions in constructive ways.

Given the current COVID-19 pandemic and the unknowns, we are experiencing unpredictable stressors.

Typically we function as more "regulated" and cope as best we can with typical stressors.



With Covid19 and its far-reaching impact on our lives, we are noticing various levels of "dysregulation."



We can expect more fatigue, expect everyone to be less capable of focusing, and expect more irritability from yourself and others. We are vulnerable to high levels of cortisol, lower immunity, inflammation, and aging at an increased rate.

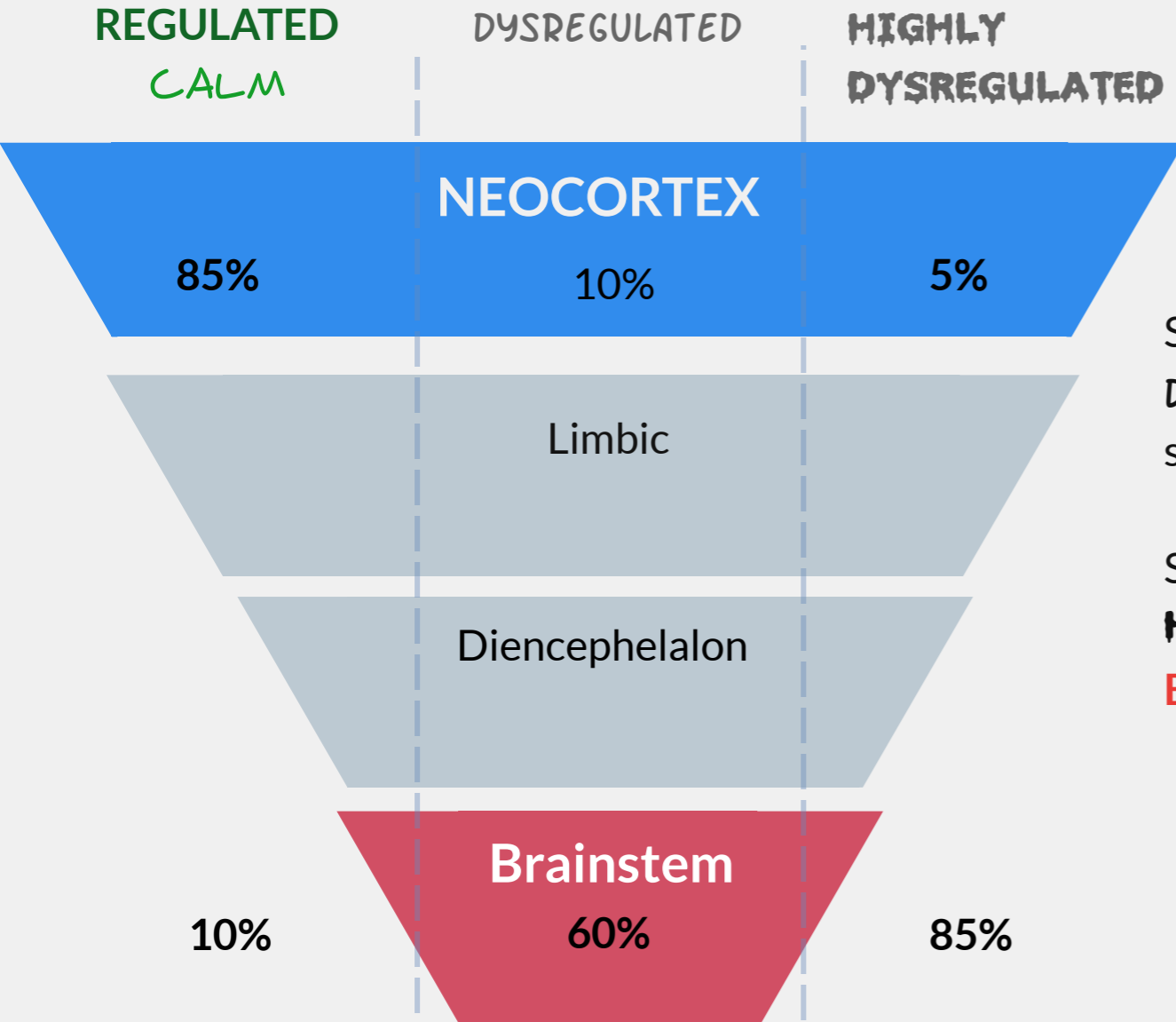


Be gentle with yourself
and others.

The importance of self-
awareness is knowing if I
am regulated or
dysregulated.

Without creating a space
for awareness of our
dysregulation and
understanding regulation
skills, we will remain
sensitized and
vulnerable.

State-Dependent Brain Functioning



We can't always "think" our way out of situations. When we are under a state of threat, we dysregulate. Feeling threatened changes the way we think, feel, and behave.

State-dependent brain functioning in the **NEOCORTEX** while **DYSREGULATED** drops from 85% to 10%. The bottom **BRAINSTEM** shifts from 10% functioning to 60%. (Flock or freeze)

State-dependent brain functioning in the **NEOCORTEX** while **HIGHLY DYSREGULATED** drops from 60% to 5%. The bottom **BRAINSTEM** shifts from 60% functioning to 85%. (Flight/Fight)

(Perry, 2020)

So when we notice our
DYSREGULATION what
do we do?



Understand and incorporate Self Regulation while practicing a "bottoms up" approach to regulation.


Tap into
somatosensory
regulation with
breathing as well as
patterned and
rhythmic movement.

Bottom-up techniques work through the body to change the brain, especially the lower, subcortical areas of the brain outside of conscious awareness and conscious control.
(Sweeton, 2019)

BREATHE



A top-down approach to awareness and coping using CBT

A person wearing a dark jacket and shorts is walking down a wide, modern concrete staircase. The staircase has glass railings with black metal handrails. The background is a large, textured concrete wall with a grid of small circular indentations. The lighting is soft and even.

After we become self-aware and tap into the skills to regulate ourselves, our cognitive functioning improves allowing us to cope with distressing thoughts the best way possible.

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY



Cognitive behavioral therapy is based on the cognitive model; the way we perceive situations influences how we feel emotionally.

So it is not a situation that directly affects how people feel emotionally, but rather, their thoughts in that situation. When people are in distress, their perspective is often inaccurate and their thoughts may be unrealistic.

Cognitive behavioral therapy helps us identify distressing thoughts and evaluate how realistic the thoughts are. Then we learn to change our distorted thinking. When we think more realistically, we feel better. The emphasis is also consistently on solving problems and initiating behavioral changes.

SITUATION



THOUGHT



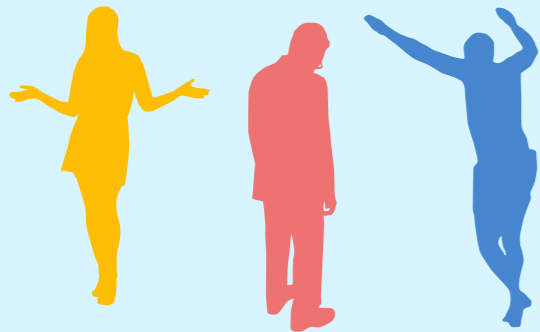
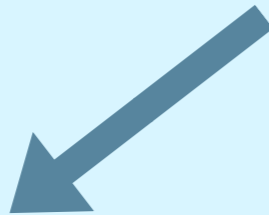
REACTION

Values

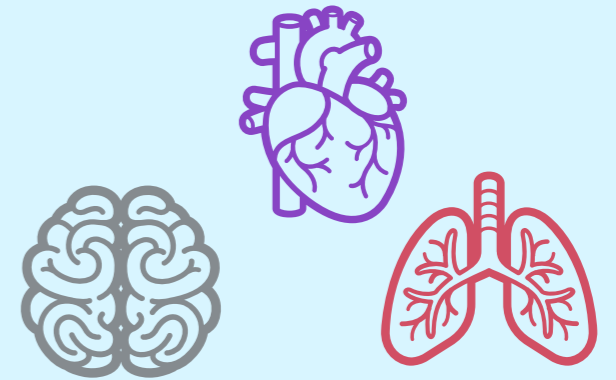
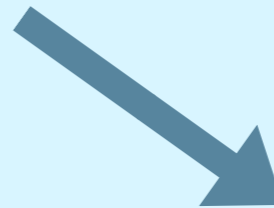
Values



EMOTIONAL



BEHAVIORAL



PHYSIOLOGICAL

COVID-19

I can't do my job
I miss my family/kids/grandchildren
The situation is hopeless

I or someone I love could get sick and die
There are too many cases, I can't handle the work load
My patient(s) might die

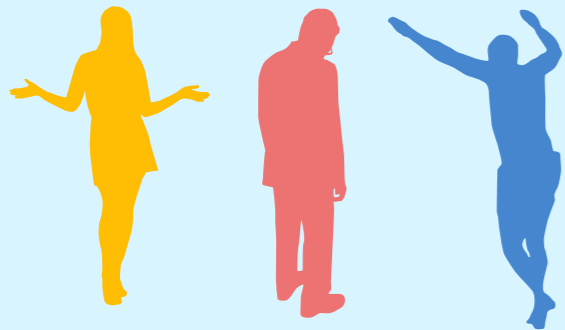
THOUGHT

This is not fair, I don't deserve this
They knew it was coming
We don't have adequate supplies
They lie to us

Values

Values

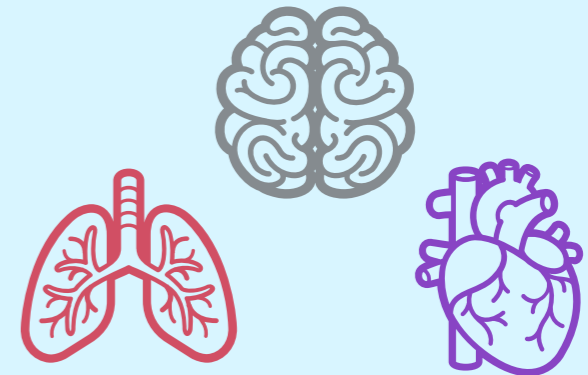
REACTION



BEHAVIORAL



EMOTIONAL



PHYSIOLOGICAL

Top-down Change Thinking

ITCH for Problem Solving

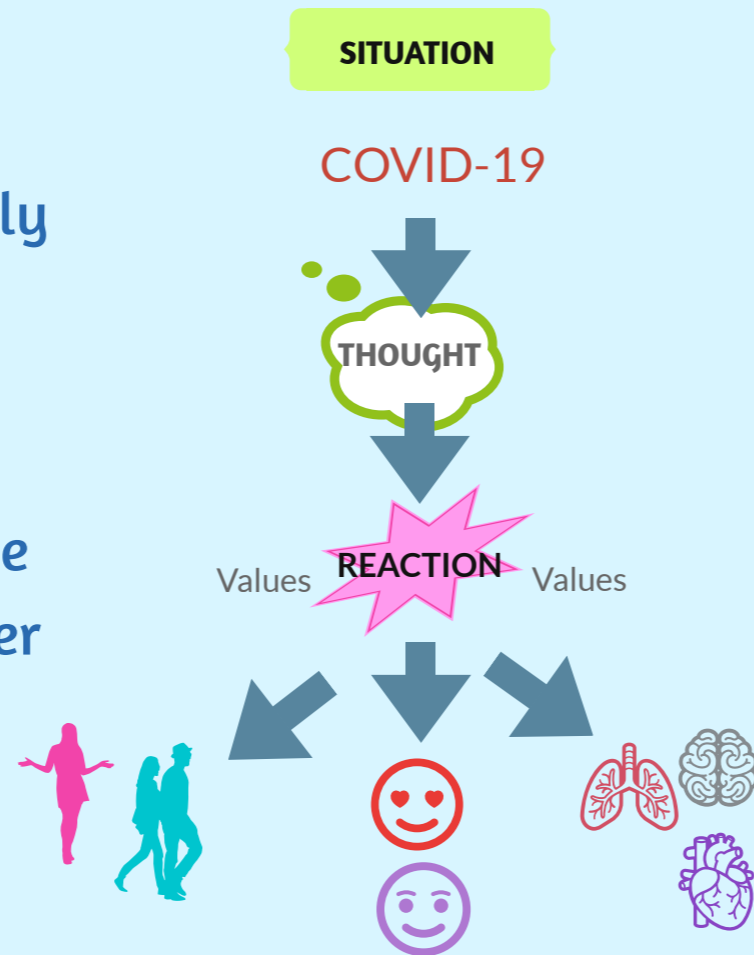
- Identify the Problem.
- Think about possible solutions.
- **C**hoose a solution to implement.
- **H**ow well does it work?

Socratic Questions for Guided Discovery

- **What is the evidence that my thought is true? What is the evidence my thought is not true?**
- **What's an alternative explanation or viewpoint?**
- **What's the worst thing that could happen and how would I cope if it did?**
- **What is the best thing that can happen?**
- **What is the most likely outcome?**
- **What is the effect of telling myself this thought?**
- **What could be the effect of changing my thinking?**
- **What would I tell someone else if he/she viewed this situation in this way?**
- **What should I do now?**

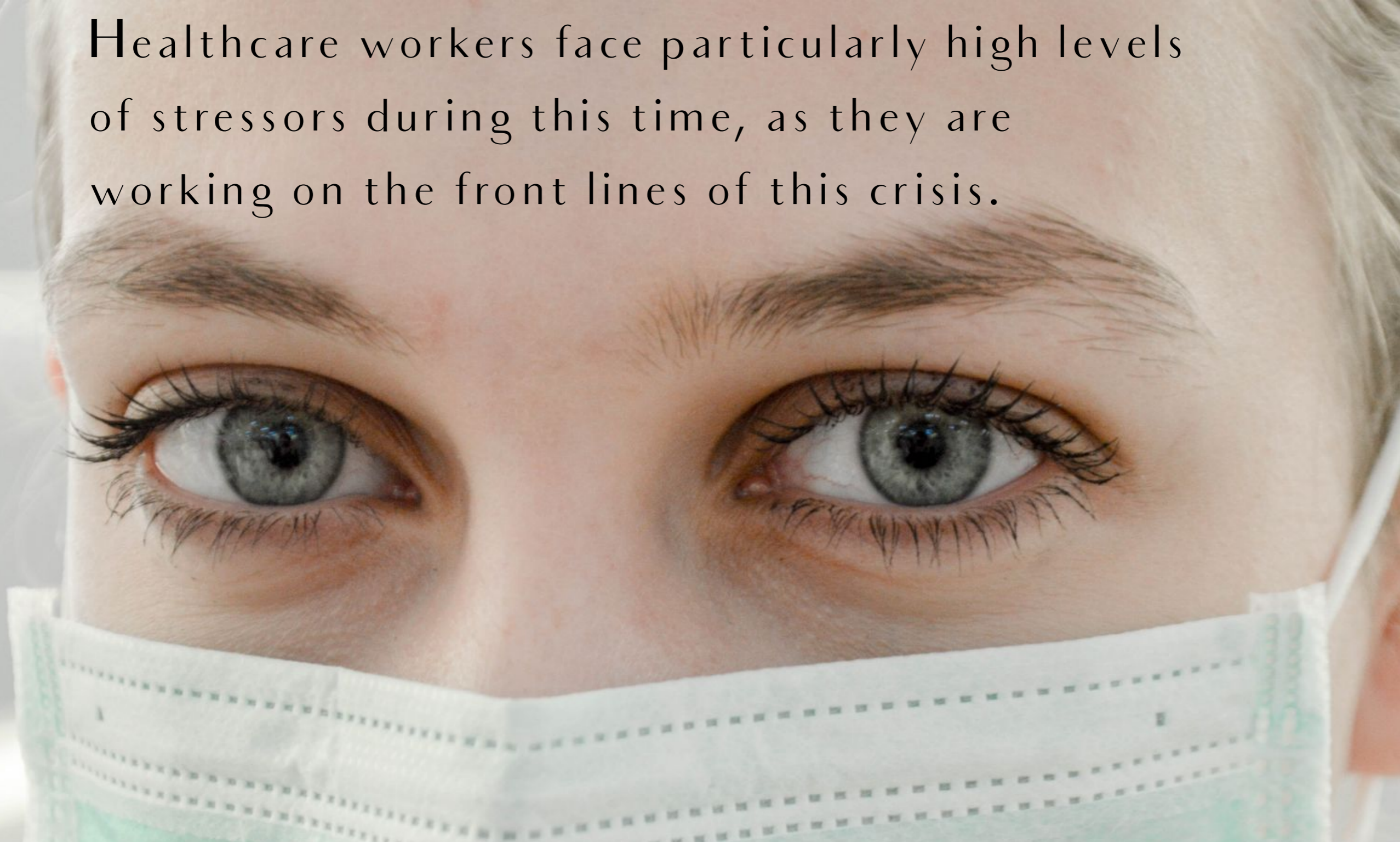
Using CBT for Empowerment and Control

- I will do my best regardless
- I'm learning what it is like for others to be fearful and scared
- I'm seeing new talents from my staff and coworkers
- I'm stronger than I thought
- I'm talking more to my family
- This is the most meaningful thing I can do
- I have a caring community
- This is hard but we will come out of this pandemic stronger and wiser



- My stress response is working for me
- This is growing me stronger in my faith
- I'm noticing what is most important
- I'm learning a new appreciation for life
- This is teaching me to take better care of my mind and body
- I'm not spending money on things I don't need
- I am not alone in this

Healthcare workers face particularly high levels of stressors during this time, as they are working on the front lines of this crisis.



Caregivers need care, too.



Healthcare workers are more susceptible during this crisis to the following conditions:

- Anxiety disorders
- Depression
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)



How much is too much anxiety?

A normal level of anxiety is healthy and serves to motivate us to prepare and react appropriately in stressful situations.

When anxiety becomes too high, it can lead us to react to stress in a disproportionate way that can interfere in our lives and dysregulate our bodies. If you are experiencing anxiety attacks, physical symptoms (heart palpitations, difficulty breathing, hyperventilating, sweating profusely, feeling overly flushed or having GI issues, highly irritable or having difficulty sleeping) or are experiencing interference at work or home, you may be suffering from an anxiety disorder.



Am I depressed?



We all get sad sometimes. Sadness is a healthy and normal response to grief, loss, life transitions and difficulties. Depression is different. It is persistent and interferes with your life.

Symptoms of depression include:

- Feelings of sadness, hopelessness, tearfulness, or emptiness
- Significant shifts in appetite
- Difficulties with sleep
- Impaired concentration and focus
- Outbursts of anger and irritability
- Slowed thinking and processing
- Feelings of worthlessness and guilt
- Loss of interest or pleasure
- Anxiety, restlessness and agitation
- Tiredness and lowered energy
- Recurrent thoughts of death and suicide

When To Get Help

If your levels of anxiety, depression or symptoms of PTSD are affecting you at work, home, in your relationships or just personally, help is available to you.

If the support you already have: your family, friends, spirituality/religion, self care routine, etc. are not enough to keep you afloat, consider reaching out for mental health care.

Therapy and psychiatric medication management are highly successful in treating anxiety, depression and PTSD.



Mindfulness



- Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present and non-judgmentally aware in a given moment
- This awareness can be an attunement to our body, our breath, our sense of self, our surroundings, our senses, or our thoughts and feelings
- Mindfulness is evidence-based for reducing anxiety and depression among many other physiological and mental health related issues

Benefits of Mindfulness Practice

Stress reduction

Decreased rumination

Improved focus

Cognitive flexibility

Relationship satisfaction and higher empathy

Greater working memory

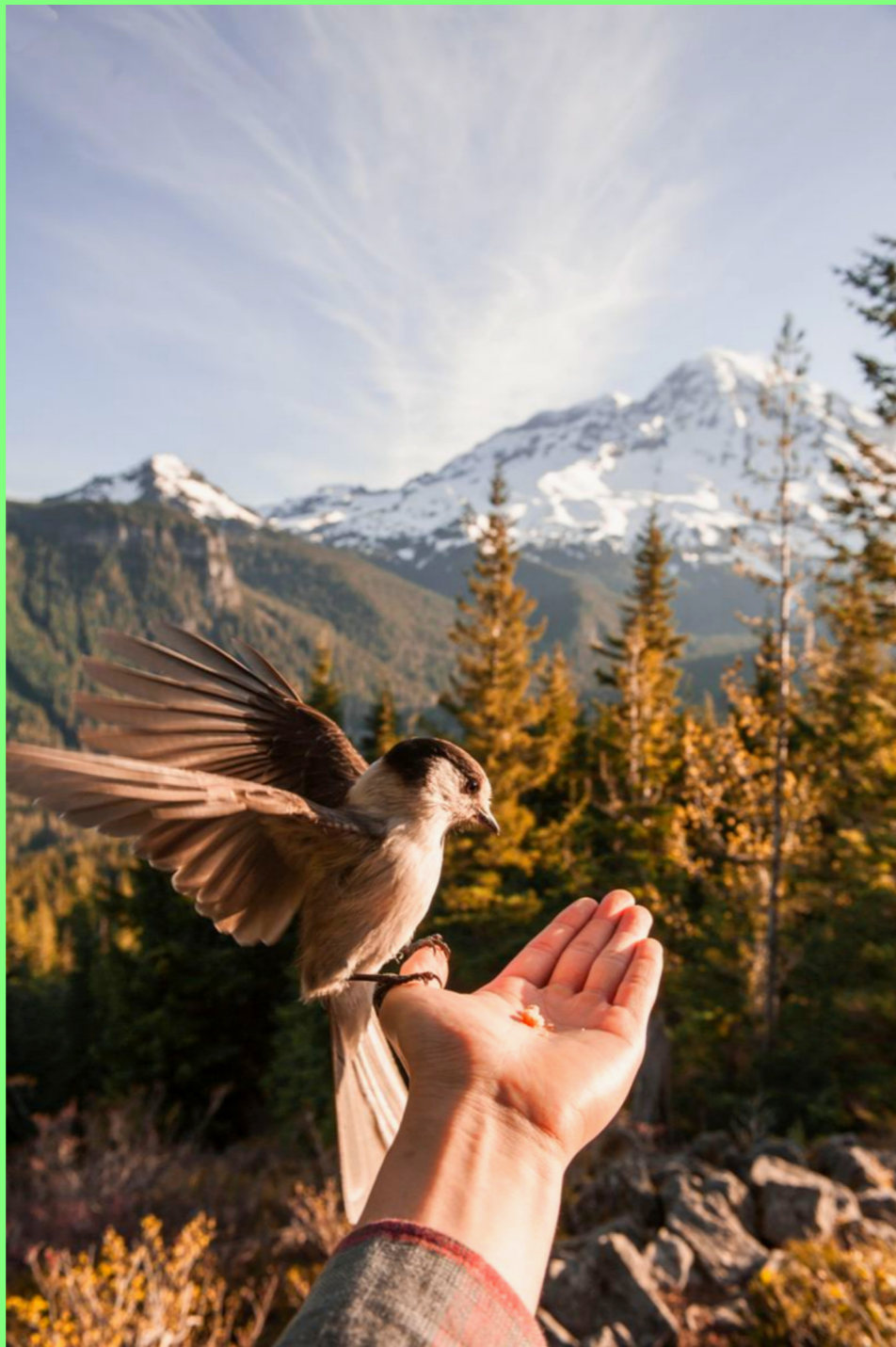
Decreased emotional reactivity

Regulation of nervous system/arousal



Breathe





God,
grant me the serenity to
accept the things I
cannot change,
the courage to change
the things I can,
and the wisdom to know
the difference.

Reinhold Niebuhr

Citations

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