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A Comprehensive Approach to Stress Management and Enhancing Well-being

Dr. Robin Arthur

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About Me

- Clinical and consulting psychologist
- 30 years working in health and mental healthcare
- I work with leaders across healthcare, private business, and elite sports, helping them enhance influence, resilience, performance, and balance.
- I bring distinctive blend of psychological insight, strategic leadership acumen, and deep commitment to cultivating sustainable success.



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- The applicability and accuracy of the course content may vary by the clinical, geographical, and cultural context; you should evaluate the course accordingly.
- As healthcare is rapidly evolving, new findings may change the validity of the information presented in this course. Providers should always consult the latest research and guidelines from professional associations.
- The interventions discussed in this course may be limited in generalizability, requiring practitioners to consider specific individual and population factors.
- The course may not cover all possible risk factors, diagnostic methods, or treatment options, and complex cases may require additional considerations.
- Healthcare providers should apply cultural competence and sensitivity to ensure effective and respectful care based on their patients' diverse needs.
- Providers should always evaluate the limitations of diagnostic and screening tools, considering their potential for false results as well as any ethical implications.
- It is the responsibility of course participants to critically evaluate the evidence from multiple sources to guide professional practice.

Learning Outcomes

- After this course, participants will be able to:
- Explain the physiological stress response and explain its impact on health, behavior, emotions, performance, and patient care, distinguishing between adaptive (short-term) and maladaptive (chronic) stress.
- Describe at least three evidence-based stress management strategies, including methods to help patients manage stress to support recovery.
- Describe and outline a personal or team-based stress management plan that integrates evidence-based practices into daily clinical and leadership work.

American Institute of Stress released data from the American Psychological on stress in 2022



American is one of the most stressed countries in the world with 55% stating they are stressed and feel paralyzed by stress.



63% say that they consider quitting their job due to stress and 76% say that workplace stress is detrimental to their interpersonal relationships.

American Psychological Work in America in 2023



77% of workers reported experiencing work-related stress in the past month.



57% of those citing negative impacts as a result, such as emotional exhaustion and lack of motivation to do their best.

Benefits of getting calm

Your life will be healthier

*Your clients will benefit
from your knowledge and
demeanor*

Case Story: Caught Between Care and Capacity

Elana

- Elana is a physical therapist
- In theory she allows 45 min for patients
- Staff shortages equals more work in the same amount of time

Stress Factors

- Workload overload
- Time pressure
- Emotional labor
- Administrative demands
- Physical fatigue

Name your stressors



Take a minute to think about the things you worry about the most currently.



On a scale of 1-10 (ten being the highest) rate how severe the stress is about each item.



- 1 I feel that demands of my day leave me stretched too thin
- 2 I struggle to maintain balance between my work and personal life
- 3 I often feel rushed or under pressure to meet too many deadlines at once
- 4 I find it difficult to share my concerns or opinions openly with others
- 5 Stress from my job or personal commitments carries over to my home life

1

Never

2

Rarely

3

Sometimes

4

Often

5

Very Often



6 I don't feel I have enough responsibilities or choice in how I carry out my responsibilities

7 My efforts or contributions are not adequately recognized or appreciated.

8 I am unable to utilize my strengths, abilities, or creativity in my daily life

9 I notice stress showing up in my body (headaches, stomach aches, muscle tension)

10 I find myself feeling anxious, irritable, or emotionally drained because of ongoing pressures.

1

Never

2

Rarely

3

Sometimes

4

Often

5

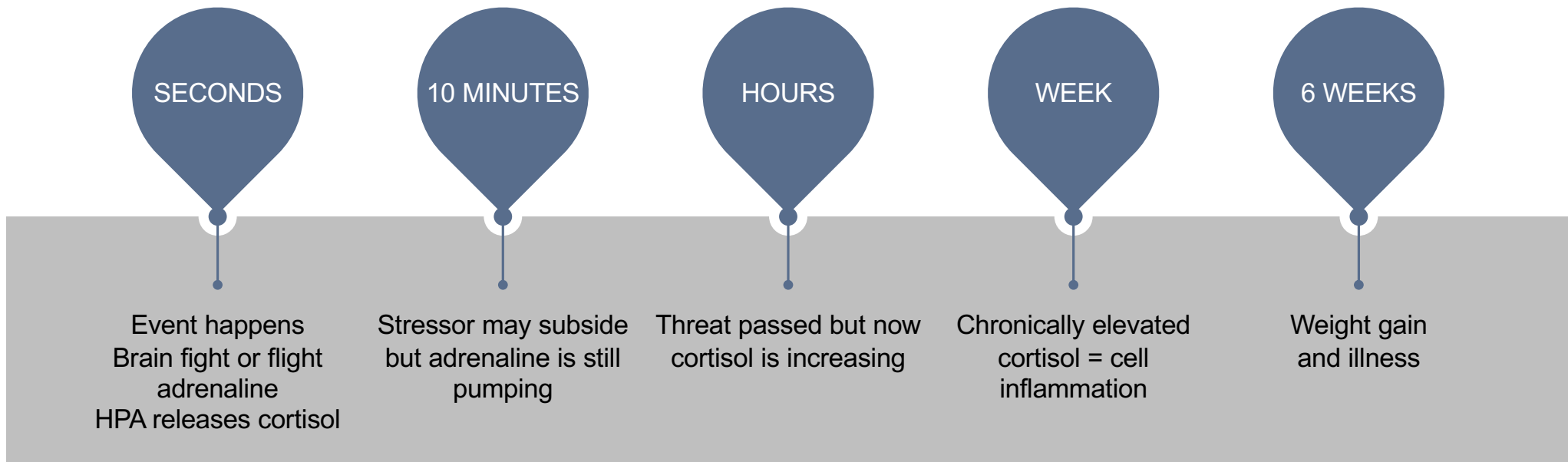
Very Often



What is Stress?

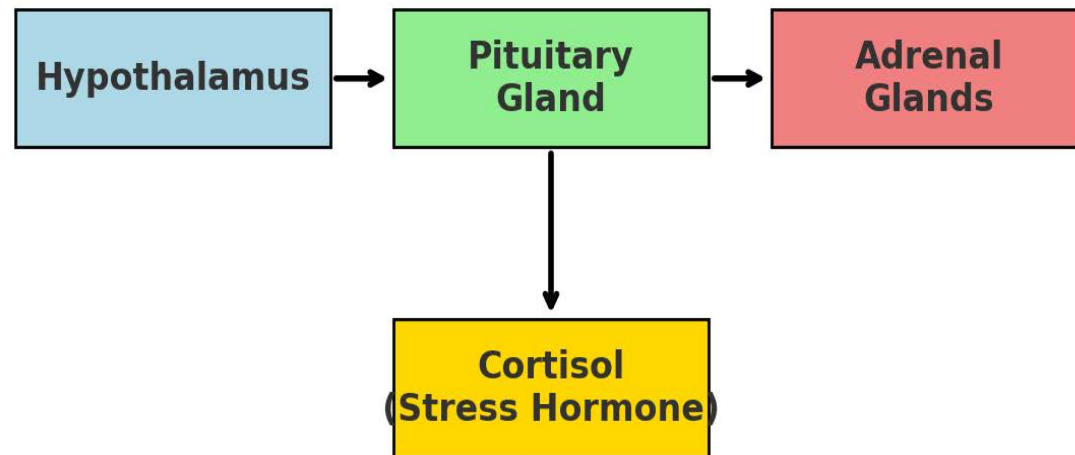
- An imbalance between the demands placed on us and our ability to cope with them.
- Fight or flight in the past was a natural reaction to stress.
- Now are often social/mental, and less physical and more chronic in nature. This has more lasting effects on our bodies.

Stress Cycle



Stress Cycle

HPA Axis: The Stress Response Pathway



Effects on the Body

➤ Musculoskeletal

➤ Cardiovascular system

➤ Neuroendocrine system

➤ Respiratory

➤ Central nervous system

➤ Gastrointestinal

Behavioral Consequences of Stress

- Eating too much or skipping meals
- Staying awake at night or laying in bed too long
- Increased drug and alcohol abuse
- Loss of sex drive
- Increased irritability
- Increased fatigue
- Loss of motivation

Case Story: Losing her Voice

Dana

- Speech-language pathologist
- Passionate about her work
- Colleague on extended leave

Stress Factors

- Patient care decline
- Team collaboration suffers
- Withdrawal from problem-solving

Psychological Symptoms

➔ Forgetfulness

➔ Anger

➔ Frustration

➔ Anxiety

➔ More irritability with family members

➔ Loss of concentration

➔ Depression

➔ Feeling powerless

➔ Dissociation

➔ More problems with schoolwork

Case Story: The Weight You Can't See

Avital

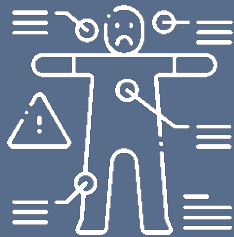
- Respiratory therapist
- Stakes are high in her environment
- Call offs and mismanagement

Stress Factors

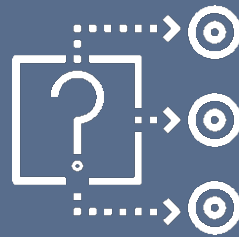
- **Anxiety and depressive tendencies**
- **Cognitive strain**
- **Maladaptive patterns**
- **Emotion regulation issues**

Symptoms versus Illness

Symptoms are present
in all of us



Causes
(bio-psycho-social)



Illness (disorder) equals

Interference with

- Leisure
- Work
- Relationships

The Results



Stress



Dis Stress



Dis Ease



You Can Take Charge!

**List your three biggest
motivators to make changes
and deal with stress**

REPEAT THIS STATEMENT

“

I CAN CONTROL STRESS

I WILL CONTROL STRESS

I WILL TAKE CARE OF ME

”

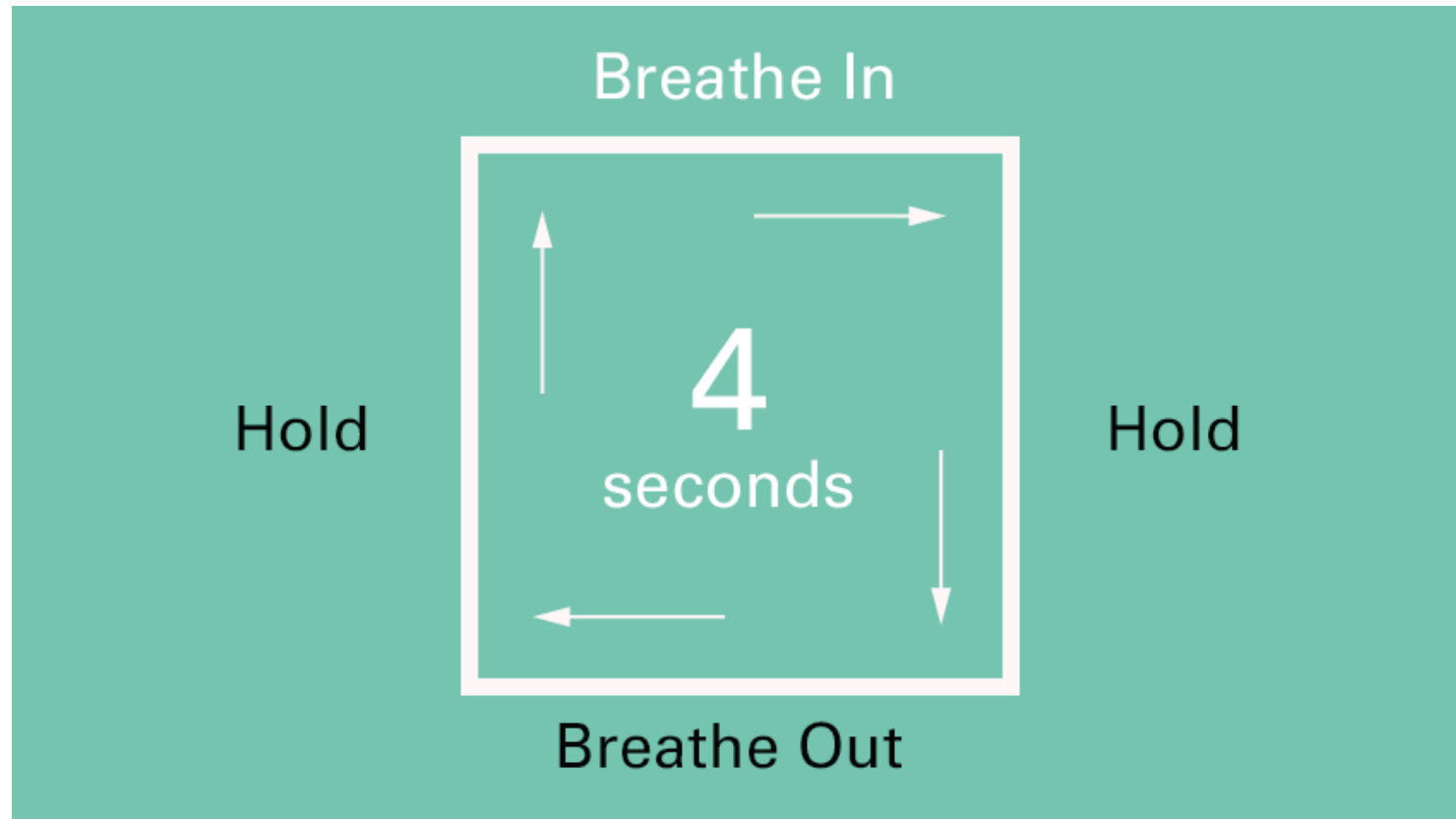
You Can Take Charge!

- **Early intervention equals best outcome**
- **Commitment to make changes**
- **Social support system**
- **Engaging in meaningful activities**
- **Good lifestyle habits**



Breathe

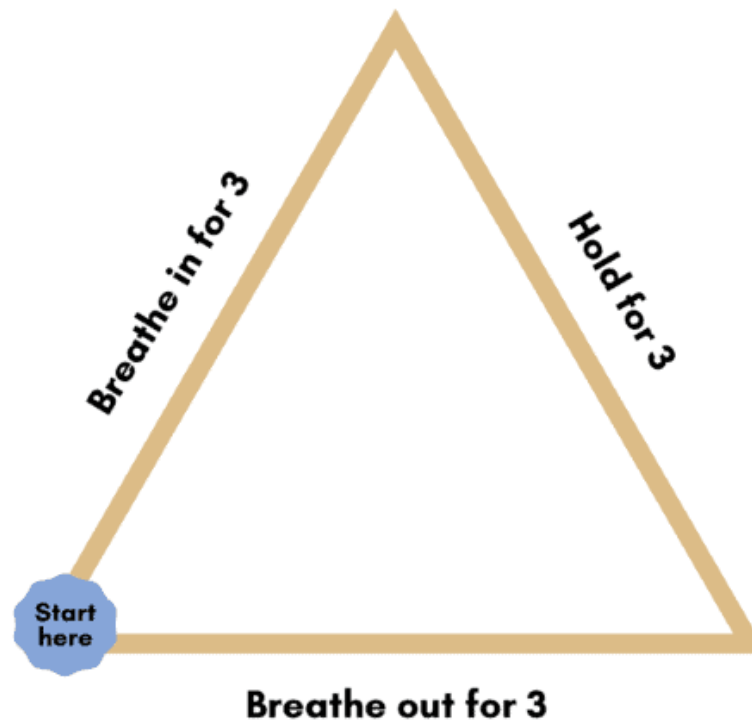
- **Decrease stress and anxiety**
- **Strengthens concentration and ability to learn**
- **Slows heart rate and lowers blood pressure**
- **Helps control emotions and encourage happiness**



TRIANGLE BREATHING

BRAIN BREAK

Starting at the left bottom of the triangle. Trace your finger up the side while you take a deep breath in. Hold your breath for three seconds as you slide down the other side. Breathe out along the bottom of the triangle. Repeat it until you are calm.





Alternate Nostril Breathing - Yoga Technique

- <https://youtu.be/G8xIEzX40bA?si=q3sfN6Rf27rinn0k>

Case Story: Pause Between Patients

Sophia

- Charge nurse
- Tense moment with patient and family
- Breathing is shallow and still needs to see three patients

Intervention and Effect

- **Step in medication room**
- **Box breathing for five cycles**
- **Heart rate slows**
- **Grounded and clear headed**
- **Able to be present and listen to patient in next room**



Pen



Paper



Paints



Case Story: Write it Out

Ben

- Physical therapist
- Two patients who are making little progress
- One patient screamed at him

Intervention and Effect

- Before heading home write all feelings without stopping
- Tone shifts as he writes
- Throws the paper away
- Goes home feeling calmer and can be present for his family

Healthy habits

- ➔ Sleep
- ➔ Nutrition
- ➔ Exercise
- ➔ No drugs/alcohol
- ➔ Nature

LifeStyle Characteristics

Sleep

- Cortisol regulation
- Immune system repair
- Emotion regulation
- Psychological

LifeStyle Characteristics

Sleep

- 7-9 hours on your circadian schedule
- Dark room
- Avoid alcohol late at night
- Cool temperature
- Set a routine before sleep

Case Story: Running on Empty

Miguel

- Only three hours of sleep
- Foggy memory
- Irritable
- Overwhelmed

Intervention and Effect

- Uses breathing techniques before getting out of bed
- Mindfulness on the way to work
- Box breathing throughout the day
- Relaxes at home, hot shower, sleeps better that night
- Energy increased feels mentally sharper
- Less irritable
- Better recovery at the end of the day

LifeStyle Characteristics

Nutrition

- Physiological response
- Hormonal regulation
- Brain function
- Gut brain connection

LifeStyle Characteristics

Nutrition

- Mediterranean Diet
- Vitamin C: fruits, peppers, broccoli, cabbage
- Vitamin D: fatty fish, egg yolks, fortified foods
- Vitamin A: think green, red, orange
- Probiotic and prebiotic: yogurt, sauerkraut, fruits, beans
- Magnesium: leafy greens, nuts, spinach, legumes



LifeStyle Characteristics

Exercise:

- Lowers cortisol
- Recover faster from stressors
- In moderation it activated PNS
- Boosts resilience
- Improves sleep
- Enhances cognitive function

Case Story: Pause Between Patients

Tanya

- Occupational therapist
- Tight schedule
- Feeling stiff, mental fog, and irritable

Intervention and Effect

- **Before work:** dynamic stretches and brisk walk from the garage
- **Midday:** body squats or walk the staircase
- **Afternoon:** calf raises or shoulder rolls

- Energy increased and she feels mentally sharper
- Less muscle tension in body
- Less irritable

Yoga

Yoga is effective because it's multi-modal:

Physical postures release muscle tension.

Controlled breathing regulates the nervous system.

Mindfulness reduces mental rumination.



Yoga for Stress Management: Benefits Wheel



Desk-Friendly Stress Relief Practices



Getting Calm | The Power of a Stress Free Life

11 POSES FOR BEGINNERS



Cobra



Seated Twist



Downward Dog



Mountain



Bridge



Child's Pose



Triangle



Tree



Warrior



Pigeon



Crow

LifeStyle Characteristics

Nature

- Activates the relaxation response
- Lowers cortisol
- Improves mood
- Restores mental energy
- Enhances cognitive function
- Supports physical

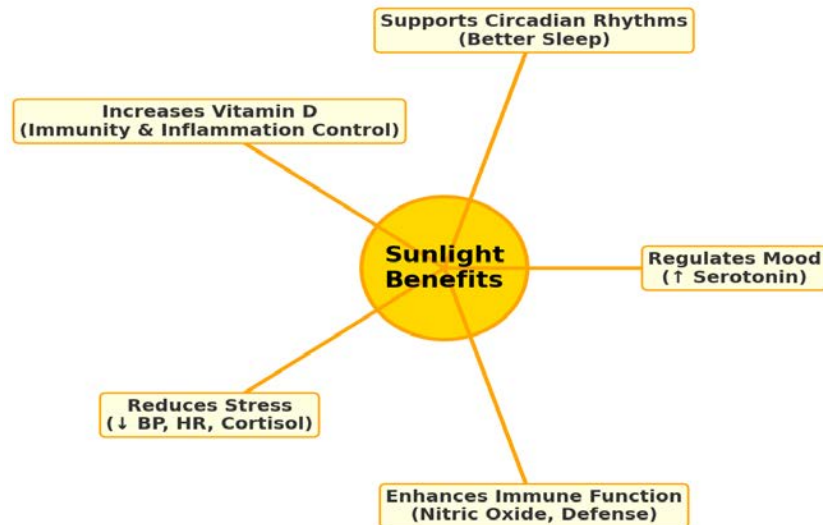
LifeStyle Characteristics

Sunshine

- Regulates mood
- Supports circadian rhythms
- Increases vitamin D
- Reduces physiological stress
- Enhances immune function

LifeStyle Characteristics

The Stress-Reducing Power of Sunlight



LifeStyle Characteristics

Consider a pet

Lowers stress

Lowers depression and anxiety

Decreased in mortality and
cardiovascular death

Fosters social interaction

Increased empathy and emotion
regulation

Mindfulness/Meditation



Meditation



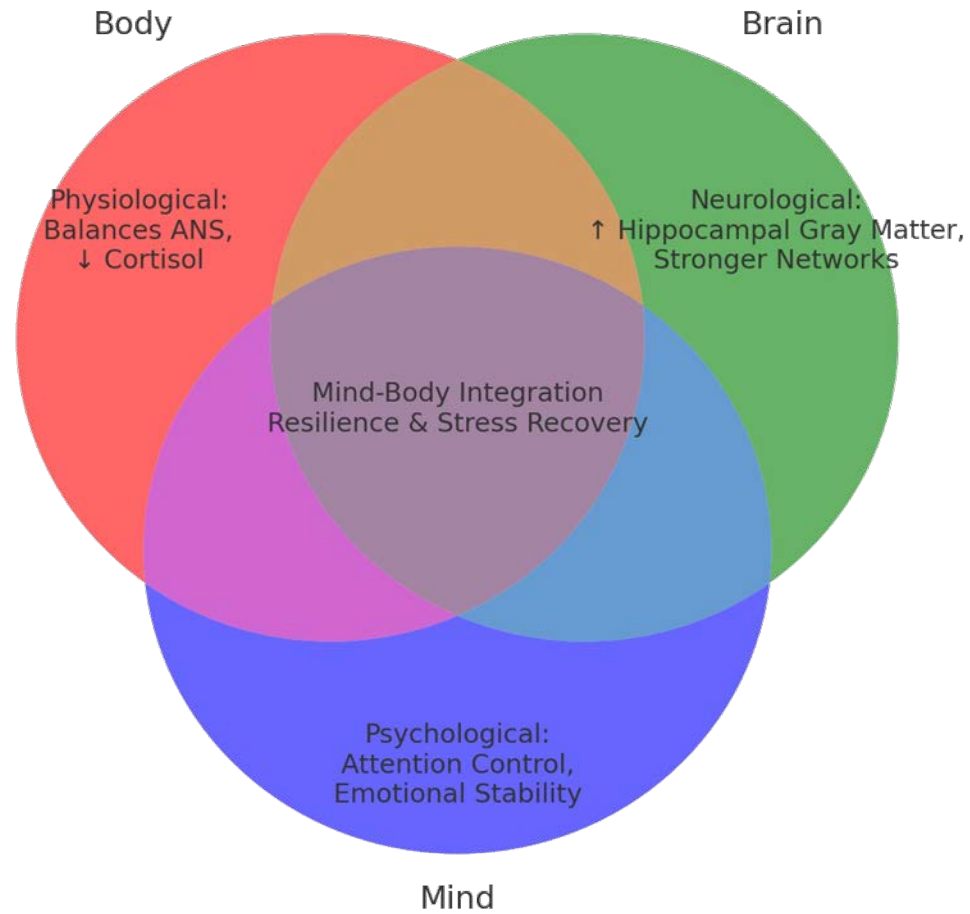
Visualization



Mindfulness/Meditation

- Downregulates the stress response
- Enhances present-moment
- Reduces cortisol and inflammation
- Promotes resilience
- Emotion Regulations

How Meditation Works: Body - Brain - Mind



Tapping

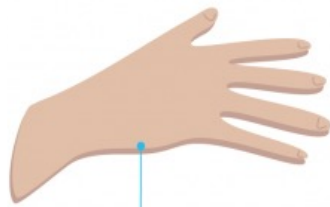
Stress and anxiety relief.

- Emotional balance and mood improvement.
- Possible reduction in cortisol levels.
- Easy to learn, safe, low-cost an non-pharmacological

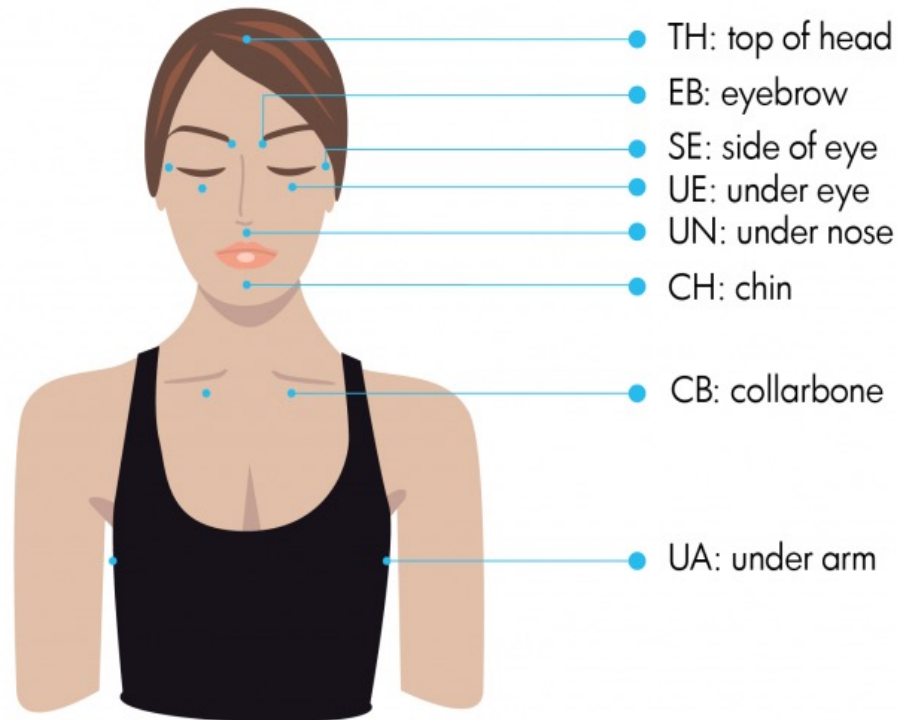
Scientific Criticism

- Lack of scientific basis for meridians or energy fields.
- Research often has methodological flaws.
- Benefits may be due to psychological factors like exposure or placebo.

EFT Tapping Points



● KC: karate chop



● TH: top of head

● EB: eyebrow

● SE: side of eye

● UE: under eye

● UN: under nose

● CH: chin

● CB: collarbone

● UA: under arm

DIGITAL DETOX

Social media and anxiety

- Correlation between social media usage and likelihood of an anxiety disorder
- Changes in our eyes
- Changes in our attention span
- Stress related to social media FOMO

➡ Turn off notifications.

➡ No phones during meals.

➡ Turn screen to black and white.

➡ Designate tech free hours.

➡ No phones in the bedroom.

➡ Forest App.

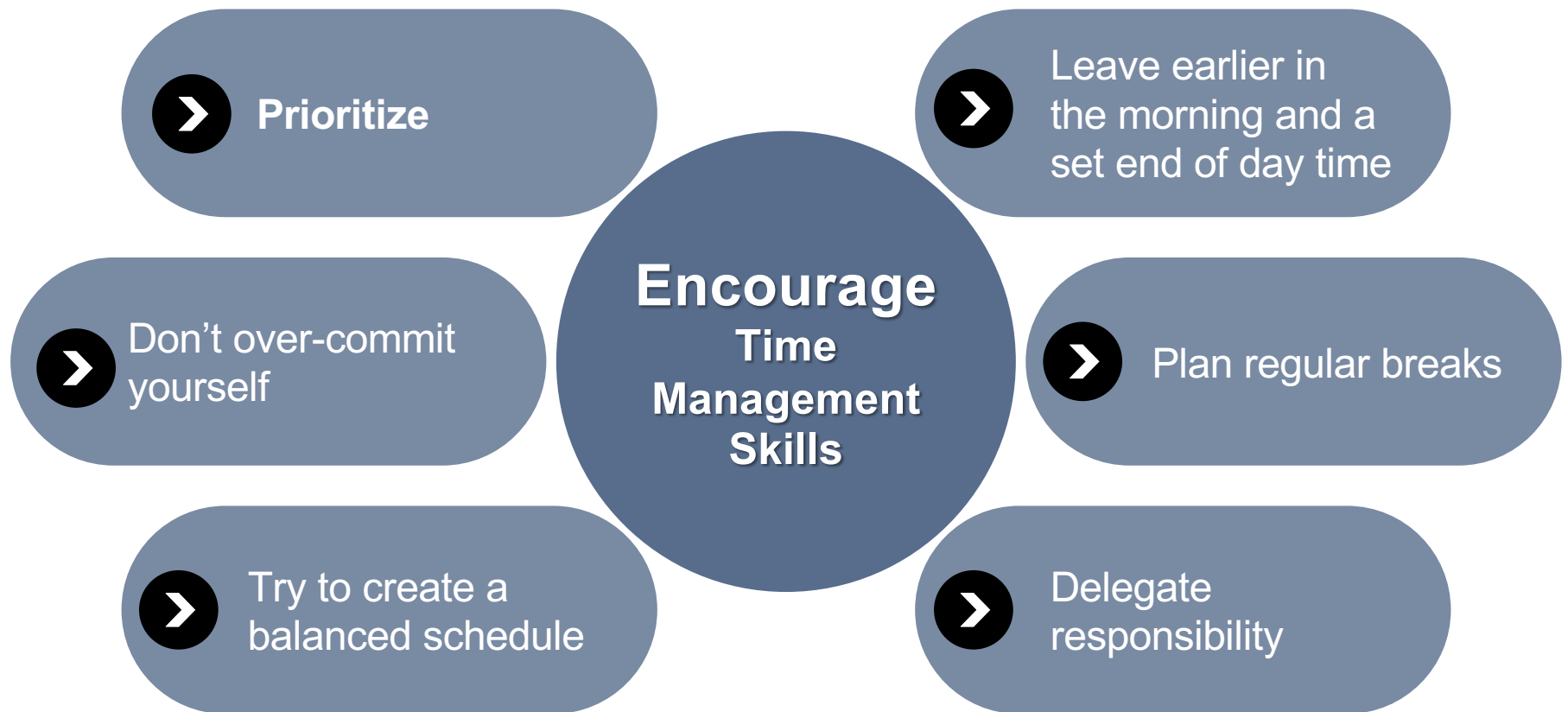
There is no Wi-Fi in the woods,
but I promise you will find
a better connection there.



Less Stress at Work

Work schedule that
supports what should be
non negotiables

- Self care
- Relationships
- Professional results



Yes to Life



Foster a respect for happiness
in life



This is a strong predictor of
success and life span

How Positive Attitude Manages Stress

- Reframes challenges as opportunities, lowering perceived stress
- Buffers the physiological stress response (lower cortisol, better heart rate variability)
- Promotes adaptive coping strategies such as problem-solving and proactive planning
- Strengthens social support networks, which are critical buffers against stress

Positive Attitude and Longer Lifespan

- Linked to reduced mortality risk and healthier aging
- Associated with 11–15% longer lifespan in large cohort studies
- May protect against heart disease, inflammation, and oxidative stress
- Encourages healthier lifestyle behaviors (exercise, diet, sleep)

Gratitude journal



Three things you did well today



Three things you are thankful
for today



Inspirational quotes/biographies
etc.



It is not joy that makes us grateful

It is **gratitude**

that makes us joyful.



Make a Commitment to Yourself

- Write a personal statement to yourself about how you will prioritize your activities in life
- Review this commitment weekly initially
- Get an accountability partner
- Keep a chart if necessary
- Reward yourself

Thank you!

Dr. Robin Arthur

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