

# **Mental Health & Well-Being** **During Covid...**

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# Concerns...

1. I am worried about my teen, they are feeling isolated and more and more sad. They are not doing school work and I do not know what to do?
2. My 8 year old is having severe temper tantrums and I have tried relaxation, talking to them but it happens everyday and we are struggling.
3. I am tired and feel drained—I cannot hear another person tell me to breathe and do meditation—it does not work for me? What other tangible things can I do?

# What is Mental Health?

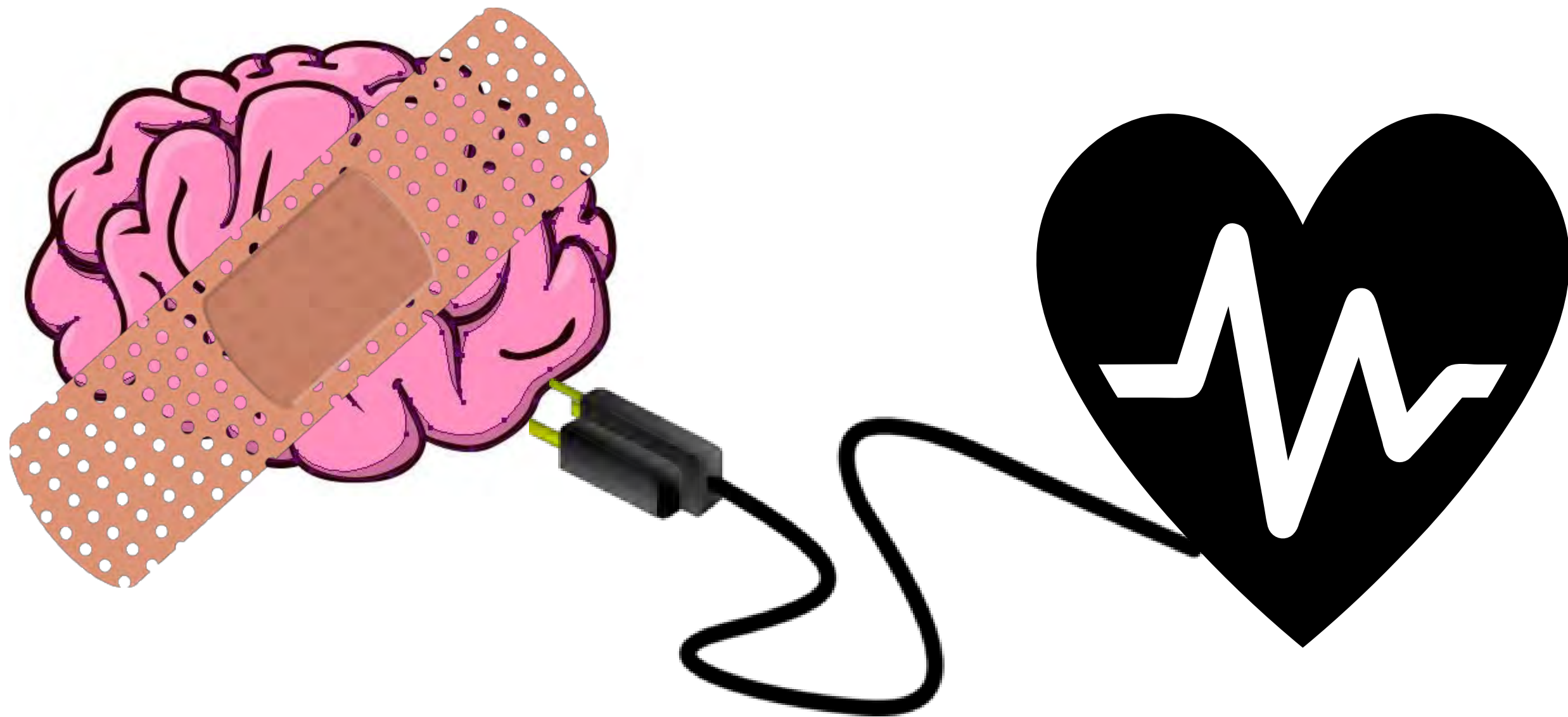
“Mental health is not just the absence of mental disorder. It is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the *normal* stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”

# Stigma of Mental Health....

# Mental health is...

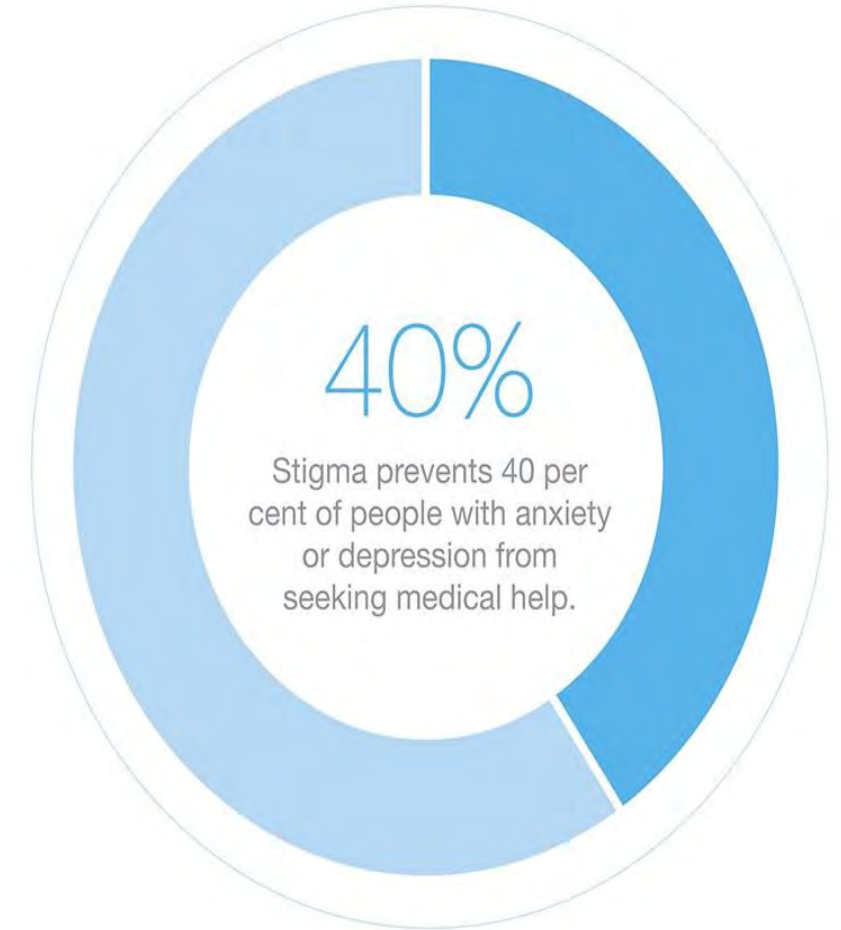
- **IMPORTANT**
- **LINKED TO ALL 8 DEMENTIONS**
- **ON A CONTINUUM**
- **WORTH MAKING TIME FOR**
- **PART OF BEING HUMAN**
- **SOMETHING WE NEED TO LOOK AFTER**
- **POSITIVE & NEGATIVE**
- **CHANGEABLE**
- **COMPLEX**
- **REAL**

# Mental Health & Physical Connection



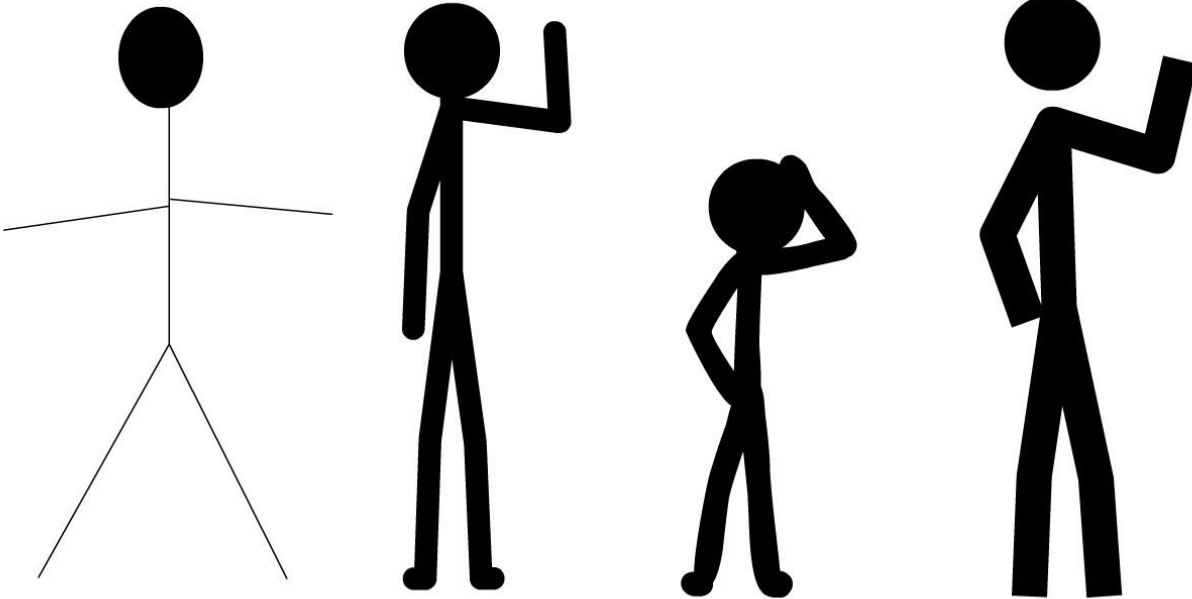
# Mental Health is not...

- **A SIGN OF WEAKNESS**
- **SHAMEFUL**
- **SOMETHING YOU DECIDE TO HAVE**
- **SOMETHING YOU THINK ABOUT ONLY WHEN YOU FEEL BROKEN**
- **FEELING GOOD ALL THE TIME**
- **SOMETHING YOU CAN SNAP OUT OF**
- **SIMPLE**
- **FAKE**



# What Impacts **HOW We** See Mental Health...

BELIEFS, VALUES & NORMS  
*(what is 'normal' for our lived experiences)*



- Whether you **DO or DO NOT** seek Support
- What **type of** Support you seek
- What Support you **have around you**



# 4 ways Culture Can Impact Mental Health

## Cultural Stigma

- Every culture has a different way of looking at mental health.
- Can be considered a weakness and something to hide.
- Harder for those struggling to talk openly and ask for help.

## Understanding Symptoms

- Culture can influence how people describe, recognize, minimize and feel about their symptoms.

## Community Support

- Because of existing stigma, many are sometimes left to find mental health treatment and support alone.

## Resources

- Lack of or inaccessible culturally responsive and relevant resources and supports.

## 2018 Canada-Wide Health Behaviour Students grades 6-10

- Mental health
- Relationship/connections
- Substance use/abuse
- Social inequities in health

### Grade 9/10 Females:

- Feeling hopeless; sad; nervous; lower confidence; less friendships; less parental understanding

### Overall:

- (+) family interactions
- (-) risk taking (vaping/cyberbullying increasing)
- (+) social media (with grade/age)

## 2021 TDSB Winter consultations with Parents, Students, and TDSB Staff Grades 6-12

- 36,000 students
- 70% coping well
- VS-experiencing more social inequities
- **Females: 40% feeling lonely; 50% nervous & 60% bored/stressed**
- Overall 20% reduction in feeling happy and hopeful
- 84% want to be back in BM school
- 39% do not know how to access mental health supports

“...43,000 postsecondary students attending 41 institutions across Canada.”

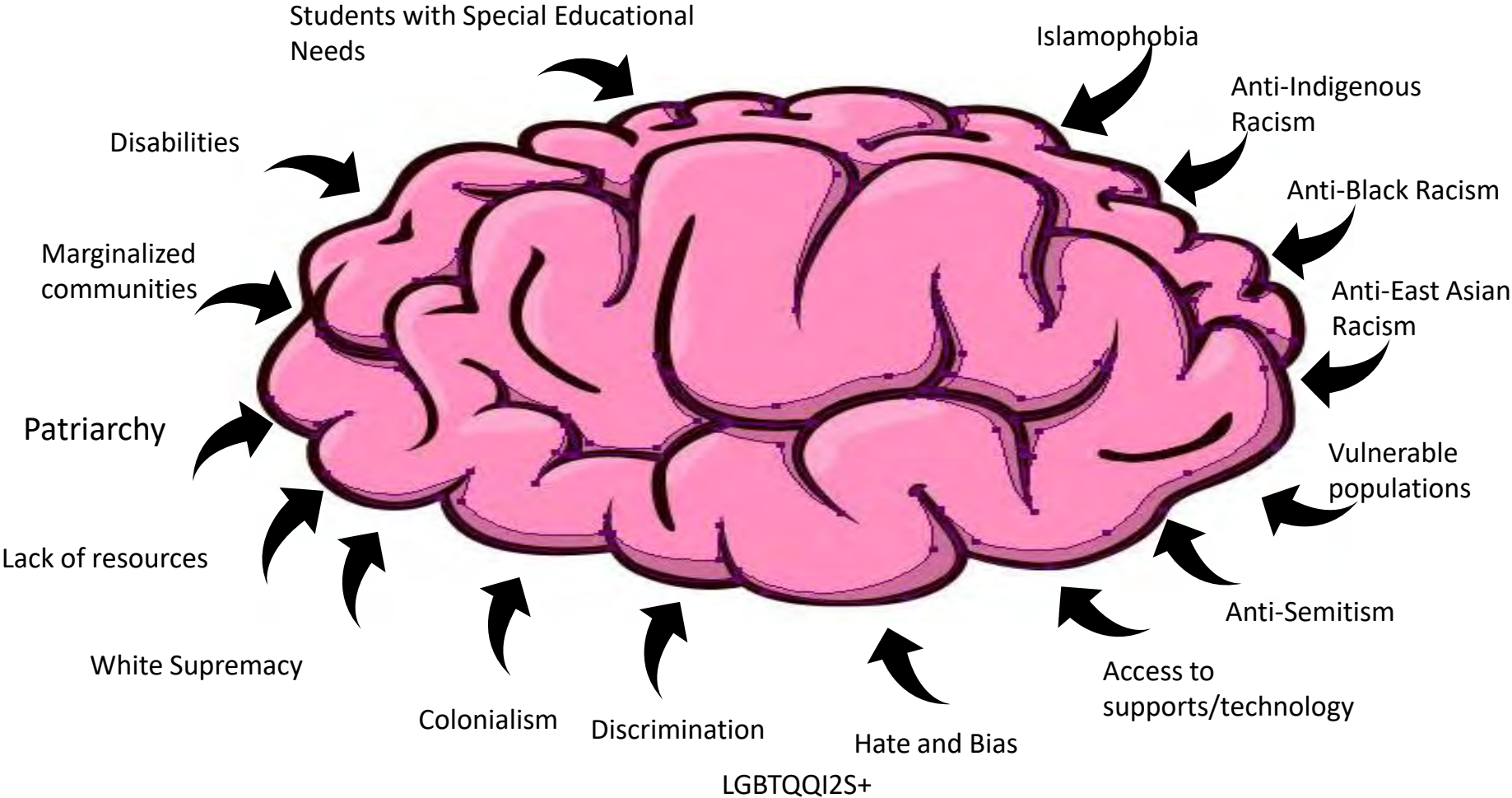
- Many students reported experiencing average (31.4%) to above average stress (46.2%),
  - with nearly 15% reporting tremendous stress levels. Overall, students reported moderate levels of distress.
- Anxiety (18.4%)
- Depression (14.7%)

“...the most prevalent diagnosed mental illnesses among the Canadian post-secondary student population”.

# Complex Layers-Oppressions

- **Inequities impact our mental health and well-being in complex, layered, in direct and non-direct ways.**

Social inequities impact on stress...



Statement: Inequities Amplified by COVID-19 19 Crisis. Retrieved from <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/statement-inequality-amplified-covid-19-crisis>

# Social Inequities

Stress related to social inequities have a **negative** impact on mental health and well being

## Ontario Human Rights Commission (2004):

“...some of the specific mental health concerns for members of racialized groups and the Aboriginal community include:

- Higher levels of anxiety, stress and stress-related illness like high blood pressure, heart disease and nervous system problems
- Higher risk of depression and suicide
- Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, fear, mistrust, despair, alienation and loss of control
- Damaged self-esteem, higher risk of addiction and violence”

# Social Issues Impact On Mental Health

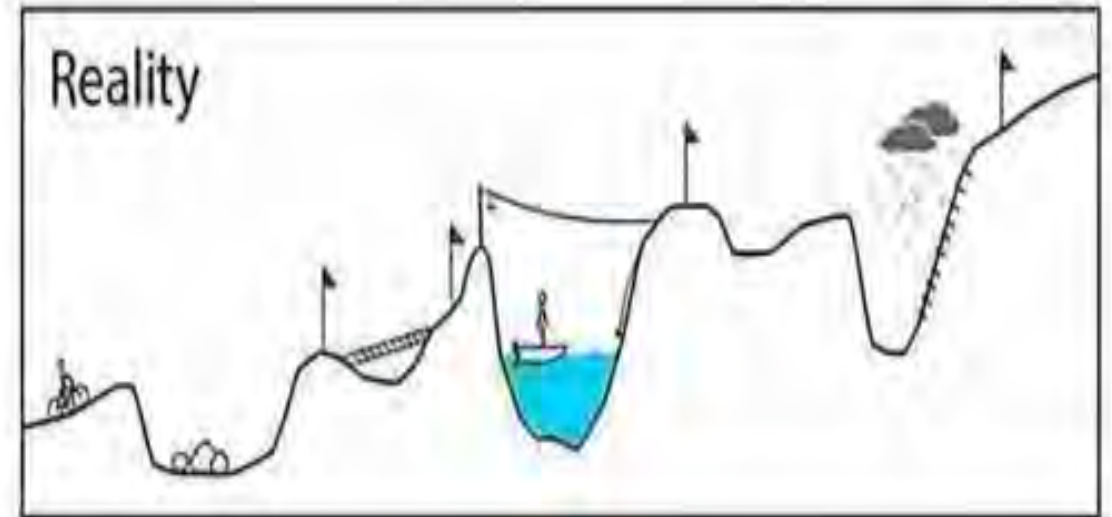
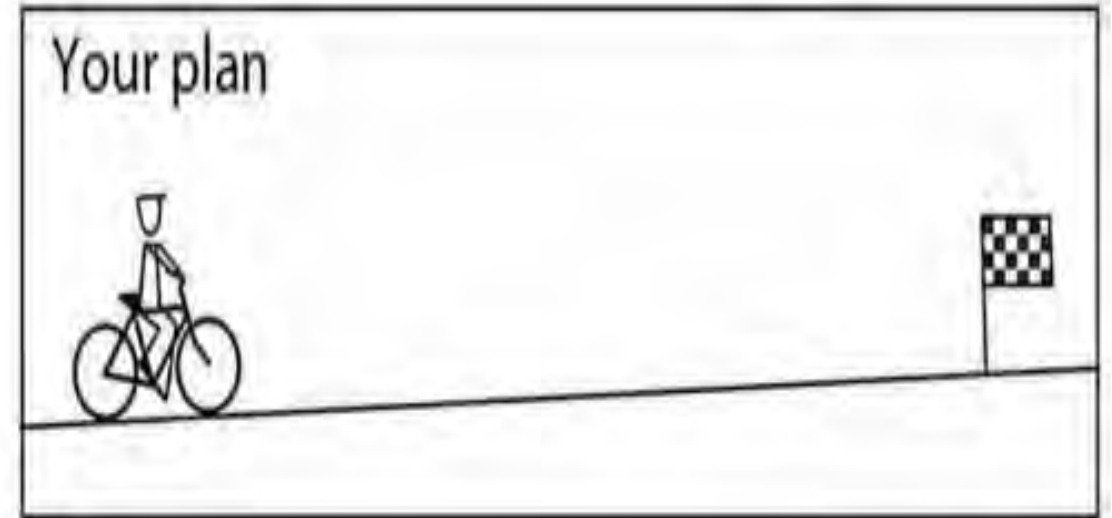
- ☐ Discrimination, hate and violence
- ☐ Social Exclusion
- ☐ Lack of access to economic resources

**Areas of Well  
Being that  
intersect &  
layer...**





**Well-Being** is  
how we respond  
to lives' up and  
downs; and  
includes...





**STRESS**

### Behavioural Wellness

- **Participates** enthusiastically in physical or learning activities
- Demonstrates age appropriate **self regulation**
- Can **resolve** conflicts and compromise

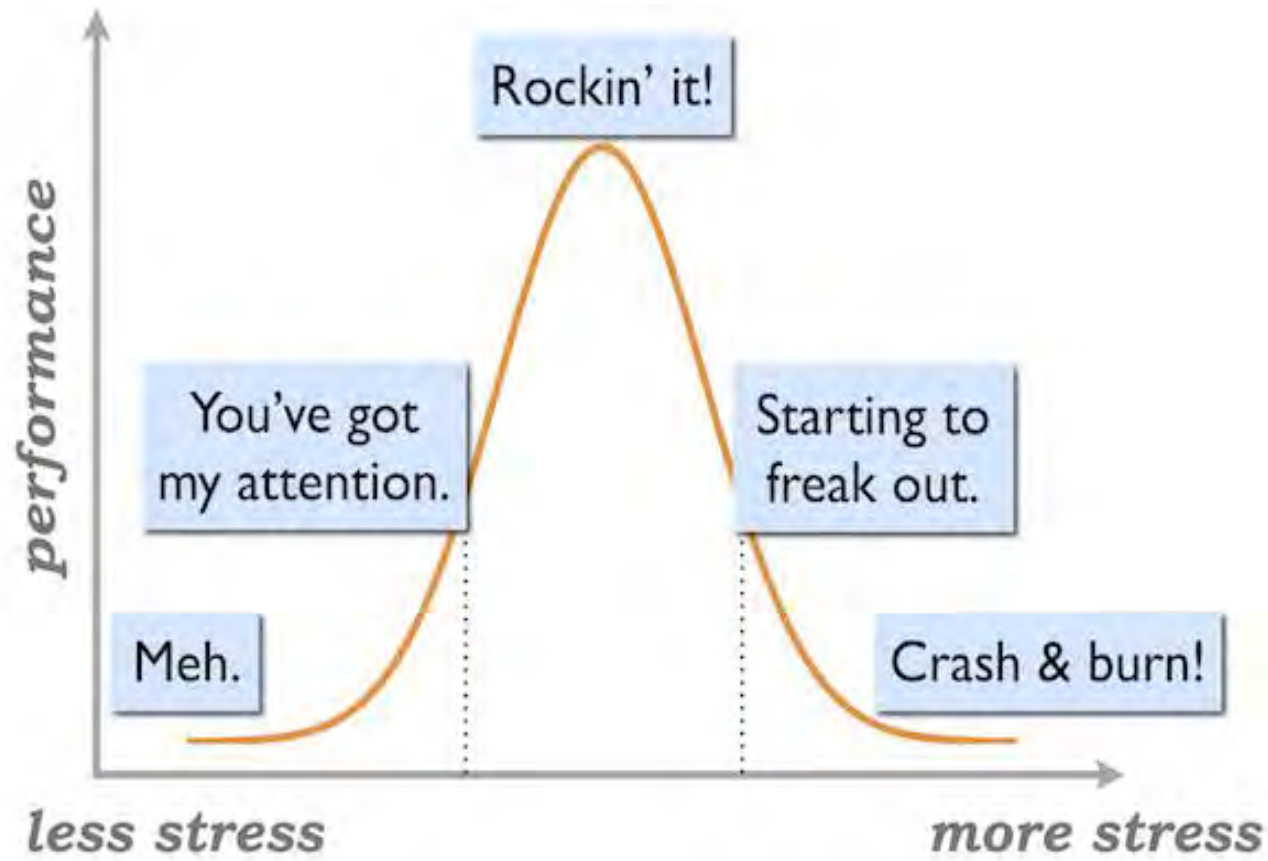
### Cognitive Wellness

- **Bounces back** from mistakes
- Shows **empathy** and enjoys interactions
- Willing to try **new experiences**
- **Can calm down** and regulate emotional

### Socio-Emotional Wellness

- **Explores** the learning environment with curiosity
- Engages in **creative** play or group work
- **Perseveres** with challenging tasks
- Can identify a problem and **resolution**

# Stress



Some stress is normal and needed to obtain goals, move forward for positive mental health.

# Impact of Stress **“Look For’s”** in Children

- ✓ Frequent changing mood/emotions
- ✓ Easily hurt feelings, crying, anger
- ✓ Ongoing temper tantrums, throwing things, hitting people
- ✓ Ongoing sadness and lack of interest in things they normally enjoy
- ✓ Withdrawals from friends and family
- ✓ Increased need for contact and reassurance



- ✓ Little motivation for schoolwork/activities
- ✓ Difficultly concentrating
- ✓ Low frustration/tolerance and irritable
- ✓ Increased physical symptoms (headache, stomach ache)
- ✓ Decreased energy, problems with sleep or appetite changes
- ✓ Frequent talking about doom, pessimism; not able to see positive

# Impact of Stress “Look For’s” in Teens

- ✓ Outburst anger or distress
- ✓ Frequent irritability
- ✓ Excessive worries and fears about the safety of family, friends and self
- ✓ Increased defiance and opposition
- ✓ School refusal
- ✓ Substance use/abuse

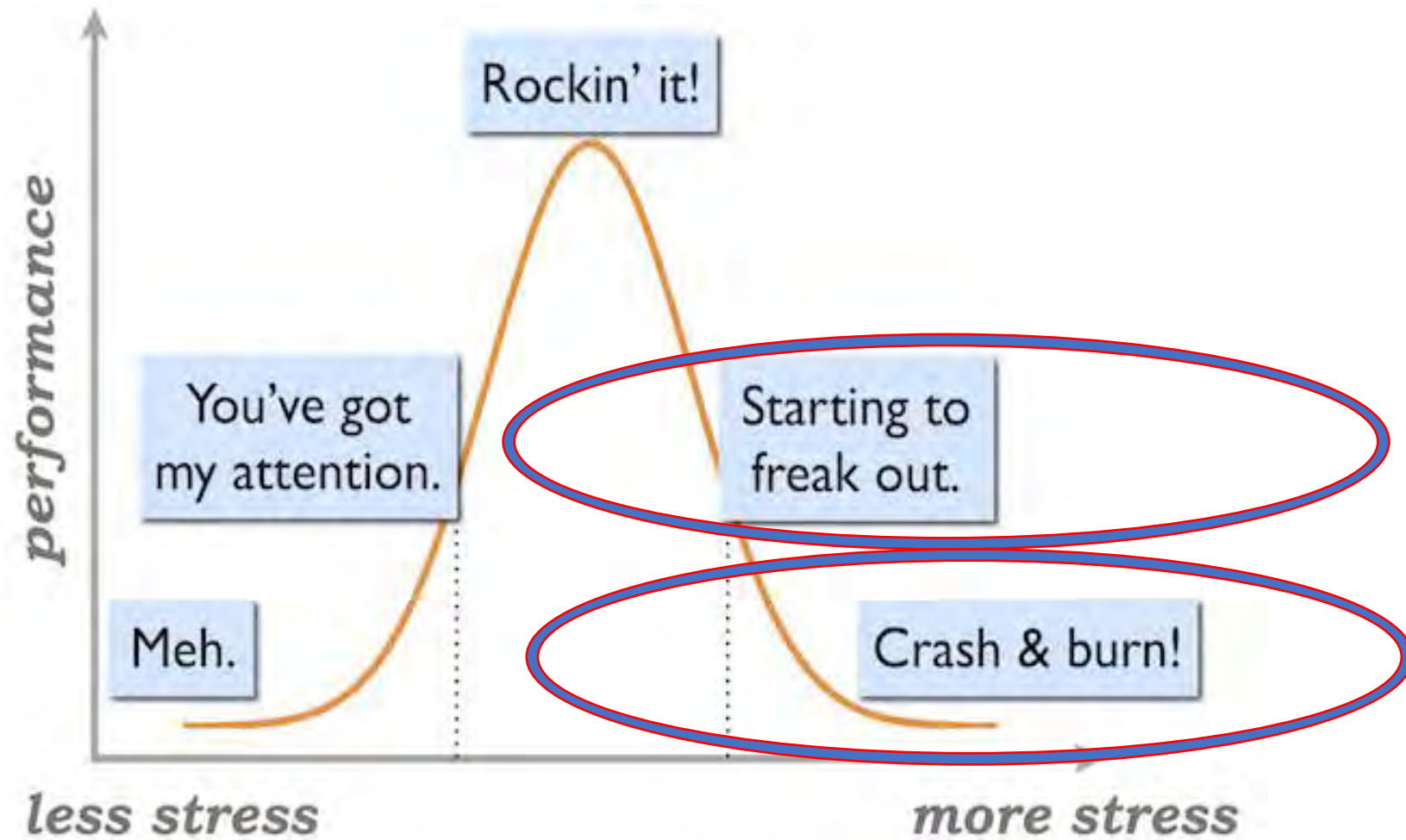


- ✓ Withdrawal from family/friends
- ✓ Ongoing negative remarks about self
- ✓ Interest in activities from younger years
- ✓ Declined grades, low motivation and sleeping
- ✓ Changes in eating, sleeping;
- ✓ Frequent talking about death, dying; giving possessions away; self harm



# Chronic Stress

Chronic levels  
of stress  
impact our  
brain's  
capacity to  
cope



1) Increases part of the brain's **survival** mode-fight/flight

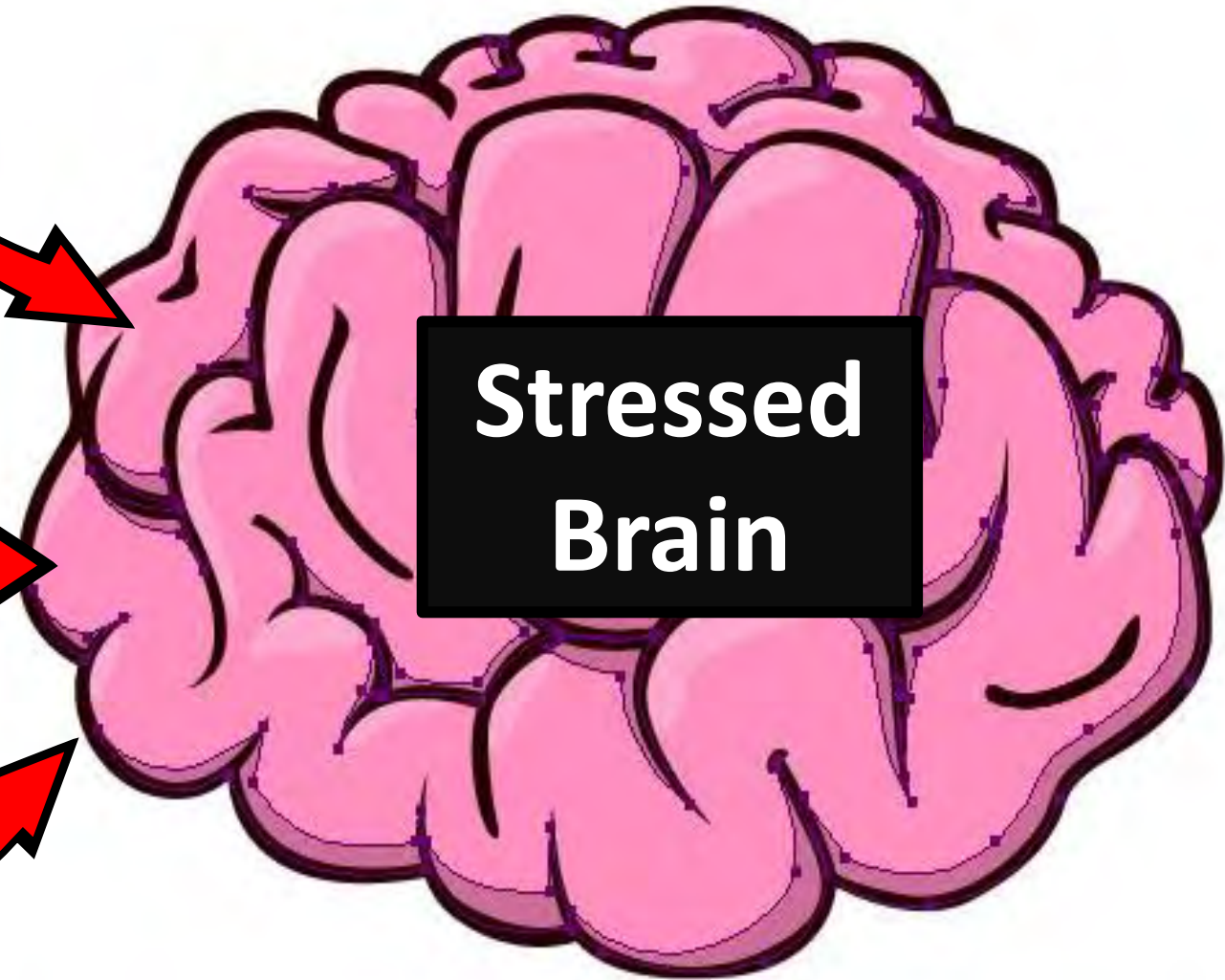
- **Feeling low/sad; unmotivated**

2) Stops producing new brain cells

- inhibits adaption to new circumstances—**feeling overwhelming**

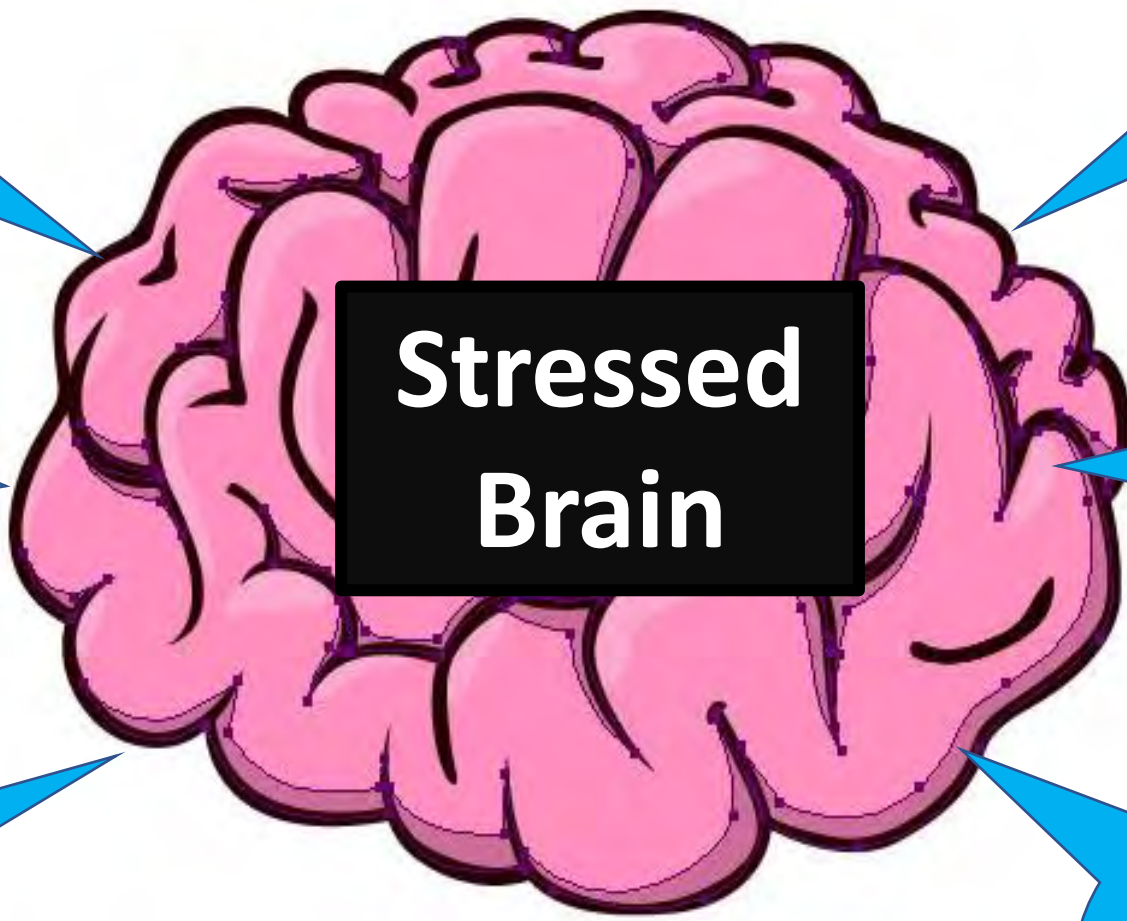
3) Shrinks parts of the brain

- **Reduces reasoning & decision-making**



# IMPACTS....

## Stressed Brain



### PLANNING

ORGANIZING  
GETTING READY  
FOR SCHOOL

### EMOTIONS

FRUSTRATIONS  
STRESS

SELF-  
REGULATION  
BEHAVIOURS/  
ACTIONS

### FLEXIBILITY

OPEN  
MINDED

### MEMORY

### FOCUS

ALERT  
CONCENTRATION



# RESULTS...

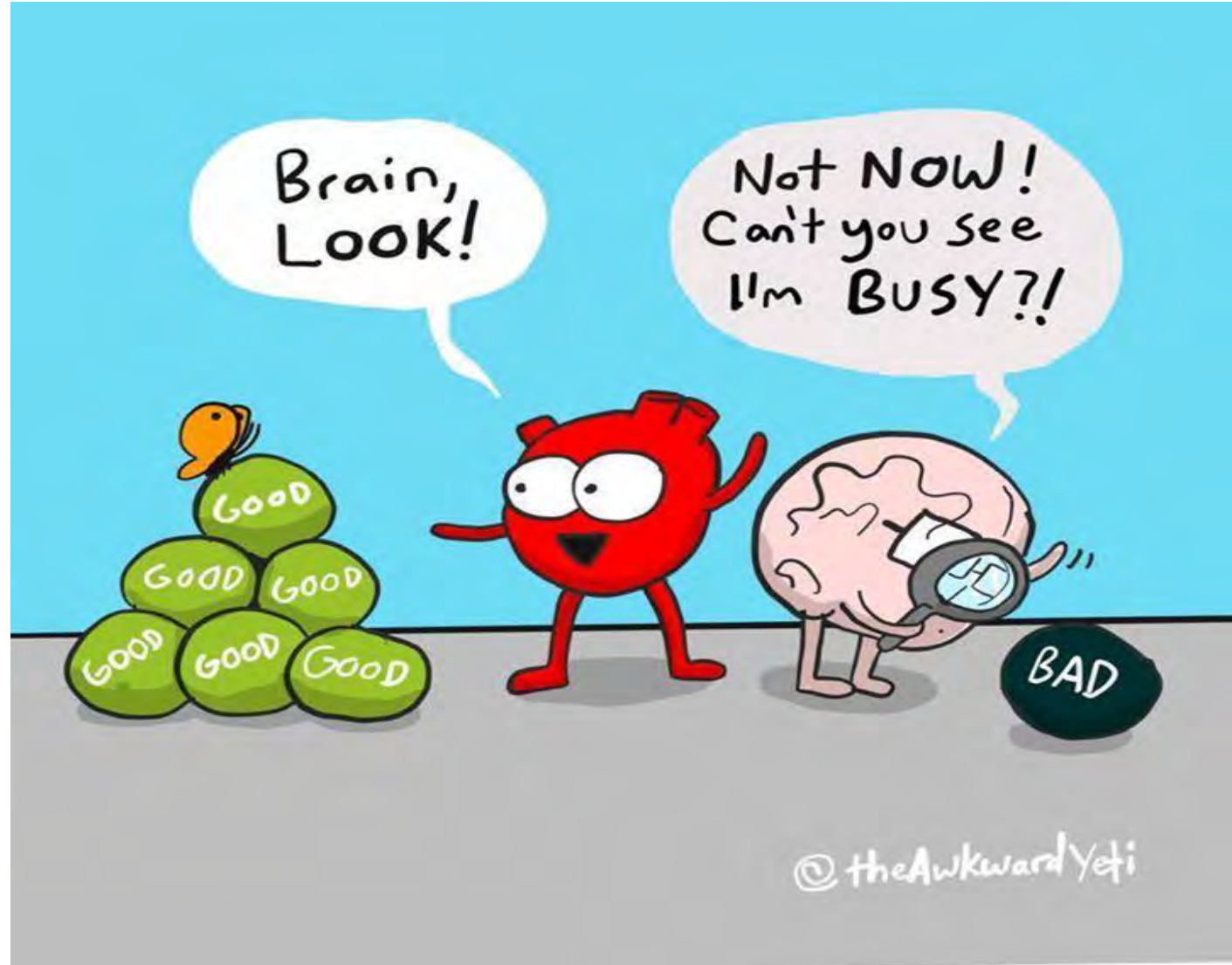
- Demands on our well being increase
- Poor decision making
- Can bankrupt your coping mechanisms/resilience
- Impact on your mind, body, emotions and actions...

# AND



# WE BECOME...

- REACTIVE
- IMPULSIVE
- EASILY EXHAUSTIVE
- COUNTER PRODUCTIVE
- ON GUARD
- UNABLE TO SEE THE 'GOOD'



# Serious outcomes...

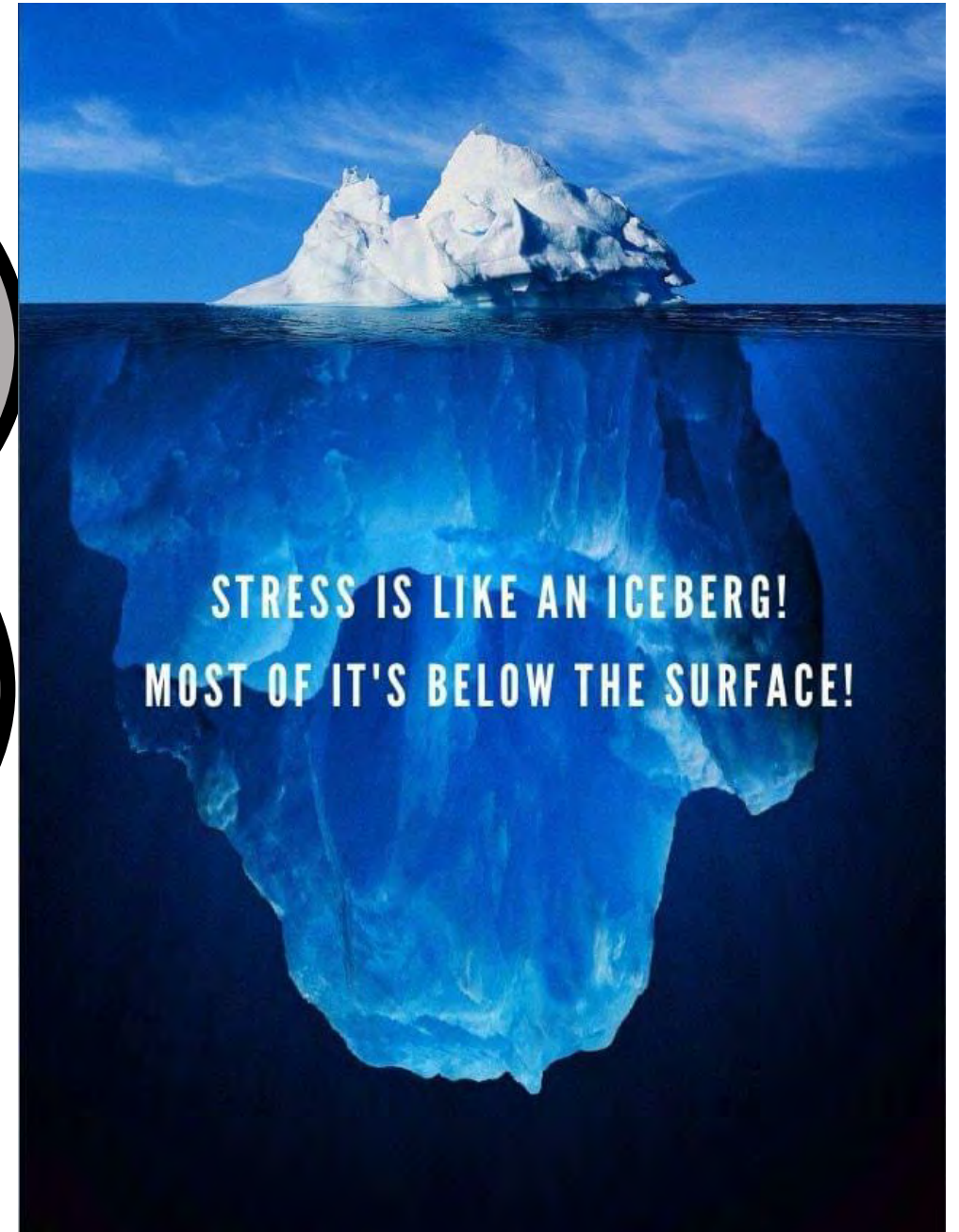
Restlessness  
Sleep

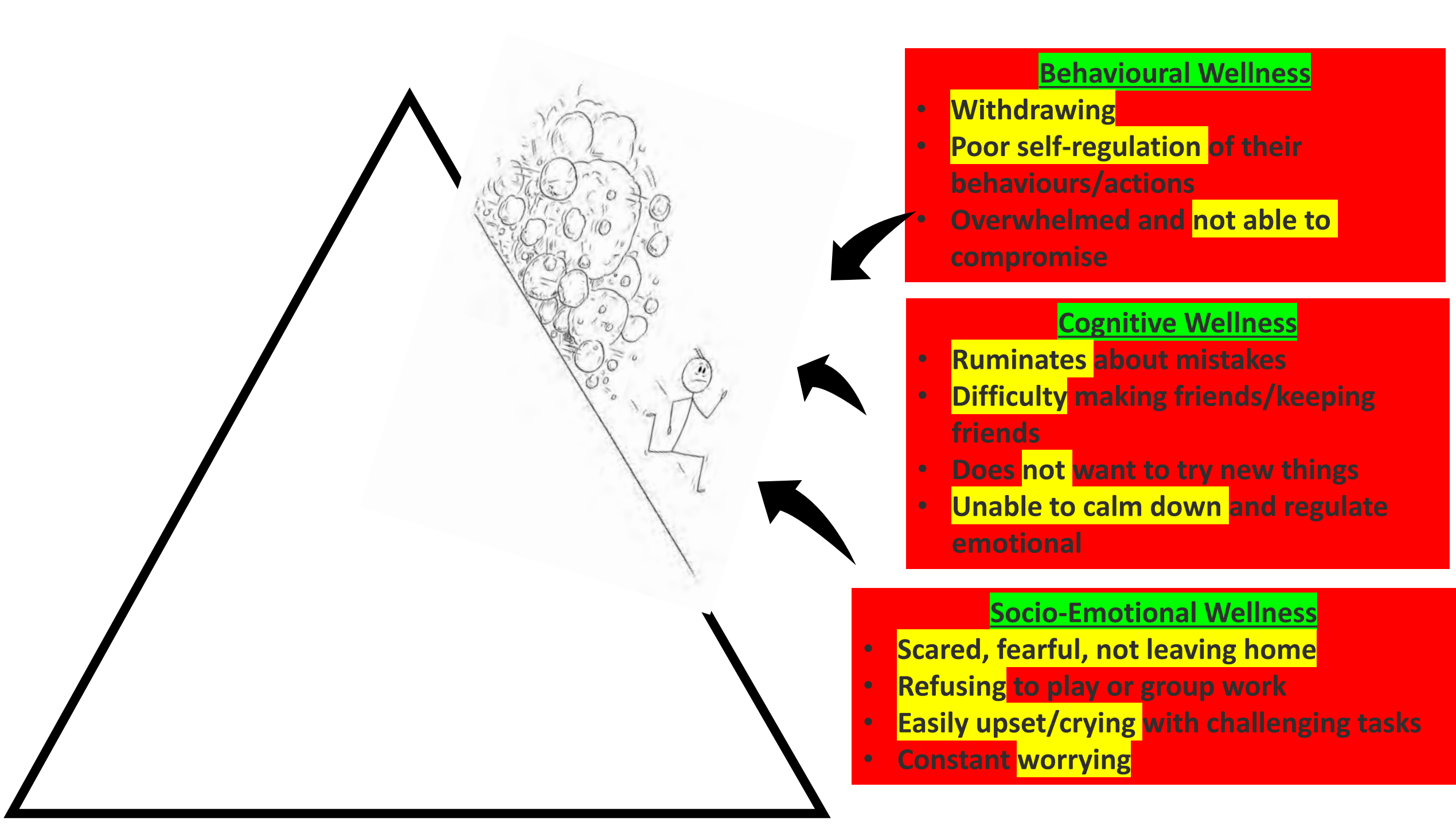
Forgetting  
things

Irritability &  
moody

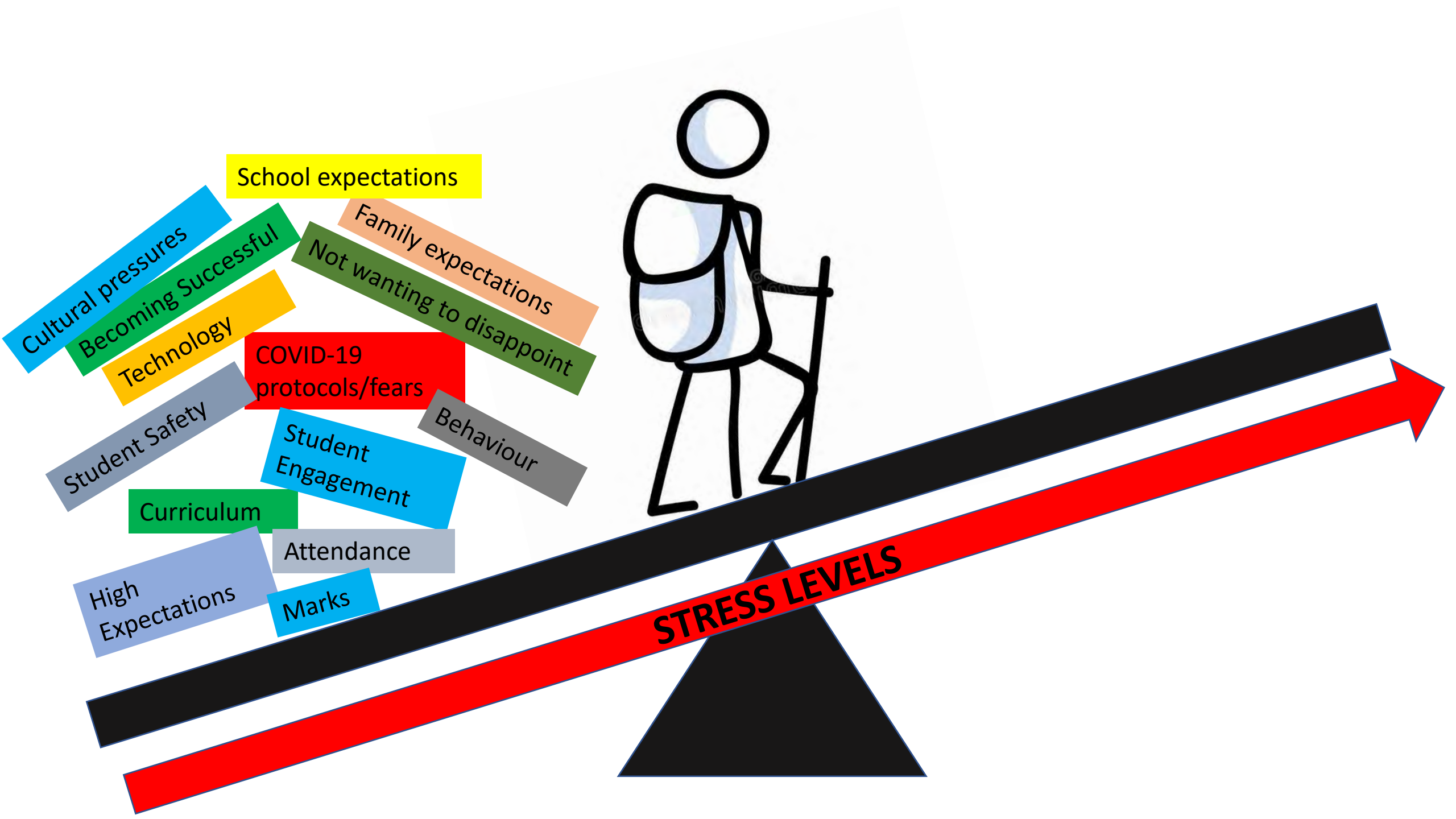
Overwhelmed  
& isolated

Low mood  
Sadness









# Mental Health and Well-Being Continuum



# Priority!!!!!!!!!! (based in CBT)

- ☐ Need to find our calm
- ☐ Acknowledge what you can/cannot control
- ☐ Continue to establish short/long term goals
- ☐ Realistic expectations (High vs. Low vs. NEW)

# Grounded in CBT

- Identify troubling thoughts, feeling which elicit certain actions and behaviours
- Become aware of your thoughts—what they produce? Why you have those thoughts? What is around you when you have those thoughts? What did you do before/after those thoughts? What evidence do you have of those thoughts? Are there alternative reasons for those thoughts? What can you control?
- Identify which thoughts are negative and/or no evidence for them
- Reframe, rechallenge and redirect challenging thoughts and feelings.



**PLEASE....**

**BE COMPASSIONATE  
&  
PATIENT WITH  
YOURSELF**



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You will soon understand that **work** is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four Balls – **Family, Health, Friends and Spirit** – are made of glass. If you drop one of these; they will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged or even shattered. They will never be the same. You must understand that and strive for it.”



## **SPIRITUAL**

- MEDITATION
- SPIRITUALITY/FAITH
- MINDFULNESS
- PAUSING
- BREAKING
- BREATHING
- CALMING STRATEGIES

## **EMOTIONAL**

- ACKNOWLEDGE FEELINGS
- COMPASSION
- GIVING BACK/DOING FOR OTHERS
- DAILY 'GIFTS'
- MAINTAIN SOME ROUTINES
- READING/MUSIC/DANCING
- GRATITUDE

## **PHYSICAL**

- SLEEP
- EXERCISE
- GROUNDING/DEEP BREATHING
- WALKS/NATURE
- YOGA/STRETCHING
- NUTRITION

## **PERSONAL**

- LAUGH!LAUGH!LAUGH!
- ACCEPT LIFE IS DIFFERNT RIGHT NOW
- NEW EXPECTATION
- RECOGNIZE THE FLOW OF GRIEF/LOSS
- FOCUS ON RELATIONSHIP
- BUILD YOUR RESILIENCE/COPING BANK
- DO NEW/OLD THINGS THAT FILL YOUR SOUL

## **PROFESSIONAL**

- ENGAING WITH PEERS
- CONNECTING WITH PEERS
- MAKING PEER SUPPORT GROUPS
- RECALL WHY YOU LIKE YOUR WORK
- PD; LEARN NEW THINGS

## **SOCIAL**

- MAINTAIN CONNECTIONS WITH FRIENDS/FAMILY
- MAINTAIN FRIEND VIRTUAL MEETINGS
- VOLUNTEERISM
- CREATIVE FAMILY ACTIVITIES

# Problems vs. Worries





## Problems

- Plan,
  - Prepare
  - Try
- 
- Failure produces growth; strengthens resilience and coping skills

## Worry

- Misguided attempt to reduce anxiety
- Creates more anxiety/stress (stuck in a loop)
- Maintains fears and anxieties that keep taking laps in your head

# Problem Solving Steps



1. What is my problem?



2. Think, think, think  
of some solutions



3. What would happen if...?  
Would it be safe? Would it be fair?  
How would everyone feel?



4. Give it a try!

# Strengthening Coping for Children/Youth with Worry

- **Awareness of Feelings**
- **Thought Re-Direction/Stopping**
- **Thought Re-Framing**
- **Thought Re-Challenging**
- **Pausing**

# First Step: Feelings Awareness...

**\*Talk to them about feelings and emotions**

- *What does happy feel like?*
- *What does it do to your body?*
- *How do you know you are feeling happy?*

**\*Allows them to be aware of their feelings**

**\*Make connection to possibly why they are feeling that way...**



# What We CANNOT Control

## What We CAN Control

What will  
happen to  
our World?

People are  
losing jobs

Sad news  
on TV

What will  
happen in  
the future?

When will  
this end?

Other  
people's  
behaviours

How others  
feel about  
you?

I cannot see  
my family

People are  
suffering/sad

Cannot go  
outside

Other  
people's  
health

Washing my hands/  
wearing a mask

Positive attitude, thoughts and  
beliefs

Gratitude for what I have  
Doing enjoyable things; learning  
new things

Being hopeful

Having a healthy routine

Maintaining social connections

Doing my school work

Do my part staying indoors

Being kind/compassion to others

# P.A.C.E.

**P**

**A**

**C**

**E**

## Prepare:

- About the future;
- Potential issues that may arise;
- Strategies and pathways on how to deal with them.

## Attention:

- Make time just for them; Listen;
- Do an activity;
- Ask them for help and include their ideas, thoughts, suggestions.

## Cushion:

- Parents cannot do it all—who else can be a support?

## Echo:

- Model calm behaviours;
- Create safety for them;
- Availability and mental health check-ins.

# Teens & Worrying

**Help your teen to determine what's within his control and what isn't.**

- This can help take some of **the pressure off** and make room for necessary free time

**Suggest ways to get the basics back in place.**

**Brainstorm stress-relieving distractions.**

**Help your teen find time for relaxation, especially during stressful moments.**

- It might take a **little trial and error** to find something that sticks, but encouraging your teen to find something that quiets the mind.

**Set limits for social media.**

**Teach your teen to practice “calm self-talk.”**

- Help your teen to become **aware** of their stressful thoughts and to practice rationalizing them.
- *Most likely nothing catastrophic.*

**Be a good role model for your teen.**

- Teens are still learning from their parents, and one of the best ways to teach stress management techniques is by **setting examples.**

# **Thought RE-DIRECTION**

## **Focus on something unrelated to the worry**

- replay a happy memory
- focus on something you're looking forward to
- replay a favorite movie scene in your mind
- imagine yourself as a superhero conquering something hard
- picture your favorite calm place



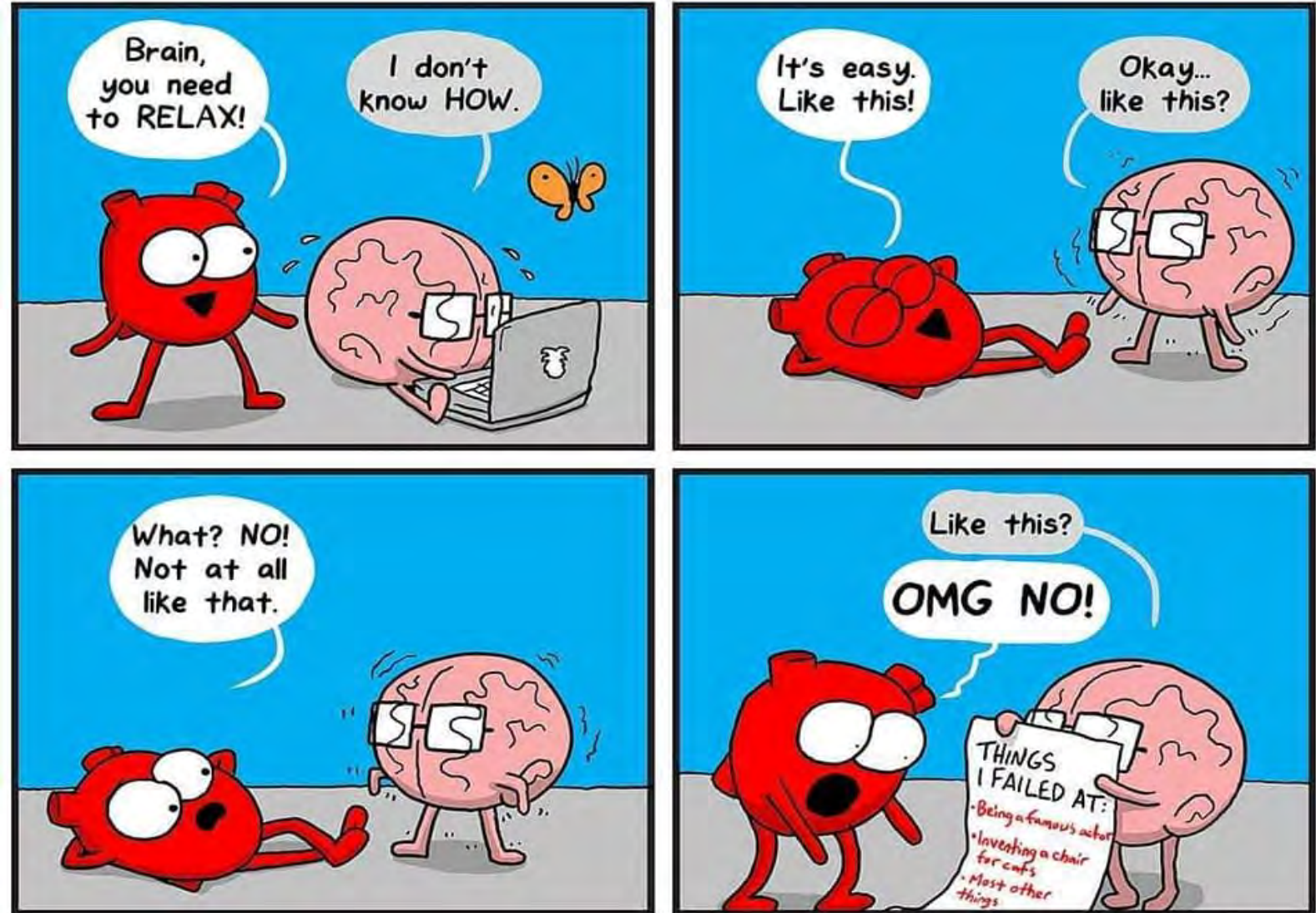
## **Positive action**

- Write in a gratitude journal
- Move your body! Do your favorite exercise
- Get creative! Paint, draw, doodle, or color a mandala
- Write a story or letter

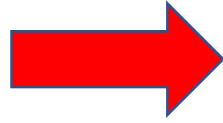
# Thought RE-FRAMING

Power of:

- ☐ “yet...”
- ☐ “at this time...”
- ☐ “right now...”

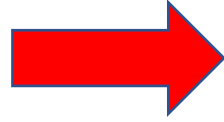


**Instead of** *"I'm not good at this"*



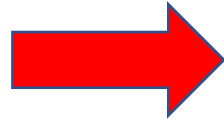
*"I can figure this out."*

**Instead of** *"I give up"*



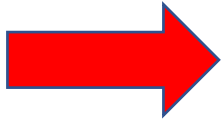
*"I am going to try something different."*

**Instead of** *"This is too hard"*



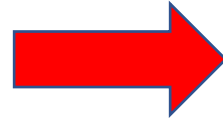
*"This might take some time to solve."*

**Instead of** *"I made a mistake"*



*"Mistakes lead to learning."*

**Instead of** *"I can't do this"*



*"I am going to train my brain to do something new."*



# Thought RE-CHALLENGING

Small steps...pacing  
& keeping  
short/long term  
goals in sight



# PAUSING



## Four square breathing

breathe in



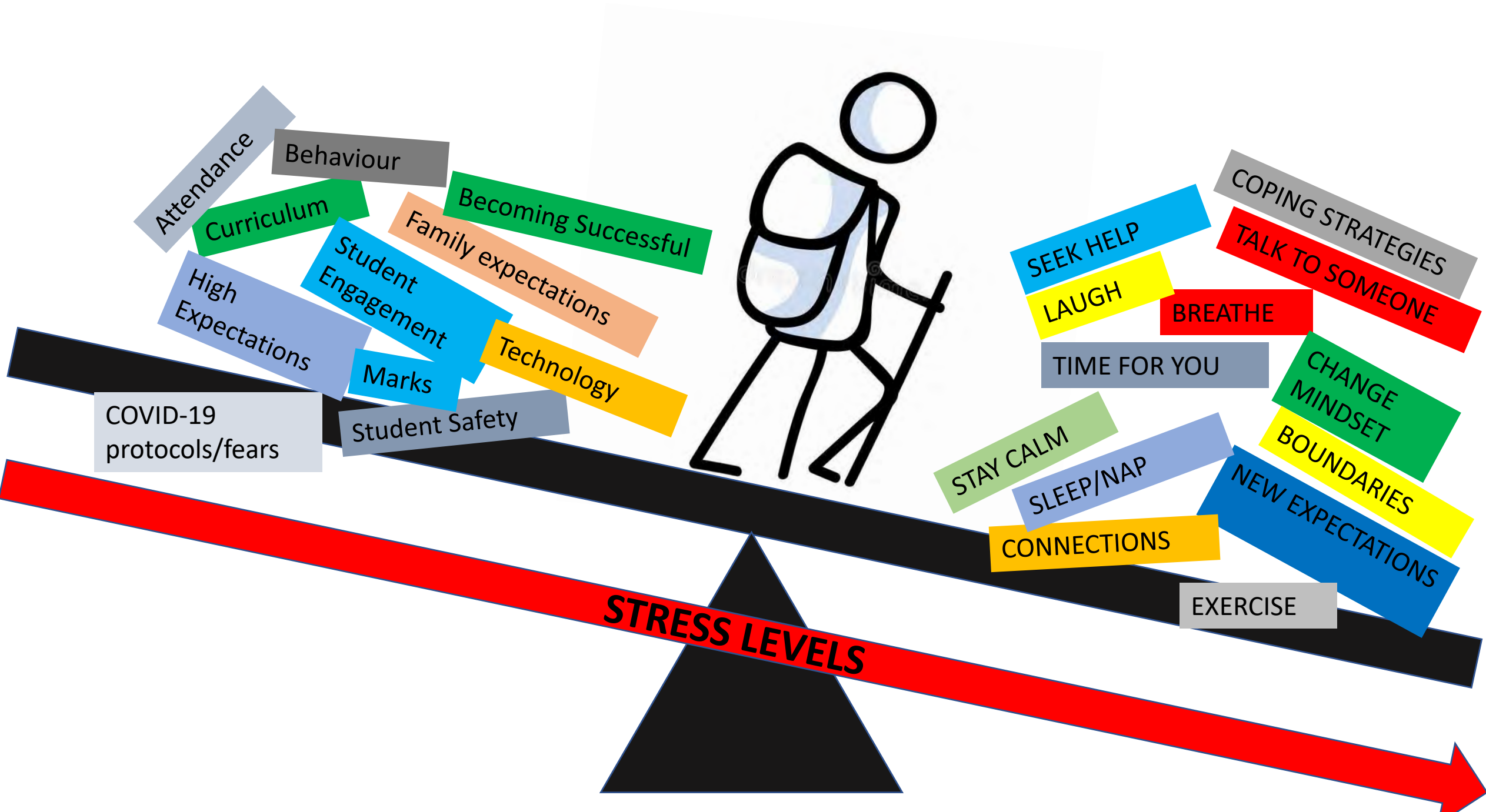
School  
Mental Health  
Ontario

Santé mentale  
en milieu scolaire  
Ontario

### GROUNDING

- What are five things you see around you?
- Four things you can touch or feel with your body (e.g., the chair on my back, feet on the floor, fingers on the table)?
- Three things you hear (e.g., a car, the clock, the humming of the vent)?
- Two things you smell or taste (or like to smell and taste)?
- And ask them to take one mindful breath





# Revisit--Concerns...

1. I am worried about my teen, they are feeling isolated and more and more sad. They are not doing school work and I do not know what to do?
2. My 8 year old is having severe temper tantrums and I have tried relaxation, talking to them but it happens everyday and we are struggling.
3. I am tired and feel drained—I cannot hear another person tell me to breathe and do meditation—it does not work for me? What other tangible things can I do?

**1#: I am tired and feel drained—I cannot hear another person tell me to breathe and do meditation—it does not work for me? What other tangible things can I do?**

- 1) **Pause**—just pause a few times a day—build up
- 2) **Calming** —what calms you? What centers you? What makes you get a distracted break? What can you control? Not control?
- 3) **Look after your well-being**—this can be heavy and can take time and patience
- 4) **Coping a coping** toolbox-how do you “float” —if you do not have a technique—begin to think about one? What thoughts take room in your head? Do they bring you value and peace?
- 5) If not getting better—**seek professional support**

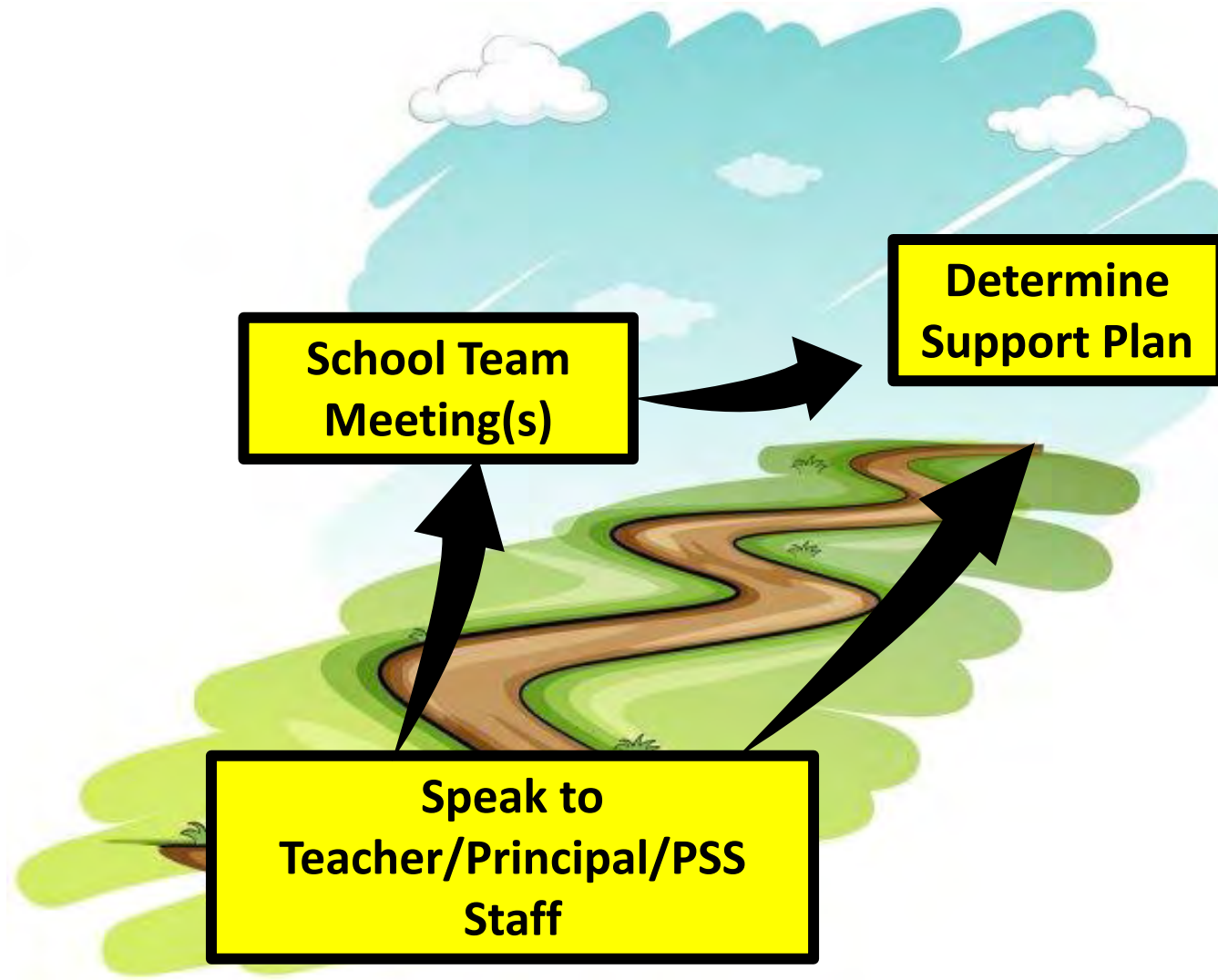
**#2: My 8 year old is having severe temper tantrums and I have tried relaxation, talking to them but it happens everyday and we are struggling.**

- 1) **Pause**—what is happening before/after? What changes in the home?
- 2) **Calming** techniques-is the child able to self-soothe? How are you reacting/partner in the home?
- 3) **Look after your well-being**—this can be heavy and can take time and patience
- 4) **Coping a coping toolbox**—(pompoms; squishy toys;) redirections
- 5) If not getting better—**seek medical/professional attention**

**#3: I am worried about my teen, they are feeling isolated and more and more sad. They are not doing school work and I do not know what to do?**

- 1) **School is secondary**—concentrate on helping your teen become aware of their feelings of isolation
- 2) **Ask**—what are you thinking that make you feel alone? Lonely? Sad?
- 3) What actions/behaviours are you **doing** when feeling alone? Lonely? Sad?
- 4) **Look after your well-being**—this can be heavy and can take time and patience
- 5) **Coping**—provide examples of reframing; redirecting; rechallenging; pausing coping techniques
- 6) If your teen is not opening up—**seek medical/professional attention**

# Pathway to School Support



## Professional Support Services (PSS)

- ☐ Child & Youth Services
- ☐ Occupational/Physical Therapists
- ☐ Psychological Services
- ☐ Social Work Services
- ☐ Speech-Language Pathology Services





## Parent & Caregiver Virtual Drop-Ins:

**Tuesdays,**

**10 a.m. - 11 a.m.**

<https://tdsb-ca.zoom.us/j/93136458934?pwd=NDhMd051dXRxQ1JqWDU4cnZxQnRBZz09#success>

**Thursdays,**

**7 p.m. - 8 p.m.**

<https://tdsb-ca.zoom.us/j/93326356676?pwd=c2tzQ1hCL2JORU9Rb3J2dmE1cWQrQT09#success>

# Mental Health Supports/Resources

- ❑ Everyday Mental Health strategies for classroom (students) <https://smho-smso.ca/emhc/>
- ❑ Jack.org <https://jack.org/Home>
- ❑ <https://www.youthab.ca/apps>
- ❑ TDSB-Mental Health/Wellbeing supports: <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/In-Person-Learning/Resources-During-Covid-19>
- ❑ Student Mental Health Action Kit <https://smho-smso.ca/covid-19/educators/>
- ❑ Supporting Mentally Healthy Conversations about Anti-Black Racism for Students <https://smho-smso.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Conversations-Anti-Black-Racism.pdf>
- ❑ Kids Help Phone Line [Kids Help Phone](https://www.kidshelpline.ca/) at 1-800-668-6868 or texting CONNECT to 686868
- ❑ <https://shaylasvoice.com/>
- ❑ [Mental Health TO](https://www.whatsupwalkin.ca/service-providers/) at 1-866-585-6486 for free phone or video mental health counselling for infants, children, youth and families (What's Up Walk-In Clinic <https://www.whatsupwalkin.ca/service-providers/>)<sup>4</sup>
- ❑ [https://www.hollandbloorview.ca/our-services/family-workshops-resources/covid-19-tip-sheets-and-resources'](https://www.hollandbloorview.ca/our-services/family-workshops-resources/covid-19-tip-sheets-and-resources/)

# Anxiety

<https://www.anxietycanada.com/resources/mindshift-cbt/>

- **B2R: Breathe2Relax:** by National Centre for Telehealth and Technology. Designed to be a portable stress management tool. Provides information on the effects of stress on the body, as well as instructions and breathing exercises to manage stress and anxiety. *Free and available on both iOS and android.* <https://psyberguide.org/apps/breathe2relax/>
- **MindShift:** by Anxiety Disorders Association of British Columbia. Designed to help young adults cope with anxiety. Learn to decrease avoidance by practicing relaxation strategies, helpful ways of thinking, and identify steps to cope with anxiety. *Free and available on both iOS and android.* <https://www.anxietybc.com/resources/mindshift-app>

# Wellness and Motivation

- **SuperBetter:** By SuperBetter, LLC. Designed as a game to help you feel stronger, increase resiliency, increase motivation and optimism, strengthen social connection, and helps you feel more capable to tackle challenges and achieve your goals. *Free and available on iOS and android.* <https://www.superbetter.com/>
- **Happify:** by Happify Inc. Provides tools, techniques, and programs to help you improve your emotional wellbeing. Techniques include positive psychology, mindfulness, and CBT interventions. *Free with offers for in-app purchases. Available on both iOS and android.* <http://www.happify.com/>

# Mindfulness Meditation

(promotes wellness and improves stress management):

- **Calm:** By Calm.com. Provides guided meditation, ranging from 2 to 20 minutes. Offers various soft music options to take you to your sanctuary. The goal: To allow you to slow down and de-stress. *Free with offers for in-app purchases. Available on both iOS and android.*
- **Smiling Mind:** by Smiling Minds. It is a tool designed to make meditation and mindfulness easy. Includes a tracker and daily meditations geared for specific age groups. *Free and available on iOS and android. <https://smilingmind.com.au/smiling-mind-app/>*

# Stress Management

- **Healthy Minds:** by the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Care Centre. Designed specifically for post-secondary students. Designed as a problem solving tool to help you deal with emotions and cope with stresses both on and off campus. *Free and available on both iOS and android.* <http://www.theroyal.ca/mental-health-centre/apps/healthymindsapp/>
- **thinkFull:** By The Canadian Mental Health Association. Designed to help you manage stress, solve problems, and increase wellness. Provides a tracker and personalized tips to help you live a healthy and balanced life. *Free and available only on iOS.* <http://thinkfull.ca/>



*THANK YOU*