



Managing Stress

HOW TO BUCKLE UP FOR TURBULENCE IN LIFE

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Overview

1. Understanding stress
2. Buckling up for different types of stress
 - Immediate stress
 - Ongoing stress
3. Stress management coping skills
 - Matching coping to the situation

Some definitions first...

- **Stress**: the physical arousal or emotional state that results when we perceive that the demands of a situation are greater than our ability to cope
- **Stressors**: events that are perceived as harmful, threatening, or challenging

Immediate Stress Response: Fight-or-Flight

Your Stone Age Brain

Modern humans came from Africa roughly 200,000 years ago.

Life could be hard in the Stone Age, and many people died young. You would have lived in a small group and would know most of the people in your tribe. Being part of a group helped you to survive.



Dangers or threats in those times included:



Cold



Hunger



Other people



Dangerous
animals



Being excluded
from your group

Our brains haven't changed much since the Stone Age.



We still have a lot of the same **programming** that helped people to survive in those times.

This programming makes it easy for people to respond to danger by:



Freezing, hiding, or 'playing dead'



Running away



Fighting or acting aggressively

Psychologists call this the **freeze-flight-fight response**. It helped your ancestors in the Stone Age to survive danger by making them act **quickly** and **automatically** when danger was near. It helps you too, although it can make you feel anxious when it happens at unhelpful times, or is switched on by your own thoughts & worries.

Fight-or-Flight

Fight-or-Flight Reactions



VISION CHANGES

Your pupils dilate so that you can better see your surroundings



INCREASED CARDIO

Your heart rate, blood pressure, breathing, and sweat production increases



CHEMICAL RELEASE

Sugars, fatty acids, and various hormones, such as adrenaline, cortisol, and endorphins are released into your bloodstream



BLOOD FLOW REDIRECTION

Blood begins to flow away from organs and out towards our muscles to prepare for action

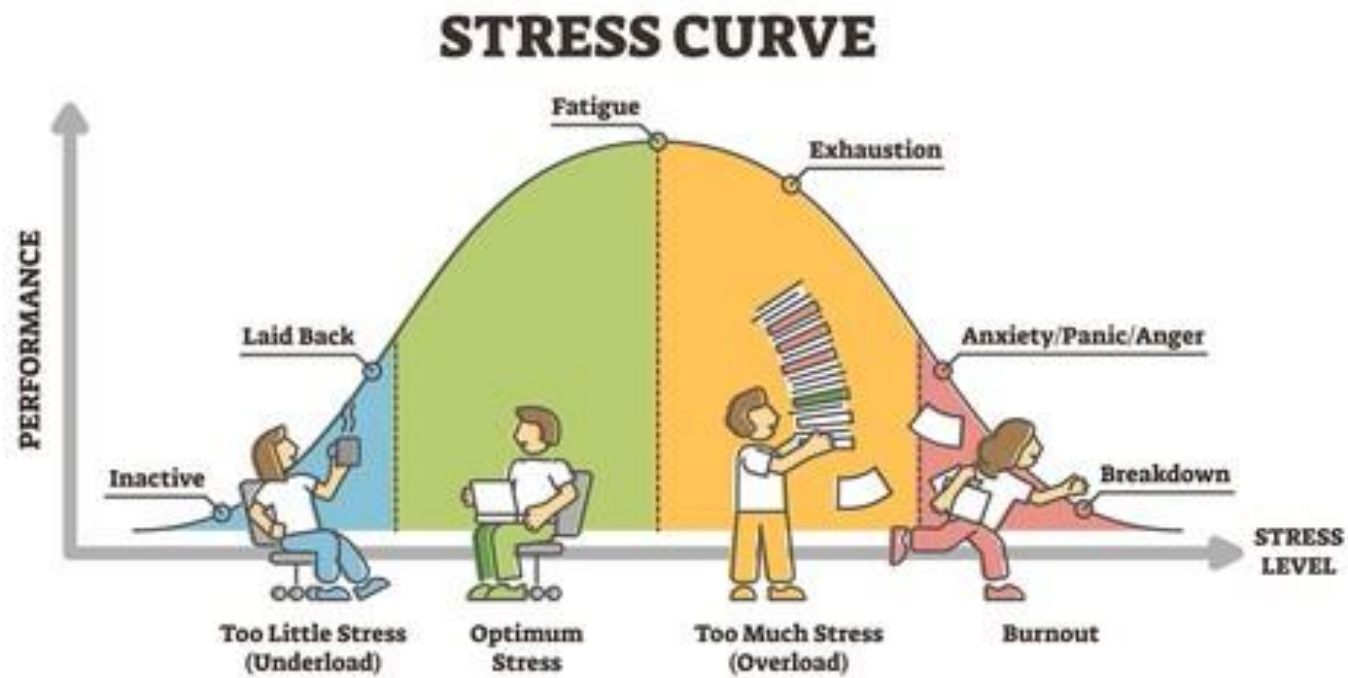


IMMUNE SUPPRESSION

Your immune system, which helps us from getting sick, is suppressed

Short-Term Stress

- Short-term stress: reaction when something stressful happens
 - Initial “fight-or-flight” phase increases arousal followed by mobilizing resources to deal with “threat” (within 48 hours)
 - Need just enough to be pro-active
 - Can you think of a time that short-term stress was actually helpful?



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Long-Term Stress

- Long-term stress: repeated on a regular basis or does not improve with time
 - If perceived threat doesn't subside within a few days, body starts to cope by releasing hormones (like cortisol) to sustain preparedness for about 1 month
 - Eventually wears on you both physically and emotionally
 - Exhaustion state is triggered (after 1-3 months) when body can no longer cope with stressor



Effects of Long-Term Stress

Lung complications (increased exacerbations of asthma, bronchitis)

Shift in insulin regulation (diabetes)

Worsening pain or “flare ups”

Suspension of tissue repair and inflammation (longer healing time)

Weakened immune system (more likely to get sick, longer recovery time)

Increase in mood and anxiety symptoms

Changes in cardiovascular health (blood pressure increases, decreased heart health)

Changes in reproductive system (including decreased sex drive)

Memory changes (trouble remembering things, harder to concentrate)

Effects of Stress

Stress can undermine health in 2 ways:

1. **Indirect-** behaviors that jeopardize physical well being (alcohol, lack of sleep)
2. **Direct-** changes in body functions, leading to physical symptoms (headaches, upset stomach) or worsening existing health issues



| Life Event | Value |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Death of spouse | 100 |
| Divorce | 73 |
| Marital separation | 65 |
| Jail term | 63 |
| Death of close family member | 63 |
| Personal injury or illness | 53 |
| Marriage | 50 |
| Fired from job | 47 |
| Marital reconciliation | 45 |
| Retirement | 45 |
| Change in health of family member | 44 |
| Pregnancy | 40 |
| Sex difficulties | 39 |
| Gain of a new family member | 39 |
| Business readjustment | 39 |
| Change in financial state | 38 |
| Death of a close friend | 37 |
| Change to a different line of work | 36 |
| Foreclosure of mortgage | 30 |
| Change in responsibilities at work | 29 |
| Son or daughter leaving home | 29 |
| Trouble with in-laws | 29 |
| Outstanding personal achievement | 28 |
| Wife begins or stops work | 26 |
| Begin or end school | 26 |
| Change in living conditions | 25 |
| Revision of personal habits | 24 |
| Trouble with boss | 23 |
| Change in residence | 20 |
| Change in school | 20 |
| Change in recreation | 19 |
| Change in church activities | 19 |
| Change in social activities | 18 |
| Change in sleeping habits | 16 |
| Change in eating habits | 15 |
| Vacation | 13 |
| Christmas | 12 |
| Minor legal violations | 11 |



Added Stress with Health Conditions

Stress is common among patients with various health conditions!

- Adjustment to new lifestyle
- Fears about future health
- Balancing family worries
- Depression, anxiety, anger/frustration

Managing your stress can...

- Improve your quality of life
- Help you manage your condition long-term
- Improve your mental and physical health
- Help you make lasting changes

Let's put a number on your current level of stress...

Take out a piece of paper and write the number that indicates your response to each of the following 4 questions



PSS-4

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, please indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way.

- 1. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?**

| | | | | |
|-------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|---------------|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Fairly Often | Very Often |

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, please indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way.

2. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?

| | | | | |
|-------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|---------------|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Fairly Often | Very Often |

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, please indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way.

3. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?

| | | | | |
|-------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|---------------|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Fairly Often | Very Often |

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, please indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way.

- 4. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?**

| | | | | |
|-------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|---------------|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Fairly Often | Very Often |

What's your
current stress
level?

Add up all the numbers from the 4 questions to
get your total on the **Perceived Stress Scale-4**

Scores range from 0-16, with higher scores
indicating higher levels of stress

≥ 6 has been suggested as “high levels of stress”

1988 US average

Male= 4.2

Female= 4.7

England 2013 average

Male=5.56

Female= 6.38



Is your stress cup overflowing?

Stress Warning Signs and Symptoms



Cognitive Symptoms

- Memory problems
- Inability to concentrate
- Poor judgment
- Seeing only the negative
- Anxious or racing thoughts
- Constant worrying

Physical Symptoms

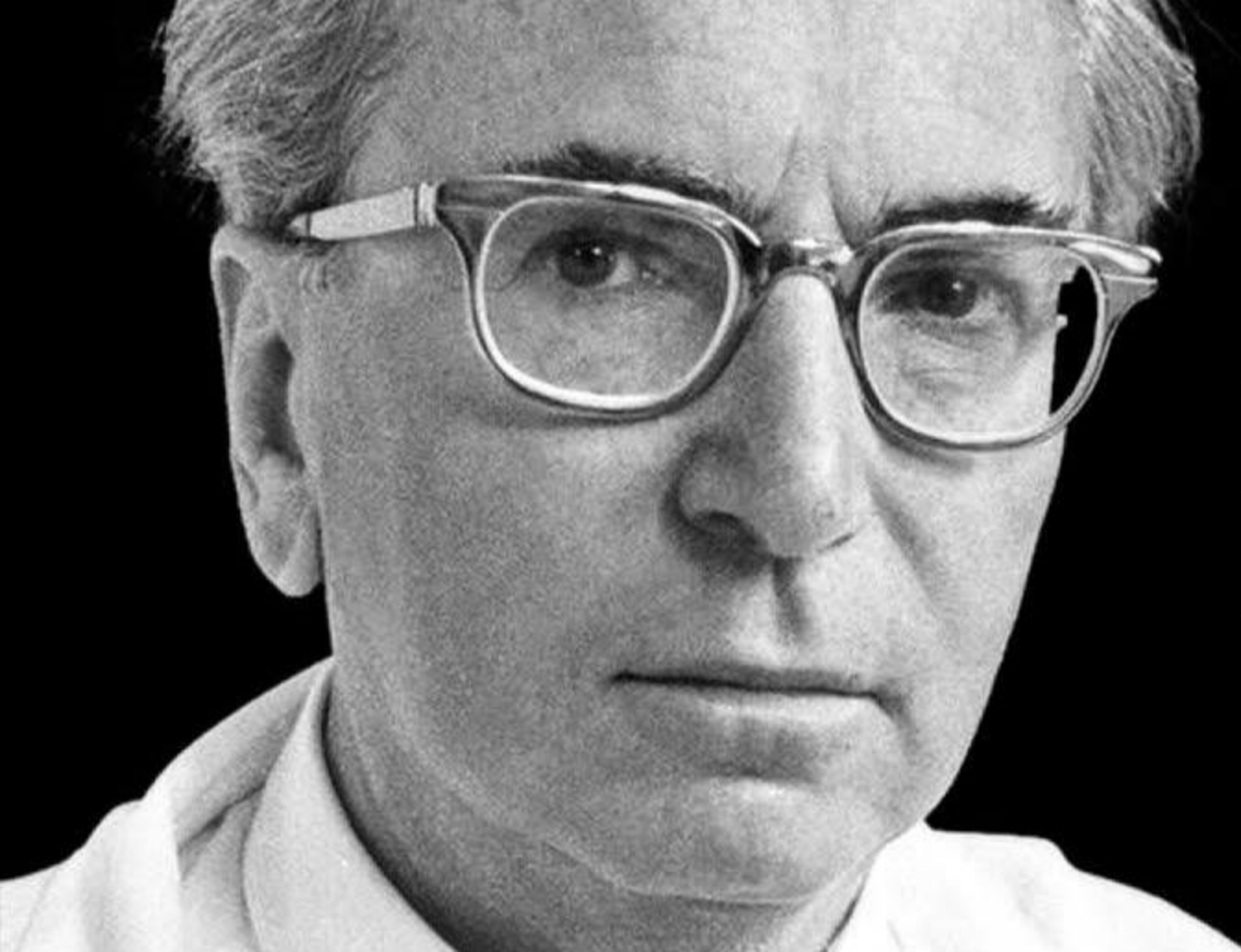
- Aches and pains
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Nausea, dizziness
- Chest pain, rapid heartbeat
- Loss of sex drive
- Frequent colds

Emotional Symptoms

- Moodiness
- Irritability or short temper
- Agitation, inability to relax
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Sense of loneliness and isolation
- Depression or general unhappiness

Behavioral Symptoms

- Eating more or less
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Isolating yourself from others
- Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities
- Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax
- Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)



"When we are no longer able to CHANGE a situation, we are CHALLENGED to change OURSELVES."

Stressors may be unavoidable, but
stress can be modified

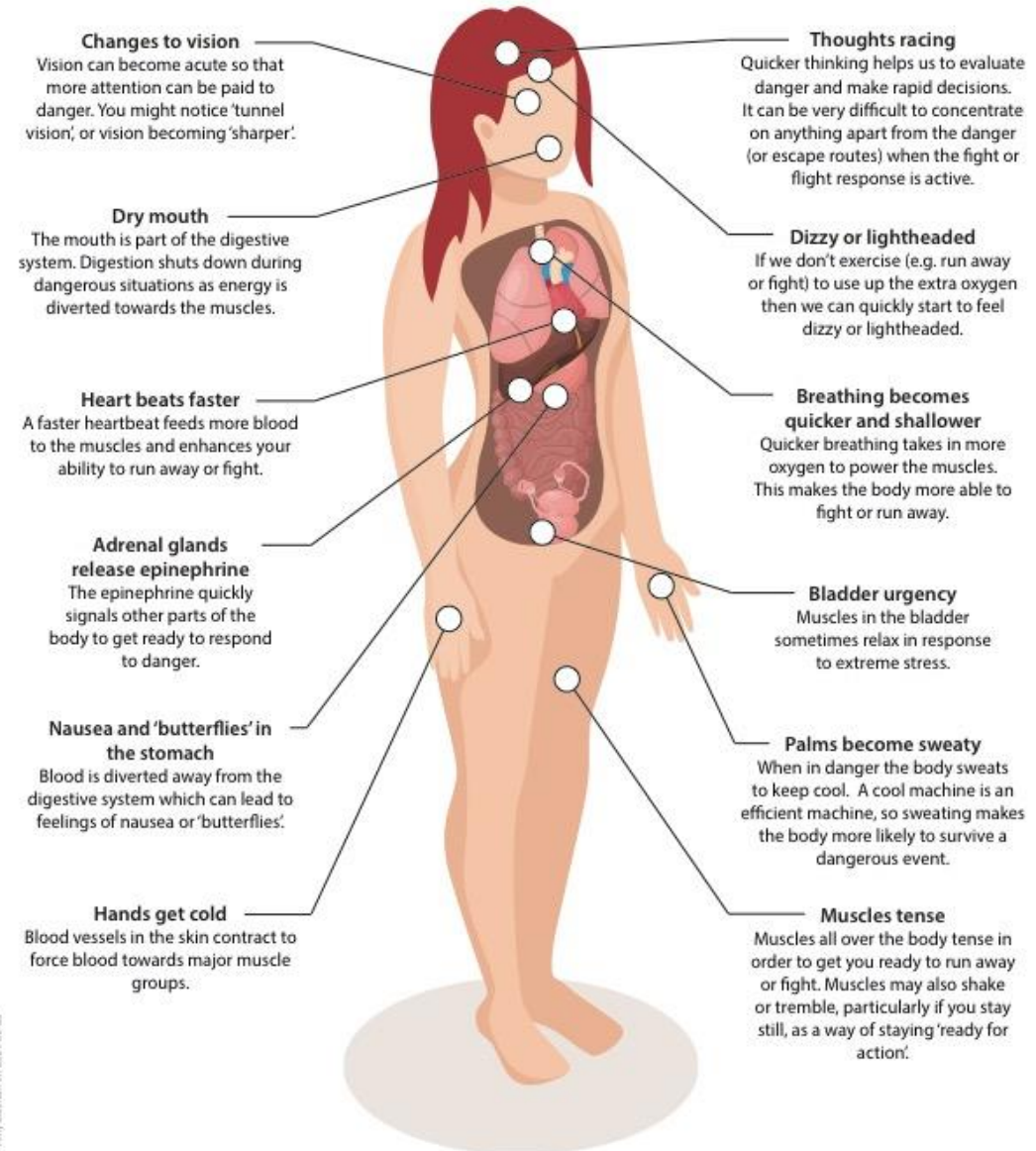
Buckling up: Equipping yourself to decrease stress

1. Coping with immediate stress responses
2. Managing ongoing stress

Coping with Immediate Stress Responses

Fight Or Flight Response

When faced with a life-threatening danger it often makes sense to run away or, if that is not possible, to fight. The *fight or flight response* is an *automatic* survival mechanism which prepares the body to take these actions. All of the body sensations produced are happening for good reasons – to prepare your body to run away or fight – but may be experienced as uncomfortable when you do not know why they are happening.



Coping through Awareness

Developing awareness of how you experience fight-or-flight will help you to identify the stress reaction more quickly and implement strategies to de-escalate

Sometimes, it's obvious when fight-or-flight is activated (a fire); other times, you may not notice until the stress response builds (carbon dioxide)

Body awareness can help to identify stress in the body earlier on in the process because our bodies tend to register stress before our conscious mind becomes aware



Body Scan

During the body scan exercise you will pay close attention to physical sensations throughout your body. The goal isn't to change or relax your body, but instead to notice and become more aware of it. Don't worry too much about how long you practice, but do move slowly.

Begin by paying attention to the sensations in your feet. Notice any sensations such as warmth, coolness, pressure, pain, or a breeze moving over your skin. Slowly move up your body—to your calves, thighs, pelvis, stomach, chest, back, shoulders, arms, hands, fingers, neck, and finally your head. Spend some time on each of these body parts, just noticing the sensations.

After you travel up your body, begin to move back down, through each body part, until you reach your feet again. Remember: move slowly, and just pay attention.



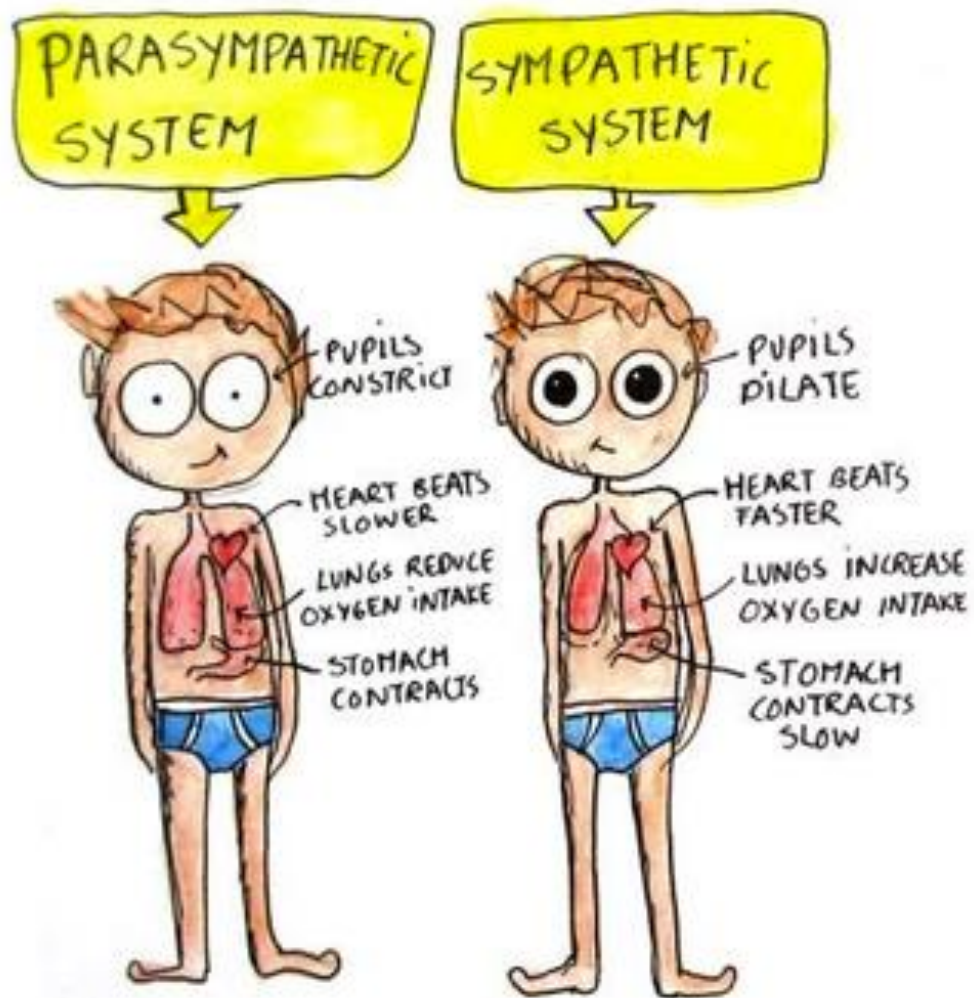
PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION



<https://www.instagram.com/healthiermcgill/>

Coping Tool: Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Practice tensing and releasing various muscle groups to train yourself to recognize tension in your body and know when to relax your muscles

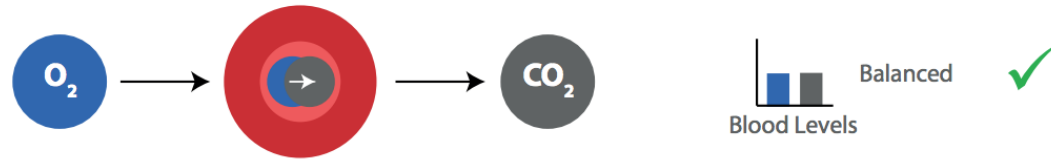


The Off Switch: Parasympathetic Nervous System

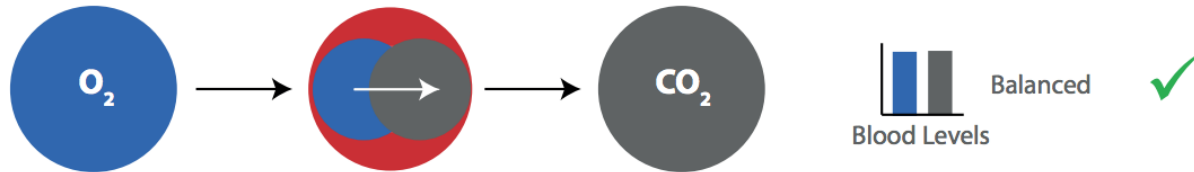


Panic Breathing

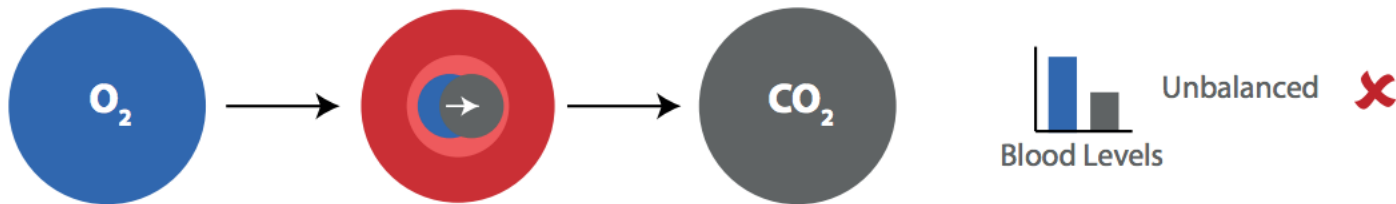
Normal breathing



Exertion breathing

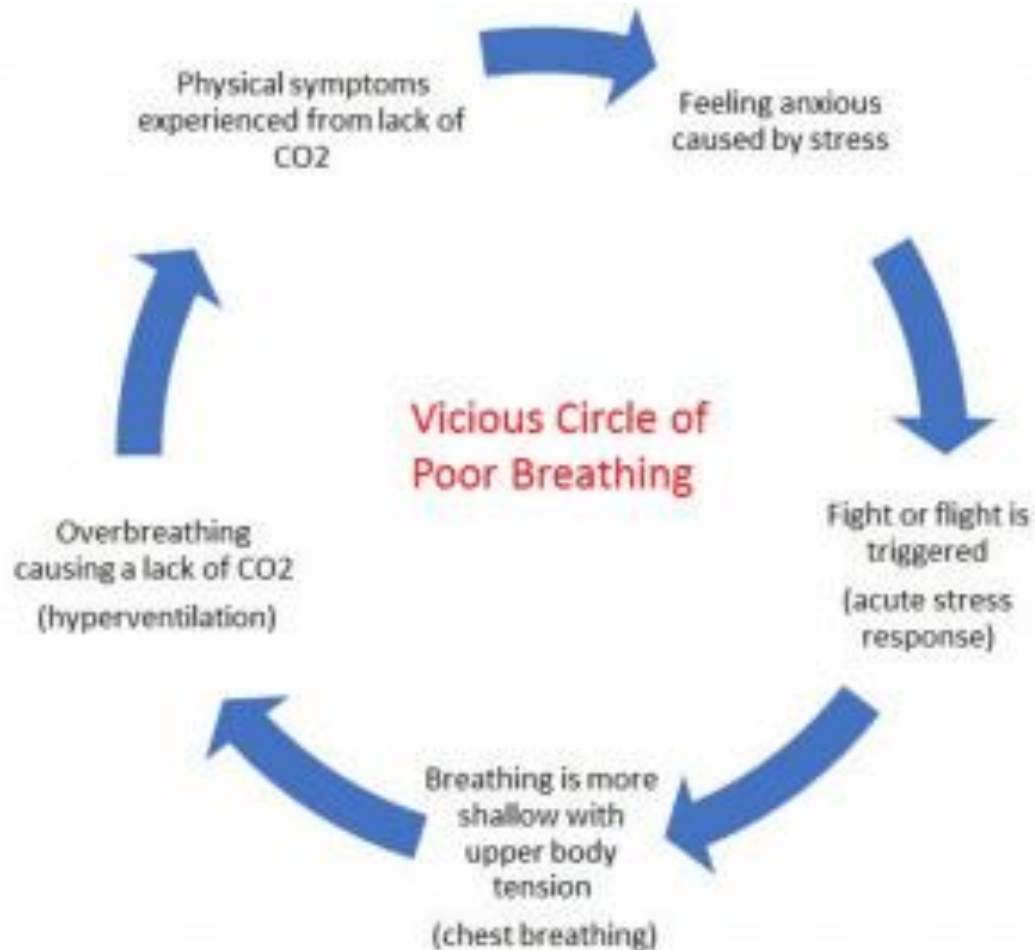


Panic breathing



Chest vs. Belly Breathing

- Living with NTM, you know the importance of breathing and how difficult things can be when breathing doesn't feel quite right
- Chest breathing: shallow and irregular
- Diaphragmatic “belly” breathing: deeper and steady, allowing for normal oxygen/carbon dioxide exchange



Coping Tool: Diaphragmatic Breathing

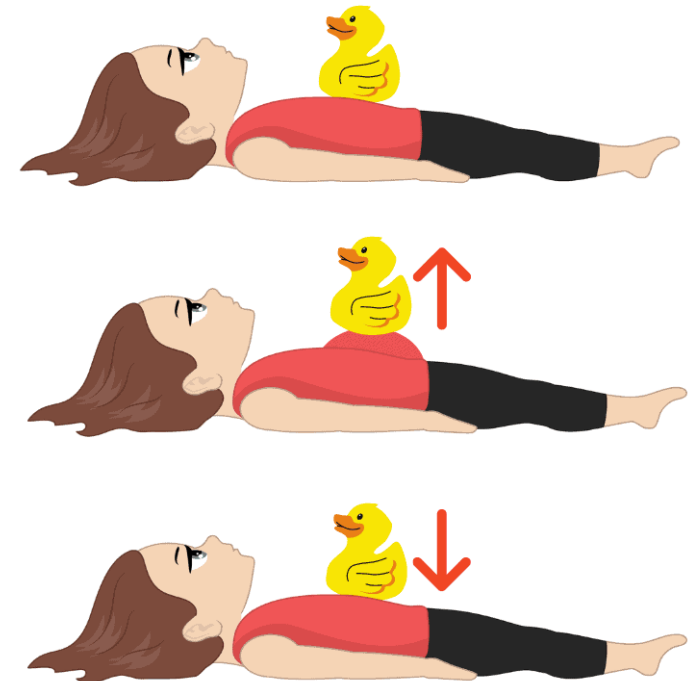


BREATHE IN, BELLY OUT

- Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly.
- Inhale deeply through your nose for a count of four, making sure your belly abdomen is expanding and not your chest. Exhale for a count of four.
- Continue this breathing cycle for a few minutes.
- Feel the stress leave your body while your mind becomes calm.

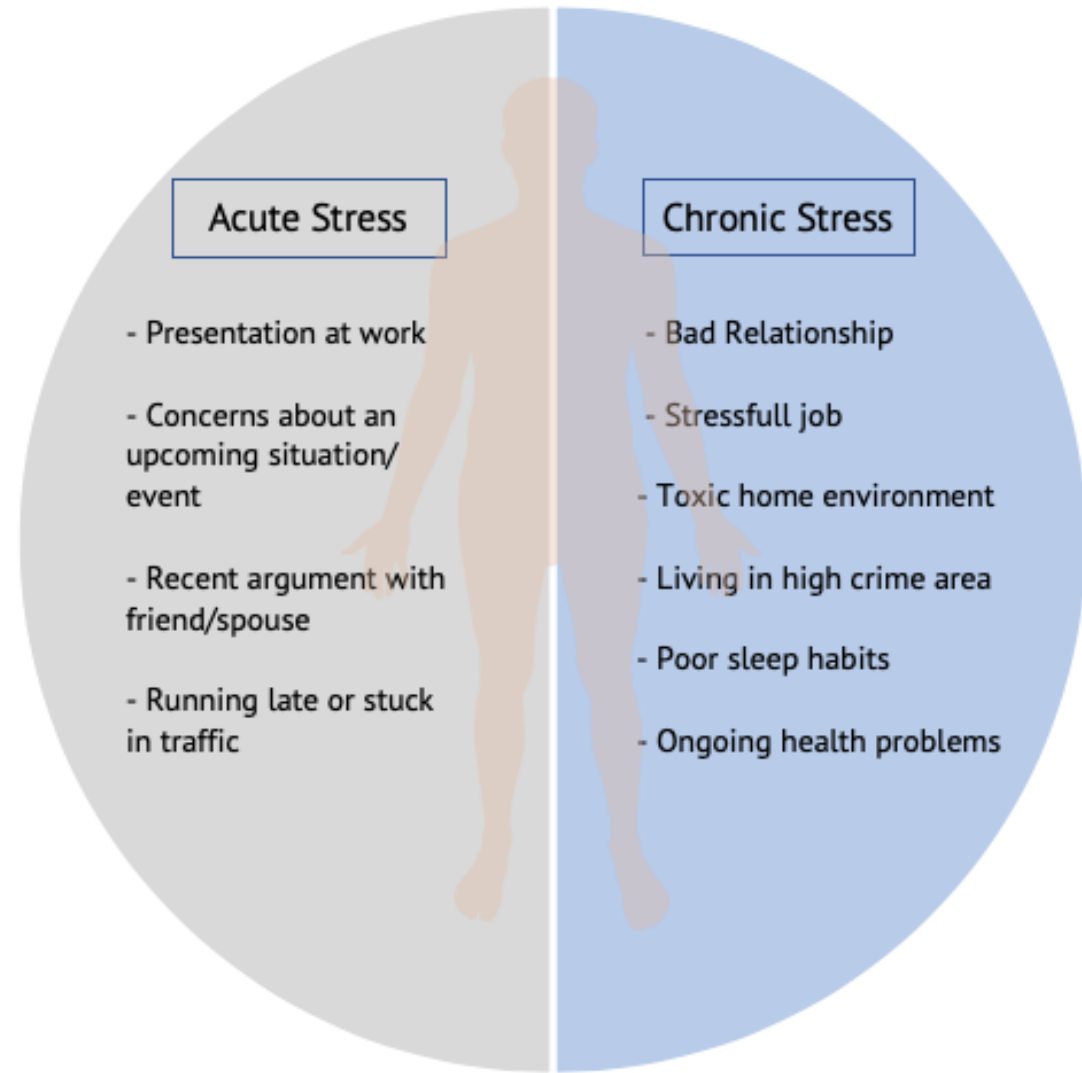


DE STRESS
MONDAY



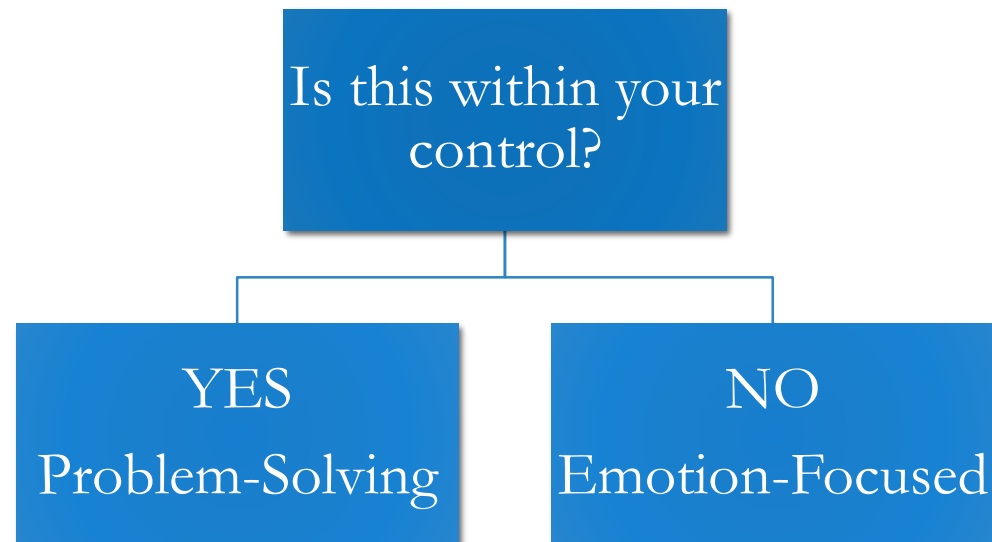
Verspecialtales.com

Managing Ongoing Stress



Matching Coping to The Situation

- The first step is to determine which aspects of the situation are within your control and which aspects are out of your control
- You can then apply the most effective type of coping skill



Problem Solving

Step 1. FIGURE OUT and DESCRIBE the problem situation.

Step 2. CHECK THE FACTS (all the facts) to be sure you have the right problem situation!

If your facts are correct and the situation is the problem, continue with STEP 3.

If your facts are not correct, go back and repeat STEP 1.

Step 3. IDENTIFY YOUR GOAL in solving the problem.

- Identify what needs to happen or change for you to feel OK.
- Keep it simple, and choose something that can actually happen.

Step 4. BRAINSTORM lots of solutions.

- Think of as many solutions as you can. Ask for suggestions from people you trust.
- Do not be critical of any ideas at first. (Wait for Step 5 to evaluate ideas.)

Step 5. CHOOSE a solution that fits the goal and is likely to work.

- If you are unsure, choose two solutions that look good.
- Do PROS and CONS to compare the solutions.
- Choose the best to try first.

Step 6. Put the solution into ACTION.

- ACT! Try out the solution.
- Take the first step, and then the second . . .

Step 7. EVALUATE the results of using the solution.

It worked? YEA!!! It didn't work? Go back to STEP 5 and choose a new solution to try.

Coping Tool: Problem Solving

For situations within your control

1. Figure out and describe the problem

Gathering the Facts

- Describe JUST the facts of the situation
- Put words to it, label what you observe (label thoughts vs. feelings vs. actions), unglue your interpretations and opinions from the facts (just describe the who, what, when, where why)

Understanding the Problem

- Describe what is problematic about the situation, including the consequences of a situation that make it a problem for you
- “Working in a job I hate is a big factor in my unhappiness; I hate my job more each day and I feel more unhappy with my life.”

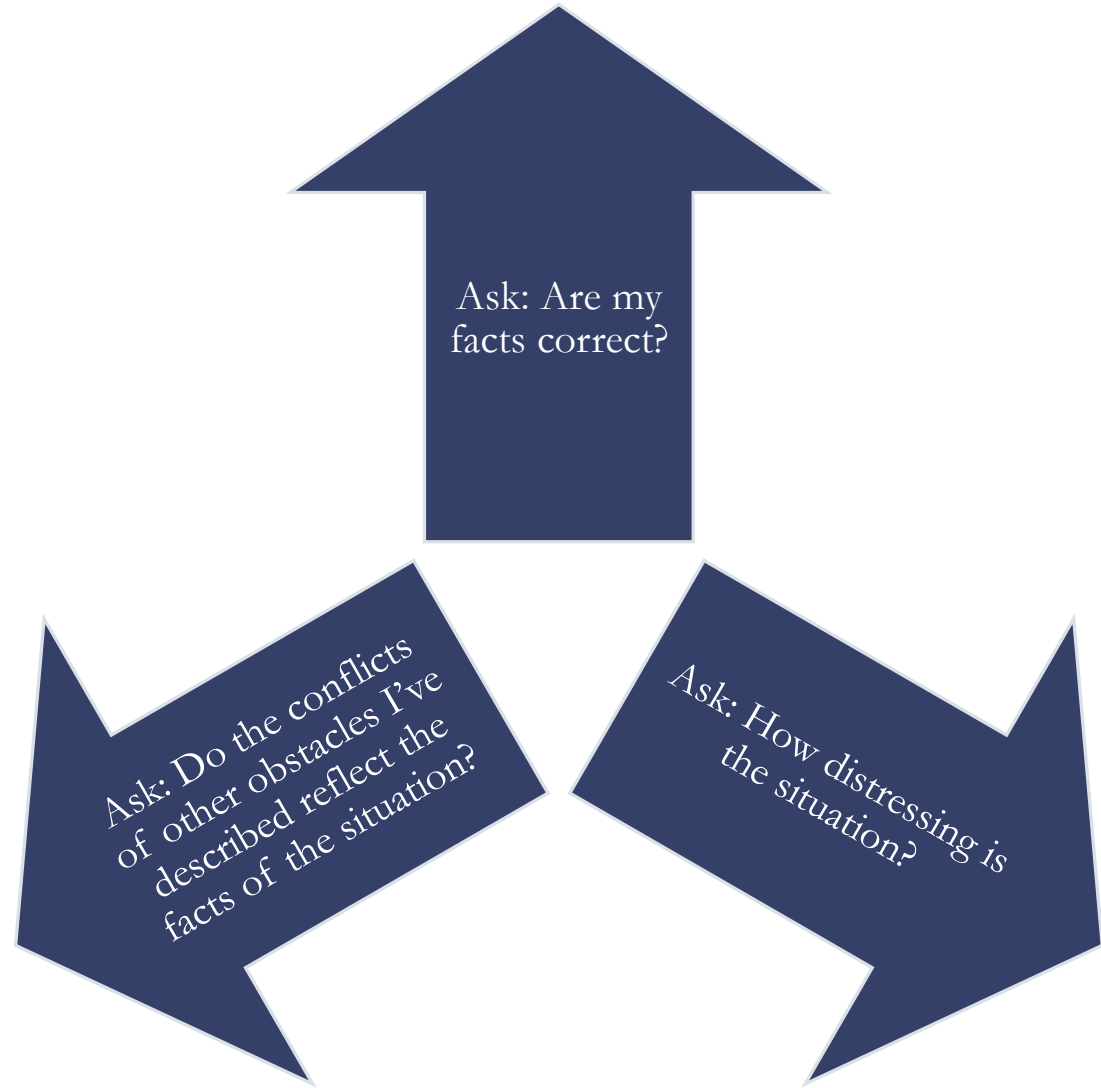
Breaking It Down

- Break down the problem into smaller, more manageable pieces to fully understand each aspect of the concern and tackle one thing at a time
- “My job is awful” vs “I don’t like that I feel isolated at work”

Potential Obstacles

- Describe the obstacles or conflicts making it hard for you to solve the problem
- “I don’t have another job to go to and I can’t afford not to have a job.”

2. Check the facts



3. Identify your goal in solving the problem

Keep it simple and something you can really achieve

Often, the major task for this step is to reduce painful emotions

Identify what must happen or change for you to feel ok

- EX) “Finding a way to work and like my job, or at least not hate it.”

4. Brainstorm LOTS of solutions

Come up with as many ideas as possible for solving the problem

- Ask people you trust for suggestions

Solutions in this stage can be thought of as one or more actions that lead to the goal

- EX) To avoid conflict with a mean boss, solutions may include leaving the job, writing a letter of resignation, or making an appointment with HR

Don't judge your ideas at this stage

- Brainstorming requires thoughts to run free and wild
- It's important to get every idea anyone can think of down in writing
- Generate a balance of effective and ineffective ideas
- Keep going until there are no new ideas or it's clear that all potentially effective ideas have been generated (although it's never too late to add more ideas)

| | | |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Pros | Solution 1 | Solution 2 |
| Cons | Solution 1 | Solution 2 |

5. Choose a solution that fits the goal and is likely to work

- Make a priority list by organizing the top contenders based on the likelihood the solution would work and the feasibility of implementing it
- Choose 1-2 of the best solutions from the priority list and so a pro/con list

6. Put the solution into action

Try out the solution

Break it down into steps

Problems you may encounter in this action phase:

- Inertia (This is too hard! I am too tired! I don't have time!)
- Fear-generating thoughts (If this doesn't work, I'll look like an idiot! People are going to be upset with me! This won't work and I'll be a failure!)
- Willfulness (I shouldn't have to solve this, they caused it!)
- Impulsiveness (i.e., running headfirst into the problem with an ineffective solution, rather than the one initially thought through)

7. Evaluate the results of implementing the solution

- Ask: Am I satisfied with the results?
- Ask: Do I feel better about my situation than I did before?
- Ask: Were there any negative outcomes for myself or others?
- Effective problem solving can take multiple efforts with different solutions before you find the one solution or set of solutions that works
 - Go back to Step 5 and choose a new solution to try

Emotion Focused Skills

Decreasing distress when a situation is outside of your control

Learning how to regulate or improve your emotional responses if you can't change a situation

When a situation can't be changed and you can't change how you feel, you can work to completely and willingly accept the reality to gain a sense of freedom and reduce suffering

A

ACCUMULATE POSITIVE EMOTIONS

Short Term: Do pleasant things that are possible now.

Long Term: Make changes in your life so that positive events will happen more often in the future. Build a “life worth living.”

B

BUILD MASTERY

Do things that make you feel competent and effective to combat helplessness and hopelessness.

C

COPE AHEAD OF TIME WITH EMOTIONAL SITUATIONS

Rehearse a plan ahead of time so that you are prepared to cope skillfully with emotional situations.

Coping Tool: ABC

Paying Attention to Positive Events

It's only human—most people give more attention to the bad things than the good. If you hear ten compliments, and a single criticism, you'll probably focus on the criticism.

If you notice yourself focusing on the negative aspects of an experience, try to stop and refocus on the positive. Practice by doing a small positive activity every day while making a point to acknowledge the good parts (even if things aren't perfect). Don't let minor problems ruin the moment.

Adding one or two positive activities won't change your life, but over time the happiness they create will start to add up. Here are a few ideas for quick positive activities to get you started:

| | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---|
| Have a good, unrushed meal. | Watch a movie. | Visit with friends or family. |
| Visit a local attraction like a zoo or museum. | Go for a walk. | Put on headphones and do nothing but listen to music. |
| Have a picnic. | Give yourself a relaxing night in. | Try a new hobby. |

Coping Tool: Positive Activities

Build Mastery

1. Plan on doing at least one thing each day to build a sense of accomplishment.

Example: _____

2. Plan for success, not failure.
 - Do something difficult, but possible.
3. Gradually increase the difficulty over time.
 - If the first task is too difficult, do something a little easier next time.
4. Look for a challenge.
 - If the task is too *easy*, try something a little harder next time.

Coping Tool: Build Mastery

Opposite Action

When you experience an emotion, a behavior usually comes with it. If you are angry, you might fight or argue. If you are sad, you might withdraw from your friends. Your body causes you to react to emotions in a specific way.

Doing the *opposite action* will help you change your emotion. If you typically start to yell when you are angry, try talking quietly and politely. If you withdraw when you are sad, make a point to visit a friend next time you feel this way.

| Emotion | Action | Opposite Action |
|---------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Angry | Fight, yell, and argue. | Talk quietly and behave politely. |
| Sad | Withdraw from friends. | Visit and communicate with friends. |

Coping Tool: Opposite Action



SIMPLE GROUNDING TECHNIQUE

If you're feeling anxious or worried, bring your attention back to the current moment with this simple grounding exercise. Notice the following around you:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can feel
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

THEBLISSFULMIND.COM

Coping Tool: 5-4-3-2-1 Exercise

What is Radical Acceptance?



COVID-19 IS HAPPENING

Non-Acceptance

Why is this happening?
I don't want this to be happening.
This is making my life more challenging.
I don't like this.
People are stressed out and I'm stressed out.
I am shut inside my home.
I wish it would end.
I hate the mask.
COVID-19 sucks!



COVID-19 IS HAPPENING

Acceptance

It is what it is.



www.dialecticalliving.ca

RADICAL ACCEPTANCE AND CHRONIC ILLNESS



I HAVE CHRONIC ILLNESS

I hate being sick. I wish I could be normal. I'm always in pain and my life would be so much better if things weren't like this. My illness stops me from doing everything I want to do. Why can't it just stop?



I HAVE CHRONIC ILLNESS

This is how things are. I may not agree with it or like it but being resentful and refusing to accept my reality will not make me better.

Functioningtired.com

Do not see acceptance as a weakness.

Accepting a situation does not mean you are giving up.

Acceptance simply means that you recognize and understand your current situation.

Acceptance allows you to be free from the shackles of denial and move forward in life, creating a new path and a new life for yourself.

www.idanceintherain.com

Coping Tool: Radical Acceptance

Radical ACCEPTANCE

RADICAL ACCEPTANCE IS FULLY ACCEPTING SOMETHING WITHOUT:

- Judging it 
- Trying to force it to change 

WHAT ARE YOU REFUSING TO ACCEPT?

 It could be a situation, memory or an emotion.

BELIEFS THAT GET IN THE WAY:

 It means you are giving up
It means you are OK with the situation

EMOTIONS THAT GET IN THE WAY:

-  Intense anger at someone or something
-  Guilt/shame about something you did or who you are
-  Rage at the injustice of the situation

You've never tried to change the color of the sky. You've never judged it for being blue- it's just blue.

If you hated the color blue you would still accept that the sky is just blue.

Radical acceptance is something you choose to do.

It does not mean you like or agree with something, just that you accept it as it is.

Coping Tool: Radical Acceptance

Coping Tool: Radical Acceptance

To practice radical acceptance, we need to:

- Accept what is-acknowledge reality
- Figure out what we can control and what we can't
- Look at our situation from a nonjudgmental perspective- stick to the facts!
- Stop fighting reality
- Learn how to live in the present moment despite our pain



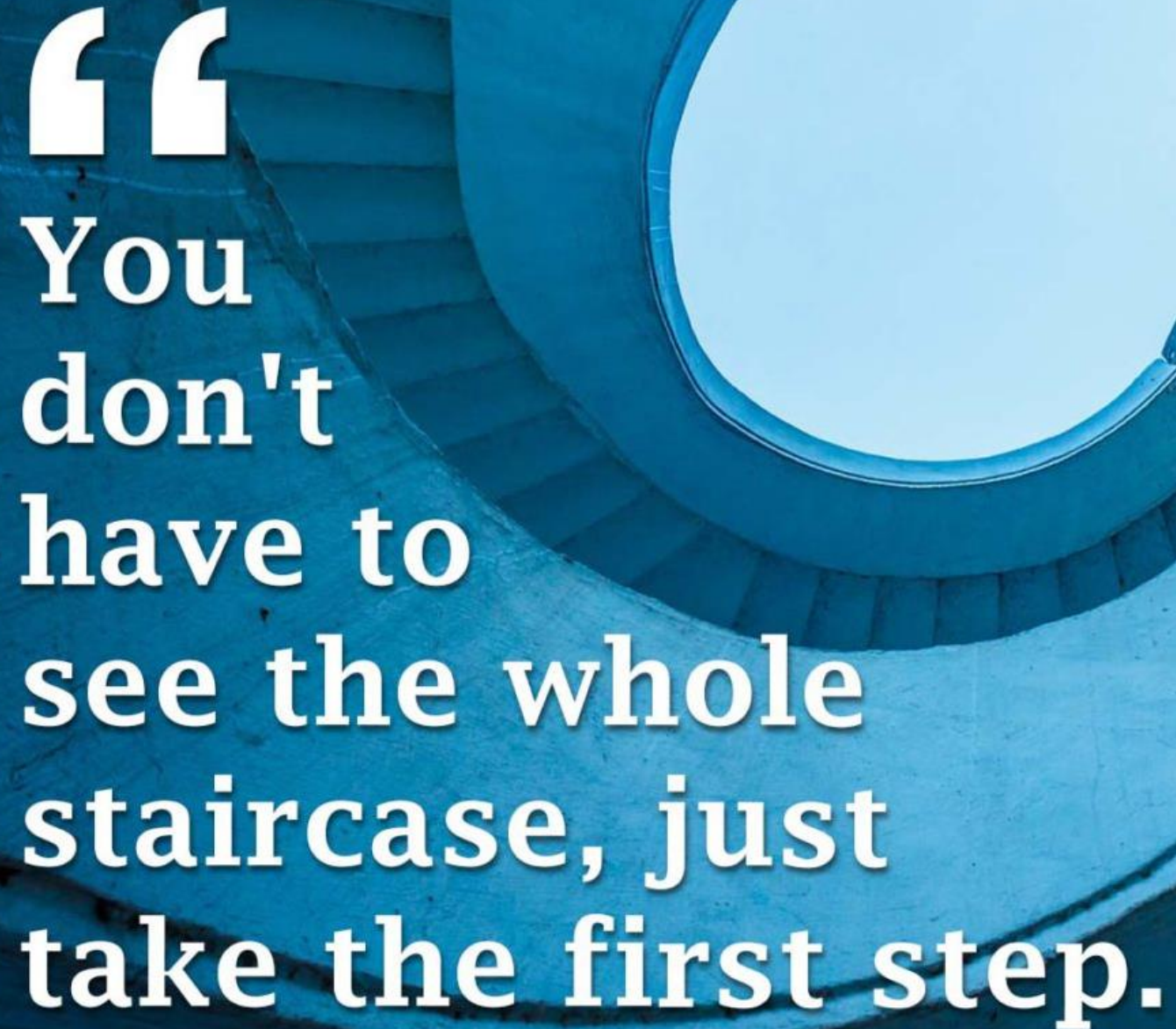
My Mighty Month

RADICAL ACCEPTANCE COPING STATEMENTS

Try saying these coping statements to yourself to help you accept a distressing situation when it arises.

- ☀ This is how it has to be.
- ☀ Everything that happened in the past has led up to now.
- ☀ I can't change what's already happened.
- ☀ There's no point fighting the past.
- ☀ I can survive the present, even if I don't like what's happening.
- ☀ I don't have control of the past.
- ☀ The present is exactly what it should be given what's happened before.

THE
MIGHTY



“
You
don't
have to
see the whole
staircase, just
take the first step.

Martin Luther King

Questions?
