



Cultivating Healing, Happiness, and Other Mental Health Matters in Schools



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Professional Background

Ph.D., Education of Students with Exceptionalities
Georgia State University (2018)

Educator wellbeing, supportive learning environments, interpersonal dynamics, empowerment of educators and other human services providers

Ed.S., Special Education Leadership (2009)
University of West Georgia

Supporting diverse youth, anti-bullying, students who learn differently, empowerment of students

M.S., Applied Clinical Psychology
University of South Carolina-Aiken (2004)

Health psychology (stress & coping), independent living, empowerment of individuals/groups in community

B.A., Psychology (2000)
Augusta University

Incarcerated youth, personal empowerment

Professional Experience

- Researcher, professional development facilitator
- Former special education teacher
- Former mental health counselor and community-based instructor

How About You?

- » Please go to this [link](#) and provide the following:
- » Your name (whatever name I may call you)
- » Your professional role in the schools (What do you do?)
- » What do you hope to get from today's session?

Session Objectives

- » Discuss mental health conditions and needs of schools
- » Explore practices that support a culture of health, happiness, and mental health
- » Explore tools and resources that may be utilized or shared with education professionals



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What this is not...

- » An expectation for any one professional or groups of professionals to solve the various mental health crises
- » A presentation of tools that solve mental health problems or eliminate their causes



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What is happening in your schools?

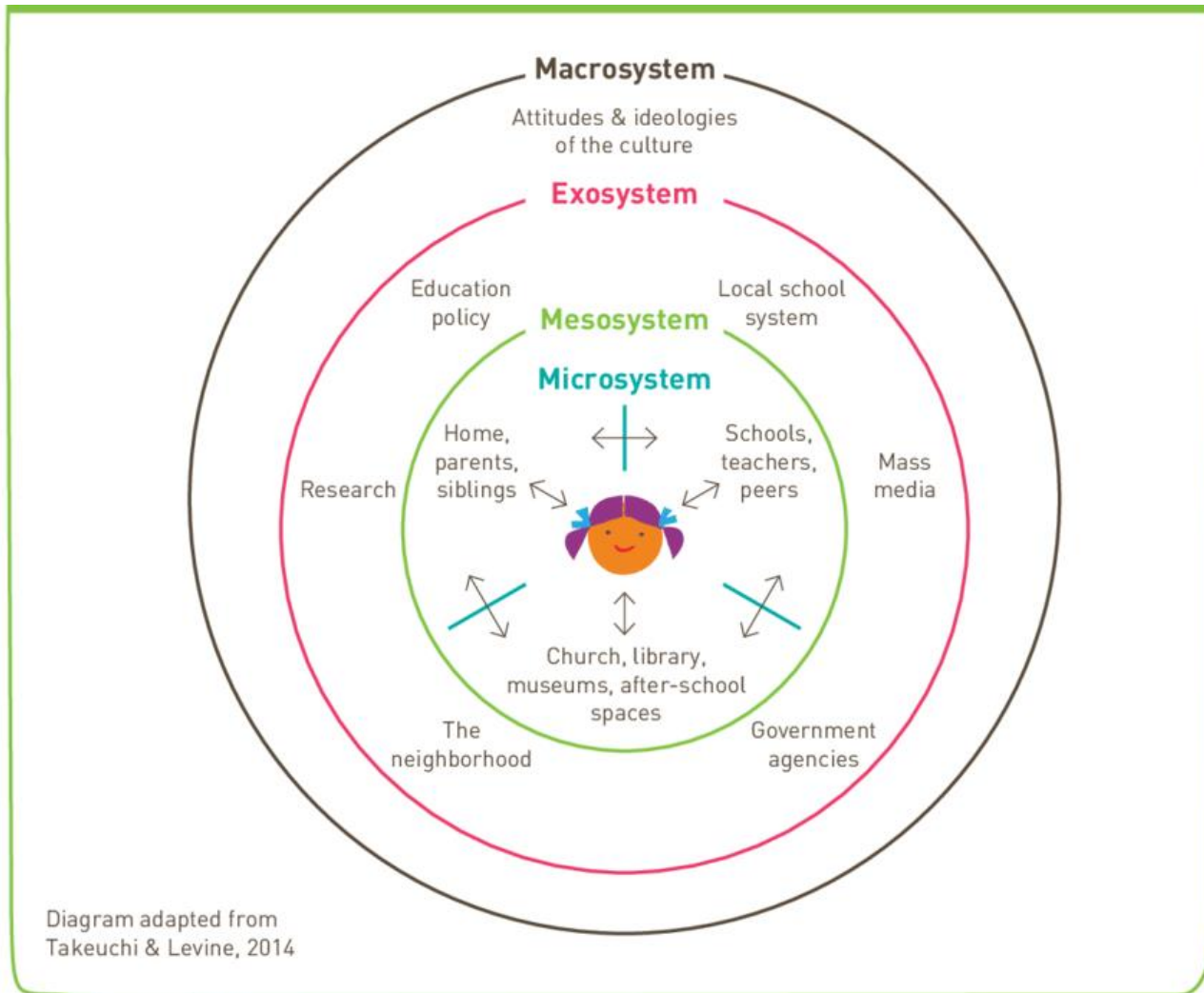
(Post brief response [here](#).)

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Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model



How do the conditions on the left differ from the conditions on the right? What do they have in common?

» Heartburn

» Heart attack

» Insomnia

» Gastrointestinal
dysfunction

» Viruses

» Occupational burnout

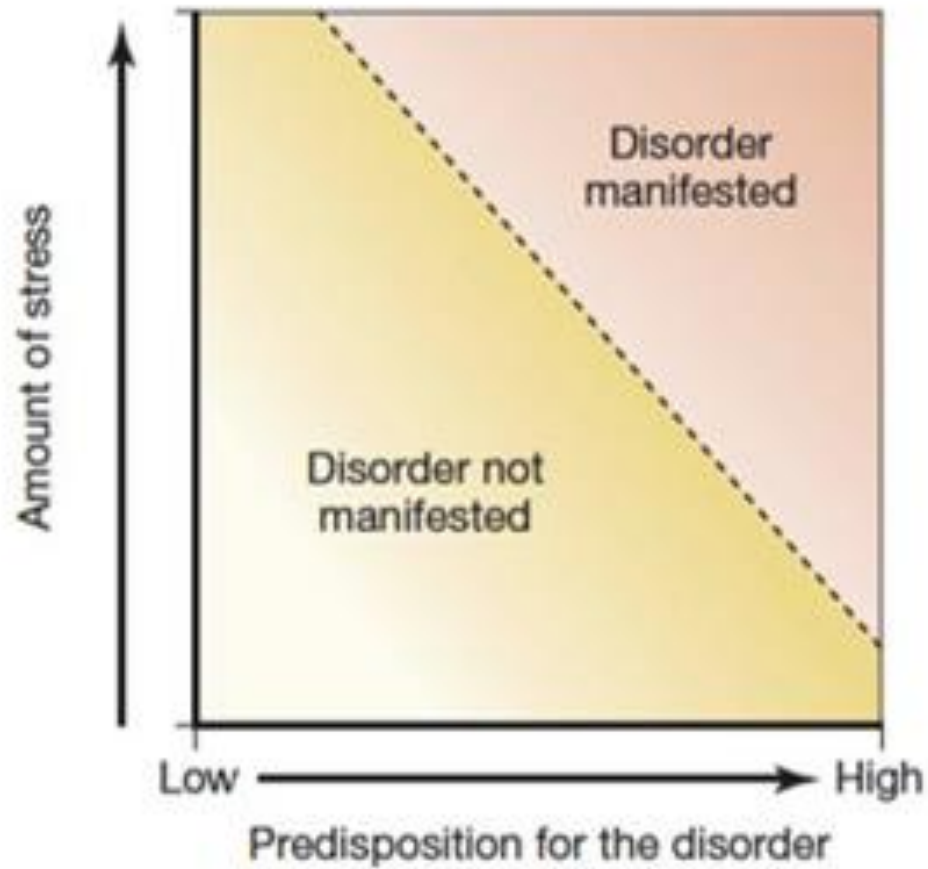
» ADHD

» Depression

» Anxiety

» Bipolar disorder

Diathesis-Stress Model [\(Monroe & Cummins, 2015\)](#)



Why are we/they stressed?

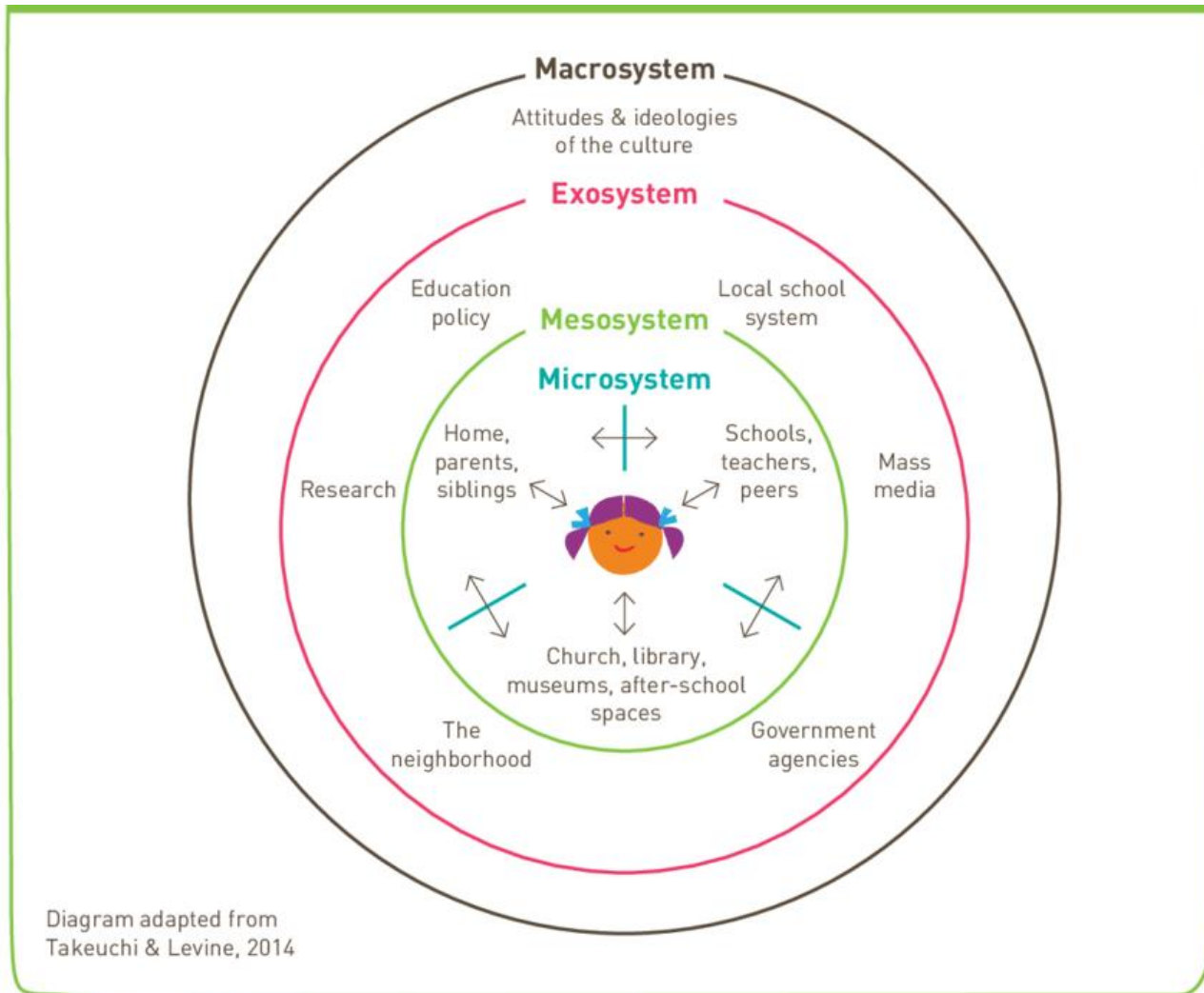
[Your Top 3 Stressors](#)

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Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model



How can we promote healing, happiness, and other mental health matters in our schools?

Within our power, that is...

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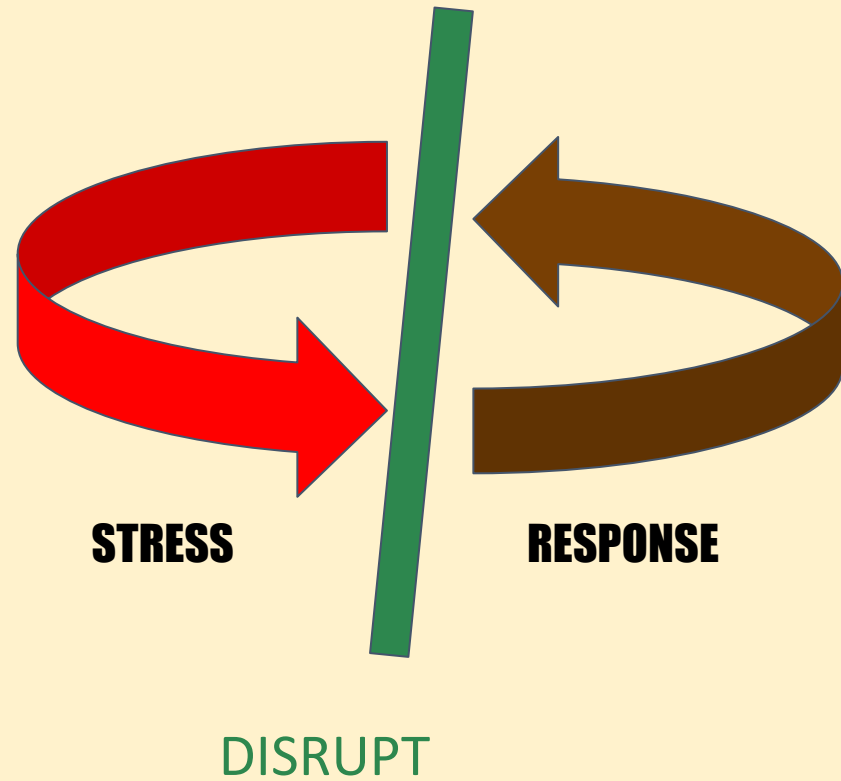


Managing the Stress Response



Anti-stress SNS vs. PNS

([Selye, 1946](#))



Individual and Collective Coping & Lifestyle Practices (a.k.a. Self-Care and Community Care)

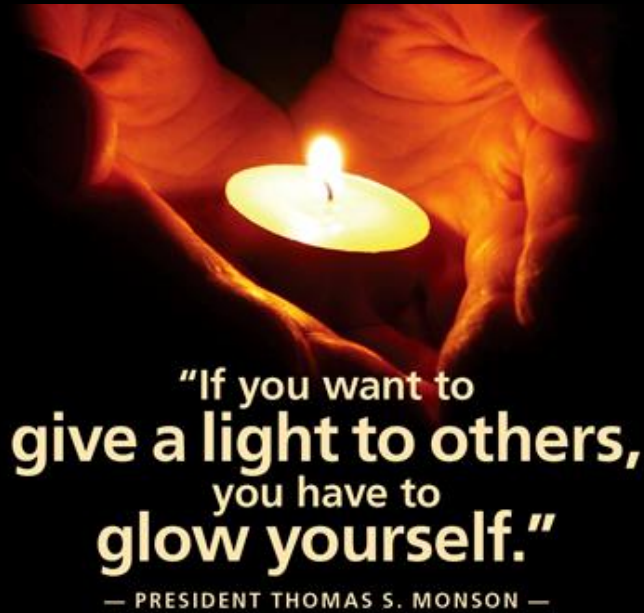
(Ansley et al., 2021; Ansley & Wander, 2021)

- » Relationship to stress
- » Activation of relaxation response; opposition to stress response
- » Integrated strategies, based on energy psychology, often have quick results

The School Community

(Ansley, Blinder, Demere, Varjas, Benson, & Ogletree, 2019; Ansley, Houchins, & Varjas, 2019:)

- » School climate & supportive work context
 - Ecological model (school \leftrightarrow families, community)
 - Administrative support
 - Collegial support vs. competition
- » Trauma-Informed or Trauma-Sensitive Practices
 - Educators and psychological first aid
 - Restorative practices



**"If you want to
give a light to others,
you have to
glow yourself."**

— PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON —

A good
teacher is like
a candle — it
consumes
itself to light
the way for
others



Begin within: With which meme do you most identify?

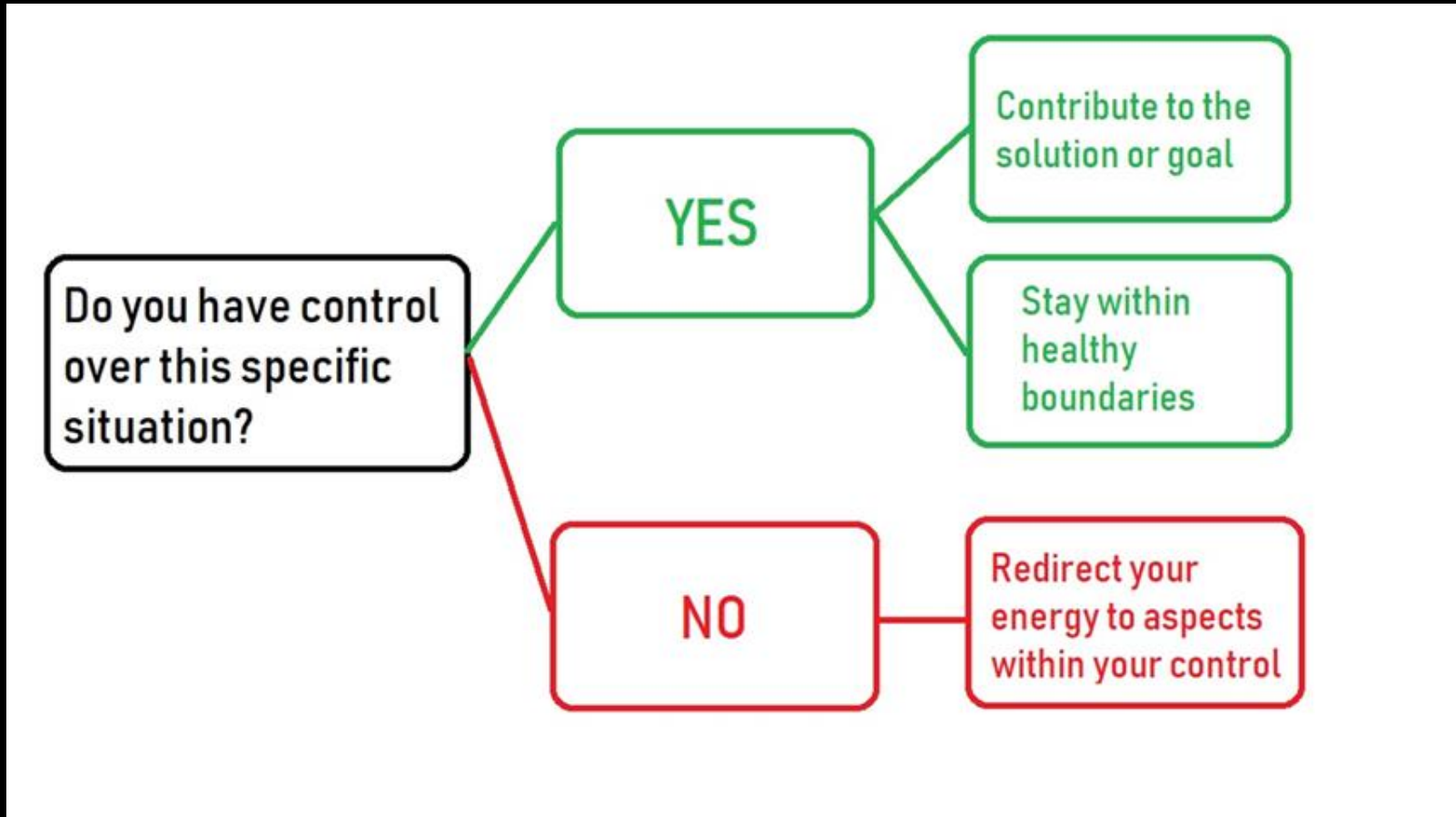
Rationale for Individual Focus

There is no **I** in TEAM

But there is **U** in
COMMUNITY

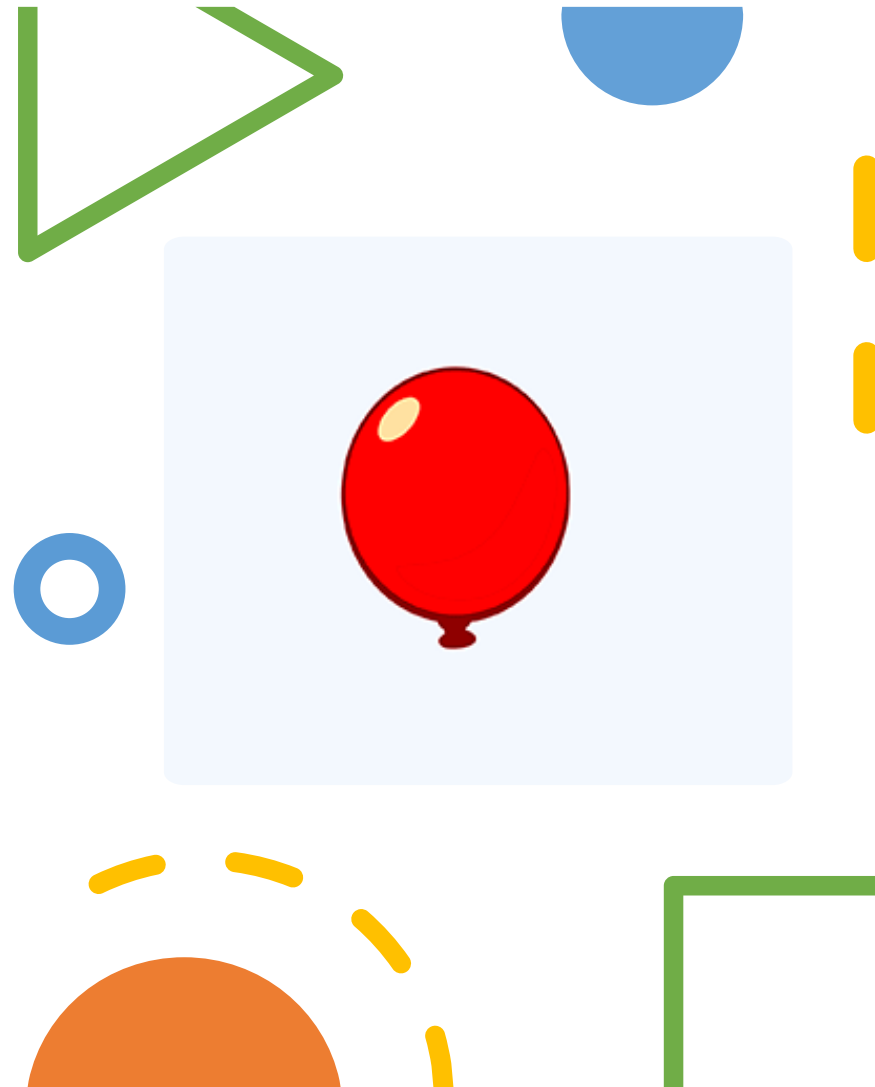
Empowerment: A Facilitator of Wellbeing

(Ansley et al., 2021; Ansley & Wander, 2021)



Giving Energy to the Uncontrollable

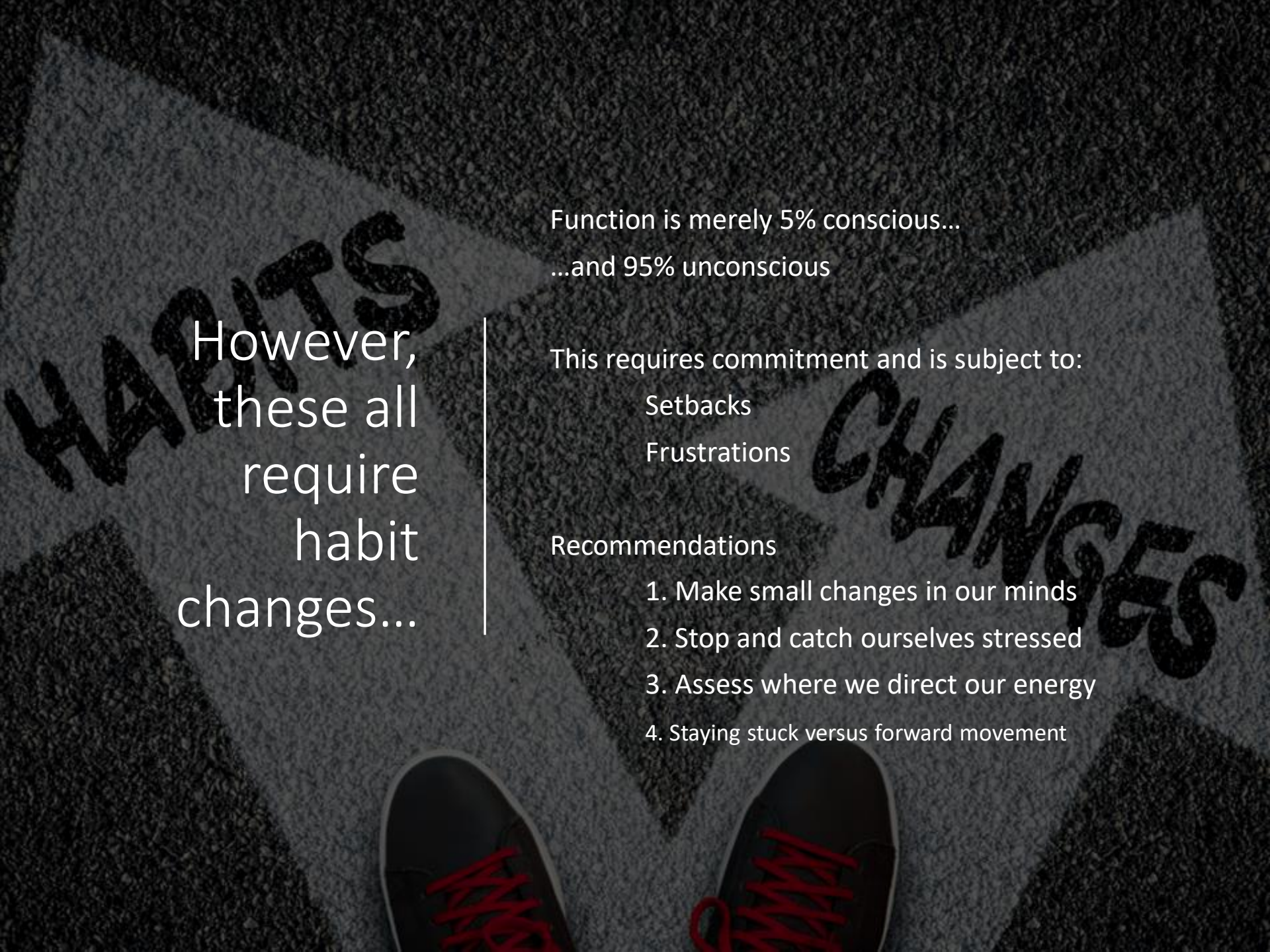
- Ruminating (mentally replaying an interaction or experience)
- Catastrophizing (preparing for the worst-case scenario)
- “Shoulding” yourself and others
- Self-concept is contingent upon others – what they think, what they say, competing with others, self-comparison
- Feelings and perceptions are attached to factors outside of oneself (how someone else behaves, desired outcomes)
- Need to rescue others, take responsibility for others’ wellbeing



Giving Energy to the Controllable

- Focusing on the present
- Living authentically
- Best effort within reasonable boundaries
- Gratitude
- Compassion and self-compassion
- How we treat, interact, and engage with others
- Hold space for others without taking ownership
- Ownership of one's own well-being





However,
these all
require
habit
changes...

Function is merely 5% conscious...
...and 95% unconscious

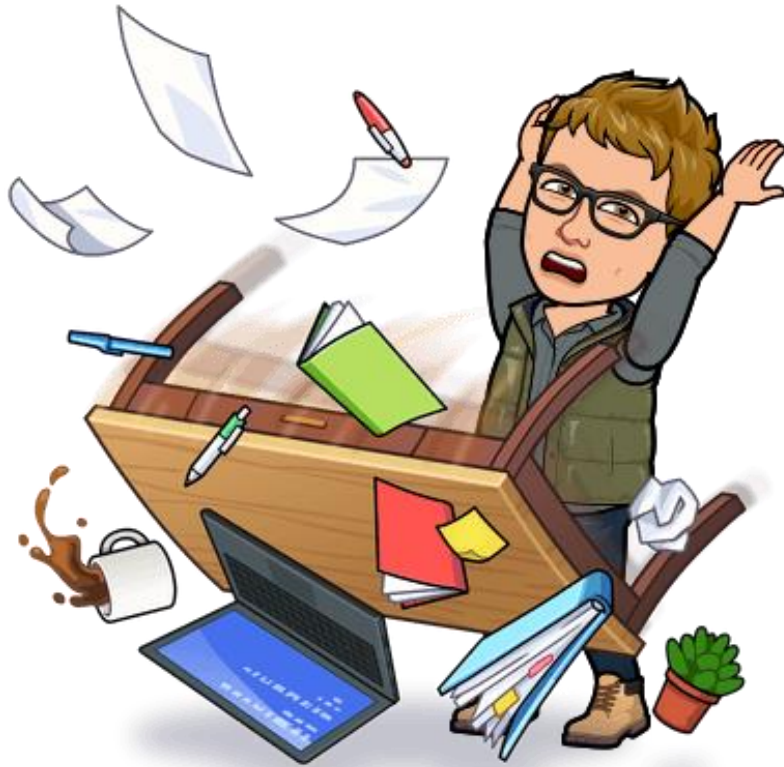
This requires commitment and is subject to:

Setbacks

Frustrations

Recommendations

1. Make small changes in our minds
2. Stop and catch ourselves stressed
3. Assess where we direct our energy
4. Staying stuck versus forward movement



Rapid Stress Response Reducers: Table of Anti-Stress Strategies

[LONG VERSION](#)

[SHORT VERSION](#)

Strategy Sampling

Research indicates many benefits of the following (stress, mood, anxiety, sleep)

Breathing technique

Rectangle breathing

Progressive muscle relaxation

Earthing

Forest Bathing

Information

Example

Beware of bold claims about memory, performance

Research supports the following for anxiety reduction and improved sleep

Brain Entrainment

Binaural beats

Monaural beats

Autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR)

“Oddly satisfying” videos

Any Remaining Questions?



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