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MIGRANT CLINICIANS NETWORK



# How to Support a Friend, Family Member or Colleague Who is Suffering in the Context of the Pandemic



Kaethe Weingarten, PhD

June 11, 2020

THE  
*witness to witness*  
PROGRAM



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**Sponsored by Migrant Clinicians Network**

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# CONTEXT OF THE PRESENT MOMENT

- COVID-19

- RACISM

Dual awareness. For self and other

- BOTH

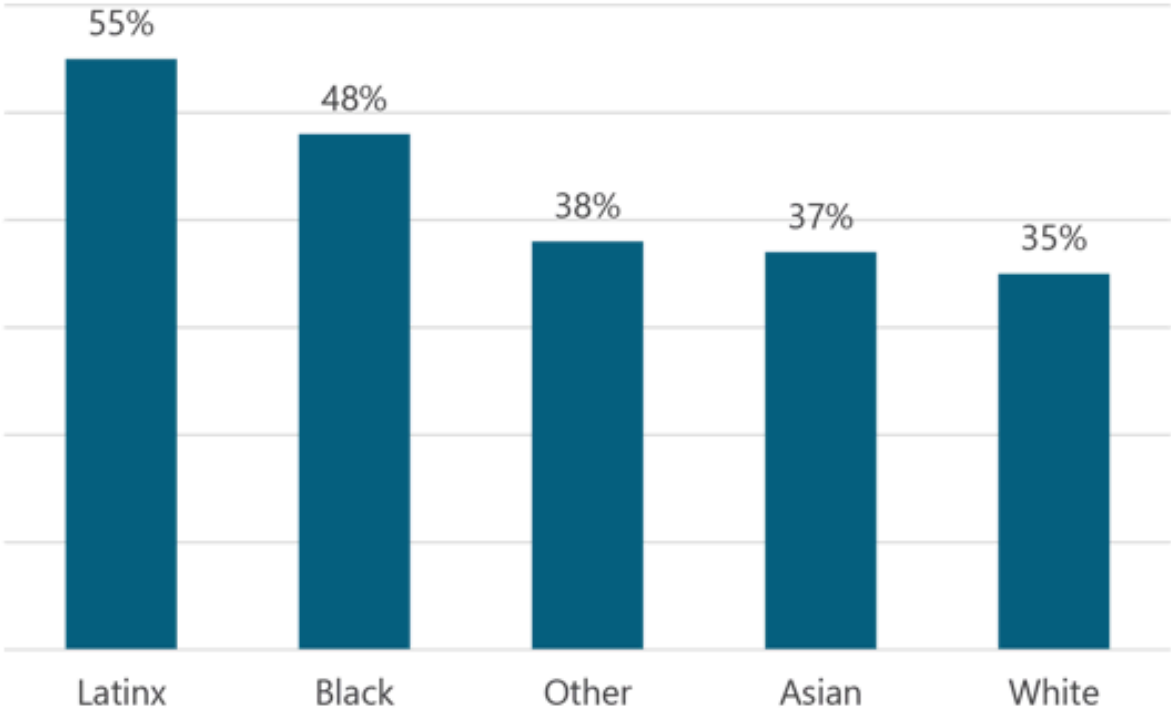
# RACIAL DISPARITIES IN WELL-BEING

- CRIMINAL JUSTICE: 6% OF POPULATION OF CA BUT 15% OF ALL STOPS AND 25% OF JAIL POPULATION AND 29% OF PRISON POPULATION
- HEALTH: TWICE THE RATE OF DEATH FROM COVID: WHY? RACISM
- INCOME AND WEALTH: TWICE WHITES AT LOW INCOME AND HALF WHITES AT HIGH INCOME. 8 TIMES LESS WEALTH THAN WHITES
- HIGHER UNEMPLOYMENT
- GAPS WITH WHITE STUDENTS IN ACADEMICS. EPIDEMIC FURTHERING DISPARITIES

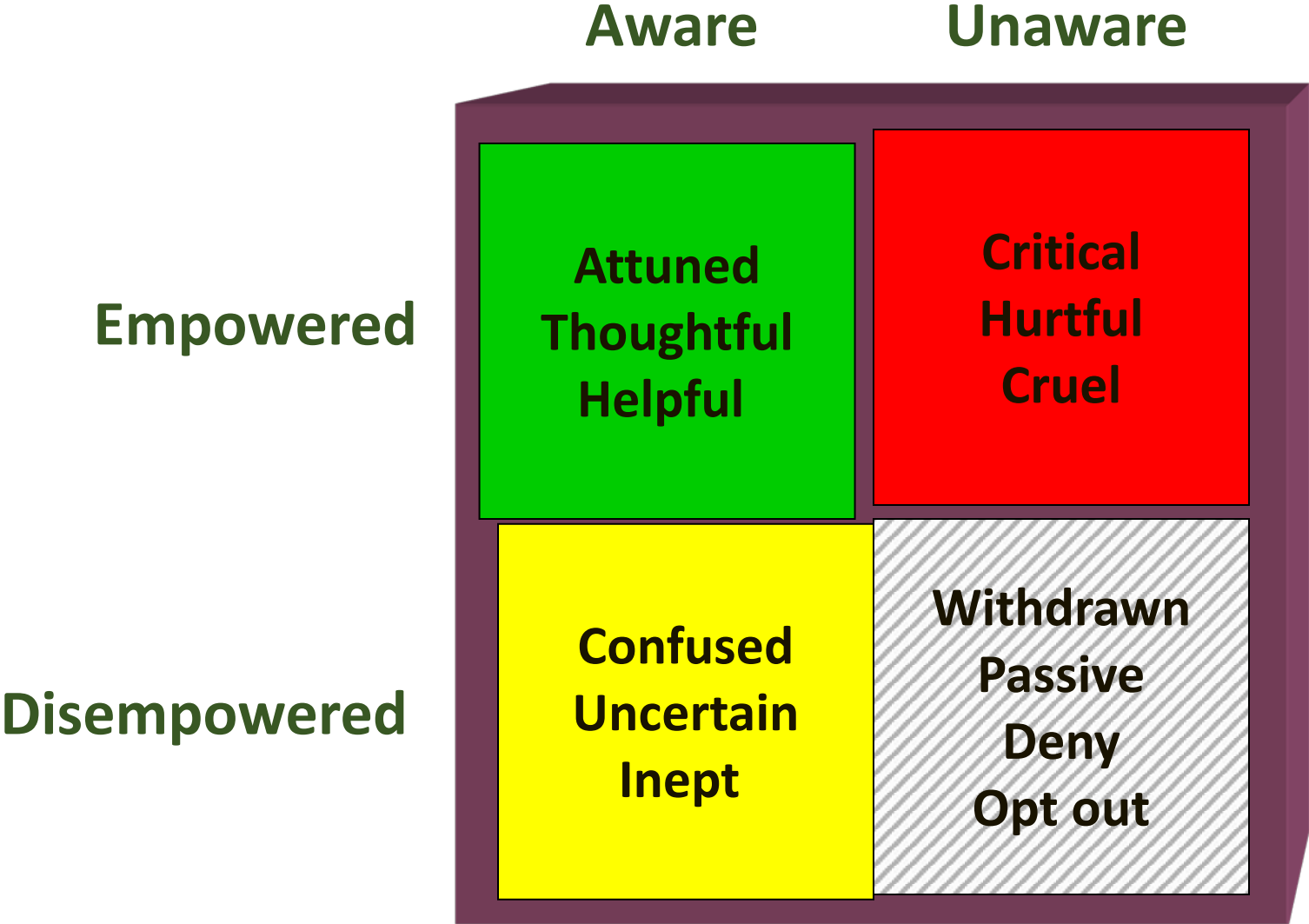
# Race and ethnicity

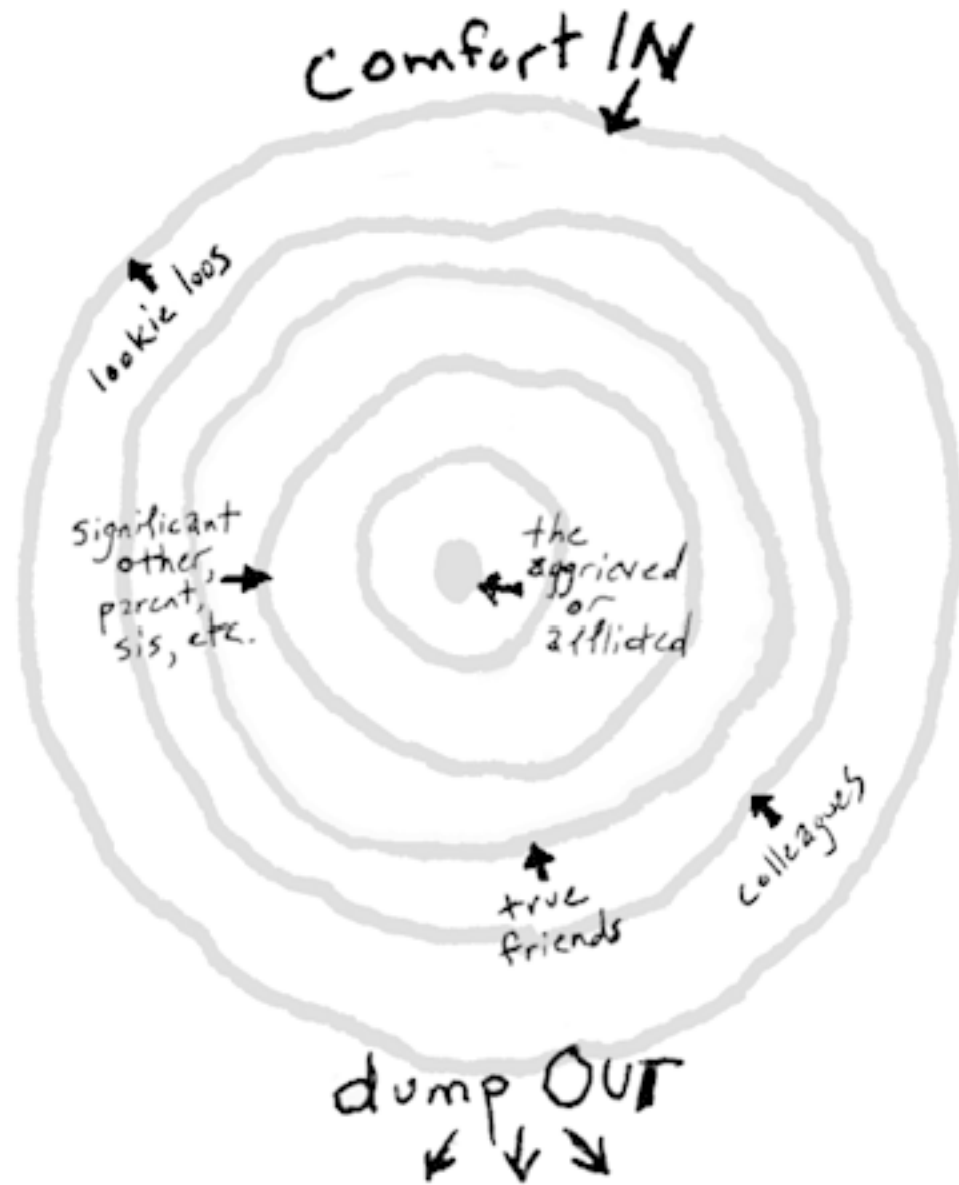
Figure 3 shows the percent of workers in California employed in front-line essential jobs broken down by race/ethnicity. Overall, Latinx workers have the highest rate of employment in these jobs (55 percent), followed by Black workers (48 percent). As a result, both groups likely face greater risk of exposure to the coronavirus in the workplace than other race/ethnic groups.

**Figure 3: Percent of workers employed in front-line essential jobs, by race and ethnicity, California 2018**



# Witness Positions







## Definition of Empathy

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Empathy refers to the capacity to understand and respond to the unique emotional experiences of another person.





# Four Different Psychological States

Imagining how one would think and feel in another's situation or "shoes."

Imagining how another person thinks or feels given his or her situation.

Feeling as another person feels.

Feeling for another person who is in need.


# Self vs Other

Imagining how another person feels and  
Imagining how one would feel in a  
particular situation are distinctly different  
forms of perspective-taking that likely carry  
different emotional consequences.

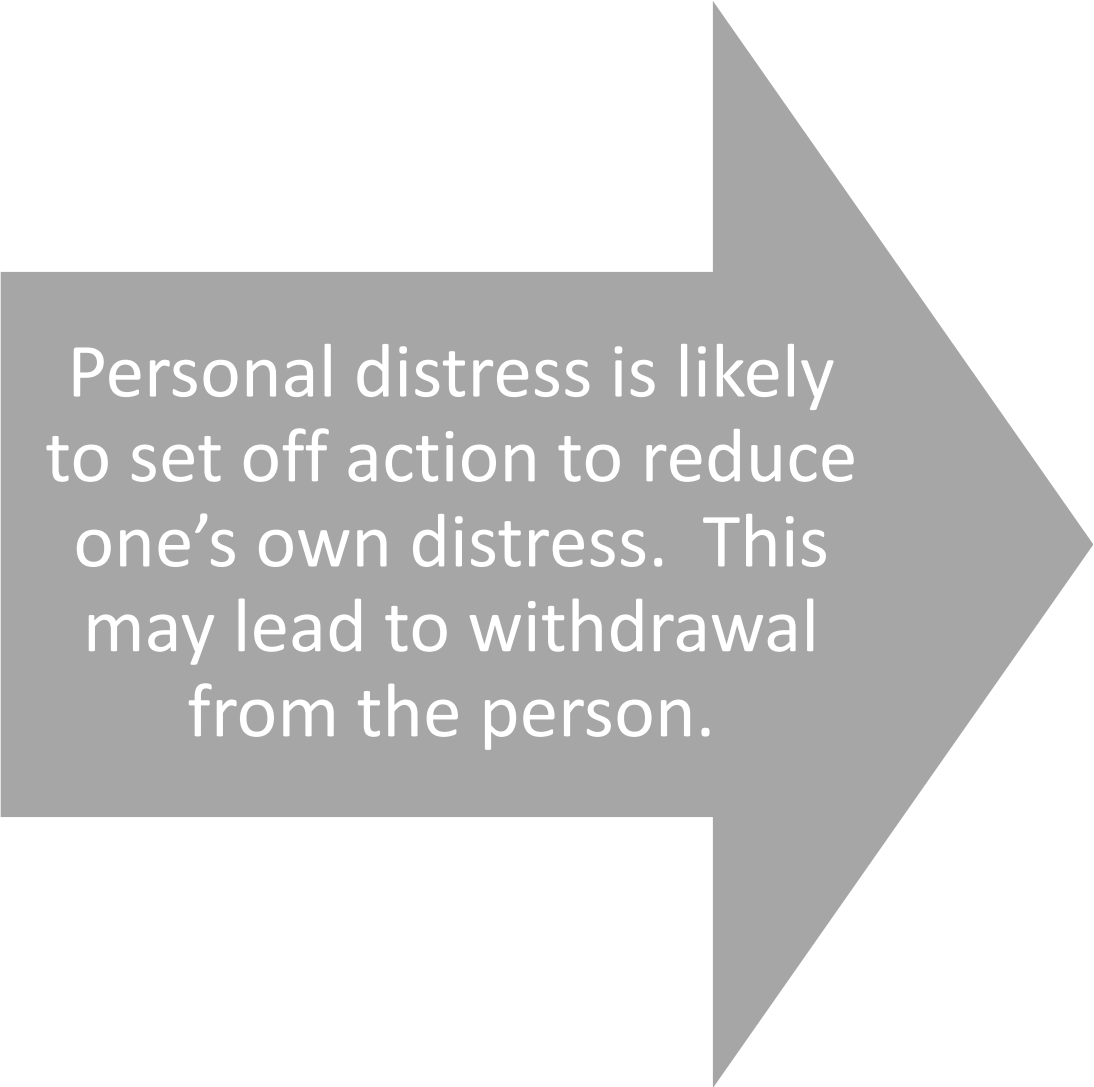


Imagining how another person feels evokes  
empathic concern  
Imagining how one  
would feel in a particular situation induces  
both empathic concern and personal  
distress

# Empathic Concern vs Personal Distress



Empathic concern is likely to inspire a desire to help the other person



Personal distress is likely to set off action to reduce one's own distress. This may lead to withdrawal from the person.

# Compassion Fatigue?

- Compassion doesn't fatigue.
- Empathy can turn into personal distress and that does get to be too much.





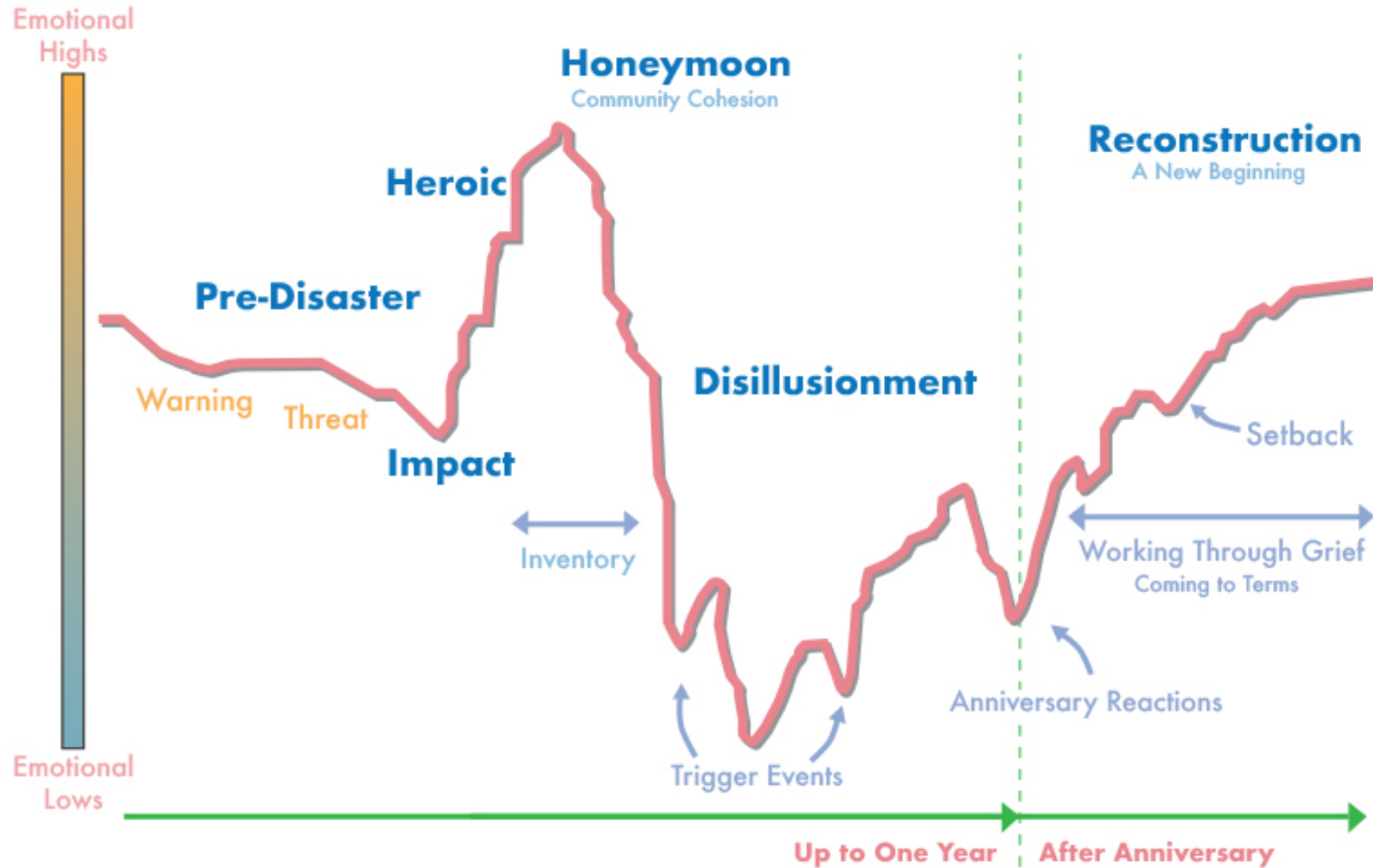
# Compassion

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1. An awareness of suffering
2. A caring and tender concern
3. A genuine wish to see the relief of that suffering
4. A responsiveness or readiness to take action in some way to relieve that suffering



# Phases of Disaster





# Four Causes of Stress Injury

## Life Threat

### ***A traumatic injury***

Due to the experience of or exposure to intense injury, horrific or gruesome experiences, or death.

## Loss

### ***A grief injury***

Due to the loss of people, things or parts of oneself.

## Inner Conflict

### ***A moral injury***

Due to behaviors or the witnessing of behaviors that violate moral values.

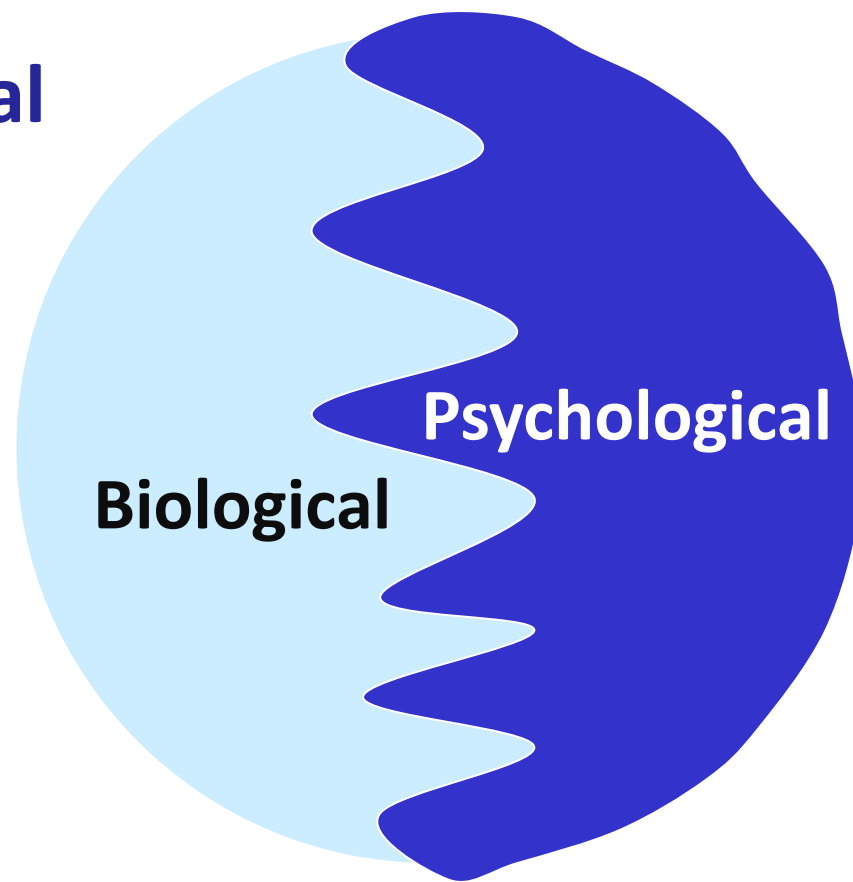
## Wear and Tear

### ***A fatigue injury***

Due to the accumulation of stress from all sources over time without sufficient rest and recovery.

**Interpersonal**

**Spiritual**



**Individual**

# Sensations in the Body

- Clamminess or chilliness
- Exaggerated startle
- Fear responses to non-threatening stimuli
- Hyper-arousal
- Hyper-vigilance
- Lethargy
- Muscle aches and pains
- Numbness
- Poor concentration
- Rapid heartbeat
- Spacey feeling
- Sweating
- Tingling
- Sudden cold or hot

# Psychological Experiences

- Aggression
  - Anger
  - Disbelief
  - Fear
  - Grief
  - Guilt
  - Helplessness
- Memory alterations
  - Numbing
  - Rage
  - Sadness
  - Shame
  - Vulnerability
  - Worry/ Anxiety

## Stress Indicators

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Change in eating habits</li><li>• Change in weight</li><li>• Loss of will power</li><li>• Losing interest / apathy</li><li>• Can't hold a conversation</li><li>• Excessive guilt</li><li>• Taking lots of time off</li><li>• Drinking more</li><li>• Conflict in relationships</li><li>• Fatigue / more sleep</li><li>• Don't give self break (leaders)</li><li>• Changes in relationships</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Loss of control</li><li>• No longer feeling like self</li><li>• Can't get tasks done</li><li>• Can't think clearly</li><li>• Things excessively piling up</li><li>• Isolating self</li><li>• Feeling overly busy, hurried</li><li>• Physical changes</li><li>• Going through the motions</li><li>• Memory problems</li><li>• Post traumatic stress symptoms</li><li>• Depressive or anxiety symptoms</li></ul> |
|--|--|

## Potential Covid-19 Stress Reaction Examples

### **Anxiety** about:

- One's health or wellbeing
- Others' health or wellbeing

### **Grief/Depression** about lost:

- Lives
- Health
- Time
- Income / resources
- Abilities / beliefs / attitudes / values
- Connection Affection
- Plans

### **Confidence** level drops about:

- Being able to function
- The systems one is in / affected by

### **Helplessness**:

- Feeling loss of control
- Being exhausted / not as able to function





Potential  
Covid-19  
Stress  
Reaction  
Examples

**Anger** about:

- Perceiving that others' actions put self or others in harm's way

**Guilt** about:

- Fears of illness, loss of resources, or death for themselves or family/friends
- Not *being able* to do as much as one wants to
- Not *wanting* to work/care for others because of fears
- Not doing enough because of *not feeling* empathy
- Not coping as well as one wants to / feels one should





## Moral Injury: Potential Pandemic Causes

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Life and death triage or resource decisions

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Knowing that under different circumstances, a person's life could/may have been saved

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Not wanting to show up for work or volunteer for dangerous rotations / assignments

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Work duties affecting one's family

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Witnessing perceived unjustifiable acts that one feels powerless to confront

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NOT feeling as much empathy or compassion as one usually feels

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Surviving when others are dying

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Not being able to save a *particular* patient



## Why Is Support Necessary?

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- When someone has a traumatic injury, loss injury, moral injury, or fatigue injury they can become less functional or even dysfunctional
- These are all forms of suffering.
- It's often hard for someone who is suffering to recognize that they are suffering
- And if they do recognize it, it may be hard to ask for help



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## Why would it be hard to ask for help?

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- The helper shouldn't need help
- I help others; I don't ask for help.
- You will think less of me if I ask for help.
- Others need help more than I do
- What else have you heard?



# Stress Continuum

Ready	Reacting	Injured	III
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Good to go</li><li>• Well trained</li><li>• Prepared</li><li>• Fit and tough</li><li>• Cohesive units, ready families</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Distress or impairment</li><li>• Mild, transient</li><li>• Anxious or irritable</li><li>• Behavior change</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More-severe or persistent distress or impairment</li><li>• Leaves lasting evidence (personality change)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stress injuries that do not heal without intervention</li><li>• Diagnosable<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– PTSD</li><li>– Depression</li><li>– Anxiety</li><li>– Addictive disorder</li></ul></li></ul>

*Nash, W. P. (2011). US Marine Corps and Navy combat and operational stress continuum model: A tool for leaders. Combat and operational behavioral health, 107-119.*

# Essential SFA Skills

## Recognize

Recognize when a peer has a stress injury

## Act

If you see something, say something

- To the distressed person
- To a trusted support of the distressed person

## Know

Know at least 2 trusted resources you would offer to a peer in distress





## Factors in Recovery From Adversity and Stress



What do you foster safety?

Safety

Self-Efficacy

How do you help them feel they can cope or persevere?

Calm

What do you do to encourage calm?

Connectedness

What do you do to help them get connected?


Hope

How do you help them to have more hope?

Stress First Aid: Helping Others



## Check: Indicators of Orange Zone Stress Reactions

- **Not feeling in control**
  - **Loss of cognitive abilities**
  - **Intense feelings**
  - **Feeling numb**
  - **Inability to engage**
  - **Sleep changes**
  - **Avoidance**
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Significant and/or persistent negative changes in behavior / habits

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Uncharacteristic behavior

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Making more mistakes

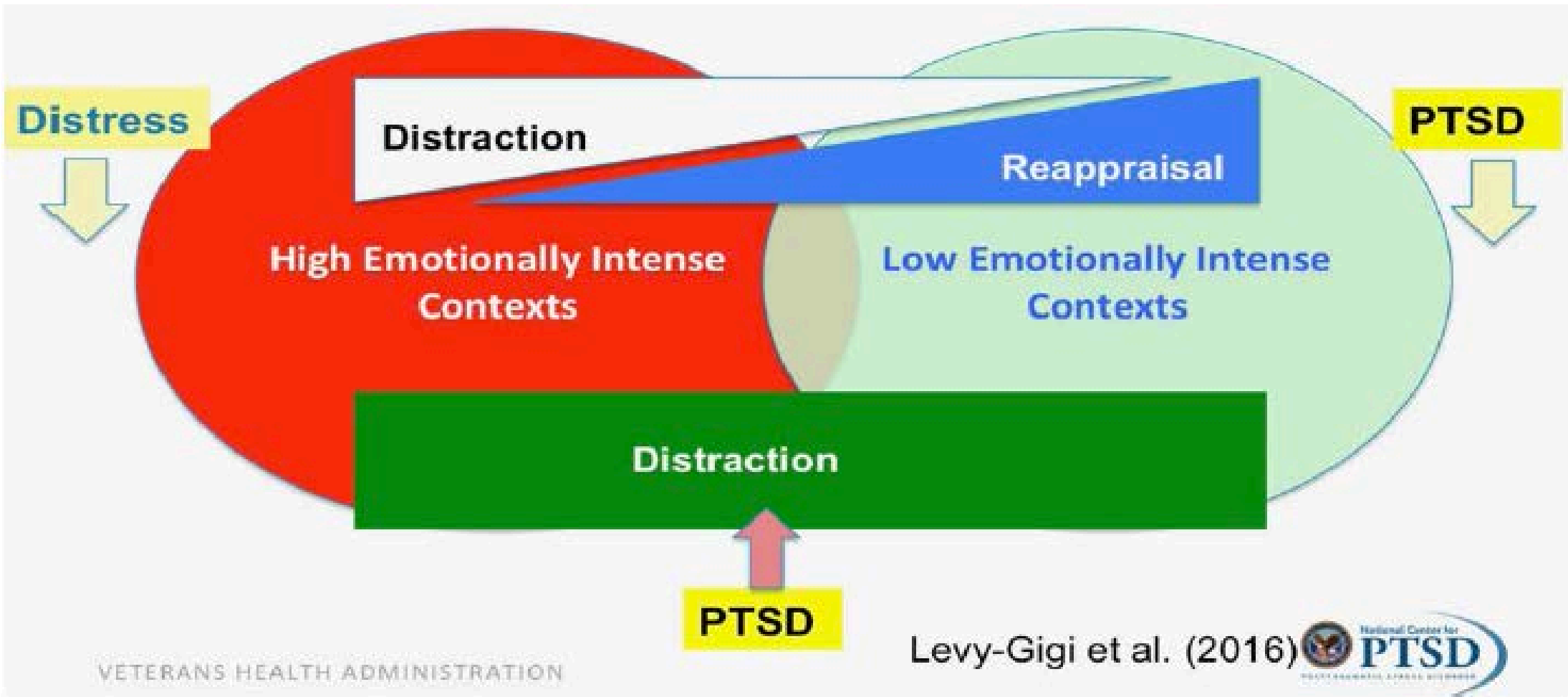
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Becoming more isolated from others

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Compulsive behavior





This research has shown that **In emotionally intense contexts, distraction appears to more successfully reduce negativity and distress** via blocking emotional information processing with independent neutral thoughts.

However, once an individual is **in less emotionally intense contexts, distraction and reappraisal can reduce negativity, but only reappraisal allows for emotional processing**, which is important for long-term adaptation.

**If a person doesn't also use reappraisal to process what has happened to them emotionally, they are more likely to have symptoms of PTSD in the long run.**



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## The common disengagement strategies firefighters use include:

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- Disengaging attention from emotional processing
- Directing attention away from emotional information with neutral thoughts
- Focusing on work
- Helping Others
- Drinking
- Talking about other things
- Humor
- Engaging activities







# Reappraisal Strategies that Focus on the Traumatic Event

- Reducing normal social obligations
- Spending time alone
- Remembering the details of the event
- Letting self fully experience the painful emotions linked with the event
- Fully experiencing the event's cognitive and emotional significance
- Reflecting on the meaning of the event
- Integrating the event into their self-concept
- Reminding themselves why they do the work even if it is hard



# Reappraisal Strategies that Have a Forward Focus

- Caring for others
- Reducing painful emotions
- Focusing on the fact that even if one was in a life-threatening situation, when they get triggered by reminders, they are now safe
- Reminding self that things will get better
- Staying focused on current goals and plans
- Keeping schedule and activities as constant as possible
- Enjoying something one would normally find funny or amusing
- Keeping self calm

**RESILIENCE**



# Everyone Has Strengths in a Crisis

**What is your strength?**

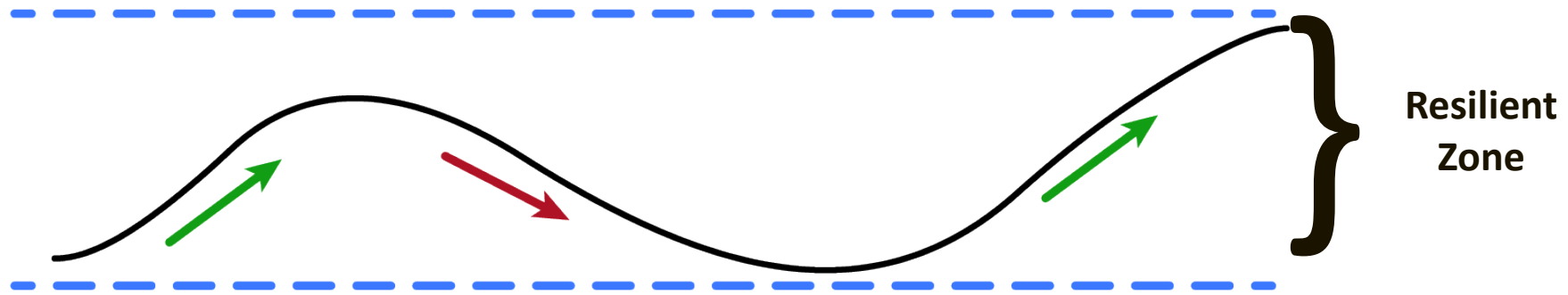
**Here are some examples:**

Planning, Responsive to others, Compassion, Spirituality, Faith, Caring, Resistance, Altruism, Mindfulness, Humor, Good Communication, Self-Awareness, Creativity, Finding meaning, Sense of purpose, Flexibility, Resourcefulness, Empathy, Insight, Logical thinking, Imagination

# Traumatic / Stressful Event

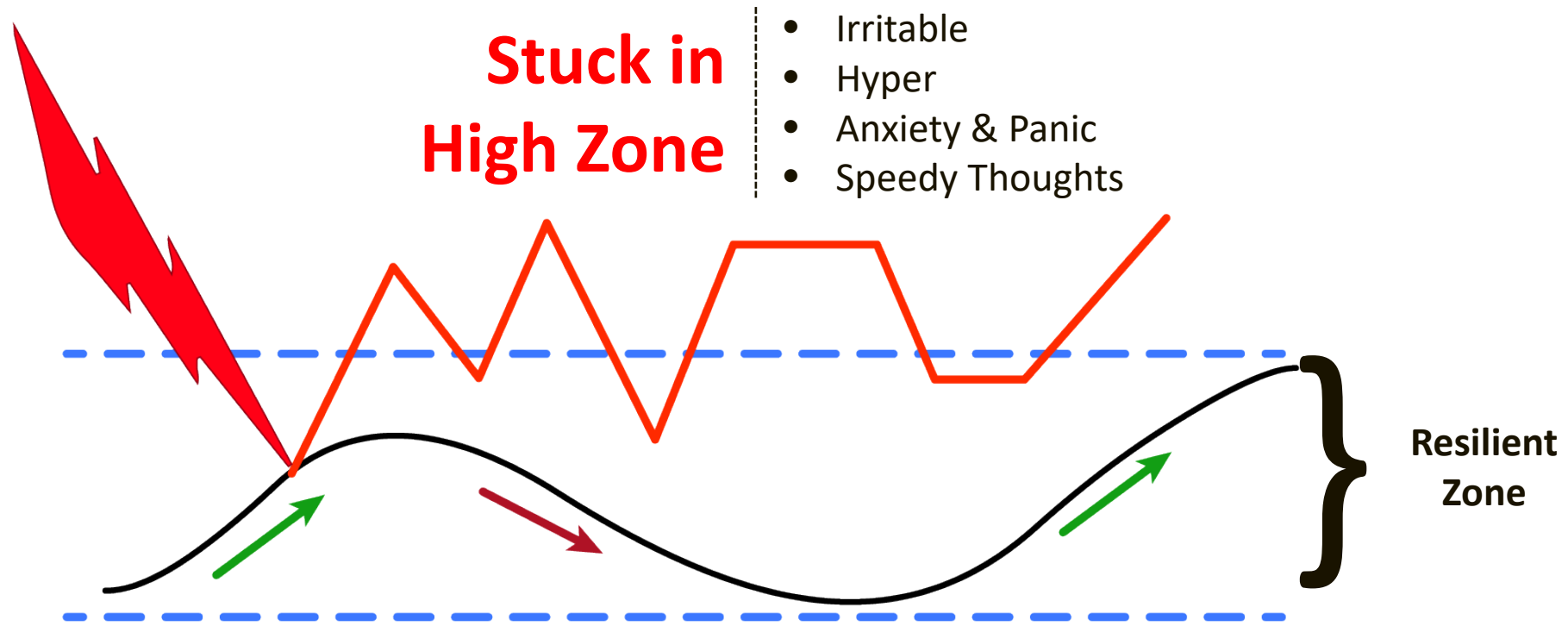


# Traumatic / Stressful Event



Adapted from the Trauma Resiliency Model Workbook written by Elaine Miller-Karas, LCSW and Laurie Leitch, Ph.D.

# Traumatic / Stressful Event

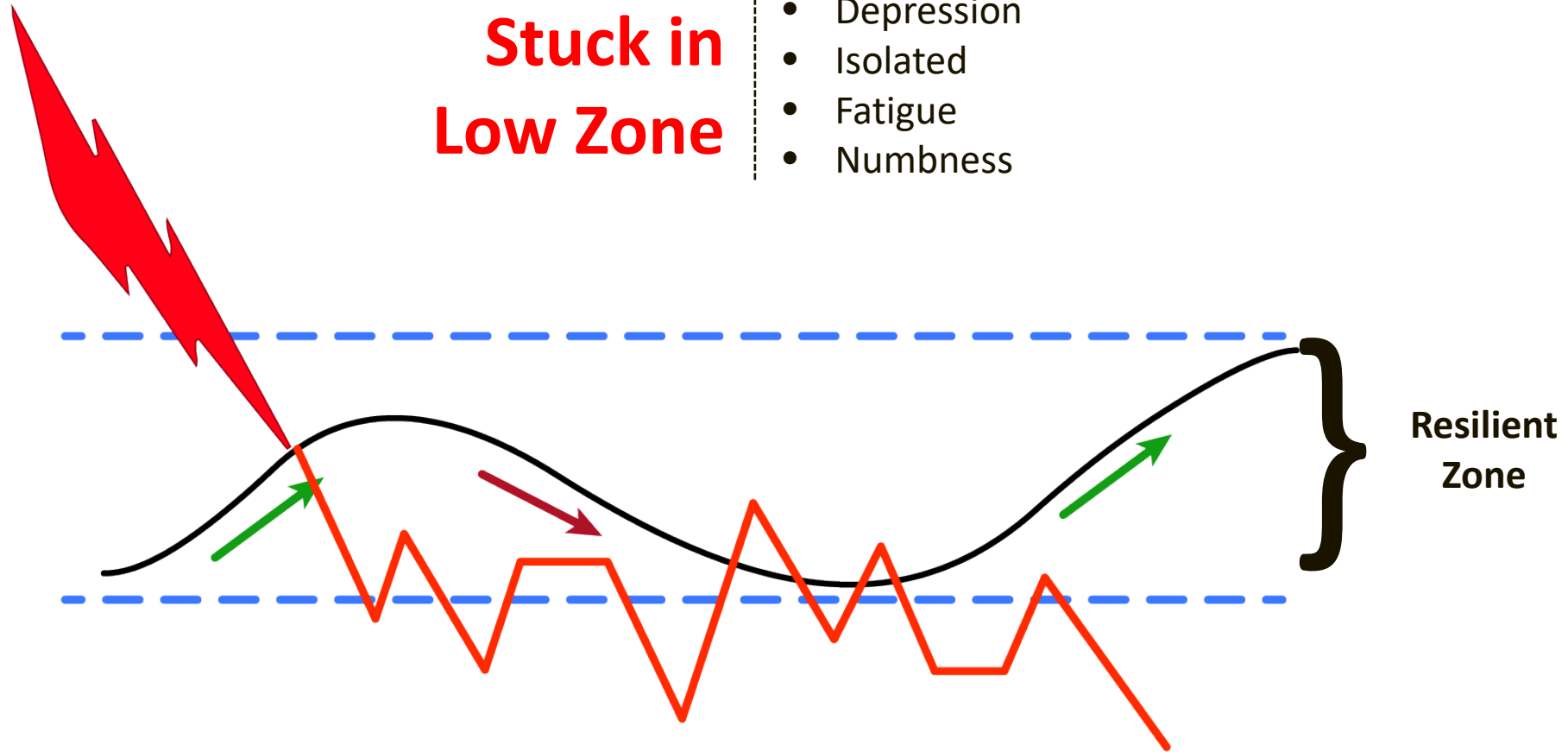




# Traumatic / Stressful Event

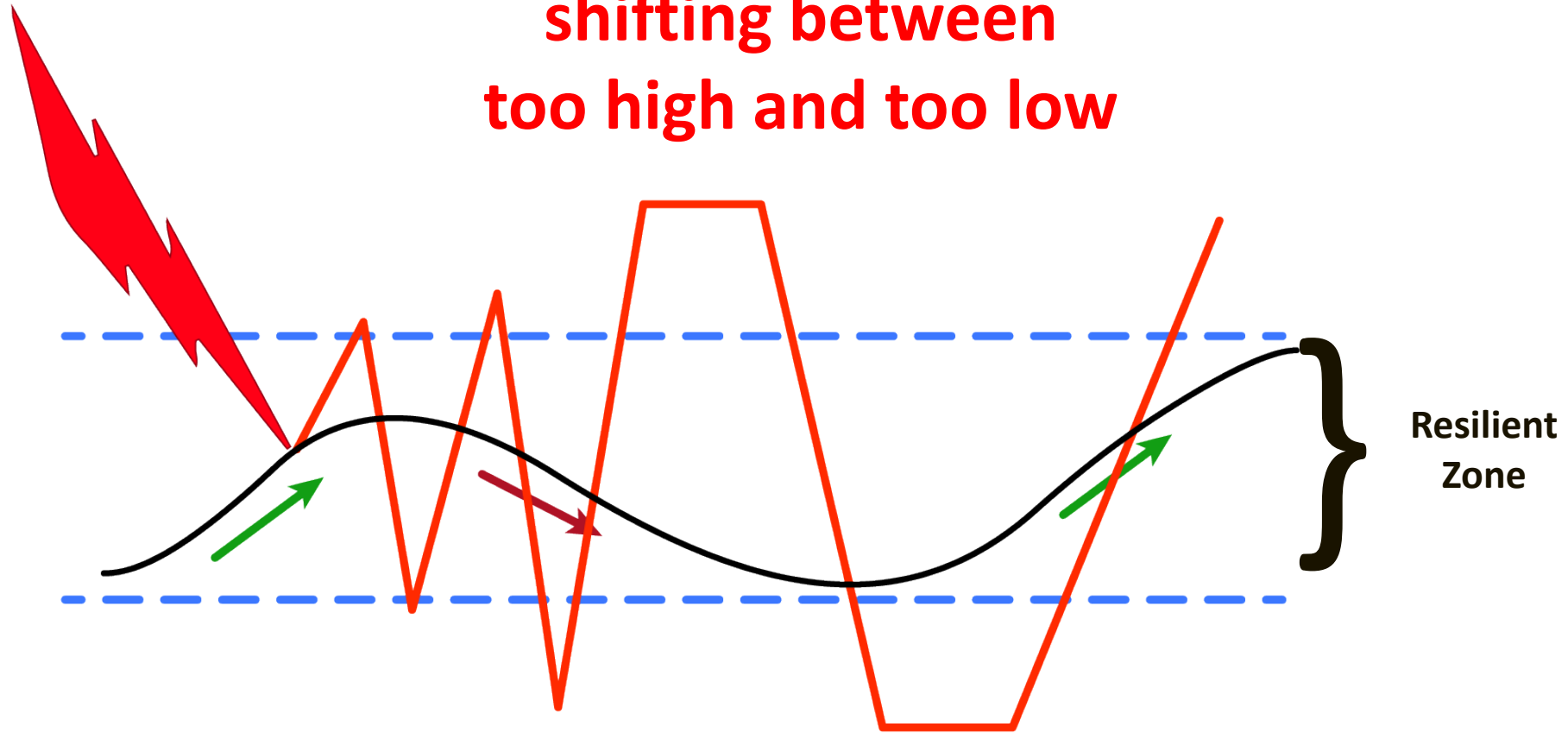
**Stuck in  
Low Zone**

- Depression
- Isolated
- Fatigue
- Numbness



# Traumatic / Stressful Event

shifting between  
too high and too low



# Resource List



- Breathing
- Butterfly hug
- Call someone
- Music
- Nature, running water
- Healthy comfort food
- Prayer

# Resource List



- Breathing
- Kicking a ball
- Exercise
- Music
- Healthy comfort food
- Call someone
- Prayer

# Resource List



- Breathing
- Meditate
- Call someone
- Yoga
- Nature
- Cook
- Nap

## National Estimates of Additional Deaths of Despair

We combined information about a) 2018 baseline deaths of despair (n=181,686) projected levels of unemployment from 2020 to 2029 and c) we estimate the annual number of deaths based on the three selected multipliers and three recovery rate estimates. Across the nine different scenarios, the additional deaths of despair range from 27,644 (quick recovery, smallest impact of unemployment on deaths of despair) to 154,037 (slow recovery, greatest impact of unemployment on deaths of despair). If recovery is four times as fast as that of the Great Recession, additional deaths will accumulate over four years compared to 10 years if recovery is the same as that of the Great Recession. When considering the negative impact of isolation and uncertainty the 1.6% multiplier may be more accurate.

**Table. Possible Additional Deaths of COVID-19 Recession on Deaths of Despair, Alternative Scenarios**

	Percent Change in Mortality with One Point Increase in Unemployment								
	1% increase			1.3% increase			1.6% increase		
	Slow	Medium	Fast	Slow	Medium	Fast	Slow	Medium	Fast
2020	9,859	9,333	8,343	12,817	12,133	10,846	15,774	14,932	13,349
2021	18,347	16,103	12,209	23,851	20,934	15,871	29,355	25,765	19,534
2022	15,879	11,840	5,832	20,642	15,392	7,581	25,406	18,944	9,331
2023	13,410	8,025	1,261	17,434	10,433	1,639	21,457	12,841	2,017
2024	10,394	3,973	-	13,512	5,164	-	16,630	6,356	-
2025	7,651	870	-	9,947	1,131	-	12,242	1,392	-
2026	7,103	316	-	9,234	411	-	11,365	506	-
2027	5,732	-	-	7,451	-	-	9,171	-	-
2028	4,086	-	-	5,312	-	-	6,538	-	-
2029	3,812	-	-	4,956	-	-	6,099	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>96,273</b>	<b>50,460</b>	<b>27,644</b>	<b>125,155</b>	<b>65,598</b>	<b>35,937</b>	<b>154,037</b>	<b>80,735</b>	<b>44,230</b>

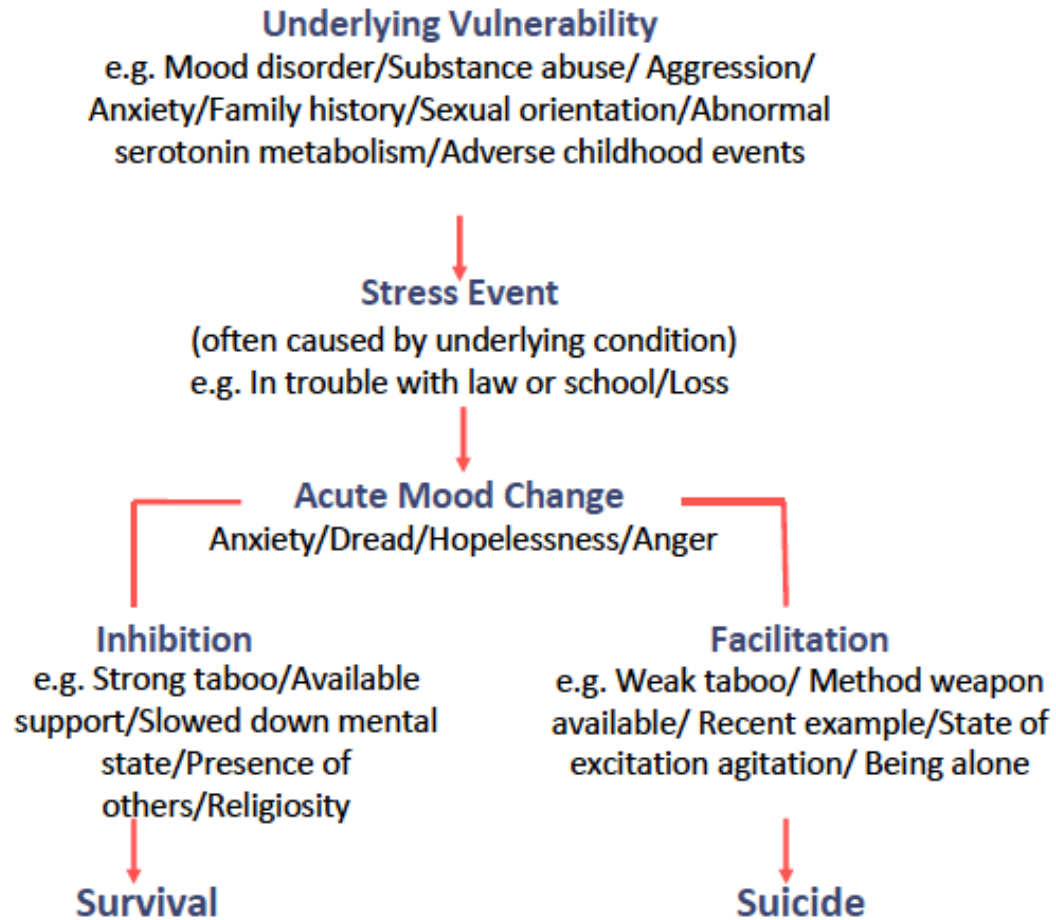
Types of Recovery: Slow—Same as Great Recession; Medium—Twice as Fast; Fast—Four Times as fast.



# Case and Deaton, June 1, 2020

“But a wave of deaths of despair is highly unlikely. Recessions are immensely costly because they disrupt people’s lives, deprive them of work and income, and inhibit many of the activities that make life worth living. We need to find safe ways of getting back to work. But we should not scare ourselves with nightmares about tens of thousands of additional suicides or drug overdoses”

# How does a suicide occur?



SOURCE: Gould, Madelyn, 2012

## Reflective Comments



"It sounds like..."



"From what you're saying, I can see how you would be...."



"It sounds like you're saying...."



"You seem really...."



Make sure your reflections are correct by using sentences like:

"Tell me if I'm wrong ... it sounds like you ..."

"Am I right when I say that you ..."

## Supportive Comments

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"No wonder you feel..."

---

"It sounds really hard..."

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"It sounds like you're being hard on yourself..."

---

"It is such a tough thing to go through something like this."

---

"I'm really sorry this is such a tough time for you."

---

"We can talk more later if you'd like..."

## Do's for Building a Connection

### Do:

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Find an uninterrupted time and place to talk

---

Show interest, attention, and care

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Show respect for individual ways of coping

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Talk about reactions that are to be expected, and about healthy ways of coping

---

Acknowledge that stress can be hard

---

Be free of expectations or judgments

---

Help brainstorm positive ways of coping

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Convey your belief in their ability to handle what is in front of them

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Offer to talk or spend time together as many times as is needed

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# Help Someone Have Self-Compassion

They can place their hand on their heart or cheek in a gentle way

Say to themselves:

- This is really hard
- This is part of life
- You are not alone in this

You want to encourage them to hold their suffering with kindness







## Helpful Self- Talk around Self-Care

- “Taking a break from this work will help me be more effective.”
- “Even though I feel fine I need to pace myself.”
- “I can better care for others if I also attend to my needs.”
- “I’m doing enough.”
- “I can contribute the most by pacing myself.”
- “Letting someone know how affected I am can help me.”
- “I can trust that others can fill in when it’s necessary.”



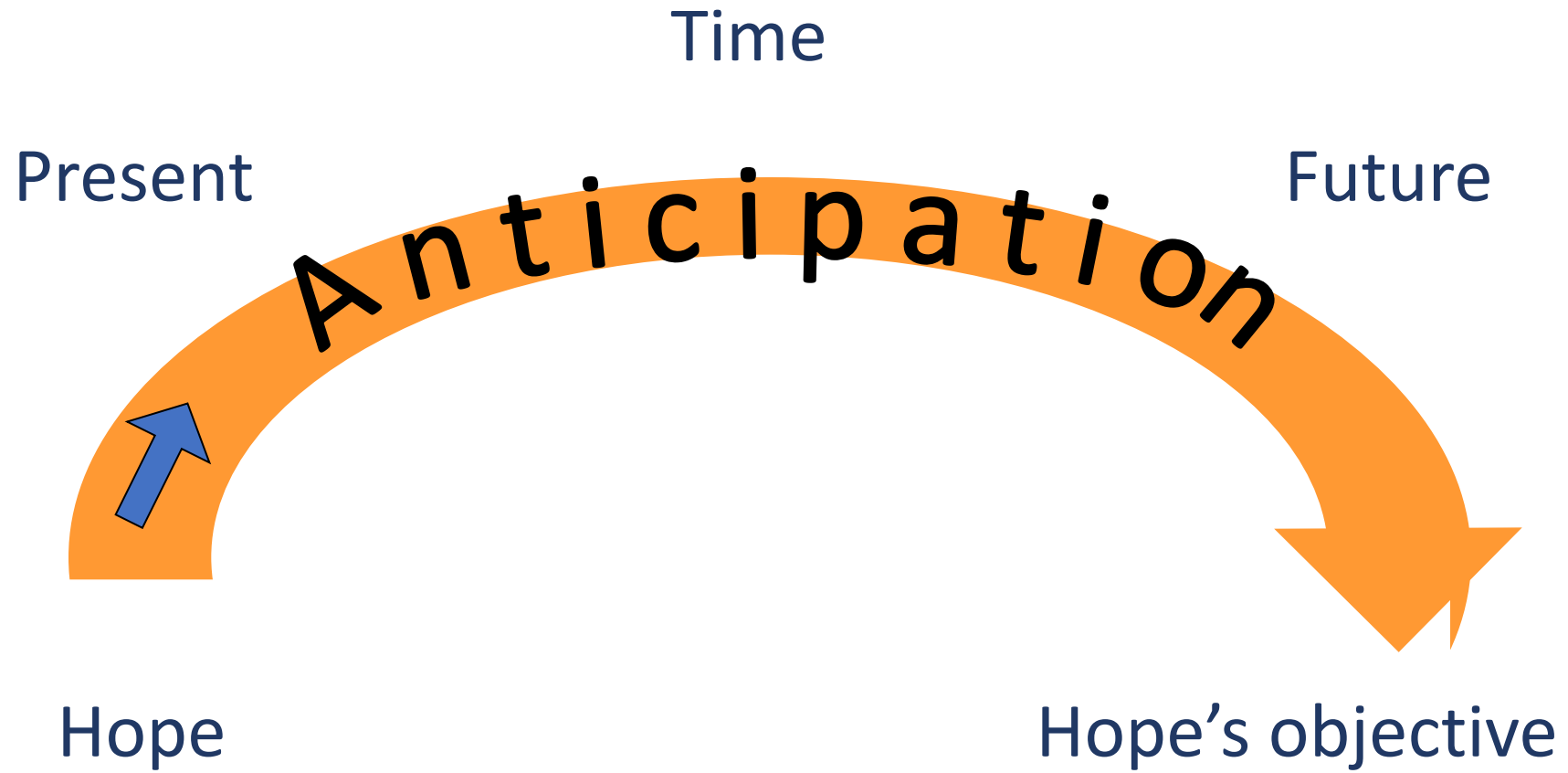


# REASONABLE HOPE

HOPE IS SOMETHING WE DO TOGETHER







# Rainbow Hope



# REASONABLE HOPE

Making Sense of the Present NOW



## Characteristics of Reasonable Hope

- It is relational
- It is a practice
- Maintains the future is open, uncertain and influenceable
- Accommodates doubt, contradictions and despair
- Seeks goals and pathways to them





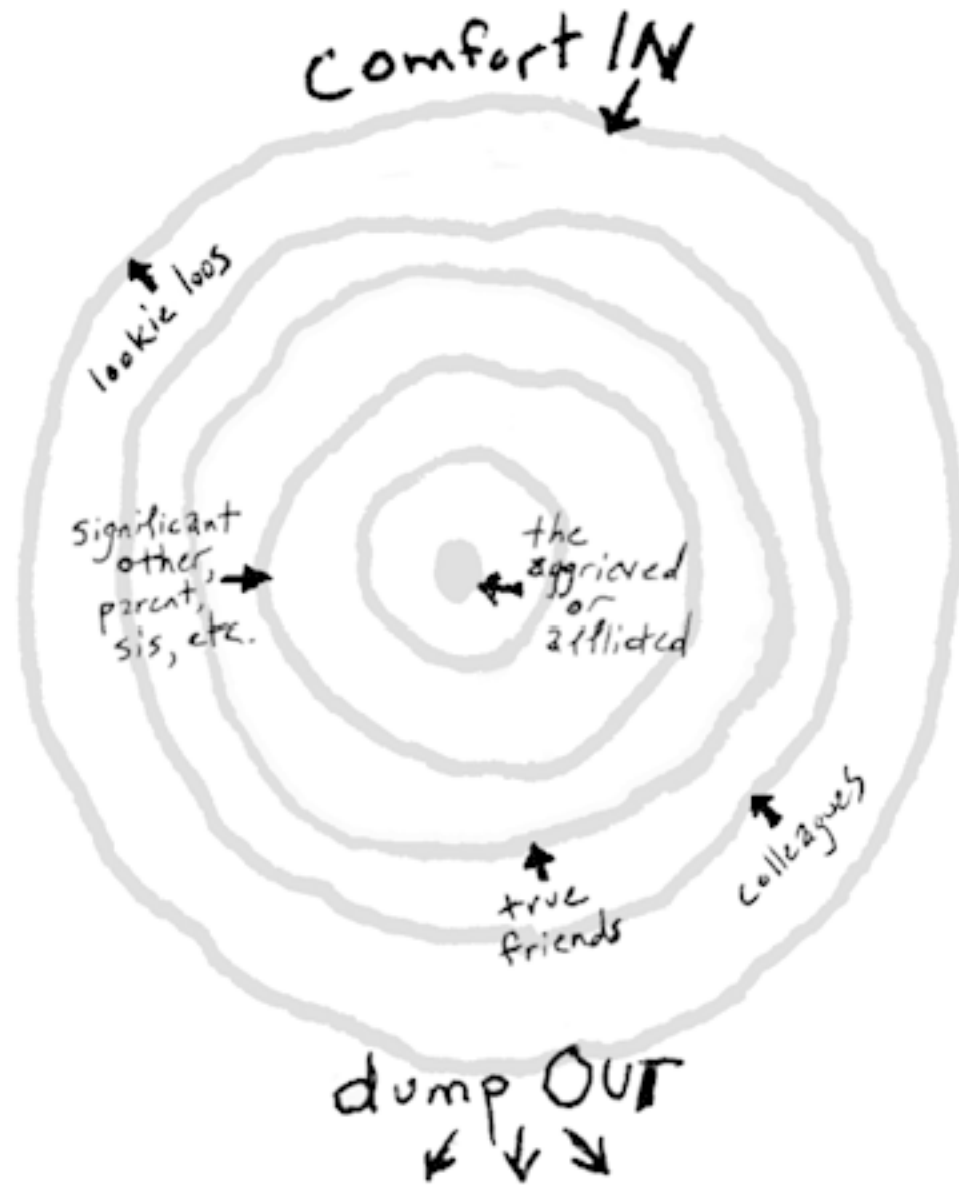
—  
**Believe the small  
is not trivial**

---

...And actions have  
ripple effects  
outward







# Life challenges are catalysts for the development of wisdom

These five resources are key to the development of wisdom:

- *Managing* uncertainty and uncontrollability
- *Openness* to viewing situations from multiple perspectives
- *Reflectivity* as the motivation to think about complex issues in a complex way.
- *Emotional sensitivity and regulation*
- *Empathy* as taking the needs of others and the common good into account

# Useful Resources



National Suicide Prevention Lifeline  
Chat online)

(Call or

[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

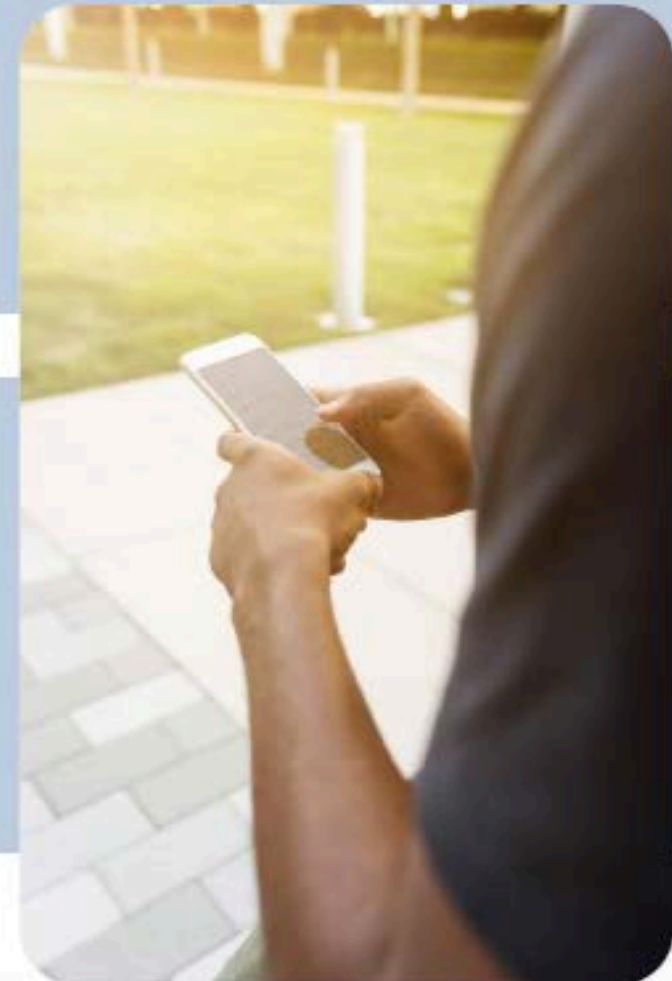
1-800-273-TALK (8255)



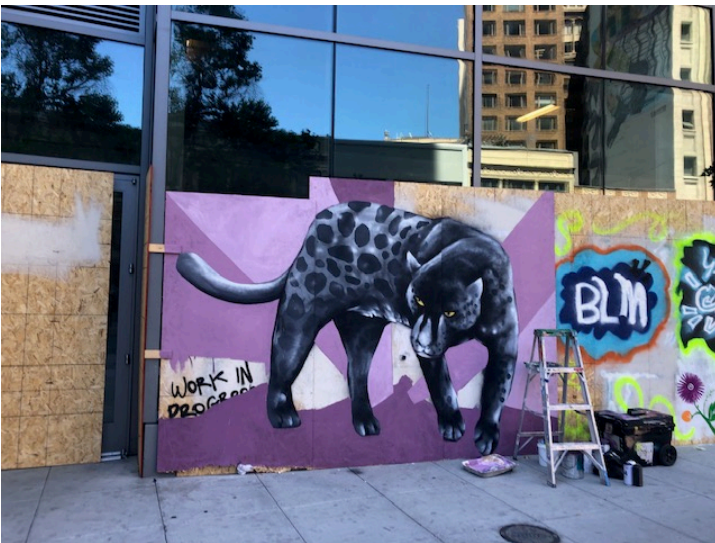
Crisis Text Line

[www.crisistextline.org](http://www.crisistextline.org)

Text CONNECT to 741741









# Useful Resources



**National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention**

[www.actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/](http://www.actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/)



**American Association of Suicidology's Survivors' Support Group Directory**

[www.suicidology.org/web/guest/support-group-directory](http://www.suicidology.org/web/guest/support-group-directory)



**AFSP American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**

[www.afsp.org/](http://www.afsp.org/)



**IASP Suicide Survivor Organizations (listed by country)**

[www.iasp.info/resources/Postvention/National\\_Suicide\\_Survivor\\_Organizations/](http://www.iasp.info/resources/Postvention/National_Suicide_Survivor_Organizations/)



**Suicide Prevention Resource Center**

[www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)



**ZERO Suicide in Health and Behavioral Health Care**

[www.zerosuicide.sprc.org](http://www.zerosuicide.sprc.org)



THE  
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PROGRAM



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