



2024 NAPA PRIMARY CARE CONFERENCE

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Marriott Hotel, Napa, CA

# Thriving with Stress

The New Science of Stress Resilience

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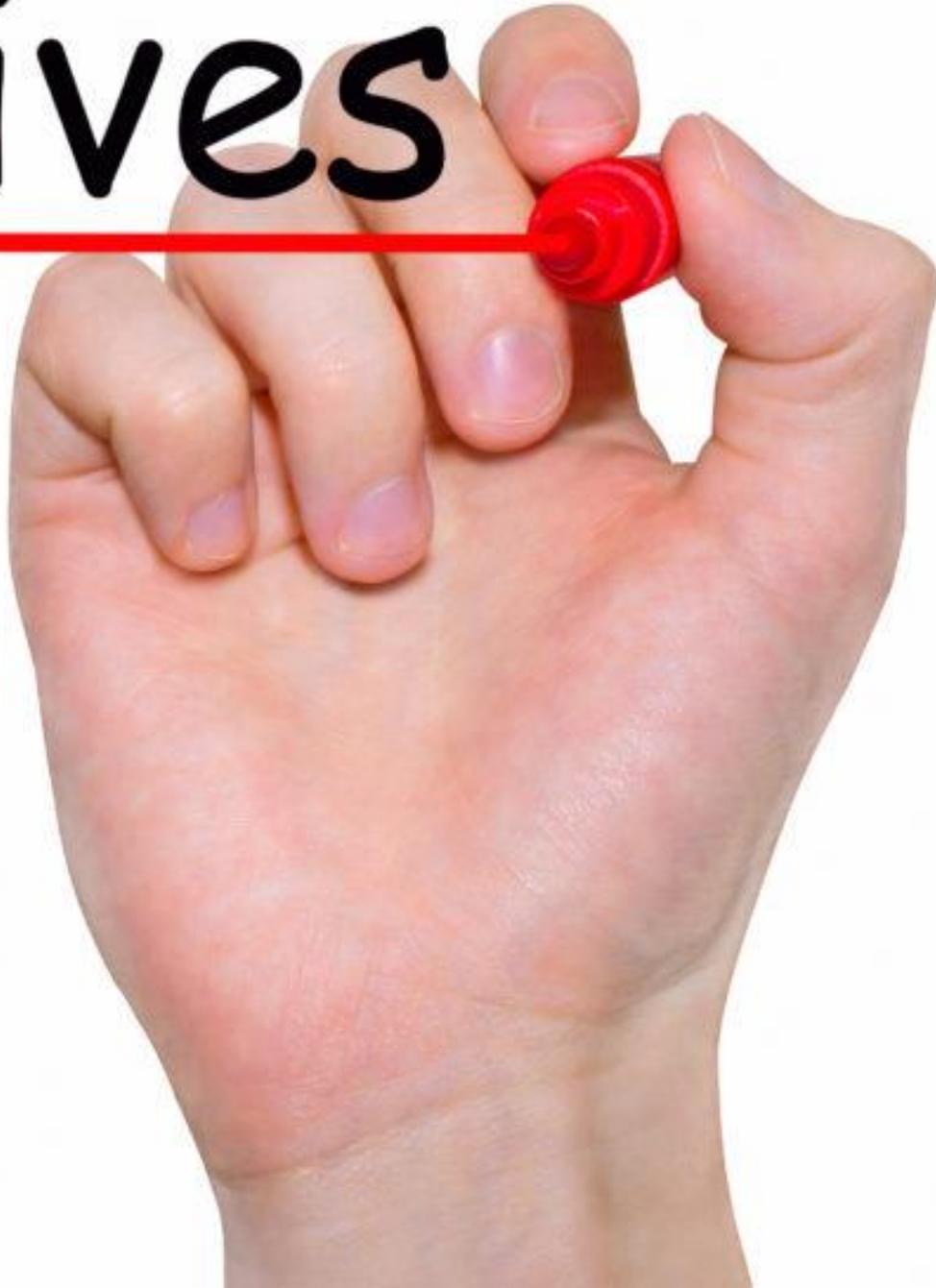
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# Objectives



- ✓ Describe the prevalence and impact of stress-related clinician burnout in primary care
- ✓ Rapidly shift mindset from “Stress is Harmful” to “Stress is Enhancing”
- ✓ Apply at least 2 simple mind/body techniques that can be suggested to patients in a brief clinical encounter to reduce symptoms, stress, and improve subjective well-being.

# Physician Burnout

- ✓ Emotional exhaustion
- ✓ Depersonalization and compassion fatigue (i.e. lack of empathy or negative attitudes toward patients)
- ✓ Feeling of decreased personal achievement



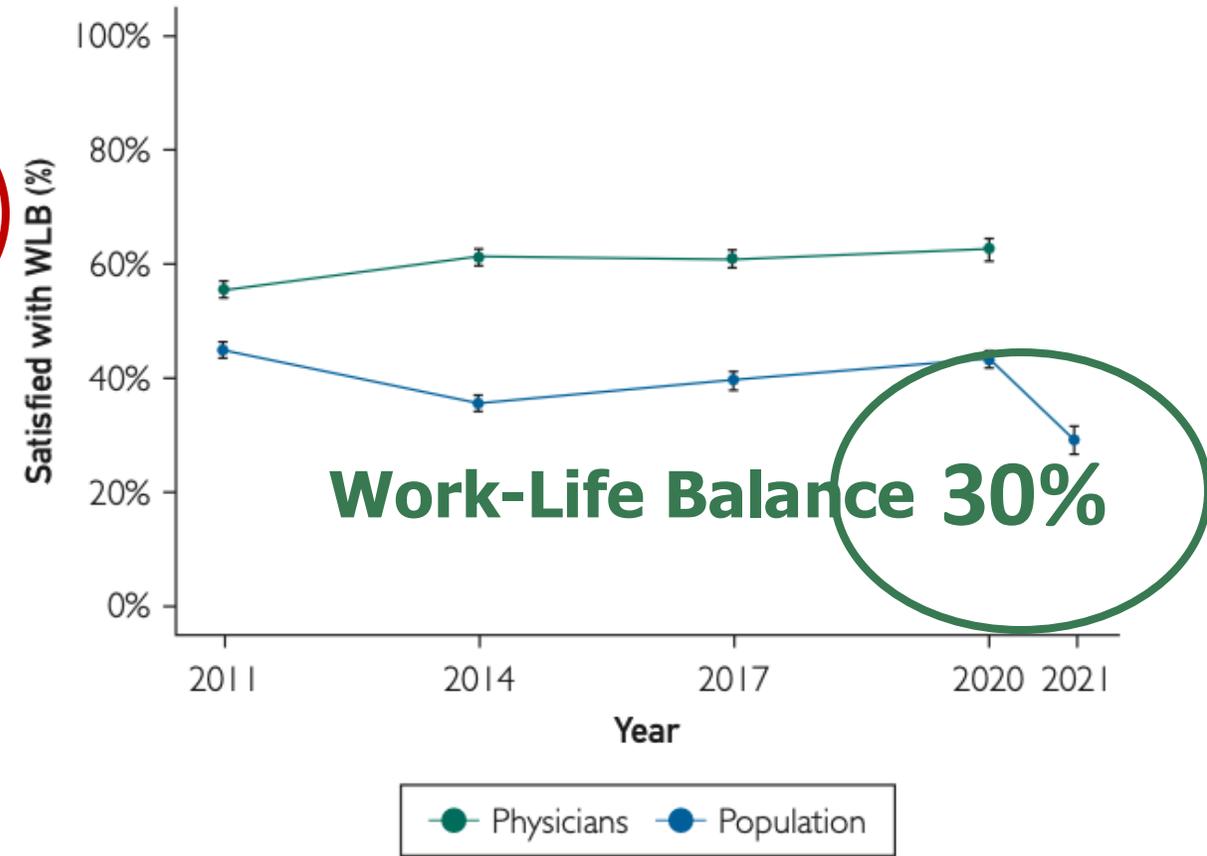
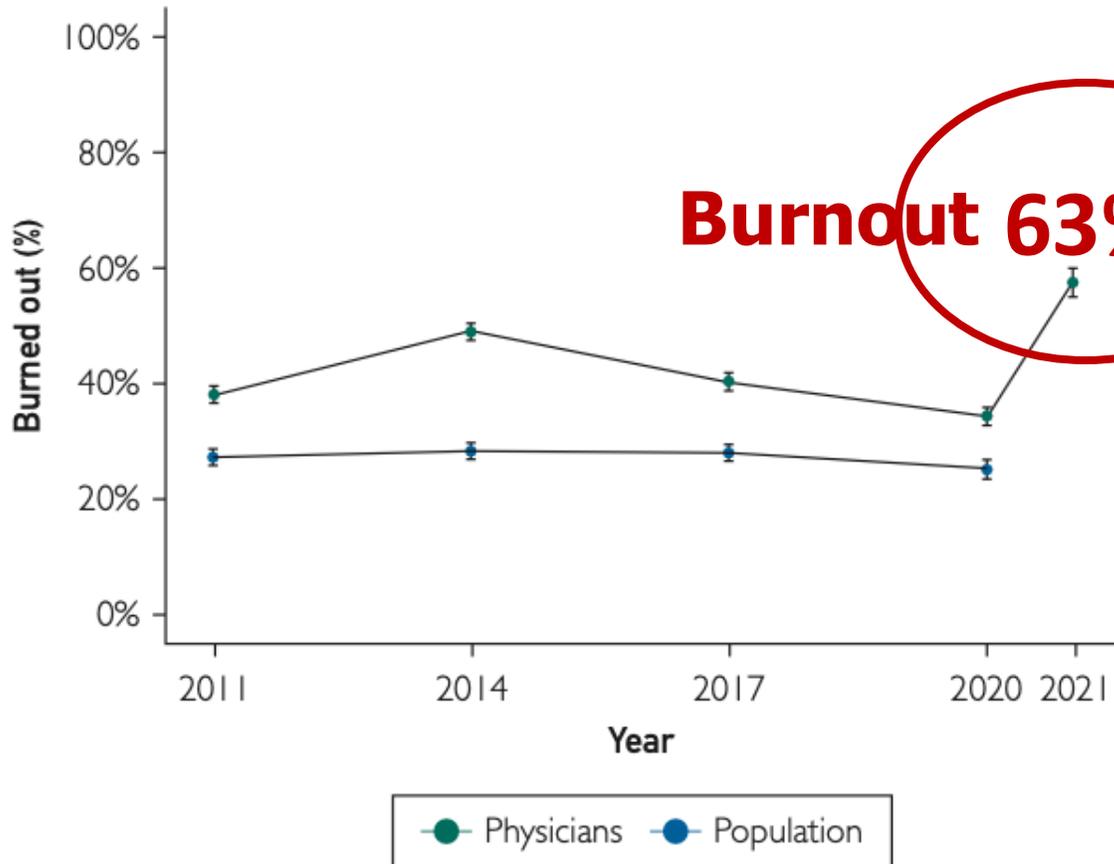
# Physician Failure to Thrive Syndrome

- ✓ Inability to experience pleasure (anhedonia)
- ✓ Lack of physical activity (“Couch Potatoism”) and increased BMI (“Waisting Syndrome”)
- ✓ Pessimistic thought patterns (“Yes, Butism” and “Nitpickers’ Syndrome”)
- ✓ Atrophic sense of humor with sarcasm and cynicism
- ✓ Lack of social connection
- ✓ Lack of present-centeredness and focus
- ✓ Lack of refreshing, restorative sleep
- ✓ Chronic deficiency of life purpose and meaning
- ✓ Self-centeredness and chronic altruism deficiency disorder

Note: All “diagnostic criteria” do not have to be met



# Burnout and Work-Life Balance (2011-2021)



Shanafelt TD, et al Changes in Burnout and Satisfaction With Work-Life Integration in Physicians During the First 2 Years of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Mayo Clin Proc. 2022 Dec;97(12):2248-2258. doi: 10.1016/j.mayocp.2022.09.002. Epub 2022 Sep 14. PMID: 36229269; PMCID: PMC9472795.



# Leaving Practice

25% of physicians reported intent to leave practice within two years (2020)

40% of medical practices had physicians retire early or leave practice due to burnout (2022)

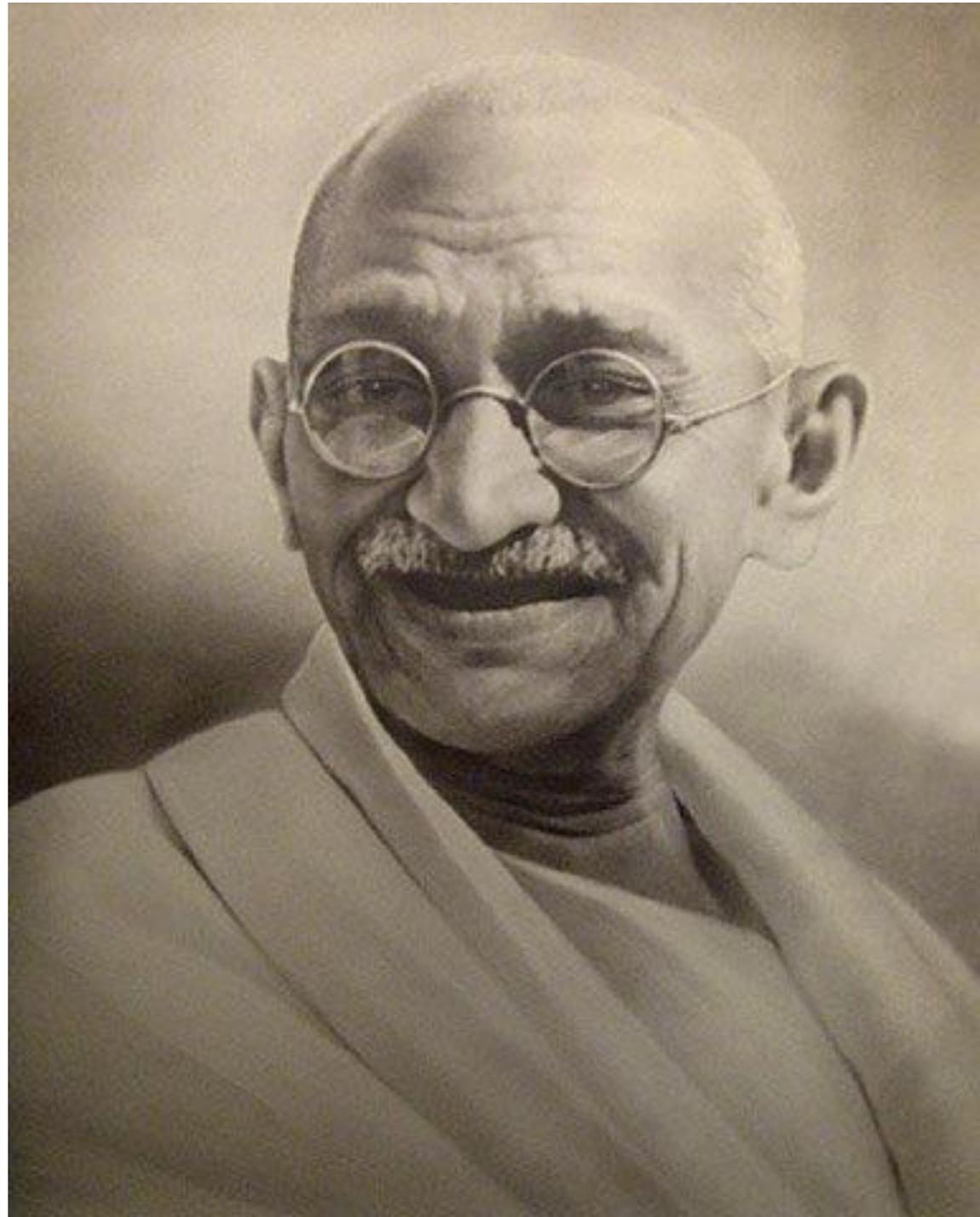
Rotenstein LS, Brown R, Sinsky C, Linzer M. The Association of Work Overload with Burnout and Intent to Leave the Job Across the Healthcare Workforce During COVID-19. *J Gen Intern Med.* 2023 Jun;38(8):1920-1927. doi: 10.1007/s11606-023-08153-z. Epub 2023 Mar 23. PMID: 36959522; PMCID: PMC10035977.

**MGMA Stat Poll** (Aug. 23, 2022), 602 responses

# Work/Life Balance

Mahatma Gandhi worked 15 hours a day for 50 years. When he was asked, "Don't you want a vacation, Mr. Gandhi?" he said quietly:

*"I'm always on vacation."*



# What can be done to promote physician well-being?



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**The Stanford Model of Professional Fulfillment™**  
<https://wellmd.stanford.edu/about/model-external.html>

# Stress: Avoid, Rethink, Restore?

**1. Avoid Stressors**



**2. Rethink Stress**

- Stress is Enhancing Mindset
- Stress Reappraisal

**3. Restore with Healthy Pleasures**

# Avoid Stressors?





# Stress: Avoid, Rethink, Restore?

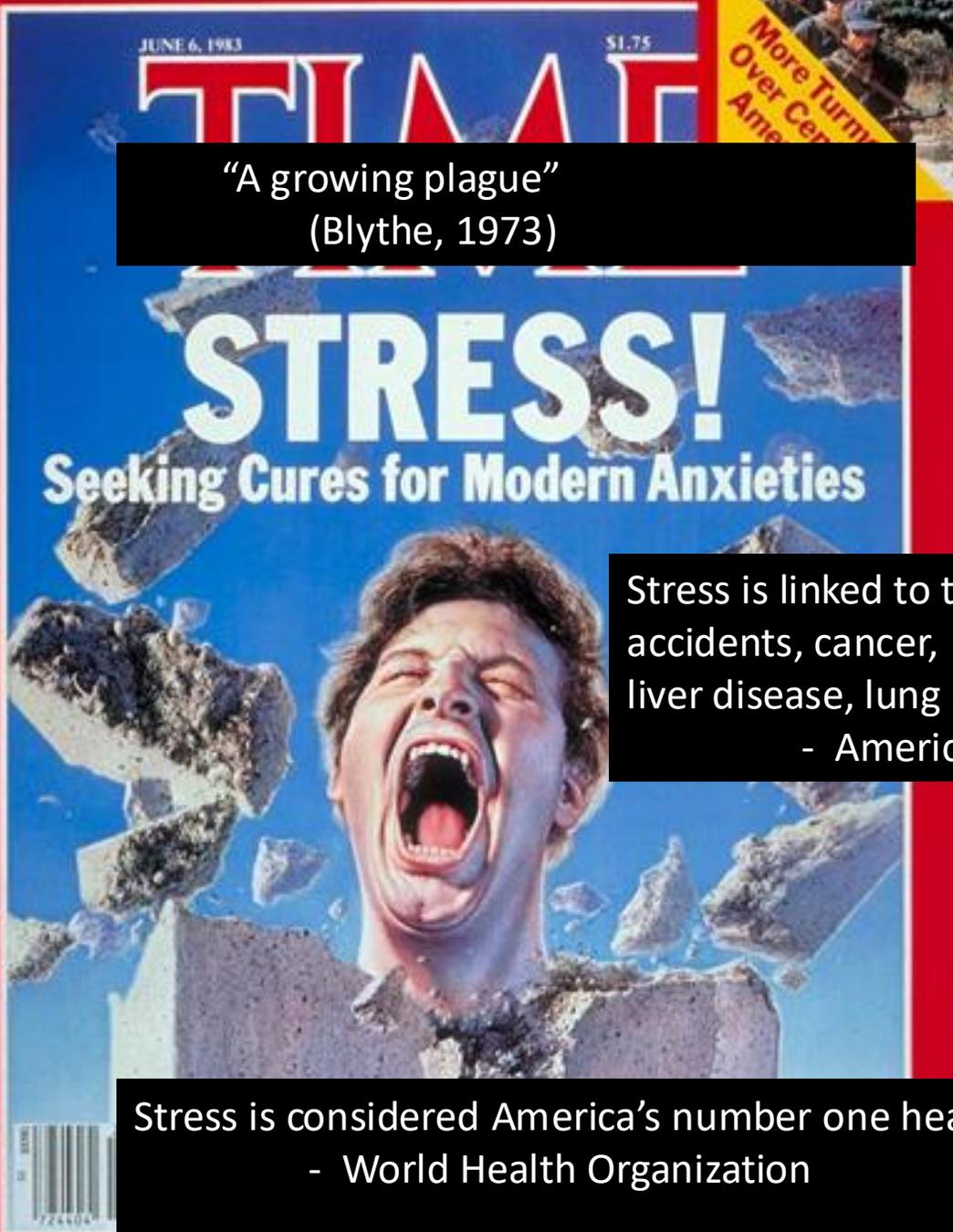


**1. Avoid Stressors**

## **2. Rethink Stress**

- Stress-is-Enhancing Mindset
- Stress Reappraisal

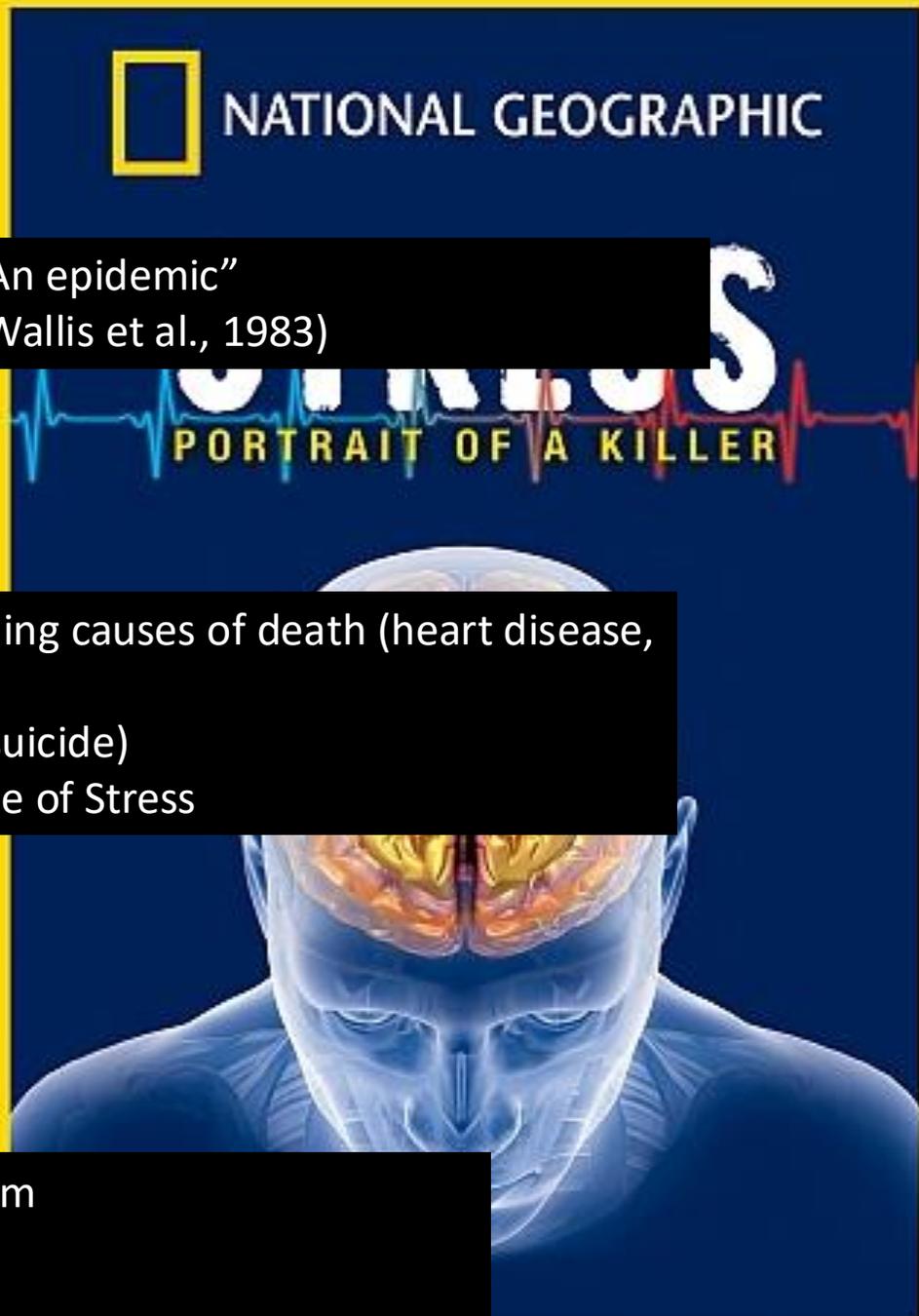
**3. Restore with Healthy Pleasures**



“A growing plague”  
(Blythe, 1973)

Stress is linked to the six leading causes of death (heart disease, accidents, cancer, liver disease, lung ailments, suicide)  
- American Institute of Stress

Stress is considered America’s number one health problem  
- World Health Organization



“An epidemic”  
(Wallis et al., 1983)



# Rethinking Stress

**Do you think that stress is helpful or harmful?**

**Do our mindsets about stress influence  
the effects of stress?**

# Mindset

A lens or frame of mind that orients to a particular set of associations and expectations





# Stress Mindsets

## STRESS IS HARMFUL

- ❑ depletes my health and vitality.
- ❑ debilitates my performance and productivity.
- ❑ inhibits my learning and growth.
- ❑ stress is negative and should be avoided.

## STRESS IS ENHANCING

- ❑ improves my health and vitality.
- ❑ enhances my performance and productivity.
- ❑ facilitates my learning and growth.
- ❑ stress is positive and should be utilized.



# Two Faces of Stress

## Stress diminishes

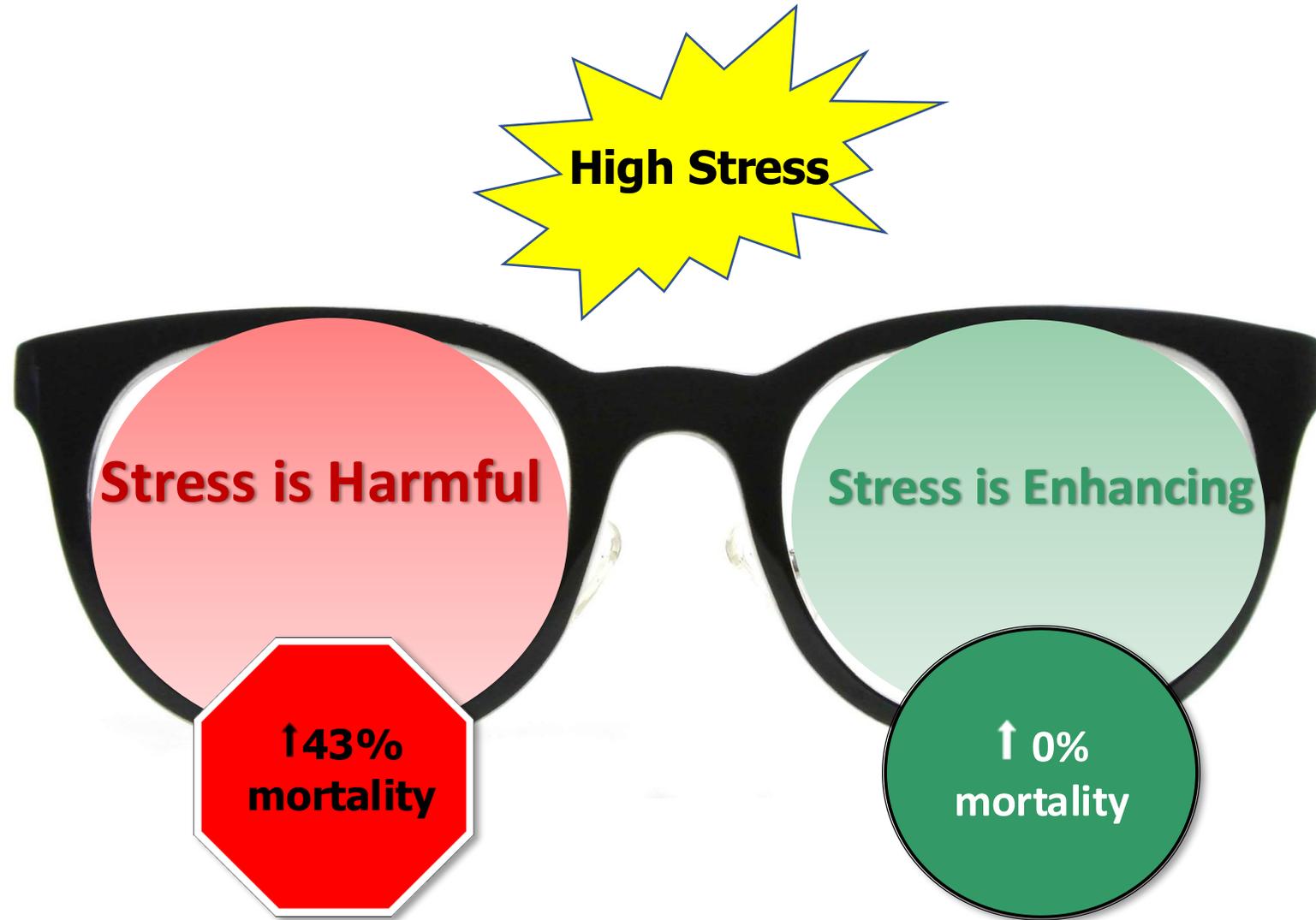
- Performance
- Health
- Well-Being



## Stress enhances

- Performance
- Health
- Well-Being

# Do Stress Mindsets Affect Outcomes?



N=29,000 Keller, A. *Health Psychology*, 31(5):677, 2012. Crum, A. *JPSP* 104:716, 2013.  
McGonigal, K. *The Upside of Stress*. 2015.

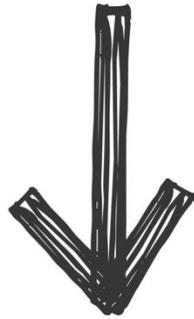
# “Stress is Harmful” mindset can be harmful itself

- May decrease performance and health
- Increases stress about stress
- Stress management can add to “to do” list
- Real growth and learning often involves stress
- Glorifies “culture of stress”





NEW MINDSET

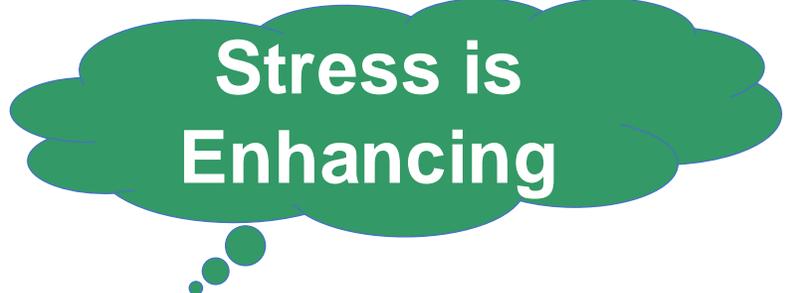


NEW RESULTS

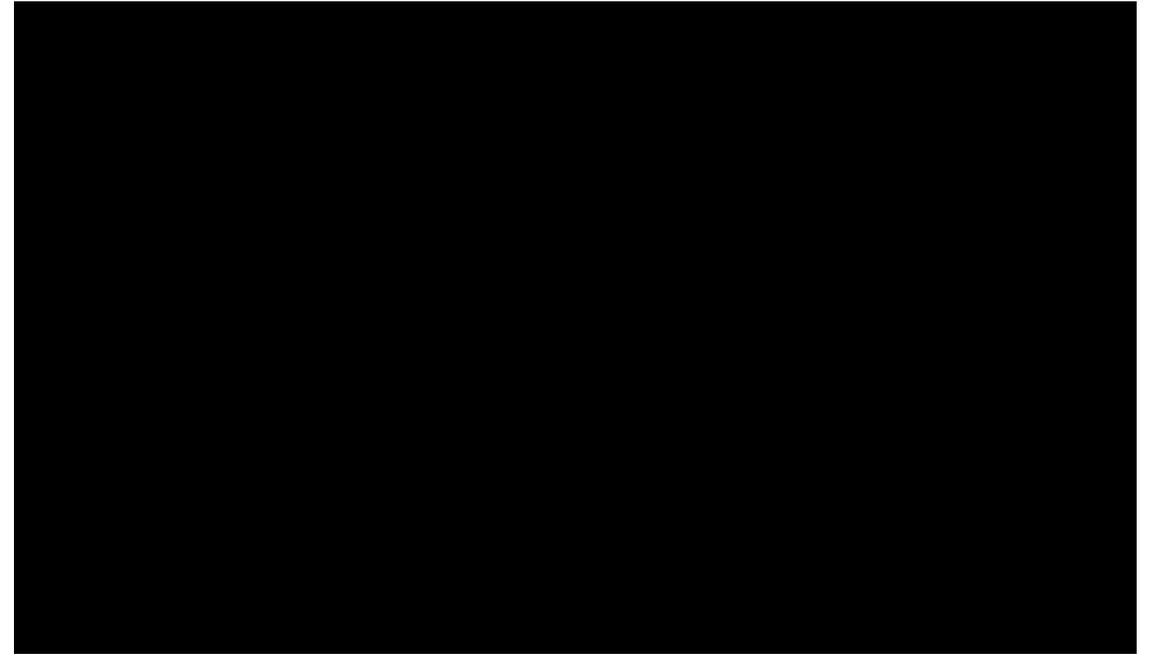
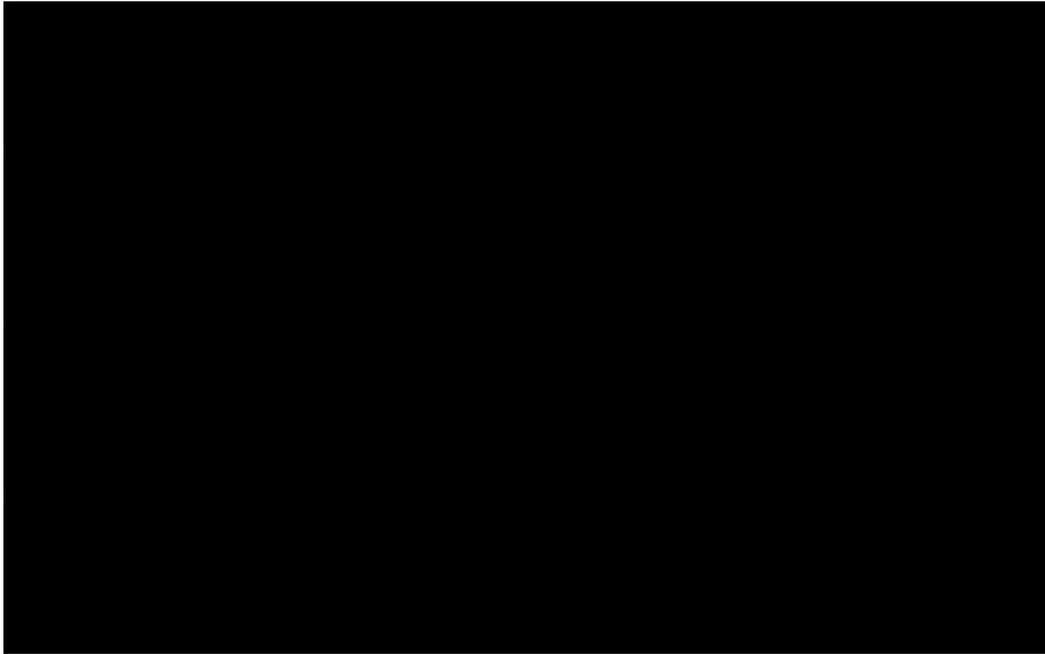
# Stress Mindset Videos



Stress is  
Harmful

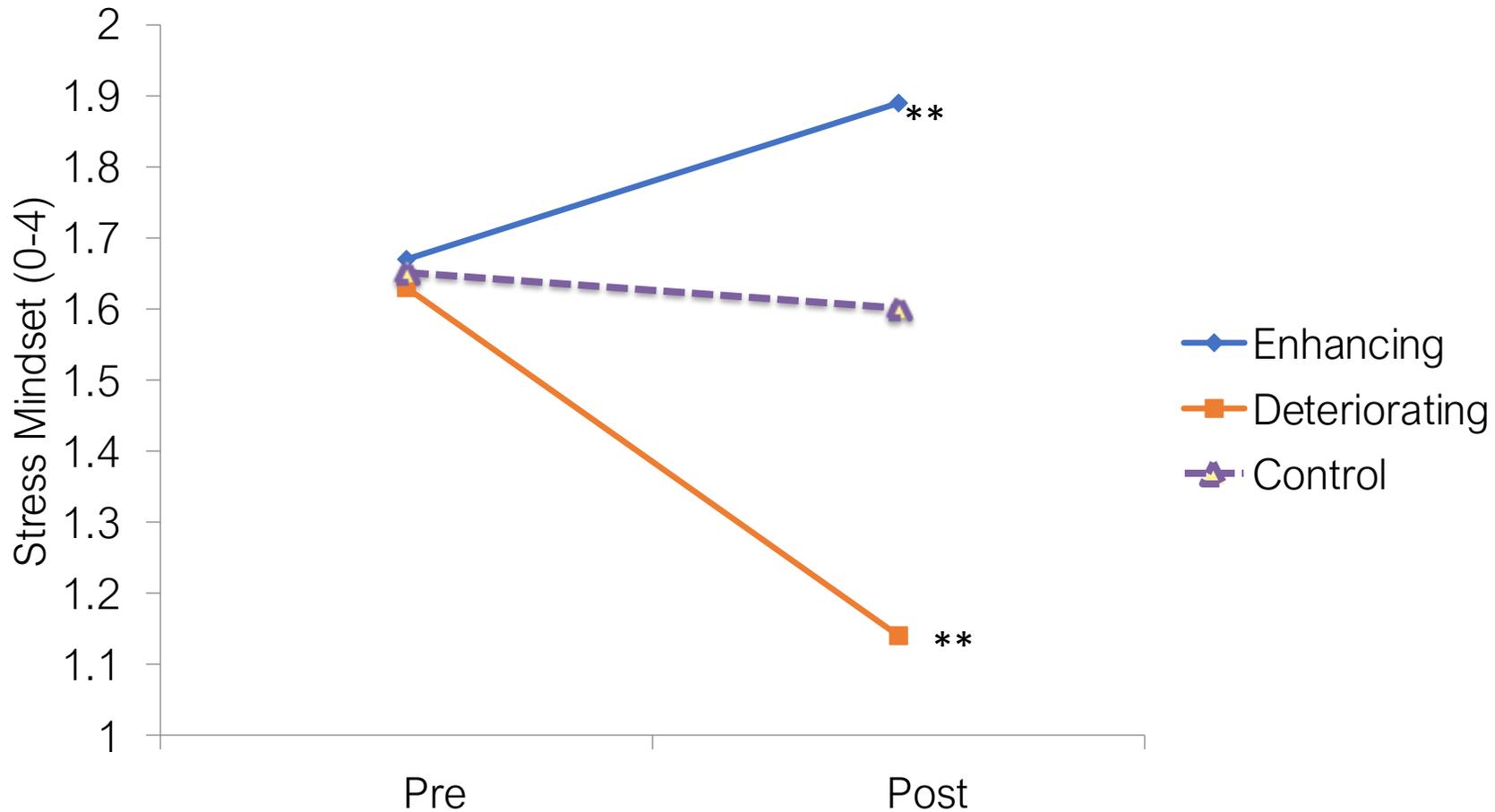


Stress is  
Enhancing

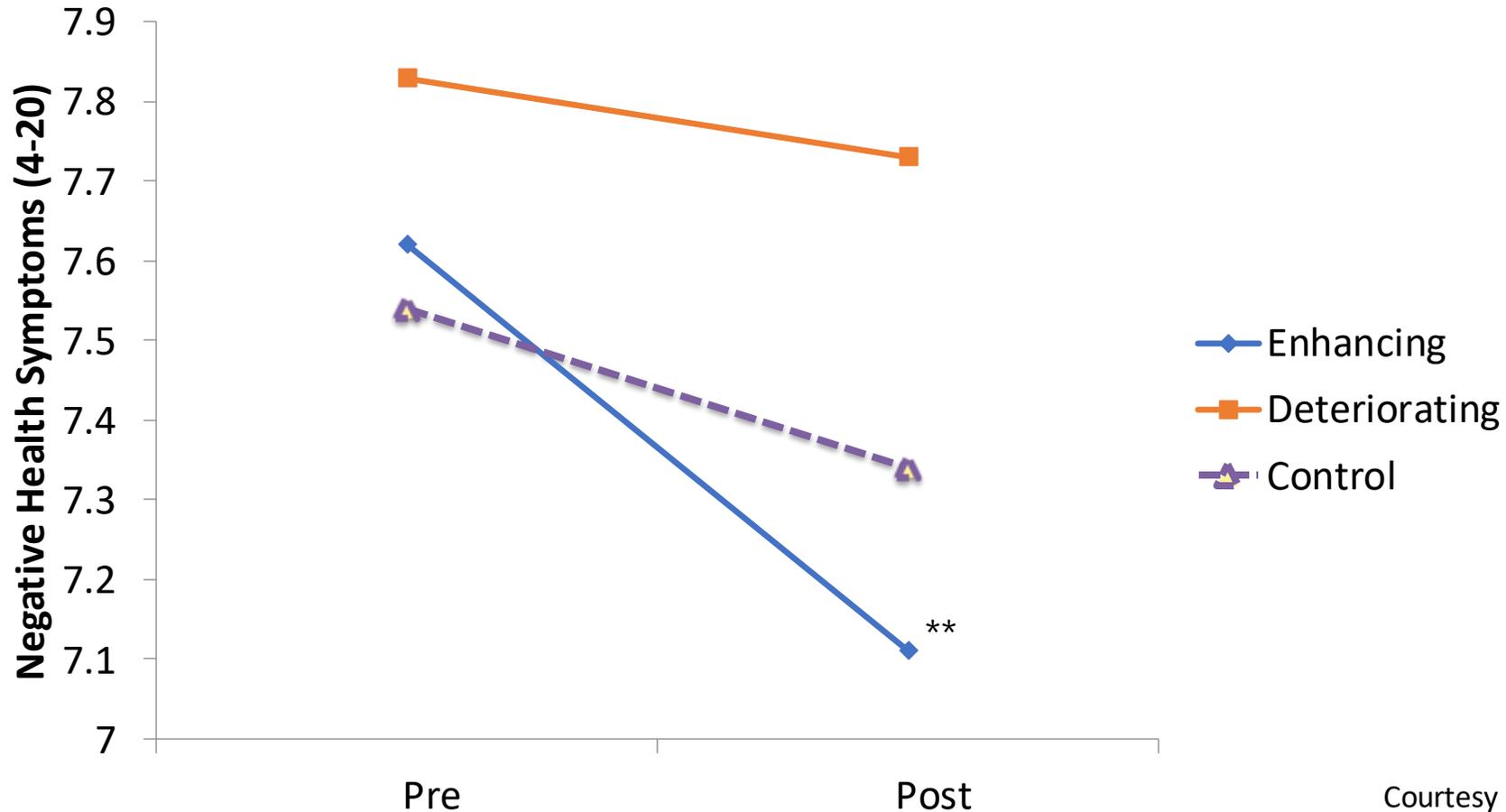


Courtesy of Alia Crum, <https://mbl.stanford.edu/interventions>,  
<https://mbl.stanford.edu/interventions/rethink-stress>

# Can Stress Mindset be Changed?



# Change in Stress Mindset and Symptoms



Courtesy of Alia Crum

Crum, Alia J.; Salovey, Peter; Achor, Shawn: Rethinking stress: The role of mindsets in determining the stress response. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol 104(4), Apr 2013, 716-733. <http://dx.doi.org.laneproxy.stanford.edu/10.1037/a0031201>

# Rethinking Stress Toolkit

- 1. Acknowledge your stress.** It is what it is.
- 2. Welcome your stress.** You are stressed because you care.
- 3. Utilize your stress.** It is designed to facilitate change.

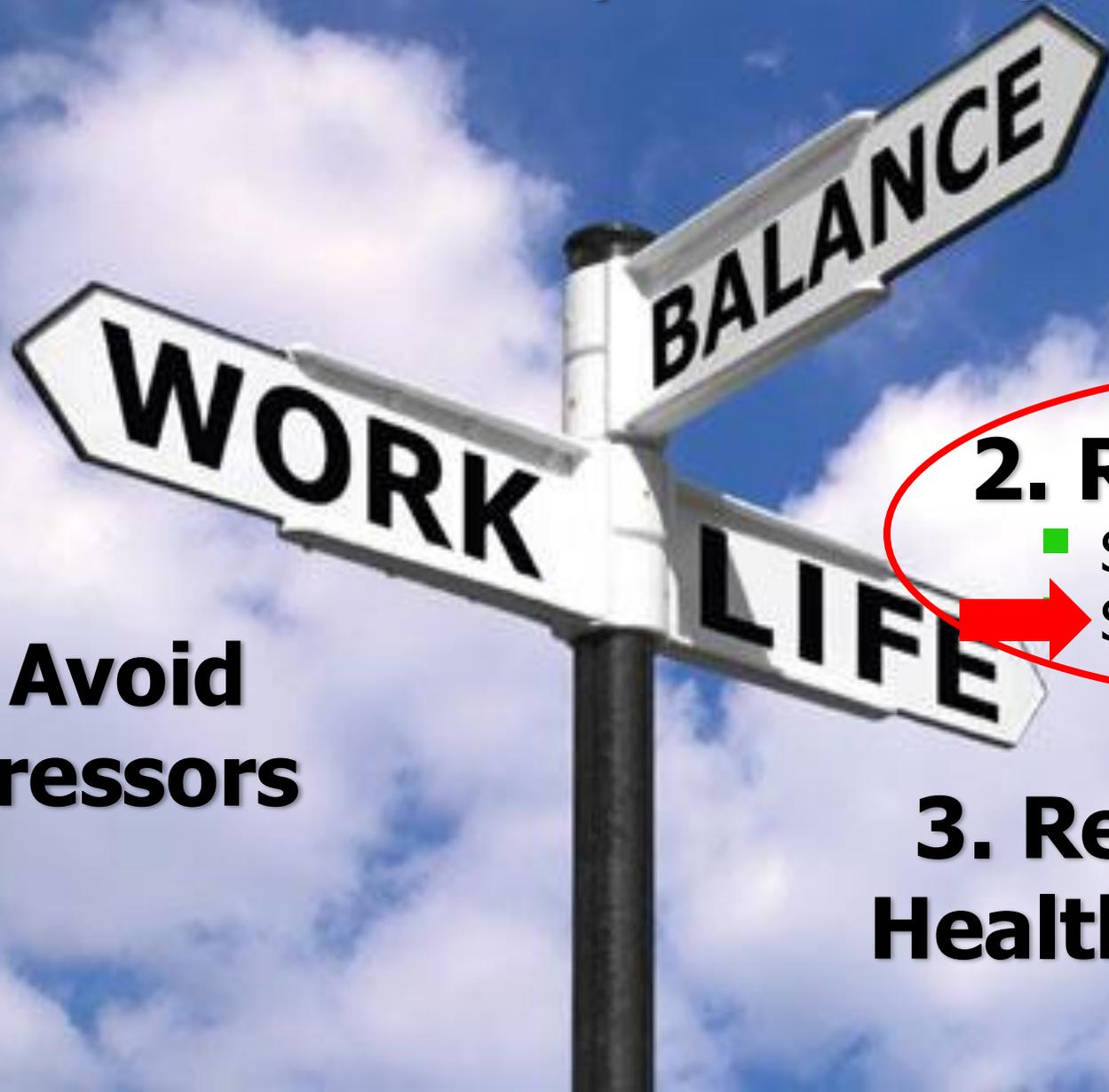
Crum AJ, Santoro E, Handley-Miner I, Smith EN, Evans K, Moraveji N, Achor S, Salovey P. Evaluation of the "rethink stress" mindset intervention: A metacognitive approach to changing mindsets. *J Exp Psychol Gen.* 2023 Sep;152(9):2603-2622. doi: 10.1037/xge0001396. Epub 2023 May 18. PMID: 37199967.

**Stanford** | SPARQ Toolkits  
<http://sparqtools.org/rethinkingstress/>



# Stress: Avoid, Rethink, Restore?

**1. Avoid  
Stressors**



## **2. Rethink Stress**

- Stress is Enhancing Mindset
- Stress Reappraisal

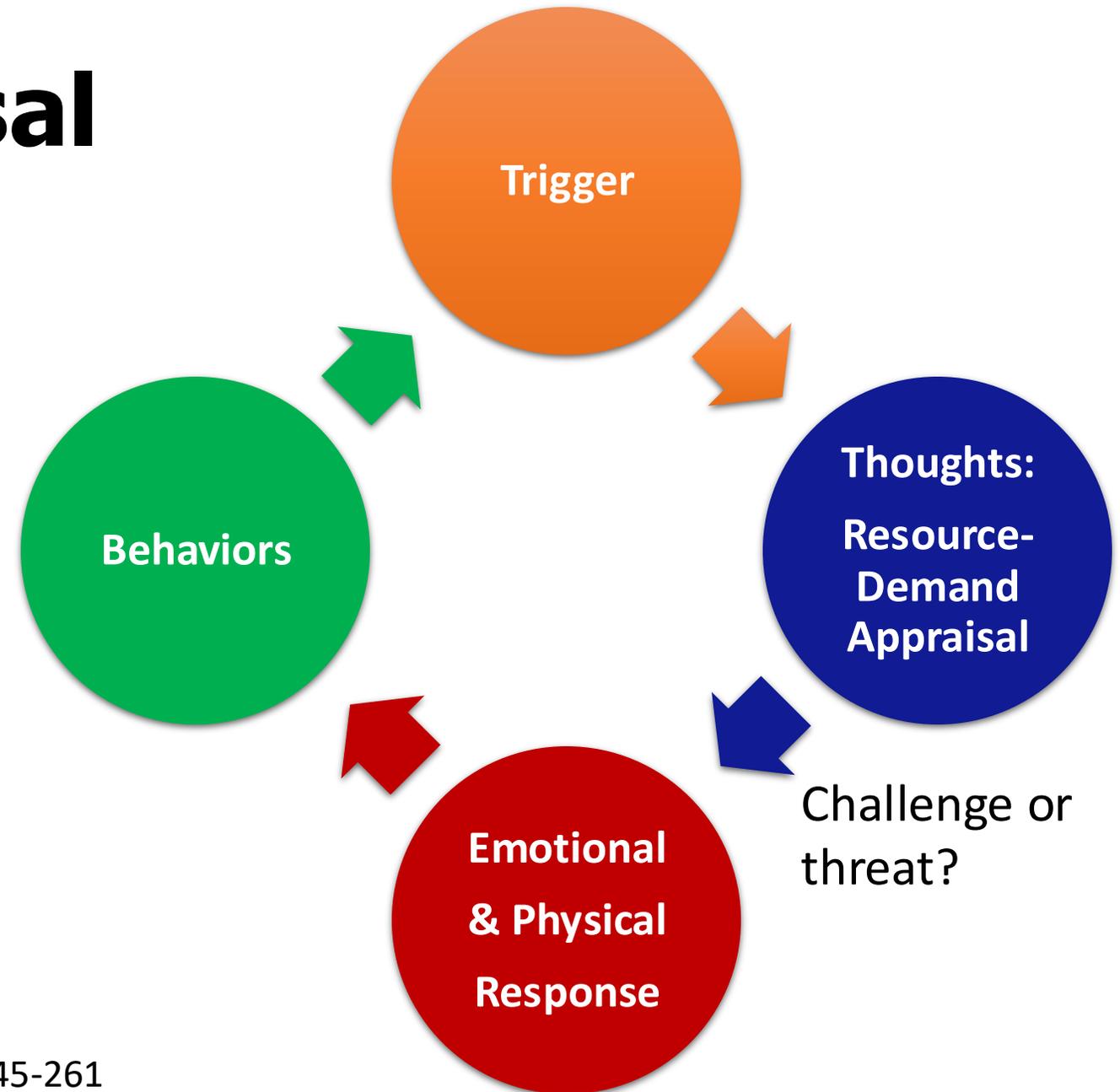
**3. Restore with  
Healthy Pleasures**

**Is this  
Stressful?**

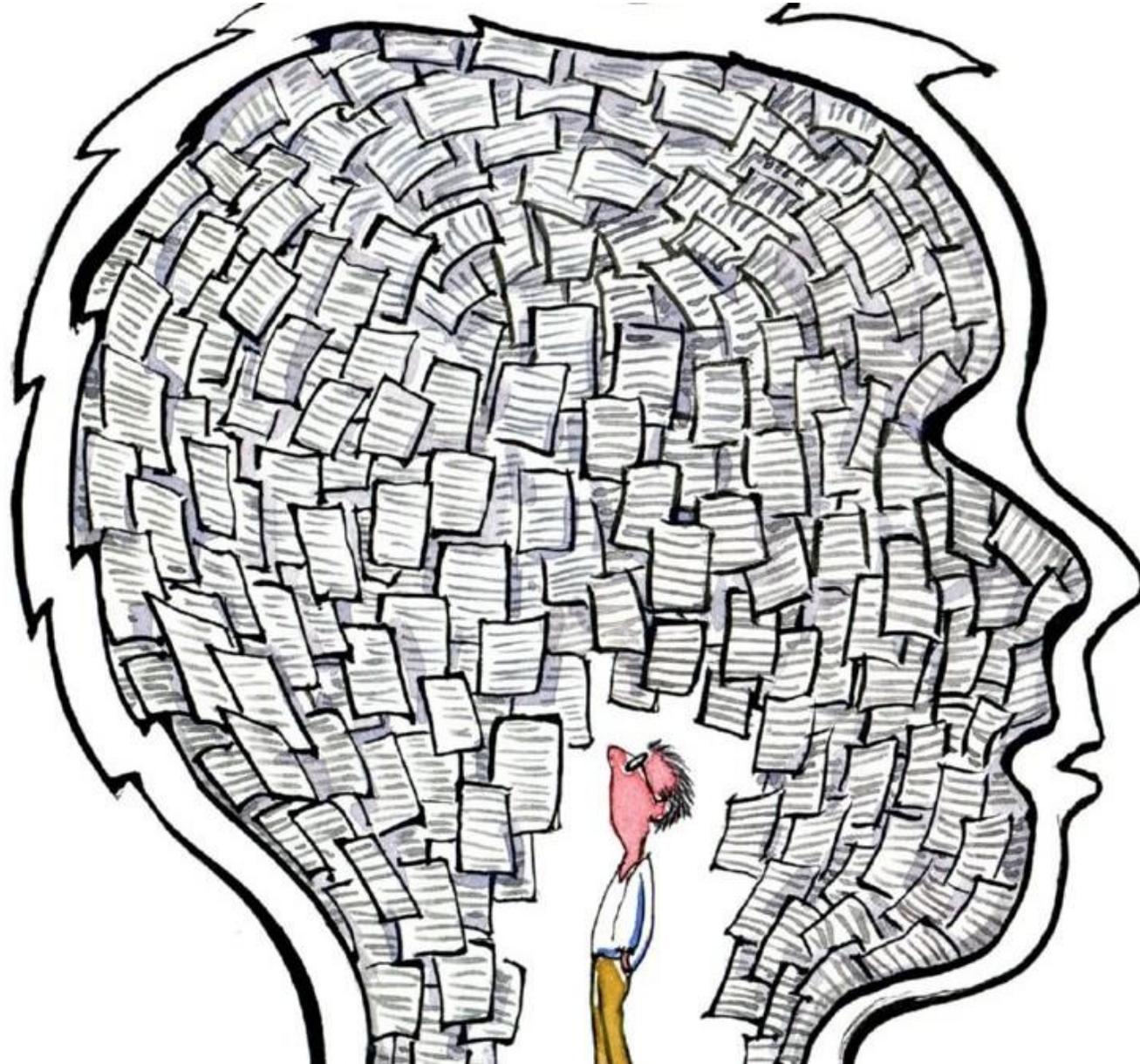


# Stress Reappraisal

- 🧠 Assess resources and demands
- 🧠 View stress as adaptive, functional resource and opportunity

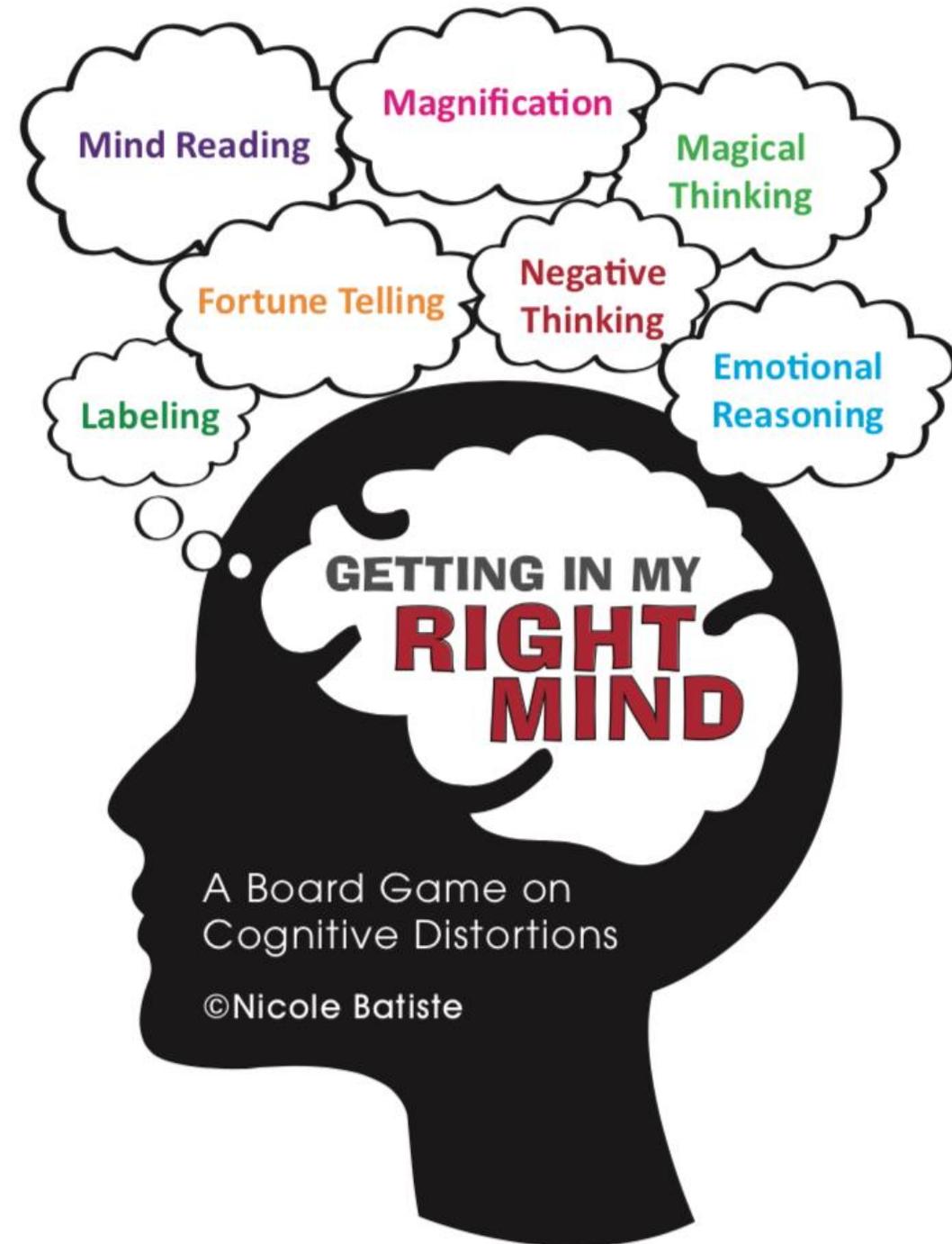


# The Stories We Tell Ourselves



# Cognitive Distortions

1. All-or-Nothing Thinking
2. Over Generalization
3. Mental Filter
4. Discounting the Positive
5. Jumping to Conclusions
6. Magnification
7. Emotional Reasoning
8. Should Statements
9. Labelling
10. Personalization and Blame



# Drowning in a Tsunami of Work

- “I’m completely overwhelmed”
- “Drowning in a tsunami of work”
- “I’ll never catch up”
- “Work is ruining my whole life”
- “My patients are all so demanding”
- “It’s the organization’s fault”
- “Shuffle and repeat...”

A hand is shown reaching up from a dark, turbulent sea. Above the hand is a large, white thought bubble containing text. Three smaller white circles of increasing size lead from the hand to the thought bubble. The background is a dark, stormy sea with white-capped waves.

**At any given moment,  
I am doing the best  
that I can!**

**PRACTICE  
HAPPINESS:  
The  
Optimism  
Antidote**



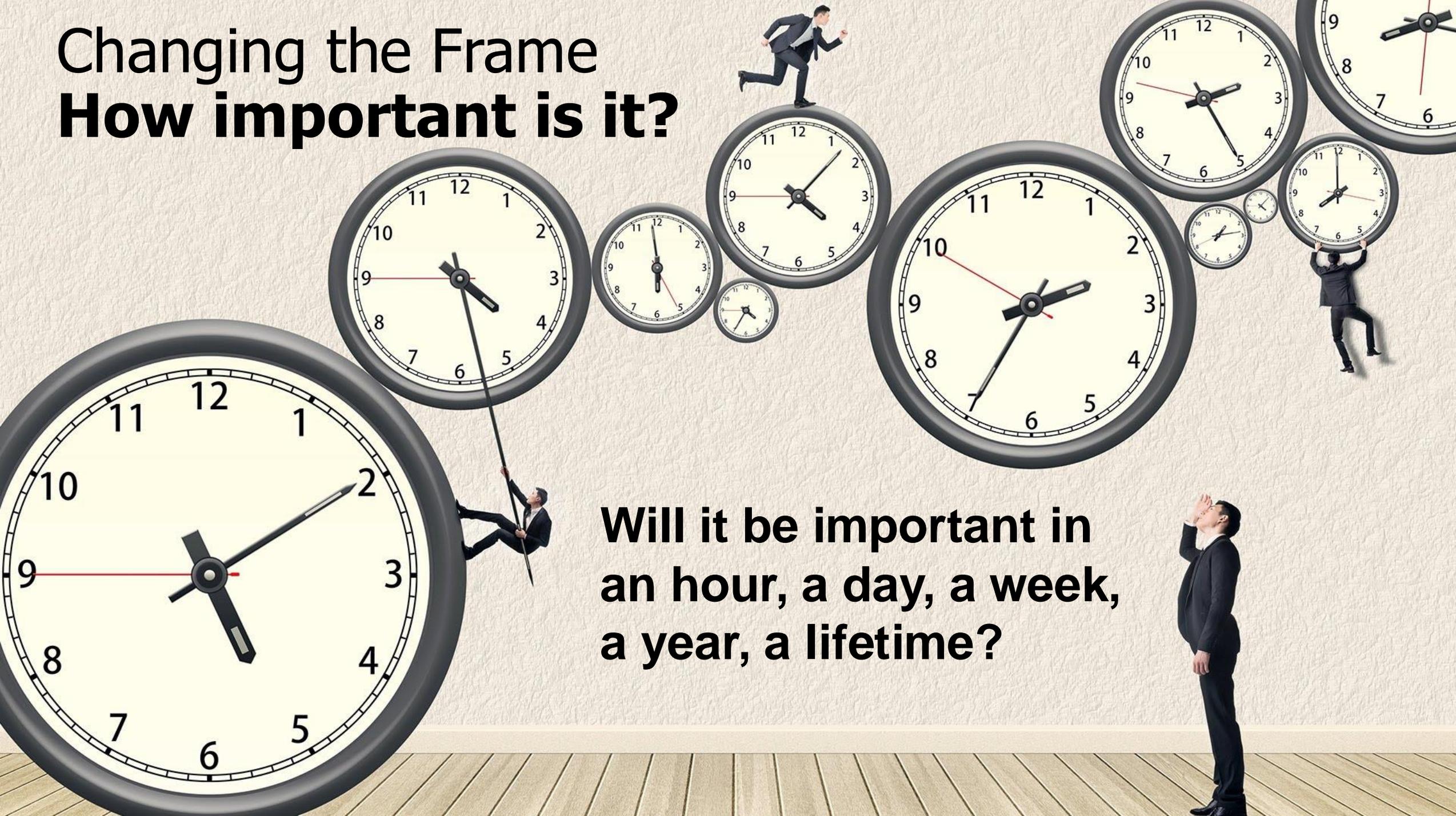
# Tell Yourself A Good Story

*A Tale of Clam Chowder*



# Changing the Frame

## How important is it?



**Will it be important in  
an hour, a day, a week,  
a year, a lifetime?**

# Changing Your Story: How important is it?



# Changing Your Story **How important is it?**

You are here



# Changing the Frame

**What can I change?  
What can't I change?**



**Changes**

# List and Sort Your Problems

<p>IMPORTANT &amp; CHANGEABLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ _____</li><li>▶ _____</li><li>▶ _____</li><li>▶ _____</li></ul>	<p>UNIMPORTANT &amp; CHANGEABLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ _____</li><li>▶ _____</li><li>▶ _____</li><li>▶ _____</li></ul>
<p>IMPORTANT &amp; UNCHANGEABLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ _____</li><li>▶ _____</li><li>▶ _____</li><li>▶ _____</li></ul>	<p>UNIMPORTANT &amp; UNCHANGEABLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ _____</li><li>▶ _____</li><li>▶ _____</li><li>▶ _____</li></ul>

# Changing the Frame

How can I learn and grow from stress?



# Changing the Frame



- ✓ Is it important or unimportant?
- ✓ If important, will it be important in a week, a year, etc.?
- ✓ Is it changeable or unchangeable (but adaptable)?
- ✓ (*extra credit*) How I learn or grow from this experience?

# Indulge in Altruism

## Practice Gratitude

- ✓ Make a list of 3-5 things you are grateful for (or curious about, surprised by, or learned something new?)
- ✓ Write a note of gratitude and thanks to someone
- ✓ Communicate regularly, specifically and explicitly

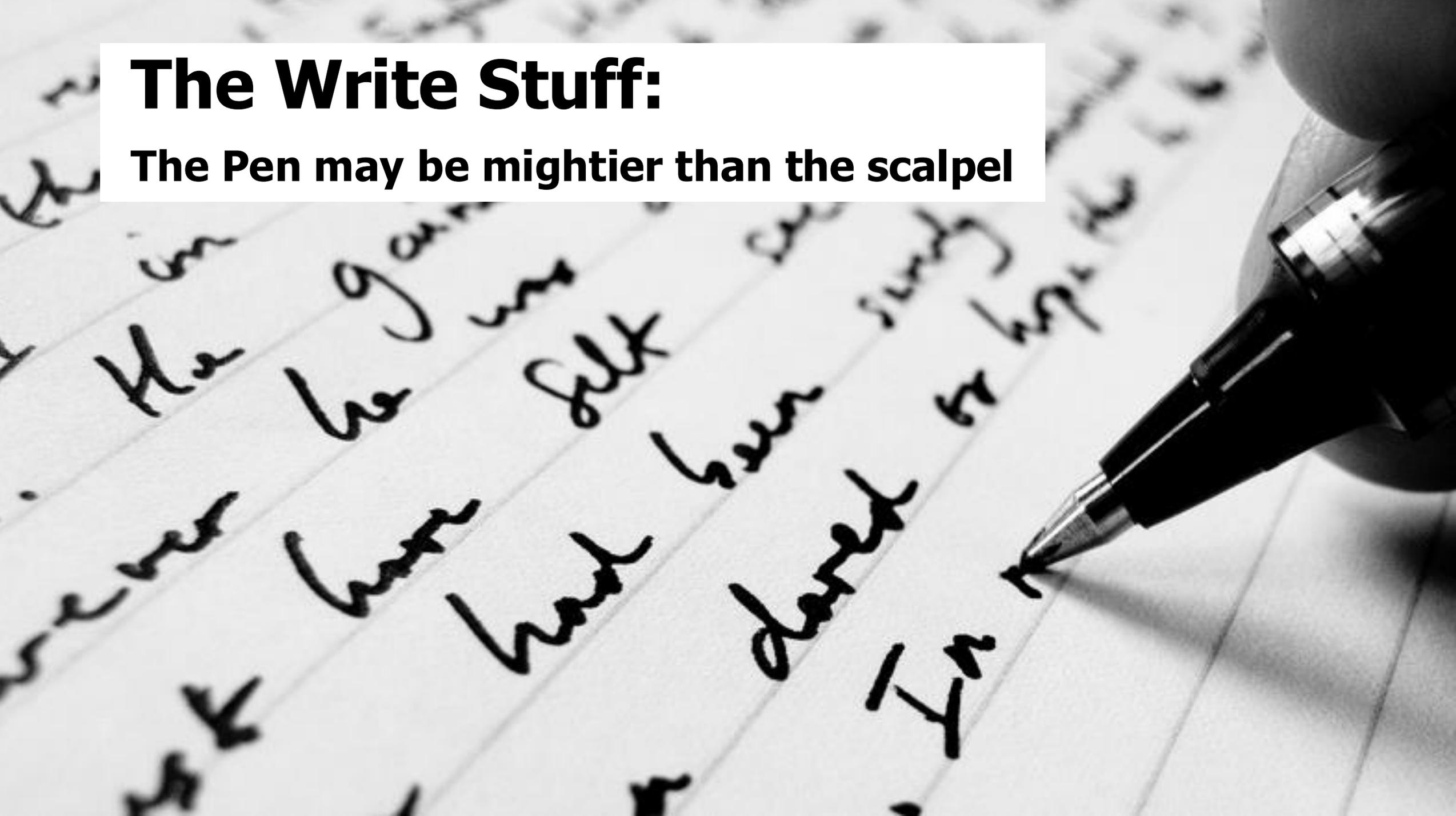
live **well** be **well**



PRACTICE HAPPINESS

# The Write Stuff:

The Pen may be mightier than the scalpel



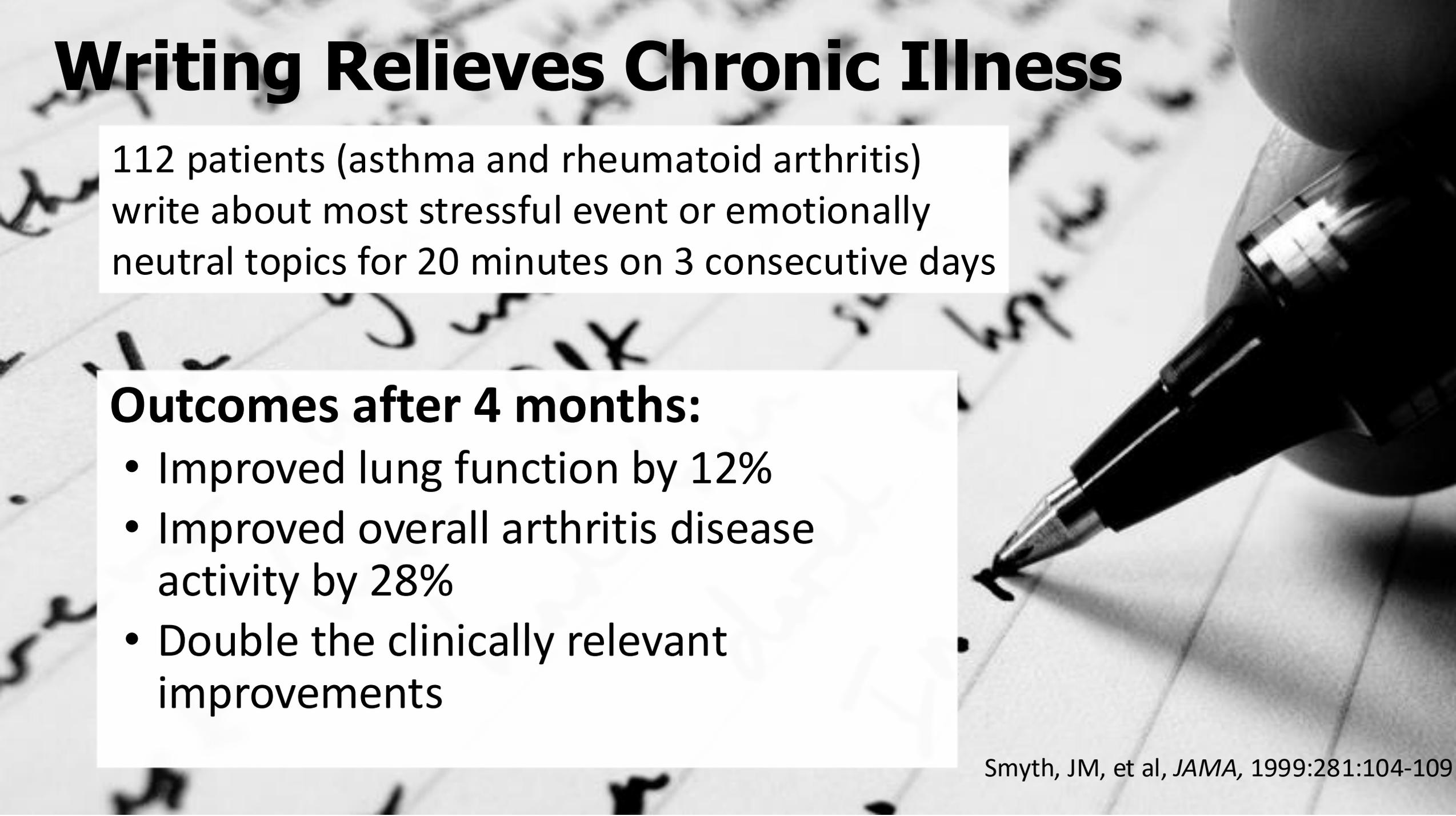
# Write Away Stress

Write “deepest thoughts and feelings” about most stressful event for 15 minutes, 3-5 days

## Improved Health

- fewer symptoms
- fewer physician visits
- fewer days off work
- improved mood and positive outlook
- enhanced immune

# Writing Relieves Chronic Illness

A black and white photograph of a pen writing on a document with cursive text. The pen is positioned in the lower right corner, and the background is filled with blurred cursive handwriting.

112 patients (asthma and rheumatoid arthritis) write about most stressful event or emotionally neutral topics for 20 minutes on 3 consecutive days

## Outcomes after 4 months:

- Improved lung function by 12%
- Improved overall arthritis disease activity by 28%
- Double the clinically relevant improvements



# A guide to writing about stressful experiences

- ✓ Set a specific schedule for writing. For example, you might write 15 minutes a day for four consecutive days, or one day a week for four weeks.
- ✓ Write in a place where you won't be interrupted or distracted.
- ✓ Don't plan to share your writing—that could inhibit your honest expression. Save what you write or destroy it, as you wish.
- ✓ Explore your very deepest thoughts and feelings, and why you feel the way you do. Write about your negative feelings such as sadness, hurt, hate, anger, fear, guilt, or resentment.
- ✓ Write continuously. Don't worry about grammar, spelling, or making sense. If clarity and coherence come as you continue to write, so much the better. If you run out of things to say, just repeat what you have already written.
- ✓ Even if you find the writing awkward at first, keep going. It gets easier. If you just cannot write, try talking into a tape recorder for 15 minutes about your deepest thoughts and feelings.

“I’ve had a lot of worries  
in my life, most of which  
never happened.”

- Mark Twain

**91% of worry  
predictions do  
not come true!**



# Schedule Worry Time...and write



- What's the problem?
- How likely is it that the problem will occur?
- What's the worst that could happen?
- What's the best that could happen?
- How would I cope?
- What are possible solutions?
- What is my plan of action?





# Embracing Stress

Other Dimensions of Life Satisfaction

- 🍀 Psychological Richness
- 🍀 Comfort Zone
- 🍀 Self-Complexity

# The Good Life

## The Good Life

a happy life



a meaningful life



a psychologically rich life



**Qualities**

comfort  
joy  
security

significance  
purpose  
coherence

variety  
interest  
perspective change

**Facilitators**

money  
time  
relationships  
positive mindset

moral principles  
consistency  
relationships  
religiosity

curiosity  
time  
energy  
spontaneity

**Consequences**

personal satisfaction

societal contribution

wisdom

# Psychological Richness

- ✓ Variety
- ✓ Novelty
- ✓ Interesting

## I. Psychologically rich life questionnaire

---

1. My life has been psychologically rich\*
2. My life has been experientially rich\*
3. My life has been emotionally rich\*
4. I have had a lot of interesting experiences\*
5. I have had a lot of novel experiences\*
6. My life has been full of unique, unusual experiences\*
7. My life consists of rich, intense moments\*
8. My life has been dramatic
9. I experience a full range of emotions via first-hand experiences such as travel and attending concerts\*
10. I have a lot of personal stories to tell others\*
11. On my deathbed, I am likely to say “I had an interesting life”\*
12. On my deathbed, I am likely to say “I have seen and learned a lot”\*
13. My life would make a good novel or movie\*
14. My life has been monotonous (r)
15. I often feel bored with my life (r)
16. My life has been uneventful (r)
17. I can't remember the last time I've done or experienced something new (r)

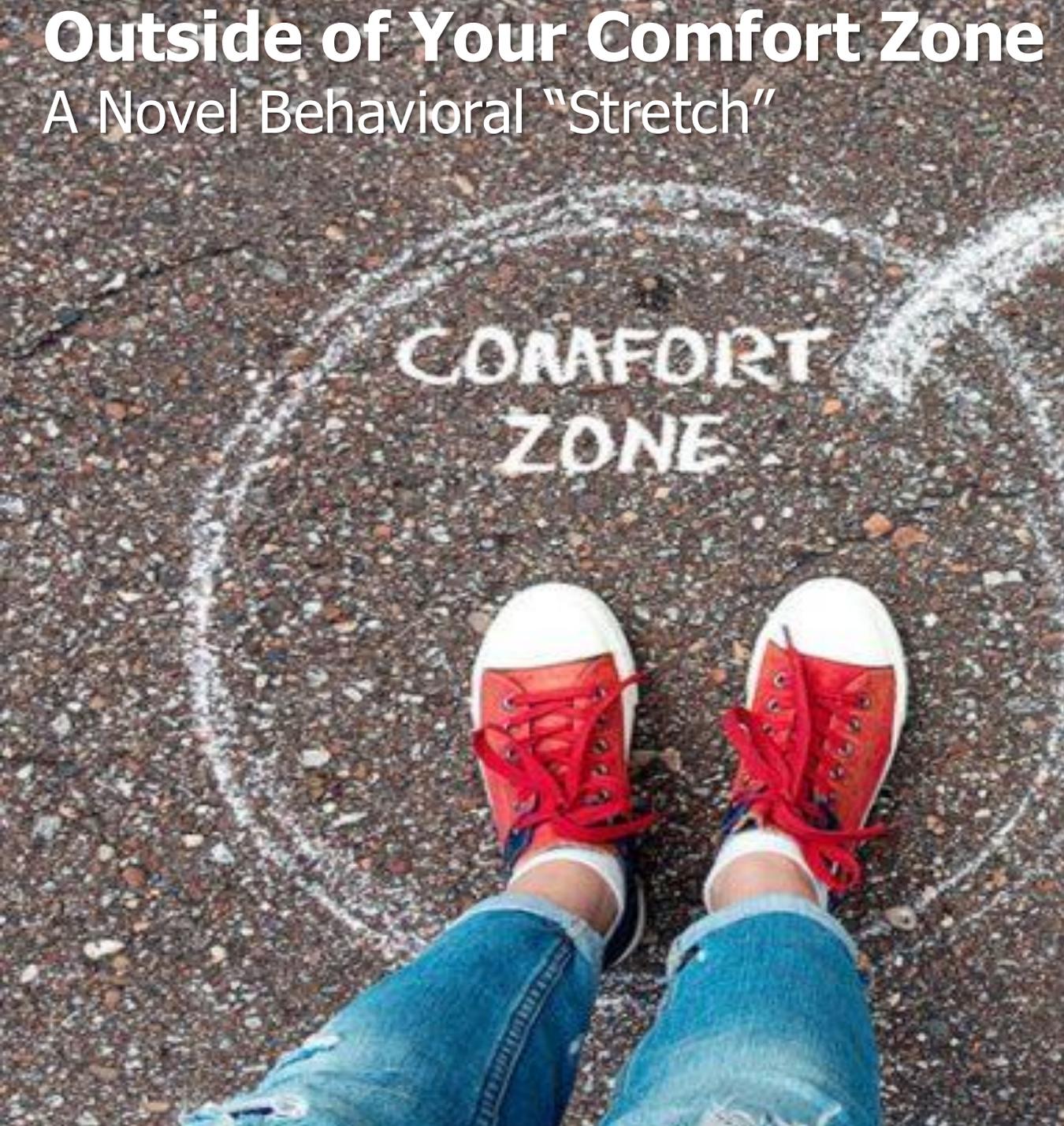
Note. The 12-item version is composed of the items with \*.

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\* Note. Respondents used the following 7-point scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = slightly agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree.

# Outside of Your Comfort Zone

A Novel Behavioral "Stretch"



COMFORT  
ZONE

*"During this week, choose one day to do something surprising that is different from what you normally do; something different that is 'out of your comfort zone.' It can be something you have wanted to do for a long time but haven't had a chance to do, like taking up a new challenge, or something that is 'opposite to your character/nature' (or the way you perceive yourself). It can be something small or big, by yourself or with other people."*

# Outside of Your Comfort Zone

A Novel Behavioral "Stretch"

COMFORT  
ZONE

- *Yoga*
- *Learn new language*
- *Ask for a raise*
- *Cut long hair and donate*
- *Play guitar*
- *Make a new recipe*
- *Booked a flight abroad*
- *Started therapy*
- *Invited a friend to a movie*
- *Got needed blood tests*
- *Left my partner of five years*

**What would you choose?**

# Outside of Your Comfort Zone

A Novel Behavioral "Stretch"



COMFORT  
ZONE

Engaging in activity outside your comfort zone vs record daily activities x 2 weeks

- ❖ Boosted life satisfaction in those relatively less happy
- ❖ Helping others appears especially helpful

**Life  
Beyond  
Medicine**



**Cultivate  
Self-Complexity**



# Stress: Avoid, Rethink, Restore?

✓ **1. Avoid Stressors**



✓ **2. Rethink Stress**

- Stress is Enhancing Mindset
- Stress Reappraisal

✓ **3. Restore with Healthy Pleasures**

# Dr Mike Evans



- <https://www.reframehealthlab.com/9010-stress/>

# Additional Resources and References

- **Video Lectures by David S. Sobel, MD, MPH**
  - **Healthy Pleasures: The New Science of Happiness** <https://youtu.be/8rTkDWe0Zec>
  - **Behavior Change and Beyond Video Lecture** <https://youtu.be/YpqI16SjZWY>
  - **Engaging Patients as Partners: Effective Behavior Change Strategies for Busy Clinicians** [https://youtu.be/Vf-\\_yHo9QnU](https://youtu.be/Vf-_yHo9QnU)
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