

The background is an abstract geometric pattern composed of numerous overlapping triangles. The color gradient transitions from warm orange and yellow tones on the left side to cool blue and teal tones on the right side, with a neutral white and light grey area at the top.

# **MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT**

AN INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID AS A  
MODEL FOR POST MELISSA SUPPORT

# HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL

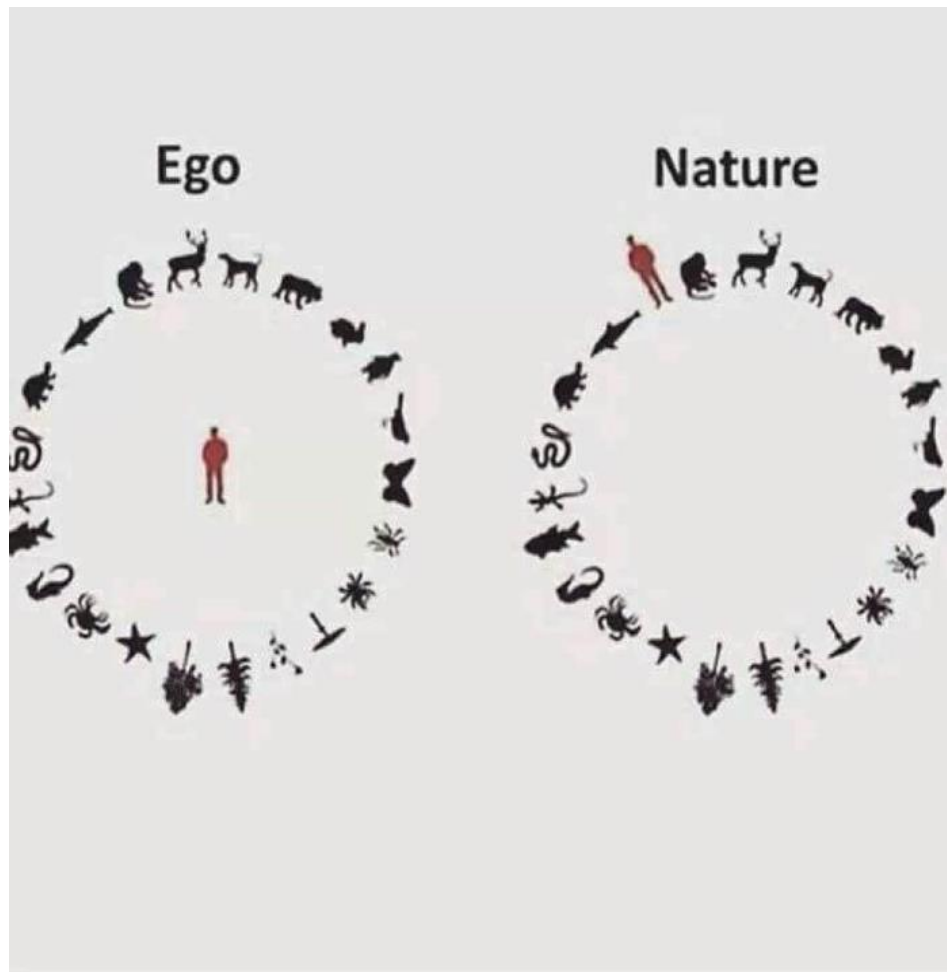
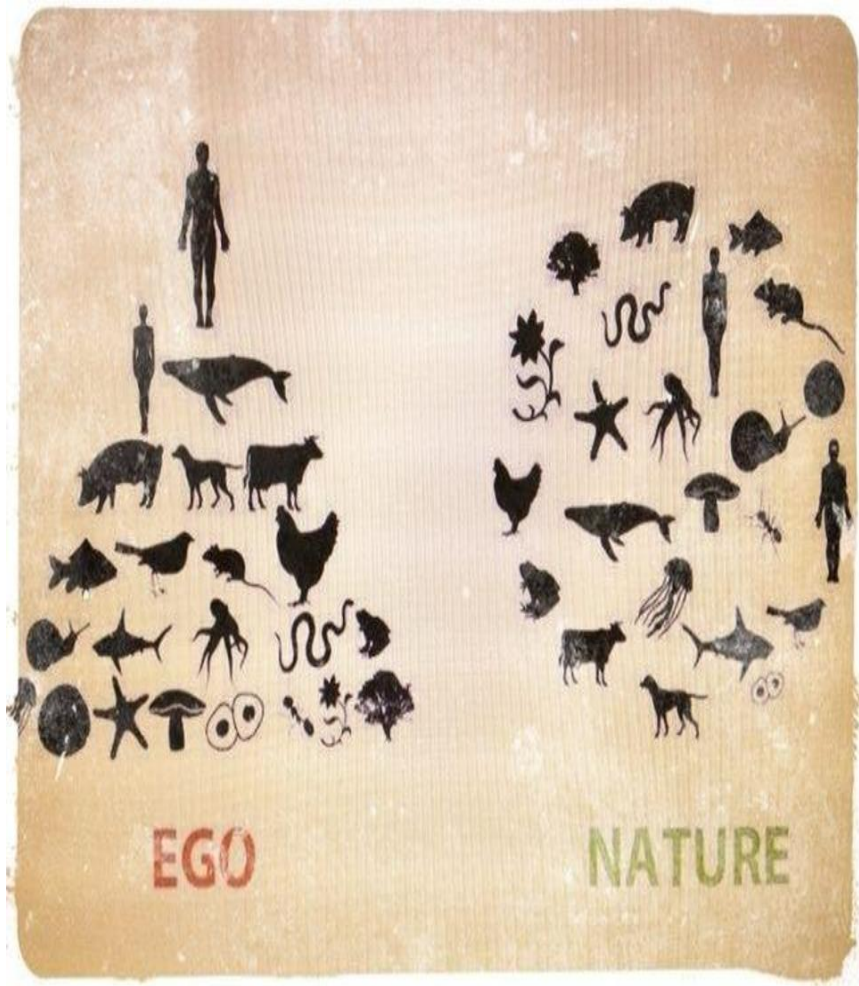


# Hope as Foundational Frame

**Hope is the most powerful conceptual frame.**

**Hope drives sustained effort and renewal.**

**Through balanced inward reach and outward stretch, guided by intentional action and community solidarity, we prepare for today's recovery and tomorrow's resilience.**



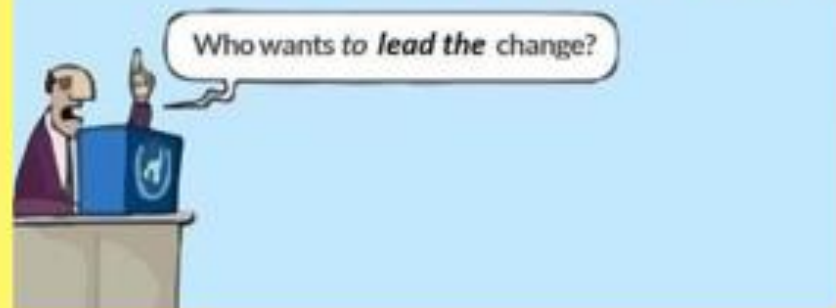
# HUMAN RESOURCE INTERVENTIONS

## Meeting of the Minds

- As practitioners we need to recognize and understand our own thoughts and feelings towards an issue to be objective when designing and applying interventions.
- We also need to understand the same dynamics among our target group for the intervention to have the desired effect.







# INWARD REACH AND OUTWARD STRETCH



You cannot pour effectively from a leaky cup!








**DON'T BELIEVE  
EVERYTHING  
YOU THINK**

Share When You See A Word




TheRandomVibes.Com



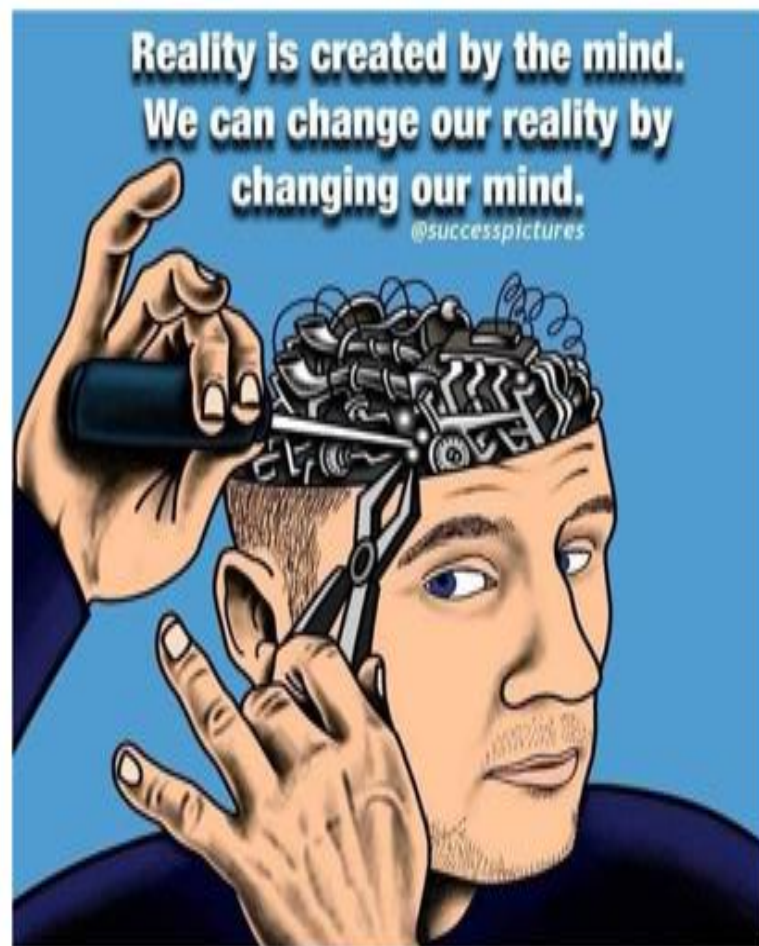
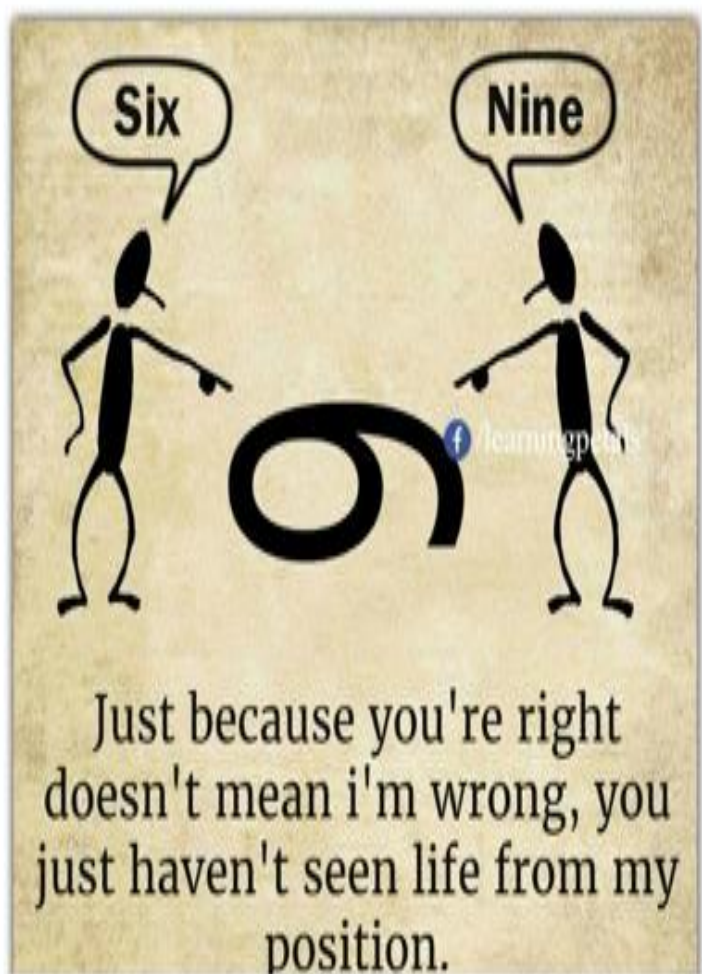
EYES ARE  
USELESS  
WHEN THE  
MIND IS  
BLIND.

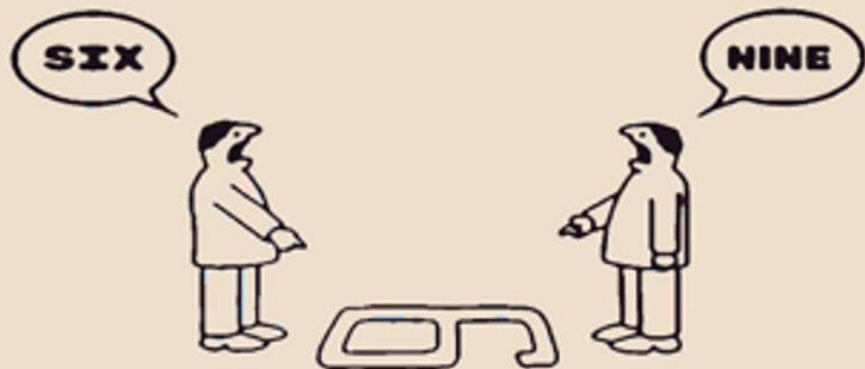
~ Unknown ~



**Automatic cars are easier  
to drive, but you sacrifice  
control.  
Automatic lives are much  
the same.**

ANONYMOUS





~~Just because you are right,  
does not mean, I am wrong.~~

But one of those people is wrong, someone painted a six or a nine, they need to back up and orient themselves, see if there are any other numbers to align with. Maybe there's a driveway or a building to face, or they can ask someone who actually knows.

People having an uniformed opinion about something they don't understand and proclaiming their opinion as being equally valid as facts is what is ruining the world. No one wants to do any research, they just want to be right.





## Things that can be equally true:

.....

|                      |            |                    |
|----------------------|------------|--------------------|
| You are resilient    | <b>and</b> | need a break       |
| You gave your all    | <b>and</b> | need to back out   |
| You are independent  | <b>and</b> | still need others  |
| You were sure        | <b>and</b> | things changed     |
| You are kind         | <b>and</b> | have boundaries    |
| Others have it worse | <b>and</b> | your pain is valid |
| You did your best    | <b>and</b> | now you know more  |

@findyourshinetherapy

WHEN WRITTEN IN CHINESE, THE WORD

**CRISIS**

IS COMPOSED OF TWO CHARACTERS

ONE REPRESENTS

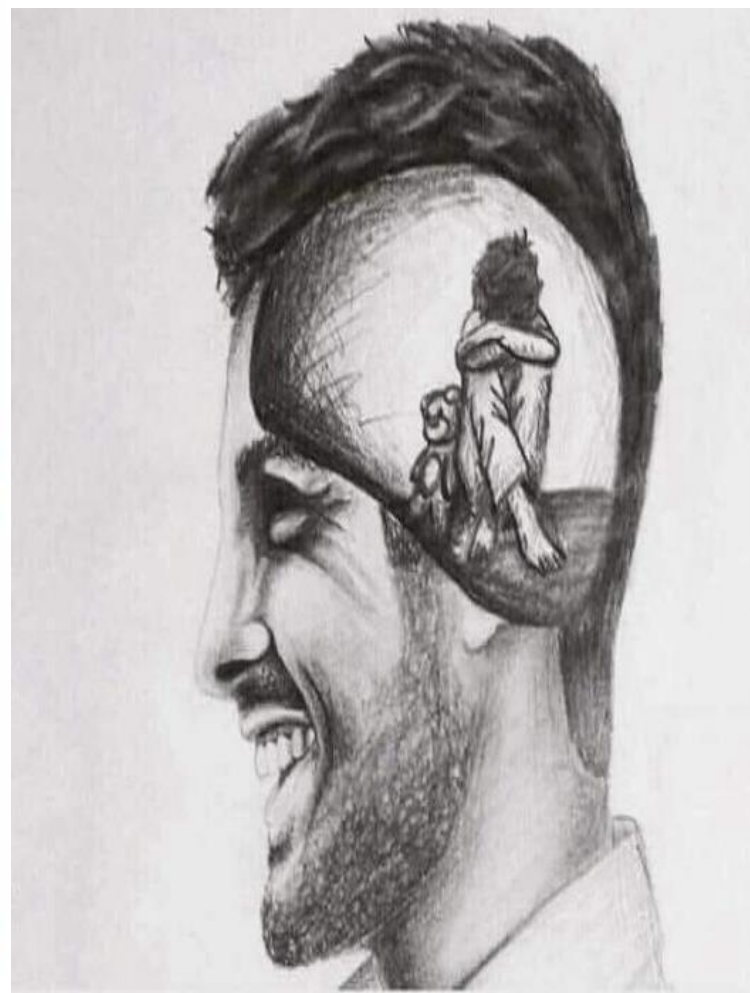
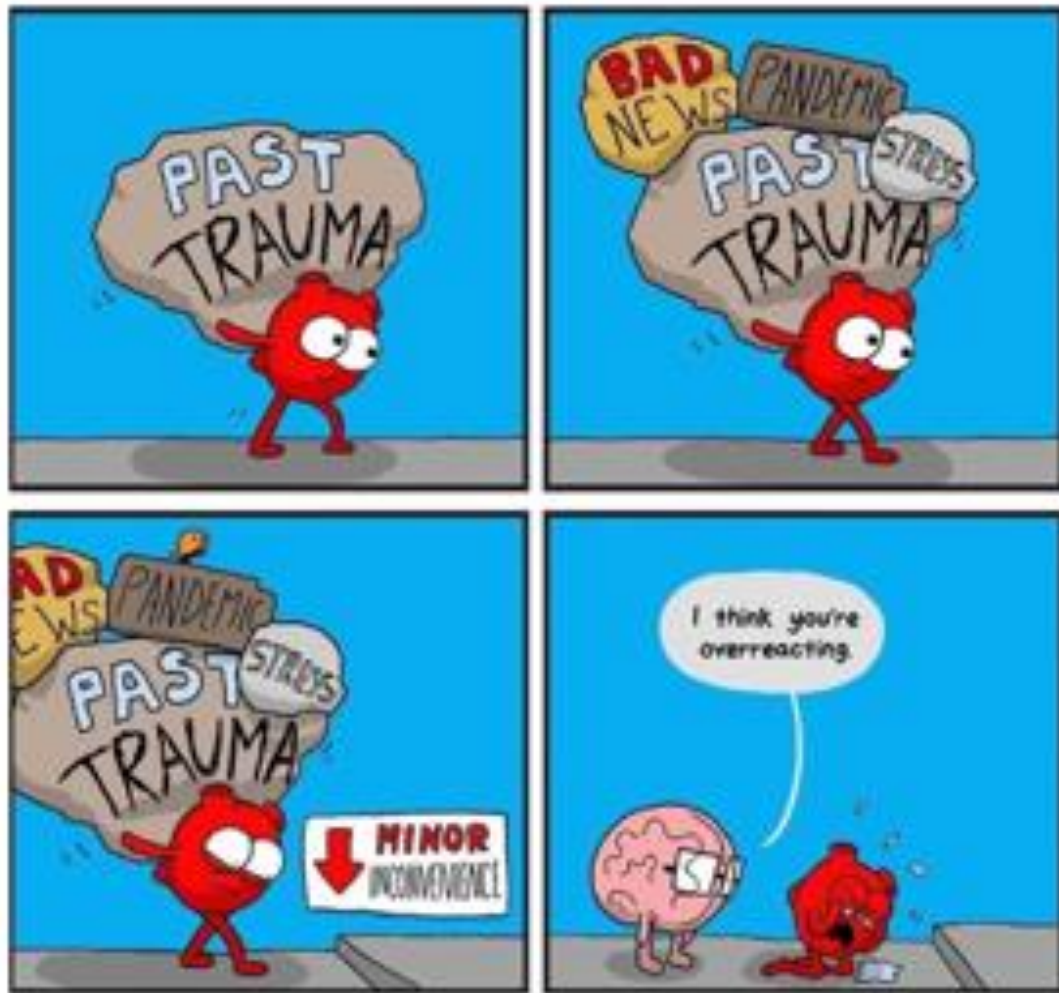
**DANGER**

AND THE OTHER REPRESENTS

**OPPORTUNITY**

危机

*John F. Kennedy*





# RESPONSES TO TRAUMA

## FIGHT



- temper and angry outbursts
- aggressive
- dominates and controls others
- demands perfection from others
- pursues power and control
- impulsive decision making
- "Bully"
- constant criticizing and raging

## FLIGHT



- Feelings of panic and anxiety
- "workaholic"
- obsessive and/or compulsive behaviours
- always on the go/staying busy
- over worrying
- perfectionist/ over achiever
- hyperactive
- over analytical

## FREEZE



- depression
- dissociation
- brain fog
- avoids human contact
- detached
- struggles with making decisions
- hibernating
- lifeless and feeling dead inside
- feeling spaced out

## FAWN



- people pleasing
- co-dependent
- has a hard time standing up for themselves and saying "no"
- lack of boundaries
- defers to others in decision making
- avoids conflict
- highly concerned with fitting in

EXAMPLES

STRESS

"I need to slow down. I need self-care."

SAD

"It's okay. I need love & to look for joy & gratitude."

ANXIOUS

"I need calm & grounding. I can remind myself"



They are SIGNALS to us...

our body bringing our attention to something → Maybe letting you know that something is 'off-kilter' or out of balance.

ASK YOURSELF:  
"WHAT IS THIS FEELING TRYING TO TELL



**HOW TO RECOGNIZE ANXIETY IN YOURSELF AND OTHERS**

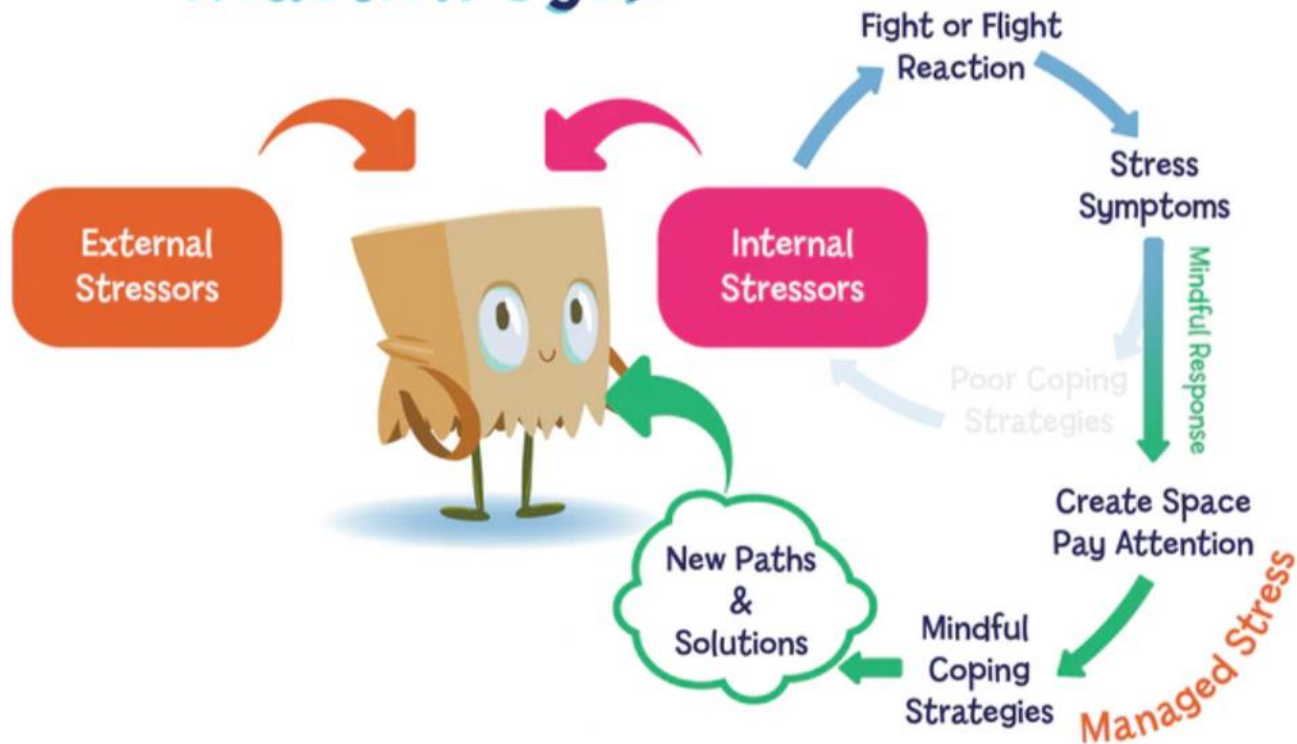
- Insomnia (Icon: Clock with an 'X')
- Rapid heartbeat (Icon: Heart with a pulse line)
- Headaches (Icon: Head with a pain symbol)
- Trouble breathing (Icon: Lungs)
- Sweating (Icon: Hand wiping sweat)
- Stomach Issues (Icon: Stomach outline)
- Panic attacks (Icon: Lightning bolt)
- Needing reassurance (Icon: Hand being held)



Meh nah able today



# The Mindful Stress Reaction Cycle



# Trauma Defined

## General

An emotional response to a deeply distressing or disturbing event that overwhelms one's ability to cope.

## Hurricane-Specific

Includes exposure to life-threatening events, loss of home, displacement, and community disruption caused by the hurricane.

- Trauma after a hurricane may also include ongoing stressors like financial loss and housing insecurity.

# Recommendations

- Promote safety, basic needs, and social support immediately after the event.
- Facilitate access to mental health resources and community support networks.
- Encourage open communication about experiences and feelings.

# Post-Traumatic Reactions

## Normal

Sadness, anxiety, irritability, difficulty sleeping, confusion, emotional numbness;

...these usually improve gradually.

## PTSD

Persistent, intrusive symptoms such as flashbacks, nightmares, avoidance of reminders, heightened arousal, emotional numbness that impair functioning

..... last more than a month.



# Recommendations

- Monitor symptoms over time to differentiate normal stress from PTSD.
- Provide psychoeducation about common trauma reactions and coping strategies.
- Refer for professional mental health treatment if symptoms persist or worsen, especially PTSD symptoms.

# Stress vs Burnout: Both involve emotional and physical exhaustion and can impact mental health.

## Stress

A response to external pressures that is typically acute and may motivate coping or action. Characterized by feeling overwhelmed but still functional.

## Burnout

A chronic response to prolonged stress resulting in exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced effectiveness, often related to work or caregiving roles.

# Recommendations

- Manage stress with healthy coping strategies: rest, physical activity, social support.
- Prevent burnout through workload management, setting boundaries, self-care, and seeking professional support when needed.
- Organizations should provide resources and promote work-life balance.

- KNOWLEDGE

- AWARENESS

- INSIGHT

- SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

- OPTIONS



**Knowledge:** The more you understand what's happening

**Awareness:** The more you are in touch with WHAT's affecting you

**Insight:** The more you appreciate WHY these things affect you

**Strategies and Skills:** The better you can USE techniques to cope

**Opportunity:** Over and Over. Practice makes "perfect" possible



What happens in  
our brain when  
we experience  
stress?

When the brain detects stress, it is detected by the amygdala- the emotion processing centre of the brain. The amygdala communicates with other parts of the brain to trigger a stress response.

The acute stress response is a good thing because it helps us to react and adapt.



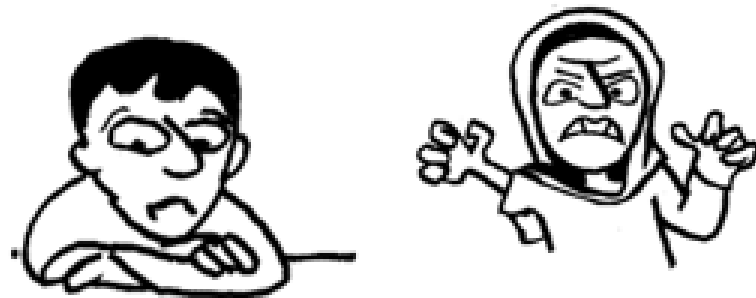
What happens in  
our brain when  
we experience  
stress?

The sympathetic nervous system releases stress hormones to allow our body to react- 'fight or flight'.

When the stressor is over, the parasympathetic nervous system kicks in to restore calm and balance- 'rest and digest'



Sometime stressors can cause very intense thoughts and emotions or emotional storms that are to unhook from. Chronic stress and trauma can also lead to an overactive amygdala that makes you more likely to exaggerate emotional cues and make you more susceptible to experiencing intense emotional storms



# PERSONAL WELLNESS

## EMOTIONAL

Ability to understand ourselves and cope with the challenges life can bring

Ability to get personal fulfillment from our jobs or our chosen career fields while maintaining balance in life

## OCCUPATIONAL

## INTELLECTUAL

Ability to open our minds to new ideas & experiences that can be applied to personal decisions, group interaction & community betterment

## ENVIRONMENTAL

Ability to understand responsibility for the quality of air, water, and land around us

## SPIRITUAL

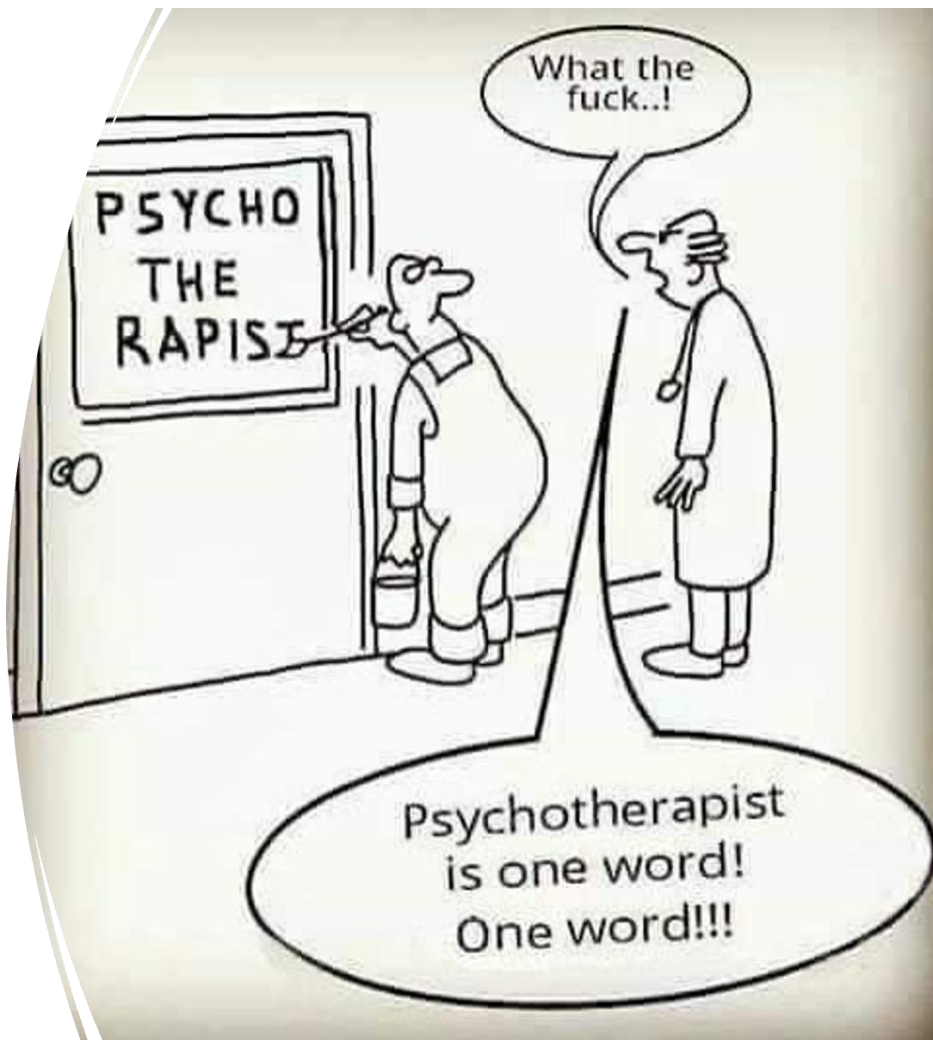
Ability to establish peace & harmony in our lives

## PHYSICAL

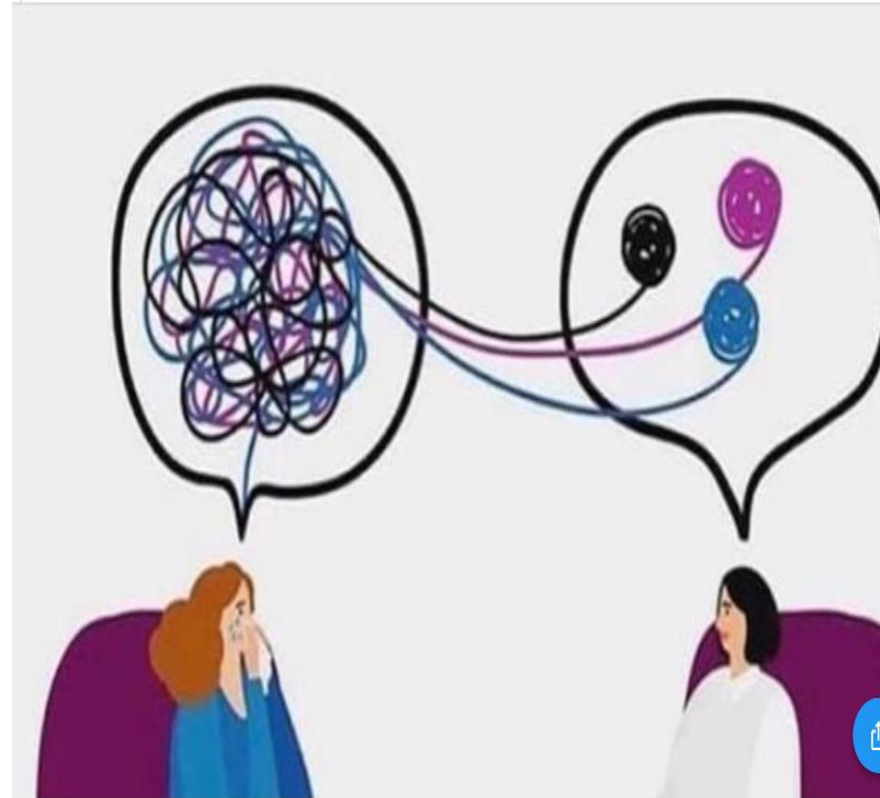
Ability to maintain a healthy quality of life that allows us to get through daily tasks without undue fatigue or physical stress

## SOCIAL

Ability to establish & maintain positive relationships with family, friends & co-workers



Please remember how powerful talking is



# WHAT IS THE STANDARD PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID (PFA) MODEL?

- PFA is the humane, supportive, and practical assistance to people who recently experienced serious stressors.
- PFA will help persons in the short term by:
  1. Helping them feel safe, connected to others, calm & hopeful
  2. Providing access to social, physical, and emotional support
  3. Regaining a sense of control by being able to help themselves





# WHAT THE STANDARD PFA IS NOT

- PFA is not counselling
- PFA is not psychological debriefing which requires a detailed revision of events
- PFA is not a highly specialized skill that requires extensive training
- PFA does not involve asking someone to analyze what happened to them
- While PFA involves active listening and empathy, PFA does not involve coercing persons to share if they don't want to





# WHO IS PFA USUALLY FOR?

- PFA is for distressed people who have recently experienced serious stressors
- PFA can be provided to both children and adults
- Not everyone who experiences serious stressors will need or want PFA
- PFA should never be forced on anyone, however persons providing PFA should make themselves accessible to those who may want PFA

# WHEN SHOULD PFA USUALLY BE PROVIDED?

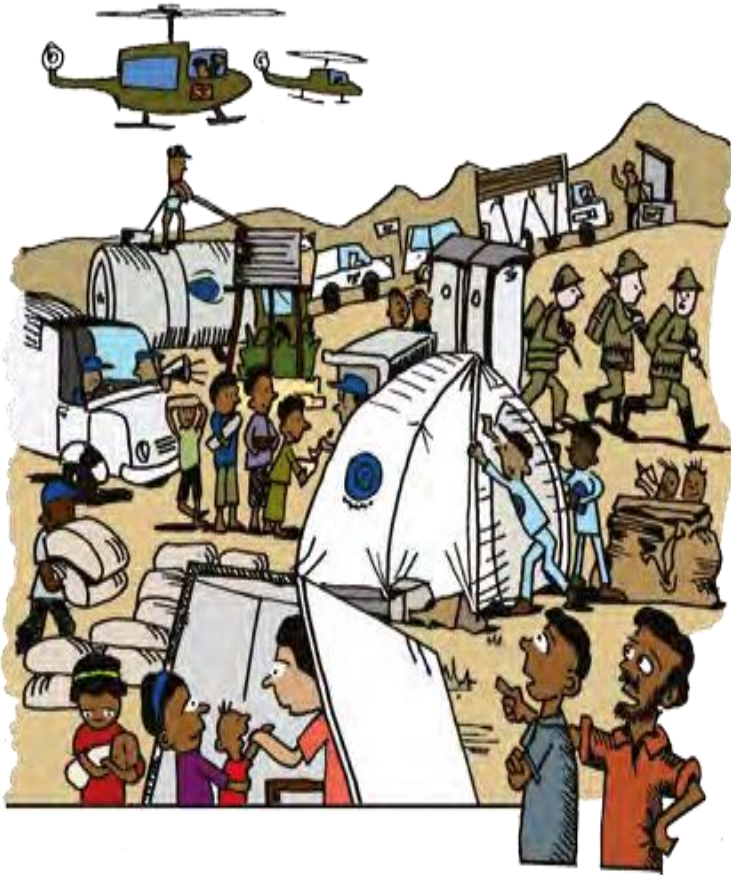
- PFA can be provided when encountering distressed people
- During or immediately after a crisis event
- Days or weeks after a crisis event depending on its duration and severity



# WHERE SHOULD PFA USUALLY BE PROVIDED?

PFA can be provided anywhere it is safe to do so. Ideally, this would be somewhere where there is some privacy to talk with the affected person when appropriate. This can include:

- Community settings
- Scene of the incident
- Health centers
- Shelters
- Camps



# ACTION PRINCIPLES: PREPARE, LOOK, LISTEN, LINK



PFA can be applied through the action principles of prepare, look, listen, and link



Prepare



Look



Listen



Link

# PREPARE



Learning about the source of distress



Learning about potential needs and concerns



Learning about the available services and support



Learning about potential safety and security concerns



# LOOK

1

Observing for  
safety reasons and  
risk factors

2

Observing to  
identify persons  
with the most  
immediate basic  
needs

3

Observing for  
persons with  
serious distress  
reactions

4

Observing to see  
what services are  
available to  
respond

# LISTEN



Reaching out to persons who  
may need support



Asking persons about their  
needs and concerns



Actively listening while  
persons share their concerns

# LINK



Connecting persons with others who can support them



Providing persons with the information needed to access services



Guiding persons to access services that are available

# THE DO'S & DON'TS OF PFA

## The Do's

- Be honest and trustworthy
- Respect person's right to make their own decision
- Be aware of and set aside your own biases
- Make it clear to persons that even if they refuse help now, they can still access it in the future
- Respect privacy and keep the person's story confidential
- Behave appropriately based on the person's age, gender, culture
- Be clear about your role, abilities, and limitations

# THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF PFA

## The Don'ts

- Don't exploit your relationship as a helper
- Don't ask for any money or favor in return for helping them
- Don't make false promises or give false information
- Don't exaggerate your skills
- Don't force help on anyone, and be intrusive or pushy
- Don't pressure people to tell you their story
- Don't share their story with others
- Don't judge the person for their action or feelings



# Support to build a Personalized Self-Care Toolkit

## Choosing Your Daily Approach

| <b>Nudge</b><br>                             | <b>Knowledge</b><br>                                | <b>Awareness and Insight</b><br>  | <b>Strategies and Skills</b><br> | <b>Opportunities to implement your Personal Plan</b><br> |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| <p>Name it to Tame it:<br/>A catchy reminder about the wellness domain for the day, to set the stage for what you can do.</p> | <p>Facts to Inform:<br/>Information on a specific wellness domain to increase your understanding and anchor your change process.</p> | <p>Who, What, When, Where:<br/>Why you do what you do.<br/>Why you don't do what you should.<br/>Increasing self-awareness to inform your change process.</p> | <p>With the knowledge, awareness and insight:<br/>How to make a Practical Personal Plan</p>                         | <p>What you will do to support your overall and specific well-being and overcome barriers on a day-to-day basis.</p>                        |
| <b>Communication Tools</b>  |  |   |   |   |
| <b>WhatsApp</b>   | <b>Videos</b>  | <b>Webinars</b>   | <b>Worksheets</b>   | <b>Templates</b>  |



# MY DAILY WELLNESS JOURNAL

| AREAS OF WELLNESS  | WHAT I TRIED | WHAT HAPPENED | WHAT TO TRY NEXT |
|--|--------------|---------------|------------------|
|  EMOTIONAL  |              |               |                  |
|  PHYSICAL   |              |               |                  |
|  SOCIAL     |              |               |                  |
|  COGNITIVE  |              |               |                  |
|  OCCUPATION |              |               |                  |
|  SPIRITUAL  |              |               |                  |
|  FINANCIAL |              |               |                  |

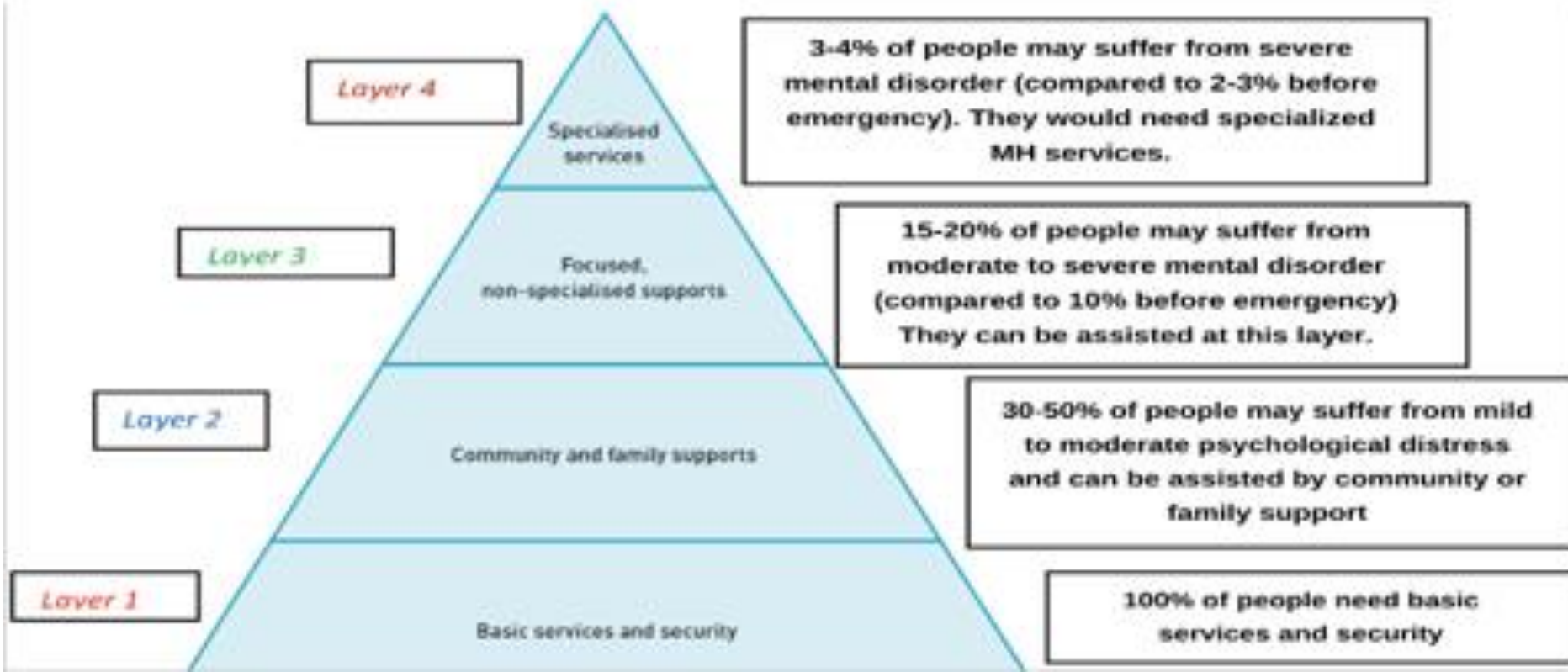
## Coping strategies for target populations: Mental Health and Psychosocial support (MHPSS)

MHPSS helps to provide support for people's general psychosocial wellbeing by:

- Helping to reduce feelings of distress.
- Helping people more effectively deal with personal challenges or practical problems.
- Helping people connect with other family and community members.



# The Mental Health and Psychosocial Pyramid



# MHPSS (Mental Health and Psychosocial Support)

MHPSS integrates health and social needs across disaster recovery phases:

**Immediate:** Safety, calming anxiety, basic needs met; aligns with PFA's Prepare and Look, and KAISSEO's early knowledge and awareness stages.

- **Intermediate:** Adjusting to new realities; peer support; PFA's Listen and Link, and KAISSEO's insight and strategy unfold.

- **Long-term:** Ongoing mental health care and resilience; KAISSEO's opportunity and IRIE's evolve stages become critical.



## Core Principles of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

Human rights and  
equity

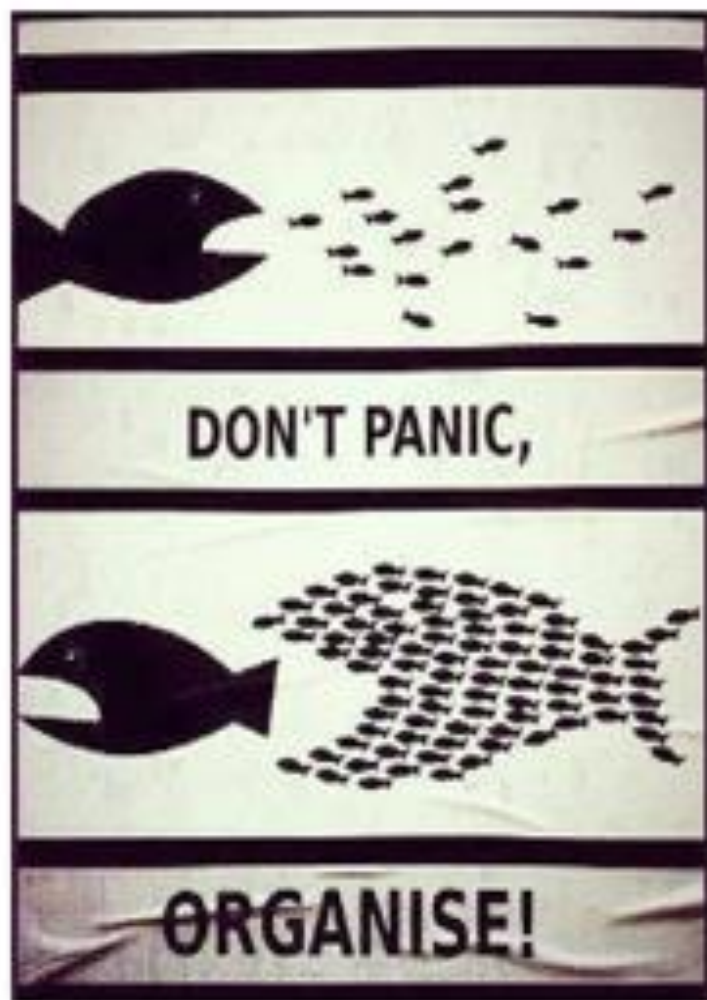
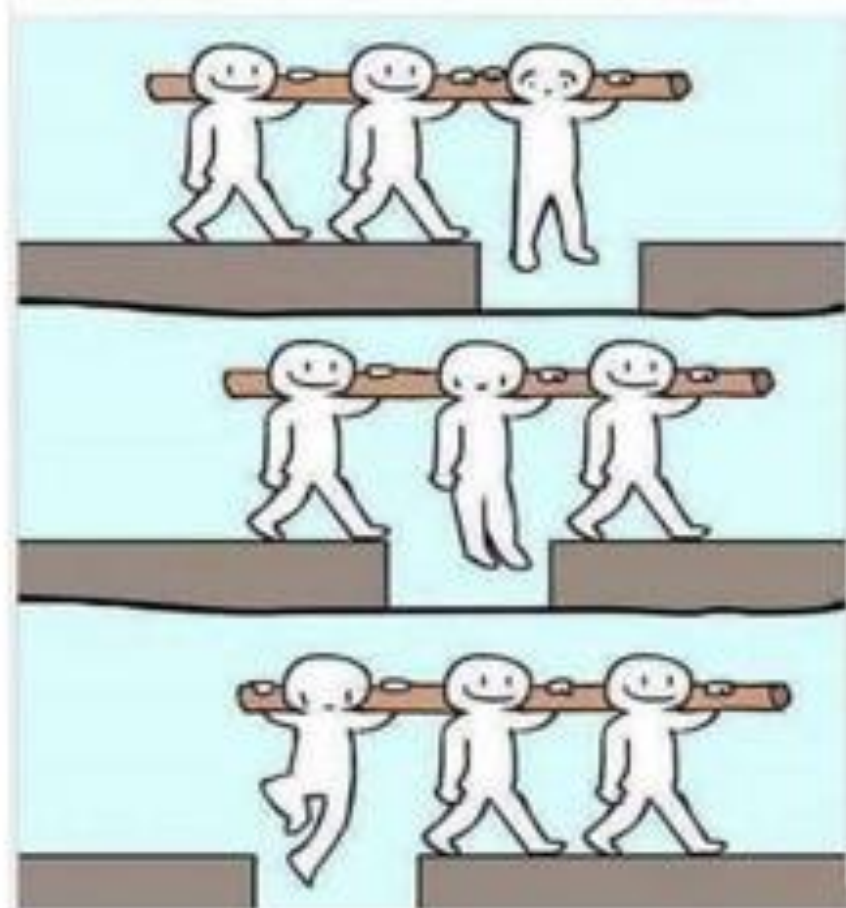
Participation

Do No Harm

Building on  
available  
resources and  
capacities

Integrated  
support systems

Multi-layered  
supports



SØREN KIERKEGAARD, 1843



TOM GAULD FOR NEW SCIENTIST

# SO WHAT!?

## Pause to Ponder

Reflect on your experiences or your team's signs of stress, burnout, or trauma.

Which idea will you apply first in your context?

Identify gaps and strengths at personal, workplace, and community levels for mental health support.

## Take Away

Commit to one immediate practical action and share learning within your network.

Appreciate disaster mental health complexity & MHPSS phased approach

- Harness KAISSE & PFA+R to empower mindful responses
- Build resilience personally & collectively
- Act with reflection and strategy
- Support recovery & resilience at personal, workplace, & community levels