



COPING AND STRESS MANAGEMENT DURING A PANDEMIC

HELPING NURSING HOME STAFF BUILD RESILIENCY TO
ADDRESS COVID-19 RELATED STRESSORS

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THE IMPORTANCE OF HEALTHY COPING AND BUILDING RESILIENCE

- During the Covid-19 Pandemic, healthcare workers in Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) staff are at increased risk for emotional distress
- This is a result of the unique challenges of being a healthcare worker during this unprecedented and highly stressful situation
- Increased stress and negative emotions are normal responses to abnormal circumstances

WHAT ARE THE STRESSORS RELATED TO COVID-19 IN SNFS



Fear of contracting Covid-19

Fear of spreading the virus to others at home

Fear of infecting patients

Limited resources/supplies

Proper use of PPE and infection control protocols

Feeling misunderstood by family and friends, feeling you have to justify work

A sense of a lack of appreciation (versus focus on hospital workers)

Negative news associated with nursing homes and Covid-19

Change in workflow and responsibility; change in units; change in colleagues

WHAT ARE THE STRESSORS RELATED TO COVID-19 IN SNFS



Death of patients

Death of coworkers

Pressure to keep our vulnerable patients safe

Increased work hours, demands, and fatigue

Increased patient distress, challenging behaviors, attention-seeking behaviors

There is no clear end in site AND things can change daily

Plus general Covid-19 outbreak stressors!

PSYCHOLOGICAL RISKS DURING AND AFTER THE PANDEMIC

Most people are resilient and will weather this storm with no lasting significant mental health symptoms

However, based on past disaster research, 10%-20% of HC workers are at risk for a new mental health disorder they did not have before the Pandemic

Current limited data suggest a spike in acute emotional distress related to Pandemic related stressors – early studies in Wuhan China (Lai, et.A;. 2020)

Rx in the U.S. for sleep medications, antianxiety, and antidepressants rose 21% between Feb 15 – March 15; 78% new prescriptions

PSYCHOLOGICAL RISKS DURING AND AFTER THE PANDEMIC

Kaiser Family Foundation poll: 56% reported that worry/stress related to the Covid-19 outbreak has led to at least one negative mental health effect:

Trouble with eating or sleeping; Drinking more alcohol; Frequent headaches or stomachaches; Shorter tempers; Etc.



64% of frontline health care workers and their families reported worsened mental health since the outbreak



Calls to National Crisis Hotlines have increased

Calls to the Sacramento crisis line increased 40% from February to March

In a year-to-year comparison, April's call volume was 58% greater than in April 2019

Increased risk for relapse or exacerbation of symptoms in those with previous MH disorders (PTSD, chronic depression, etc.)

Some people experience delayed onset of symptoms – even after the crisis

While symptoms lessen over time, for those with severe symptoms, they may last a long time (SARS studies)

Most likely to see a risk for family discord, difficulties at work, increased substance abuse, etc.

PSYCHOLOGICAL
RISKS DURING
AND AFTER THE
PANDEMIC,

HOW TO COPE AND BE RESILIENT DURING THE PANDEMIC

Know

- Know your stress indicators – acknowledge when you are stressed so you can make a conscious choice to cope

Consider

- Consider your personal coping strategies

Encourage

- Encourage adaptability and flexibility

Tap

- Tap into social support

Promote

- Promote healthy thinking and positive attitudes

Engage in

- Engage in healthy behaviors (sleep, eating, exercise)

Practice

- Practice relaxation

WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension

Indicators of stress:

- **Physical:** muscle tension, fatigue, upset stomach
- **Emotional:** anxious, sad/depressed, worrying, irritable
- **Cognitive:** negative thinking (catastrophizing), difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- **Behavioral:** impulsivity, snapping at others, withdrawal, increased substance use



TAKING CHARGE OF STRESS: BUILDING RESILIENCY



- Good stress management improves your resilience to hold up under pressure and successfully manage challenges
- Stress Management is not a “one size fits all” process
- Identify what positive coping tools work for you
- **PLAN** how you will respond to stress during the pandemic and as stressors occur

CONSIDER WHAT POSITIVE COPING SKILLS DO YOU ALREADY USE?

- Listening to music
- Taking a walk
- Journaling/writing
- Reading
- Doing a puzzle
- Games on your phone
- Yoga/exercise
- Socializing (from afar)
- Engage in a hobby
- Cooking/baking
- Cleaning/organizing
- Having a cup of tea



COVID-19 CONSIDERATIONS

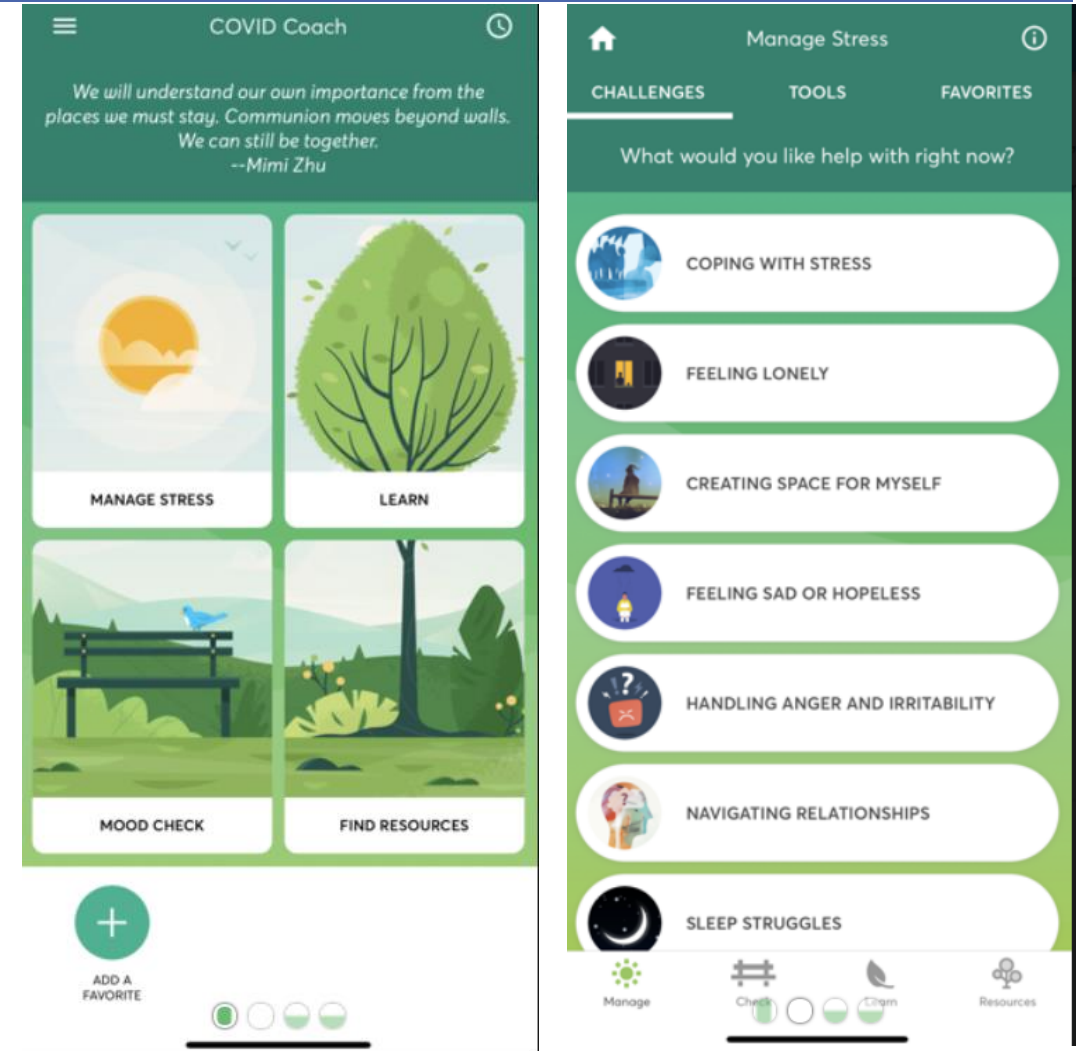


Limit	Limit media consumption
Remind	Remind yourself of the positive work you are doing
Say	Say your gratitude list daily/keep a gratitude journal
Take	Take more breaks
Spend	Spend time outdoors
Download	Download COVID Coach App

COVID COACH APP: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS



- Education about coping during the pandemic
- Tools for self-care and to improve emotional well-being
- Trackers to check your mood and measure your growth toward personal goals



ACCEPT THE THINGS YOU CANNOT CHANGE



GRANT ME THE
Serenity TO ACCEPT THE
THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE
Courage TO CHANGE
THE THINGS I CAN AND
Wisdom TO KNOW
THE DIFFERENCE

- **Don't try to control the uncontrollable**
- Many things in life are beyond our control
- Focus on the things you can control

BE FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTABLE



- Stressful situations often require us to be flexible
 - The Covid-19 Pandemic is no exception
- Flexibility and adaptability play important roles in an individual's ability to adapt to continuously changing environments
- People who are flexible cope with stress better and have less negative affect

SOCIAL SUPPORT: CONNECT WITH OTHERS



- Social support is consistently found in research to buffer the effects of stress, including during “disasters”
- Because of social distancing and quarantine requirements, this is more challenging
- Consider ways to stay connected socially during social distancing:
 - Reach out to a colleague at work
 - Ask a loved one to check in with you
 - Call or email an old friend
 - Go for a walk (at safe distance) with a colleague during breaks
 - Schedule zoom and other app get togethers
 - Facetime with loved ones
 - Confide in a faith leader

DEVELOP HEALTHY THINKING

Pay attention to what you are thinking

Many thoughts are not accurate, realistic, or helpful

Thoughts are NOT facts

When stressed, individuals may have more Negative Automatic Thoughts:

- Catastrophize
- Overgeneralize
- Have a “Negative Filter”

“Everyone will get sick, overwhelm my work, and I won’t be able to bear the burden.”

“I only worked 12 hours but everyone else worked more than that. I never do enough.”

“I know I’ll get sick even though I am using PPE and following all safety precautions.”

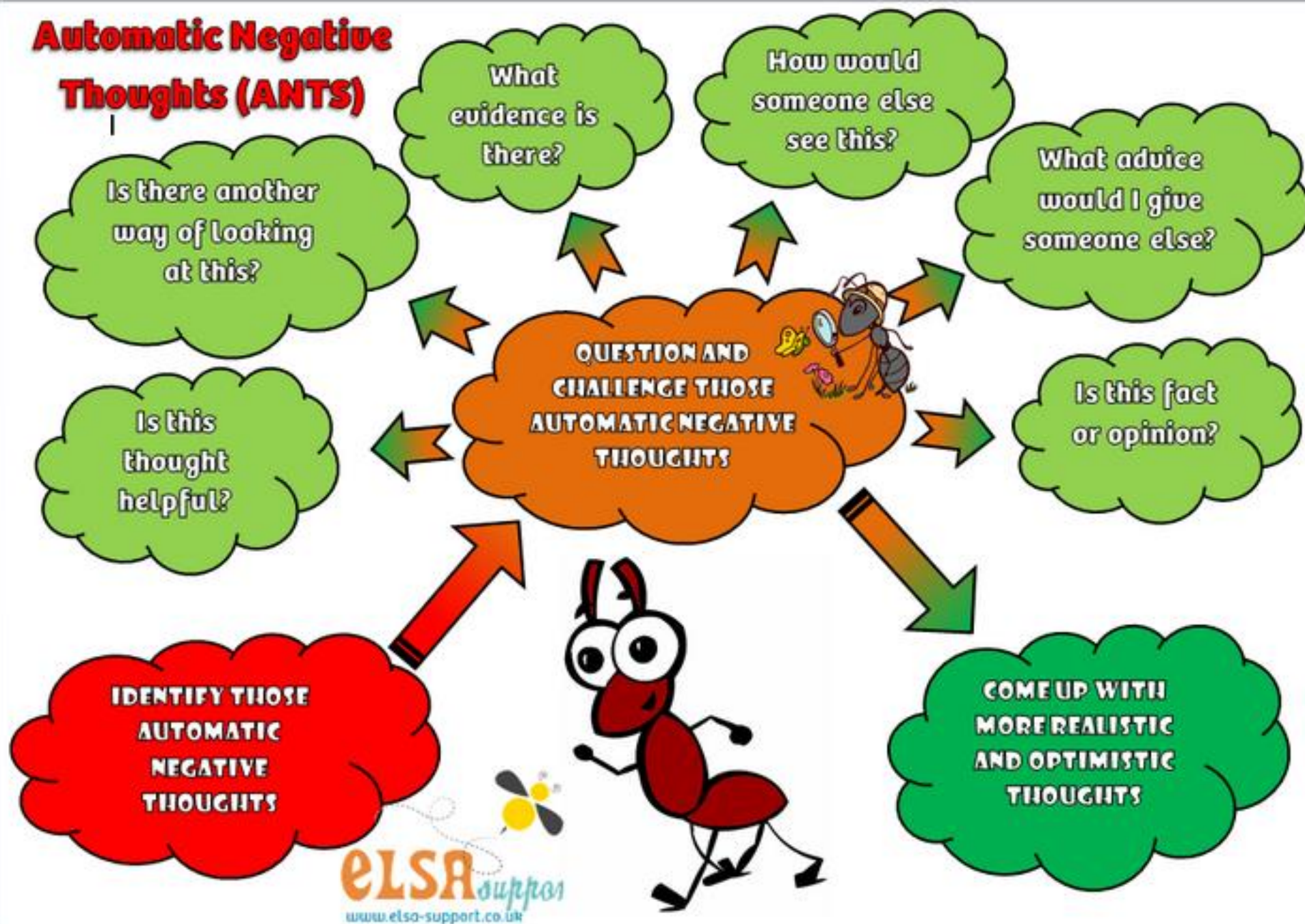
“If I take time to rest, I would be selfish and put others at-risk.”

“A patient was hospitalized and placed on a ventilator because I didn’t do enough. It’s my fault if the patient dies.”

“If I take a break, others will think I’m shirking my responsibilities and criticize me.”

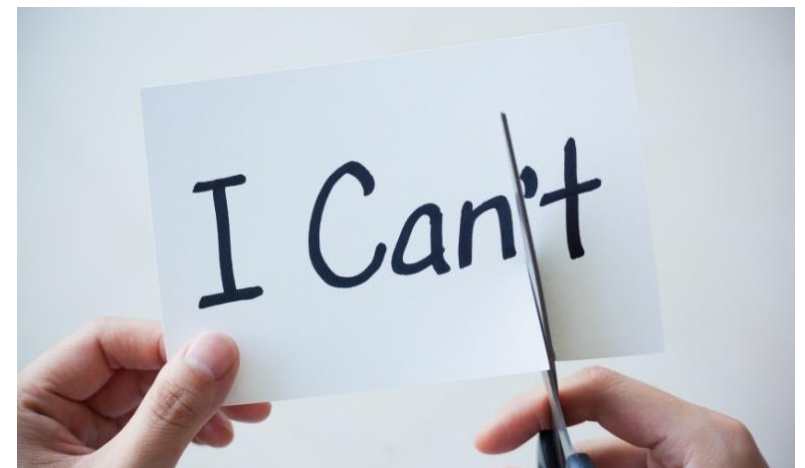
NEGATIVE AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS (EXCERPT ADAPTED FROM: ARNOLD, K.D. & SKILLINGS, J.L., 2020)

Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTS)



POSITIVE “SELF-TALK”

- "I can cope with my anxiety."
- "I can problem solve and prepare for upcoming events."
- "I know ways to cope with stress and use them effectively."
- At a minimum: Change self-limiting statements to questions
 - *I can't do this! --- How can I do this?*
 - *This is impossible! --- How is this possible?*



POSITIVE EMOTIONS AND THINKING: PRACTICE GRATITUDE

- **Gratitude** is an awareness of the good things in one's life and being thankful.
- Gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness.
- In research studies, self-guided weekly or daily gratitude exercises were associated with higher levels of positive affect.
- How to practice gratitude:
 - Gratitude journal
 - Daily gratitude mental list
 - Say thank you/write a thank you card



WORRY LESS



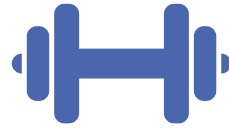
- 10 Minutes is usually plenty of time to worry
- Schedule “worry time” and set a timer
- Then stop the worry, as it is counterproductive
- When considering a stressor, use time for planning, and coping

INCREASE HEALTHY HABITS



Eat a healthy diet

Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of what you eat



Exercise

Consider even brief opportunities for physical activity, such as brief walks, stretches, etc.



Get enough sleep

Adequate sleep improves mood and stress management

Feeling tired limits your stress management capabilities and may reduce your thinking skills and emotional regulation

MAKE TIME FOR REST AND RELAXATION

If you regularly make time for rest and relaxation, you'll be in a better place to handle life's stressors

You may need to be creative during the pandemic



Set aside time to rest

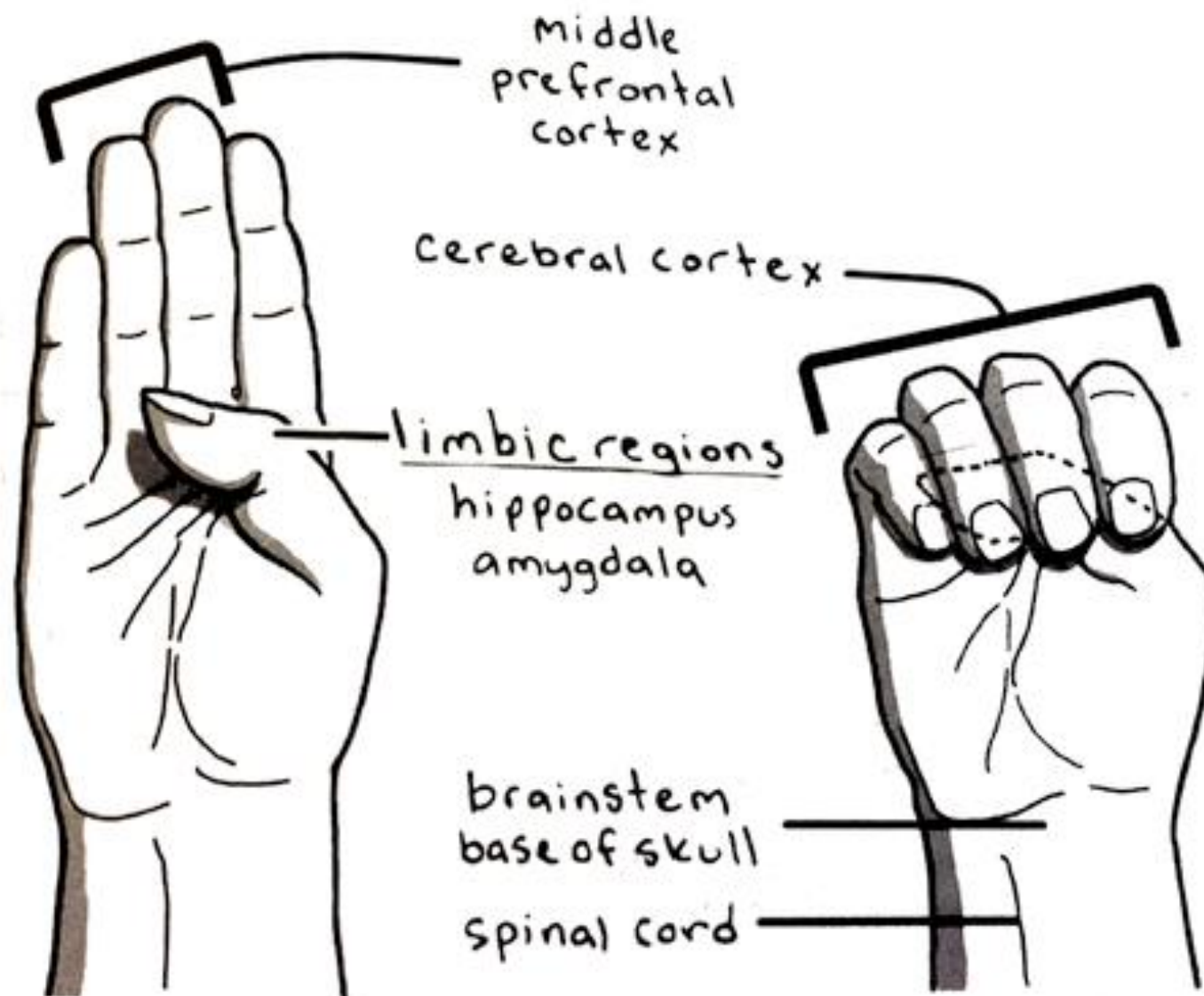
Include breaks and rest time
in your daily schedule

This helps you “recharge your
batteries”



Identify activities that help you feel more relaxed

**E.g. Have a cup of tea, take a bath, light a candle,
practice relaxation exercise, etc.**



HAND MODEL OF THE BRAIN

BY DR. DANIEL SIEGEL

WHAT IS “RELAXATION?”

Definition of ‘relaxation:’

- Refreshment of mind or body

Definition of ‘relax:’

- To make less tense
- To release the effects of stress
- To release oneself from worry



Reduce anxiety, anger/irritability, negative affect

Prevents stress from building up

Decrease muscle tension

Helps reduce headaches or other physical complaints

Improves concentration and memory

Helps sleep

WHY PRACTICE RELAXATION TECHNIQUES?

Feelings Thermometer



RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

- Guided Breathing
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Guided Imagery
- Mindfulness Meditations
- Others

<https://vimeo.com/402344226>



SIMPLE VISUALIZATIONS



WHEN SHOULD I SEEK HELP?



- If you feel initial symptoms of stress are not getting better
- If you feel your current coping skills are not enough
- ***When functioning is impaired (at work, at home, in relationships)

SIGNS OF ANXIETY

- Persistent worry or feeling overwhelmed by emotions
- Excessive worry about a number of concerns and/or a general sense that something bad is going to happen.
- Restlessness
- Irritability; feeling on edge
- Difficulty concentrating
- Sleep problems





SIGNS OF DEPRESSION

- A lack of interest and pleasure in daily activities
- Change in appetite; significant weight loss or gain
- Difficulty sleeping or excessive sleeping
- Lack of energy; chronic fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating and/or making decisions
- Feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, and/or helplessness
- Excessive guilt
- Thoughts of death or suicide

WHERE DO I GET HELP?

You are not alone!

- Professional therapy – seek out a psychologist, counselor, other mental health therapist
 - Psychology Today – Find a Therapist; Find a Psychiatrist
 - American Psychological Association – Provider Locator
 - Behavioral Health Providers listing in your health insurance “Find a Provider”
 - Ask your Primary Care Physician for a referral
 - Ask your faith leader for a referral
 - CHE Behavioral Health Services – Outpatient Telehealth Psychotherapy – with licensed psychologists



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National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

(Spanish)

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National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

(Options for Deaf and Hard of Hearing)

(800) 799-4889

Crisis Text Line

Text HELLO to 741741

CRISIS LINES

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THANK YOU!



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