

# STEPPING INTO RESILIENCE

(Transforming stressful experiences  
into opportunities for growth)

# GROUND RULES

- ▶ Willingness to participate and self-disclosure
- ▶ Non-judgemental acceptance of others
- ▶ Respect confidentiality
- ▶ Valuing the importance of the group
- ▶ Respecting others (no put downs or criticism)
- ▶ Willingness to accept feedback
- ▶ Making the group members feel safe
- ▶ Willingness to accept decisions by group coordinators

# RESILIENCE

- ▶ Mental and physical well being depend on how we manage our lives
- ▶ Stress caused by life events affects our ability to manage
- ▶ The capacity to bounce back in the face of difficult life events is referred to as Resilience

# RESILIENCE DEVELOPMENT

- ▶ Individuals can develop/learn resilience
- ▶ A number of factors influences this capacity
  - Genetics
  - Life events
  - Traumatic life events
  - Biological/medical barriers
  - Managing day to day events/activities
- ▶ Stress is a major cause of vulnerability and inhibits an individuals capacity to develop resilience

# THE PROGRAM

- ▶ Definition and meaning of resilience
- ▶ Stress and the effects on mental and physical health
- ▶ Develop self awareness. What are “hot spots”- triggers
- ▶ Develop change pathways based on the pillars of developing psychological resilience
- ▶ Provide modules to assist with change process (online)

# WHAT DOES RESILIENCE MEAN?

# DEFINITIONS OF RESILIENCE

- ▶ “Set of processes that enables good outcomes in spite of serious threats”  
(Masten, 2001)
- ▶ “Resilience is the ability to persist in the face of challenges and to bounce back from adversity” (Reivitch et al., 2011)
- ▶ Further: “How individuals transform stressful experiences into opportunities for growth” (Gillespie et al., 2007)

# WHAT DO RESILIENT PEOPLE DO?

- ▶ Individuals react to adversity (negative events) in different ways
- ▶ Resilient individuals handle adversity with positive behaviours, positive mindsets, and manage negative emotions and develop self belief
- ▶ Individuals unable to be resilient may react to adversity by resigning from their job, drinking alcohol, taking drugs, fighting with their boss, ignoring or getting angry with their partners, not participating in life etc. and moving into distress and negative emotional states



# VULNERABILITY INFLUENCES

- ▶ Vulnerability is a state that occurs in the context of what we are born with (genetic) and life events and how we manage these factors
- ▶ As a consequence of being vulnerable we are predisposed to moving into emotional distress and this increases the chances of developing mental health problems
- ▶ Medical problems and genetics - vulnerable

# IMPORTANT FACTORS IN DEVELOPING RESILIENCE

- ▶ Emotion Regulation
- ▶ Impulse Control
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Optimism
- ▶ Causal Analysis – cause and effect



- ▶ Self Efficacy
- ▶ Reaching out
- ▶ Faith/spirituality
- ▶ Sense of meaning
- ▶ Flexibility

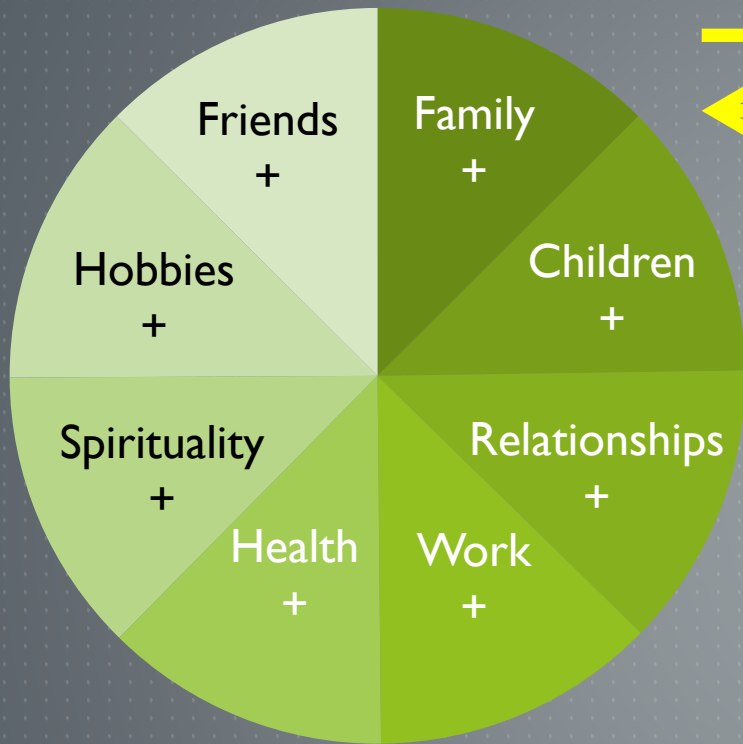
(Reivich and Shatte 2011)

# PILLARS OF RESILIENCE

- ▶ Lifestyle Management
- ▶ Beliefs/attitudes/thinking styles
- ▶ Affect/body/brain
- ▶ Consequent emotions/mental state/ill health

# RESILIENCE

## Lifestyle Management



## + Thoughts/Beliefs

- I like myself
- I believe in myself
- I am a good person
- The world is a positive challenge
- My mind is brilliant
- I possess the qualities I need
- I am a happy person

## + Emotions

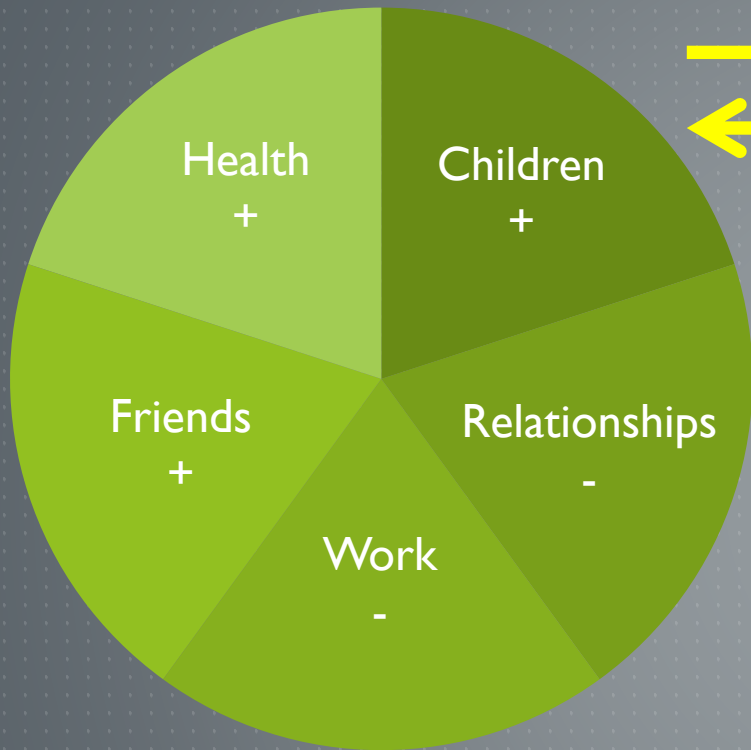
- 
- Love
  - Joy
  - Curiosity
  - Acceptance

## Affect / Body / Physical

- |                     |                    |                        |
|---------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| - Breath rate       | - Sleep            | - Muscles              |
| - Heart rate normal | - Weight gain/loss | - No Headaches/Tension |
| - Stomach           | - Brain            |                        |

# SURVIVING

## Lifestyle Management



## Thoughts/Beliefs

- I am struggling
- I may make it
- There is some hope
- I will have to resign
- Will my relationship make it
- Sometimes the world is terrible

## Emotions

Mix of good emotions and bad emotions

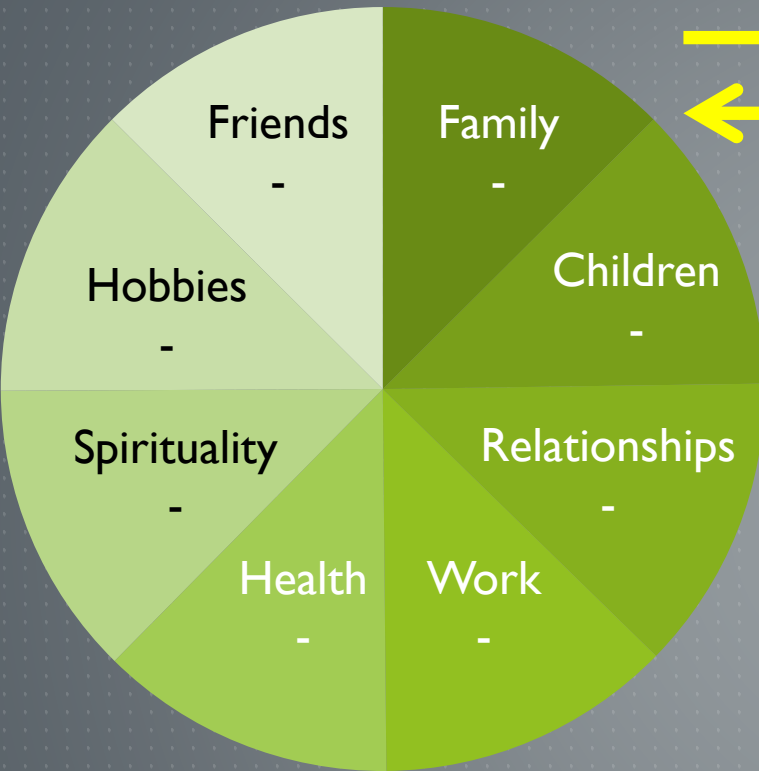
## Affect / Body / Physical

Sometimes :

Tension, headaches, nausea, trembling, poor sleep, loss or gain of weight, dizziness, fatigue, palpitations, anxiety, migraines

# VULNERABILITY

## Lifestyle Management



## - Thoughts/Beliefs

- I am not good enough
- I am a failure
- I am unworthy
- I am a bad person
- I am different
- I can't make mistakes
- I am unlovable

## - Emotions

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Fear
- Anger
- Guilt

## Affect / Body / Physical

Tension headaches, nausea, trembling, poor sleep loss or gain of weight, dizziness, fatigue, palpitations, anxiety, migraines

# RESEARCH-GENETICS

- ▶ Research suggests that we can manage our genetic vulnerability to some extent, and we can manage the impacts of life events (Bruce Lipton Biology of belief)

<http://youtube/KQp7oKdgjhY>

- ▶ Research in some areas suggest that genes can turn on/off depending on level of stress an individual is experiencing

# RESILIENCE AND STRESS

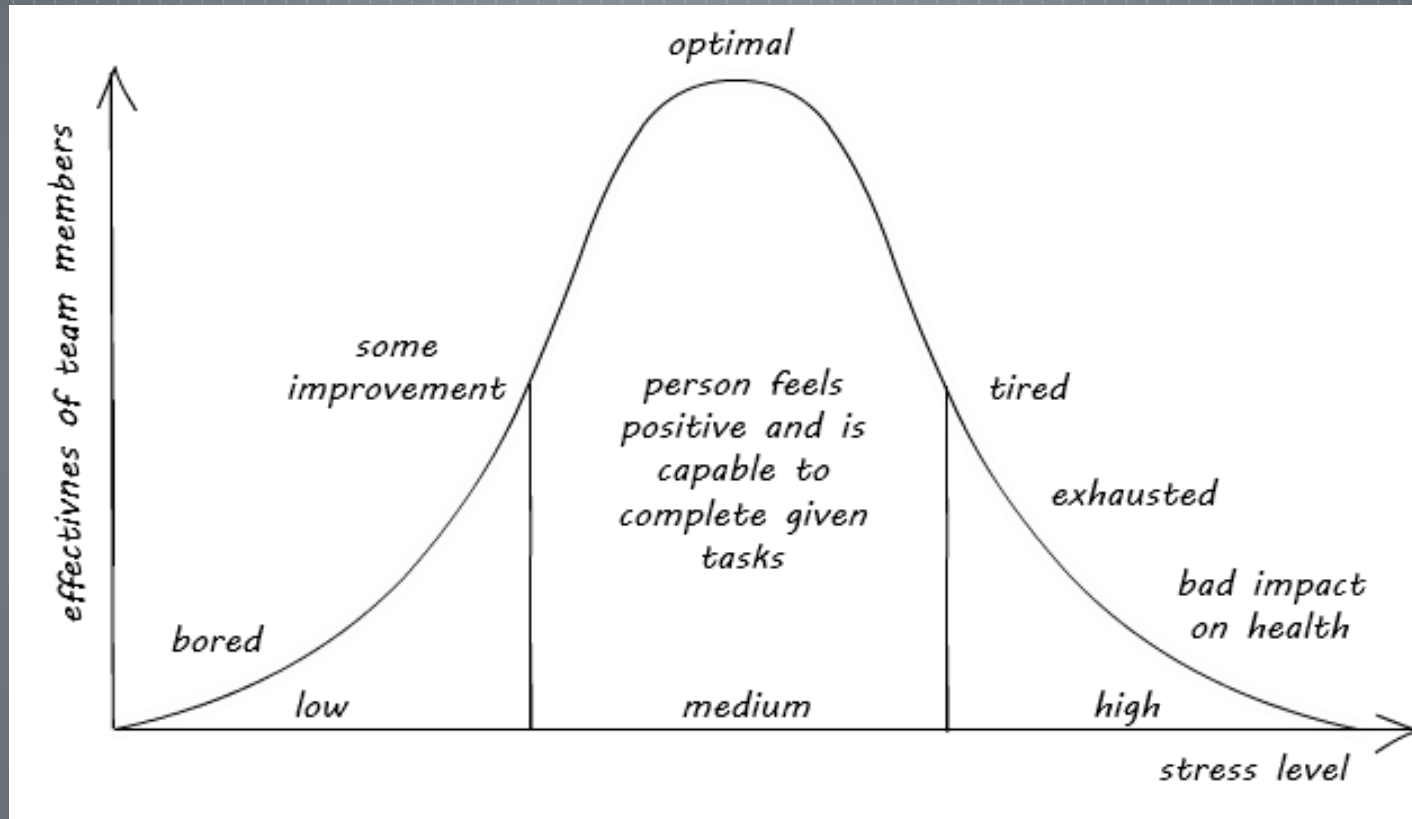
- ▶ Stress is a major factor in determining our capacity to be resilient
- ▶ The body/brain axis plays a major role in stress development
- ▶ Cortisol is the major stress hormone that plays a major role
- ▶ Many/most individuals do not recognise stress signs



# WHAT IS STRESS?

- ▶ Stress is your body's way of responding to any kind of demand or threat
- ▶ Sense danger - whether it's real or imagined - the body's defences kick into high gear
- ▶ Flight or fight response - automatic
- ▶ Nervous system releases stress hormones including adrenaline and cortisol
- ▶ Chronic stress system is harder to shut down - and cortisol overload
- ▶ Rewires the brain - changes to prefrontal cortex amygdala and hippocampus as well as other parts of the brain
- ▶ MOST INDIVIDUALS ARE UNAWARE OF THE EFFECTS OF CHRONIC STRESS

# IS STRESS NORMAL



# “NORMAL STRESS”

- ▶ Life in Western culture creates stress from completing day to day activity
- ▶ Some of these life activities keep us “on the ball “and focused/productive (work/life)
- ▶ When stress increases through a change in life circumstance changes in the body/brain make individuals vulnerable
- ▶ In many instances individuals are unaware that they are vulnerable (its normal to feel this way)
- ▶ US survey 80% of participants reported one stressful event in the past month and 20% reported extreme stress

# STRESS

## HEALTH PROBLEMS

- ▶ Depression and anxiety
- ▶ Pain of any kind
- ▶ Sleep problems
- ▶ Autoimmune diseases



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- ▶ Digestive problems
- ▶ Skin conditions, such as eczema
- ▶ Heart disease
- ▶ Weight problems

# STRESS

## COGNITIVE SYMPTOMS

- ▶ Memory problems
- ▶ Inability to concentrate
- ▶ Poor judgement
- ▶ Seeing only the negative
- ▶ Anxious or racing thoughts
- ▶ Constant worrying

# STRESS

## EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS

- ▶ Depression or general unhappiness
- ▶ Anxiety and agitation
- ▶ Moodiness, irritability, or anger
- ▶ Feeling overwhelmed
- ▶ Loneliness and isolation
- ▶ Other mental or emotional health problems

# STRESS

## PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

- ▶ Aches and pains
- ▶ Diarrhoea or constipation
- ▶ Nausea, dizziness
- ▶ Chest pain, rapid heart rate
- ▶ Loss of sex drive
- ▶ Frequent colds or flu

# STRESS

## COMMON EXTERNAL CAUSES

- ▶ Major life changes
- ▶ Work or school
- ▶ Relationship difficulties
- ▶ Financial problems
- ▶ Being too busy
- ▶ Children and family

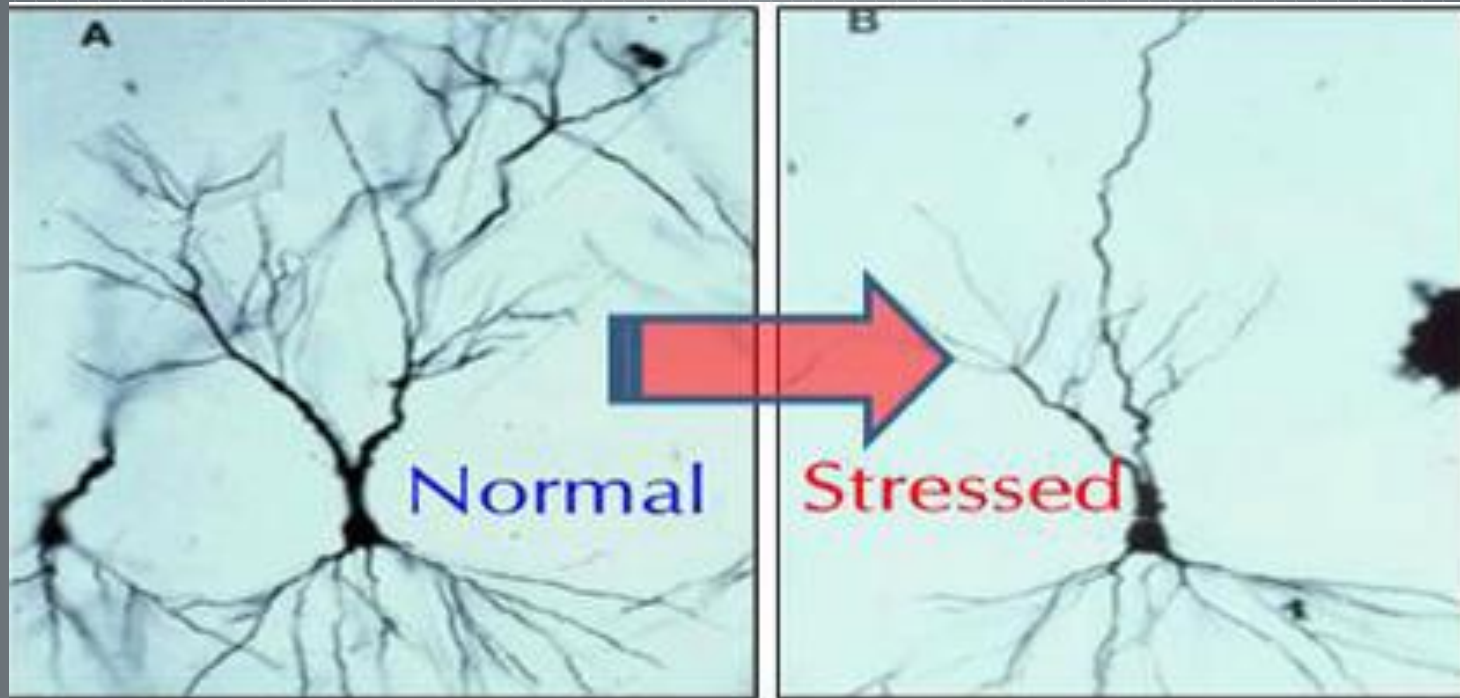


# STRESS

## COMMON INTERNAL CAUSES

- ▶ Pessimism
- ▶ Inability to accept uncertainty
- ▶ Perception out of control
- ▶ Negative thinking styles-beliefs-attitudes
- ▶ Changes to the biology/biochemistry of the body/brain

# STRESS AND THE BRAIN

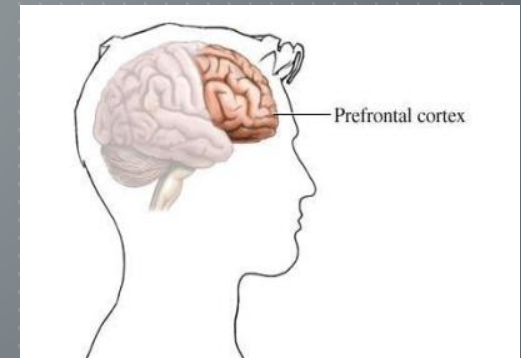
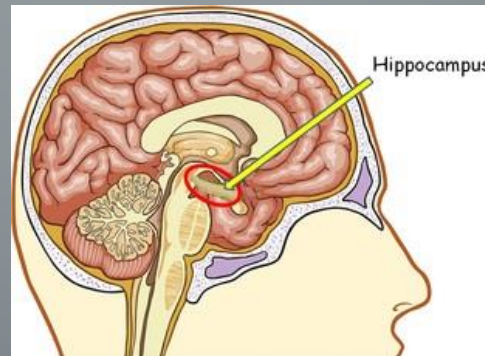
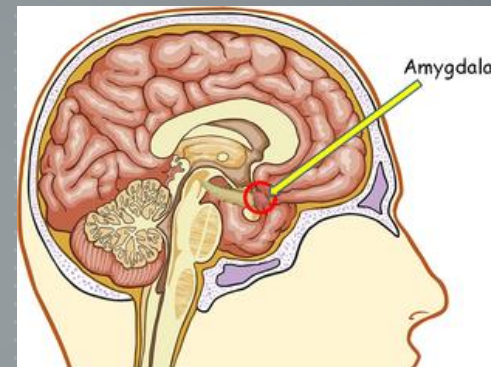


Stress decreases connectivity in the brain. Brain networks are shrunk

# STRESS AND THE BRAIN

- ▶ There are three parts of the brain that are highly involved in how we recognise and respond to stressors:

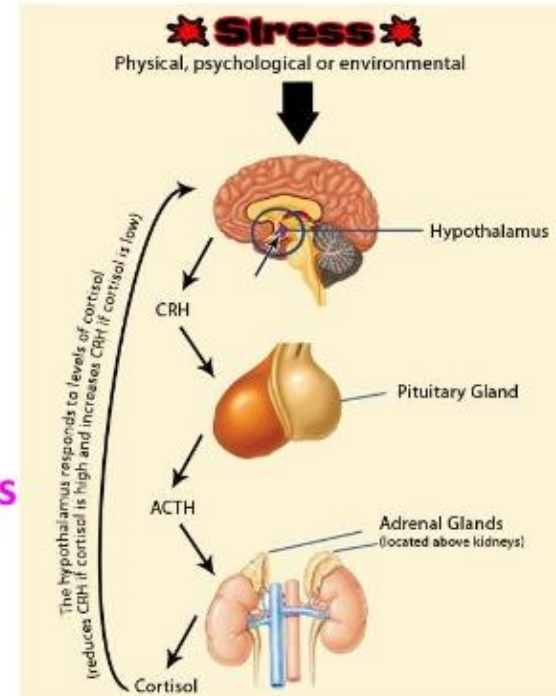
- ▶ the amygdala
- ▶ the hippocampus
- ▶ the prefrontal cortex



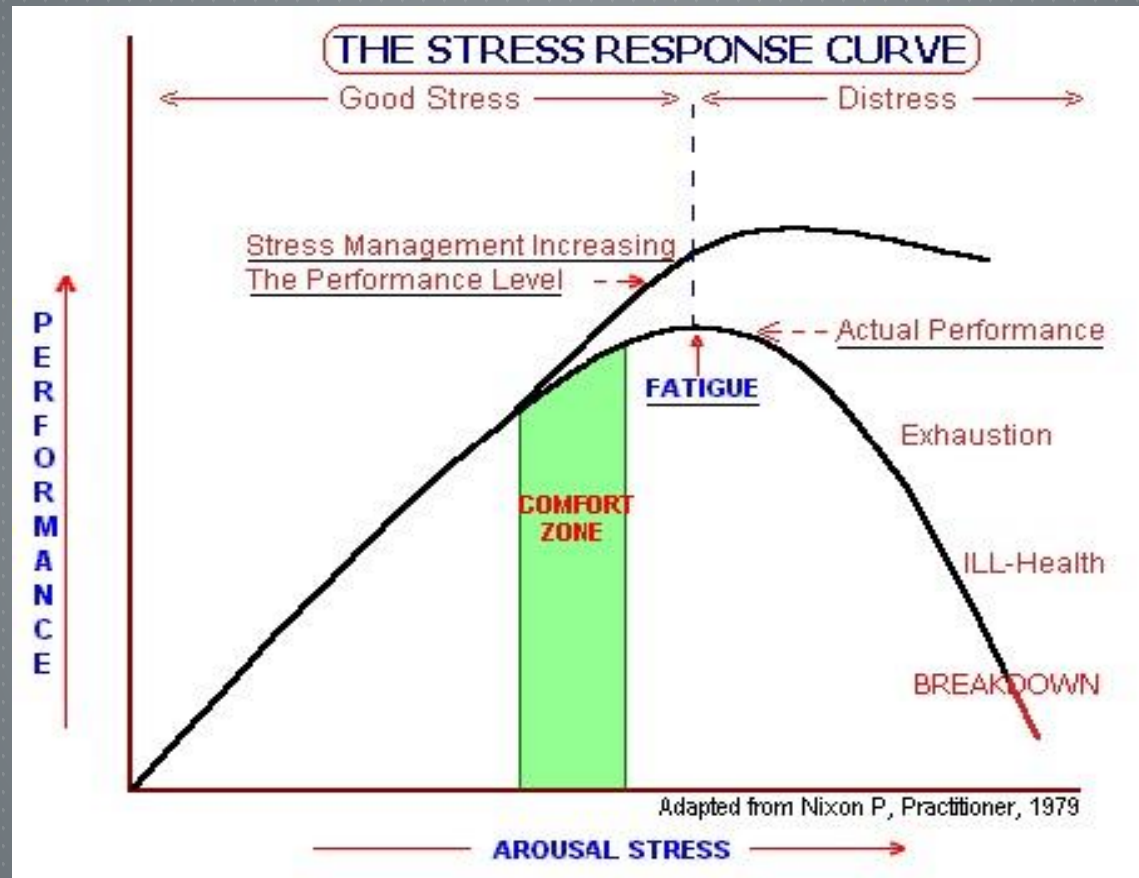
# STRESS AND HPA AXIS

## HPA axis

- **Hypothalamus** triggers the release of
- **CRH** (Corticotrophin releasing hormone) which activates the
- **Pituitary Gland** which releases the hormone
- **ACTH** (Adrenocorticotropic hormone) which is carried by the blood to the
- **Adrenal gland** which releases stress hormones
- **Cortisol/ Adrenalin and Noradrenalin**
- **To assist the body deal with the stressor**



# THE EFFECTS OF STRESS ON PERFORMANCE



# STRESS IS NOT EASILY SEEN

- ▶ It is not readily identifiable (e.g. like a broken leg)
- ▶ The impact of stress is not well understood by the community, both individuals and organisations
- ▶ Assumptions are made that stress is normal and to be accepted
- ▶ Managing stress is crucial to developing positive health
- ▶ Self awareness is essential to identifying states of stress

# SUBSTANCES AND STRESS

- ▶ Alcohol elevates cortisol and interferes with dopamine and serotonin in the brain
- ▶ Nicotine elevates cortisol and interferes with dopamine and serotonin in the brain
- ▶ Excessive use of substances leads to dopamine and serotonin receptors shutting down with an increased need for the substances.
- ▶ Cortisol has been referred to as “public enemy no 1”

# UNDERSTANDING OUR PERSONAL TRIGGERS, PUSH BUTTON SENSITIVITIES AND “HOT SPOTS”/”SWEET SPOTS”

“The Resilience Factor” (Reivich & Shatte, 2002)

- ▶ 1. Negative life events (separation/divorce/losing a job)
- ▶ 2. Positive life events (holiday/memories of good times/sport/exercise)
- ▶ 3. Recognising life events that cause changes in feelings thoughts and emotions
- ▶ 1 & 2 develop automatic thinking and body responses



# HOW TO MONITOR AND LEARN ABOUT YOUR PERSONAL HOT SPOTS AND SWEET SPOTS

## Understanding, learning and noticing (observing):

- ▶ Body changes (muscle tension, breathing changes)
  - e.g. Invited to the beach, was told would have to wait alone for a few hours. Felt discomfort in body – why? Images of being alone after break up – not aware of thoughts
- ▶ Mind changes (thinking, worrying, obsessing)
  - e.g. Invited to beach, thought: I don't want to go I always get sunburned.
- ▶ Behaviour changes (avoidance, aggressiveness, substance abuse)
  - I was invited to the beach but I felt anxious and I thought I'm not going. I decided to stay at home and watch TV. Depending on the intensity of feelings: if too intense may avoid by substance abuse

# FOUR ESSENTIAL PERSPECTIVES TO UNDERSTANDING RESILIENCE AND BARRIERS TO BECOMING RESILIENT

1. Understanding what is happening in our lives (what we do)
2. Understanding what is happening in our minds (what we think)
3. Understanding what is happening in our bodies (muscle tension, headaches, breathing rate)
4. Understanding what emotions are present (depression, anxiety, anger)

NOTE: Have some awareness of the role genetics may play in the process.

(The temperament people are born with or their environment will give them more or less resilience)

# FIRSTLY: NEED SELF-AWARENESS

- ▶ What situations/people make you feel uncomfortable?  
(angry/avoidant/anxious)
- ▶ What situations/places make you think in certain ways?  
(I hate this place)
- ▶ What situations make you feel comfortable?
- ▶ What are your “hot spots”?  
(Do you know what triggers you to be afraid, nervous, or angry?)
- ▶ What are your “sweet spots”?  
(nice images/memories/favourite activities)



# SELF AWARENESS FACTORS

- ▶ Understanding what your body is telling you
- ▶ Understanding what your brain/thoughts are telling you
- ▶ Understanding what your behaviour involves (approach/avoidance)
- ▶ Understanding how others may be feeling/thinking (empathy)
- ▶ Understanding your “hot ”spots

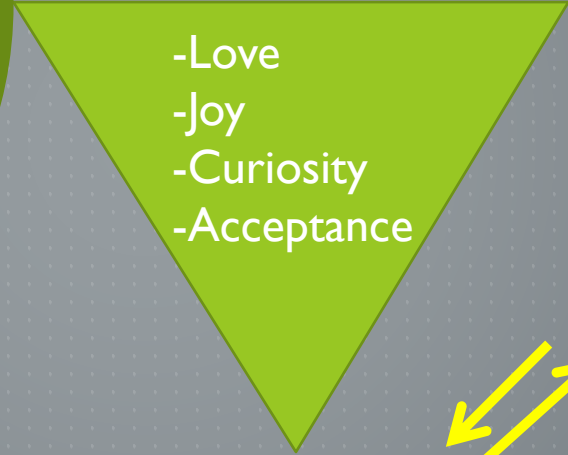
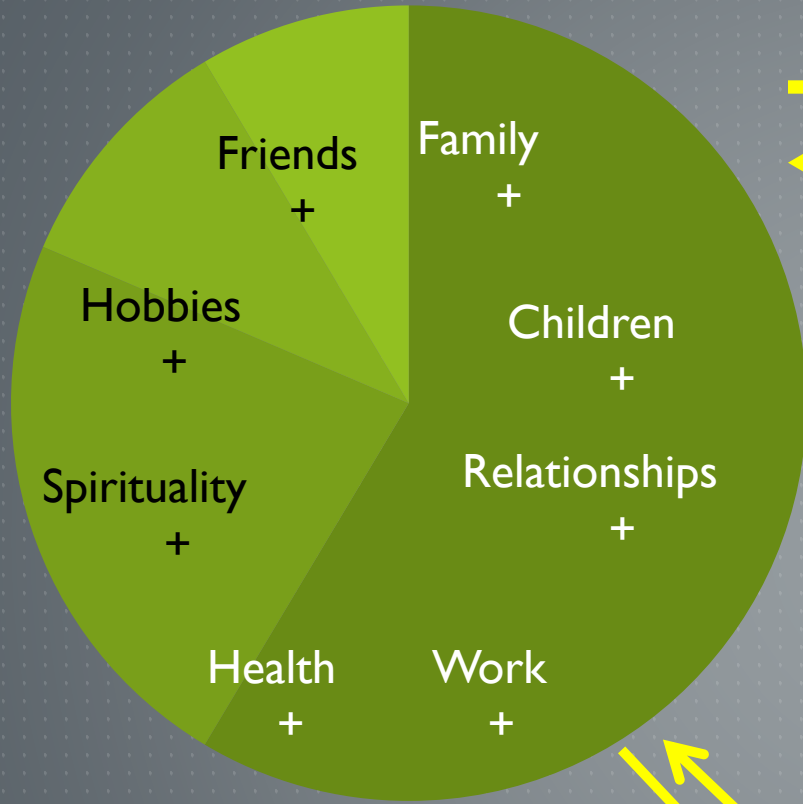
# ROUTINES AND HABITS

- ▶ Routines are useful- get the job done
- ▶ Routines that don't meet our needs are stressful
- ▶ Missing awareness of what is meaningful - autopilot
- ▶ Self awareness can be helpful in changing “bad” habits



# RESILIENCE

## Lifestyle Management



## + Thoughts/Beliefs

- I like myself
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## Affect /Body/Physical

- Breath rate
- Heart rate normal
- Stomach
- Sleep
- Weight gain/loss
- Brain
- Muscles
- No Headaches/Tension

# RESILIENCE SUMMARY

- ▶ Life needs to be meaningful and provide pleasure and joy
- ▶ Positive attitudes and beliefs are important resilience factors
- ▶ Managing physical sensations is important in building resilience
- ▶ Calming the brain is important in building resilience
- ▶ Understanding the nature of stress is critical

# REFLECTION

Reflect upon answers:

- ▶ What are the barriers to living an enriched life?
- ▶ What habits do you need to break?
- ▶ Who/what can you utilise to create new positive habits?



# SUMMARY

- ▶ Building resilience is an integrated process that involves lifestyle management, thinking styles, understanding and managing the body/brain
- ▶ All parts of our lives are interconnected
- ▶ Changes have to be practised (old habits to new)
- ▶ The impact of negative emotions can be minimised
- ▶ Best is to plan(e.g. activity); get support for changes in life

# LETS GET STARTED

## HOW STRESSED ARE YOU?

- ▶ Complete the stress survey/test - sent
- ▶ Complete the resilience survey/test - sent
- ▶ You will find at the end of the survey ways to estimate how stressed you are and how resilient you are

# PROGRAM SUMMARY

- ▶ 1. Education
- ▶ 2. Modules incorporating change processes
- ▶ 3. Each module will have a challenge for you to complete each week
- ▶ 4. The modules – Lifestyle Management; Affect/body/brain: Cognition-mindset; Compassion
- ▶ 5. Plan to review in two months
- ▶ 6. Feedback –resilience and stress surveys
- ▶ 7. Your feedback

# MODULES

- ▶ 1. Lifestyle management
- ▶ 2. Affect/body/brain
- ▶ 3. Cognition-Mindset
- ▶ 4. Compassion

# MORE REFLECTIONS

- ▶ Resilient individuals are more productive in the workforce
- ▶ Resilient individuals report increased job satisfaction
- ▶ Resilient individuals have lower absenteeism rates
- ▶ Resilient managers report less conflict in the work environment



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# MODULES

- ▶ A lot of material and references/attachments
- ▶ Not meant to absorb everything
- ▶ Use what is meaningful and applicable for you
- ▶ Use other material as a starting point/reference material

# STRESS COSTS TO BUSINESSES/COMMUNITY

- ▶ \$10 billion a year (Safework Aus., 2013)
- ▶ The highest rate of mental stress is found in workers with high levels of responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of others and workers at risk in dangerous situations
- ▶ Women have a 3 times higher rate of stress-related claims (harassment and bullying)

# SUMMARY OF EXERCISES

- ▶ Any activity that reduces cortisol overload will assist with developing resilience and minimise stress
- ▶ Any activity that increases dopamine/serotonin will assist with developing resilience
- ▶ Any activity that increases dopamine will make you more motivated
- ▶ Be kind to yourself in your efforts as compassion and gratitude will assist the brain in dealing with stress
- ▶ Any activity that increases self efficacy will have significant effects on mindset and thinking styles (in and out of awareness)



# SUMMARY OF EXERCISES (CNTD)

- ▶ Any activity that increases your connectivity to the world increases your resilience
- ▶ Any activity that manages/reduces overthinking and worry will increase your resilience
- ▶ Any activity that calms the brain will increase your resilience
- ▶ All of the activities referred to will decrease your chances of becoming mentally vulnerable

# CONTACT

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