

NC CLE Professional Well-Being

WHO YOU CALLIN' CRAZY?!

A Guide to Understanding Mental Health

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SUN COUNSELING
& WELLNESS

**Yep,
I go to therapy**

@YEPIGOOTHERAPY

Yep, I go to therapy

@YEPIGOOTHERAPY



SUN COUNSELING
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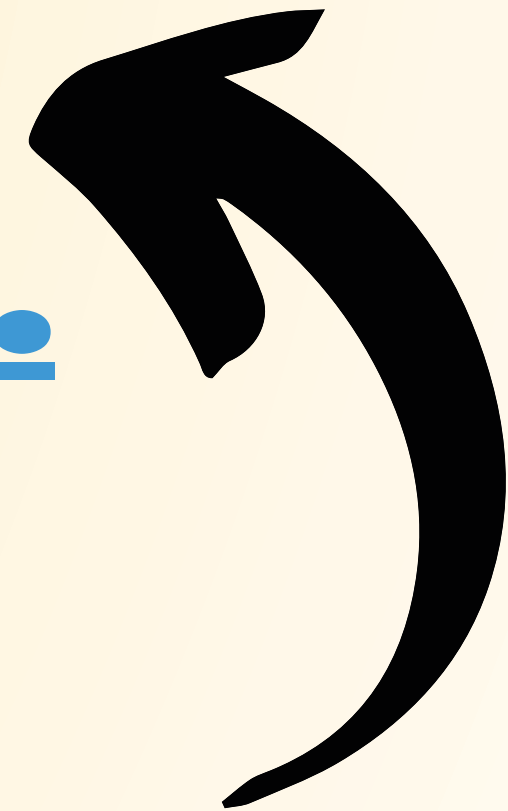


Raise your hand if you
have mental health...



Mental Health Is Health

We ALL have
mental health.



The World Health Organization says,
"There is no health without mental health."

How many of these phrases regarding mental health have you heard or even said or thought to yourself?

Mental health issues aren't common.

People with mental health issues are dangerous.

Mental illnesses aren't actual illnesses; they're not truly a health issue.

Mental health problems are permanent.

Mental health struggles are a sign of weakness.

Mental health issues only affect certain people.

It's weak to show emotions or vulnerability.

I'm the only one going through this or feeling this way.

Things really aren't that bad; other people have it worse.

I should be able to get over this.

There's something wrong with me.

I have no reason to feel sad or anxious; my life is fine.

You can will yourself out of this feeling because your life is good.



Defining Mental Health

Mental health is the state of our emotional, psychological, and social well-being.

It influences how we think, feel, and behave in daily life, as well as how we cope with stress, relate to others, and make decisions.

The ultimate trifecta:
mental health, physical health,
& spiritual health.



Mental Health

Is how we think,
feel, and behave
toward ourselves
and others

Impacts how we
relate to others

Impacts how we
take on what life
throws at us

Impacts how we
make choices
and decisions

Impacts how we
make sense of
our physical and
spiritual health

Includes
emotional
intelligence

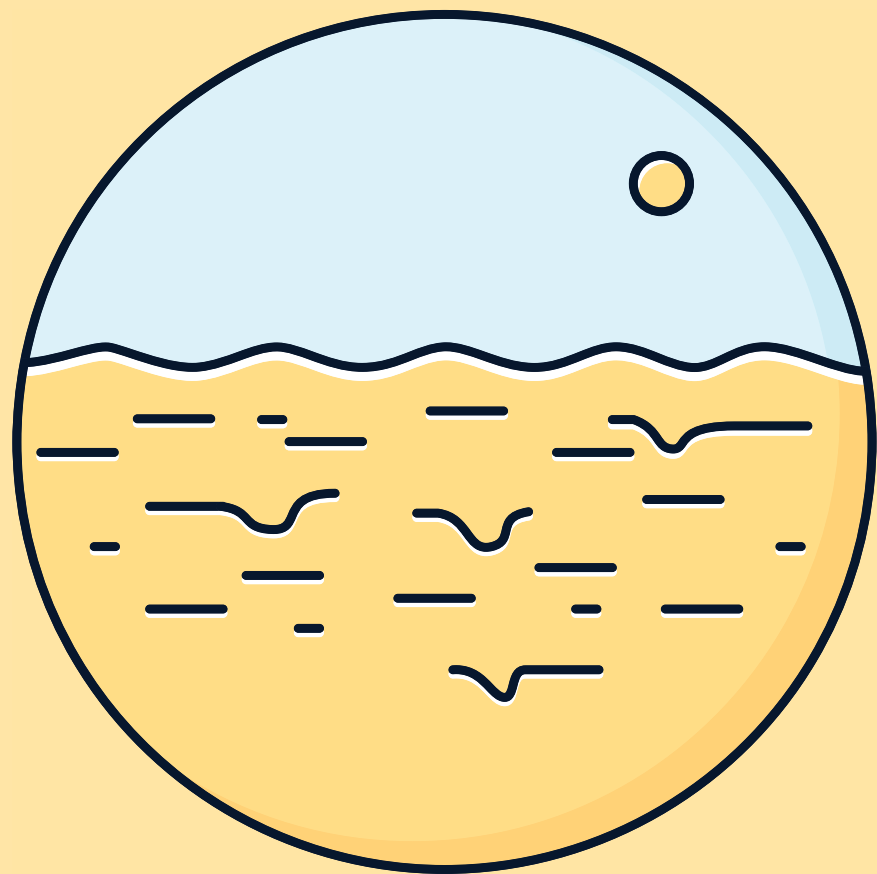
Includes our
capacity for stress
and for ALL
emotions, both
comfortable and
uncomfortable

Different
experiences with
our mental health
can require
different levels of
attention and
support

Impacts each
unique
individual
differently

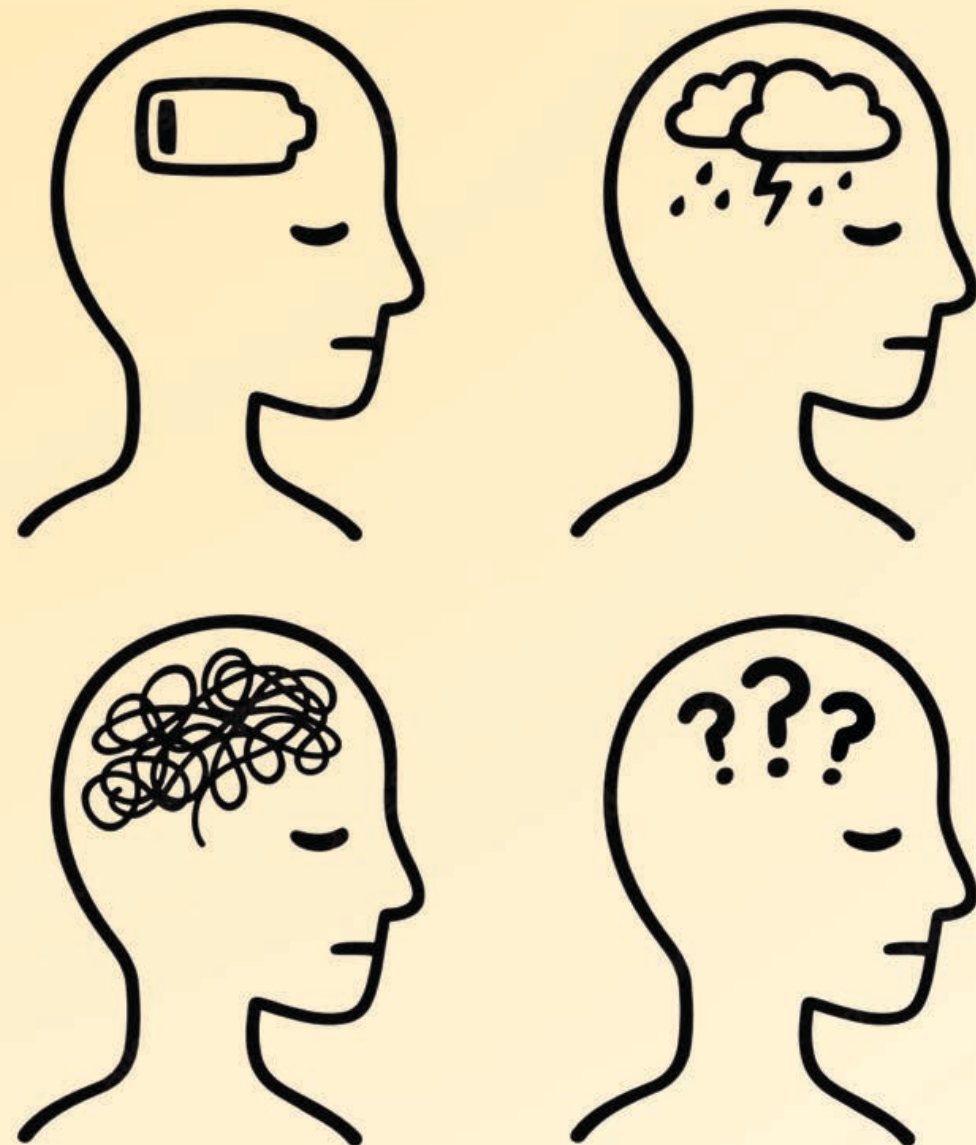
Impacts how we
adapt to handling
stress, connecting
with others, and
navigating
choices in life

Well-being is not the absence of hardships and stressors.



Mental Illness

Mental Illnesses are diagnosable clinical disorders. They are biopsychosocial diseases, impacted by one's brain structure, genetics, life experiences, and environment.



1 in 5 adults
experience mental illness

1 in 6 youth
(ages 6-17)
experience a mental illness

↓
each year

Biological Factors:

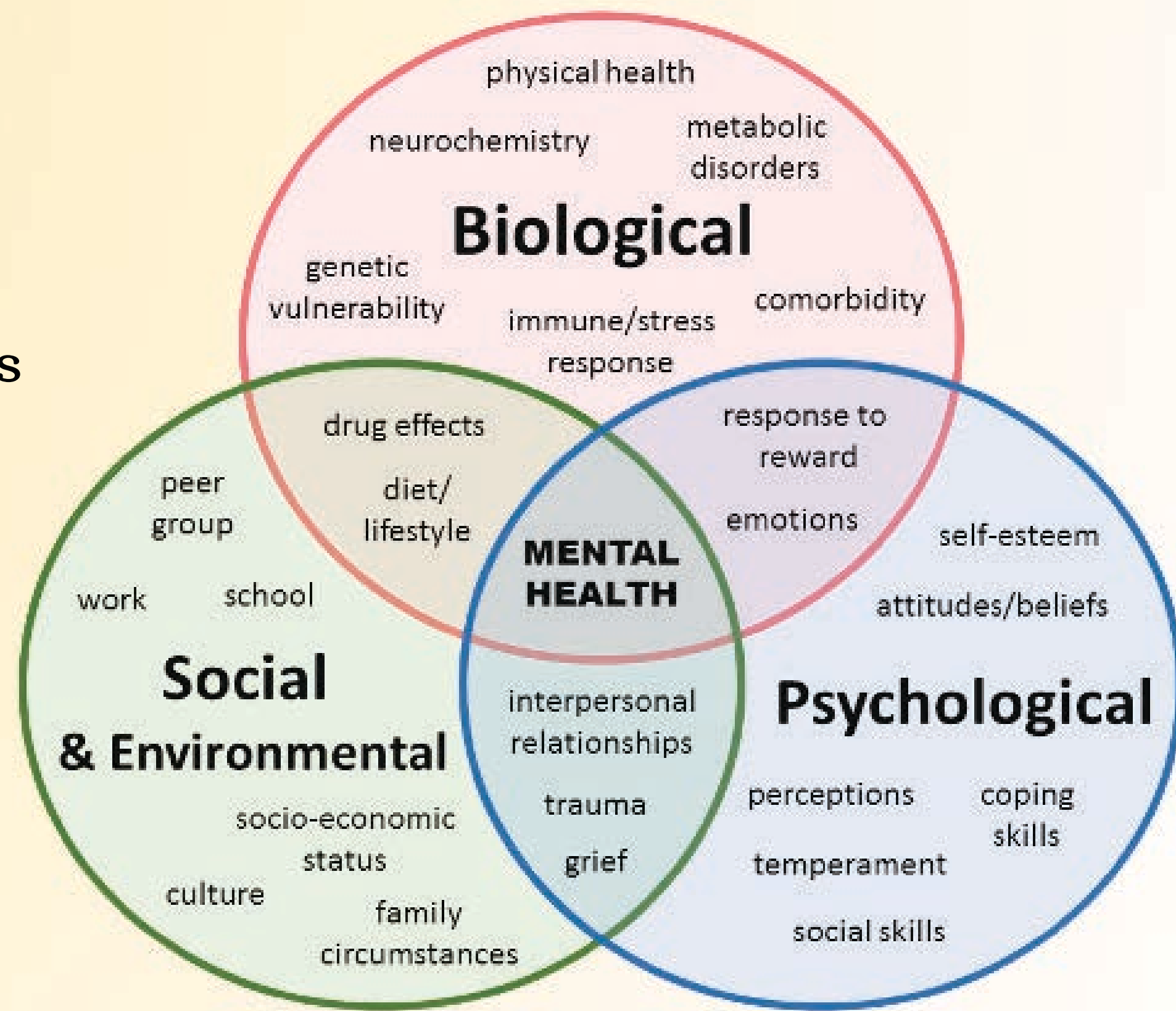
Genetic predisposition
Neurochemical imbalances

Psychological Factors:

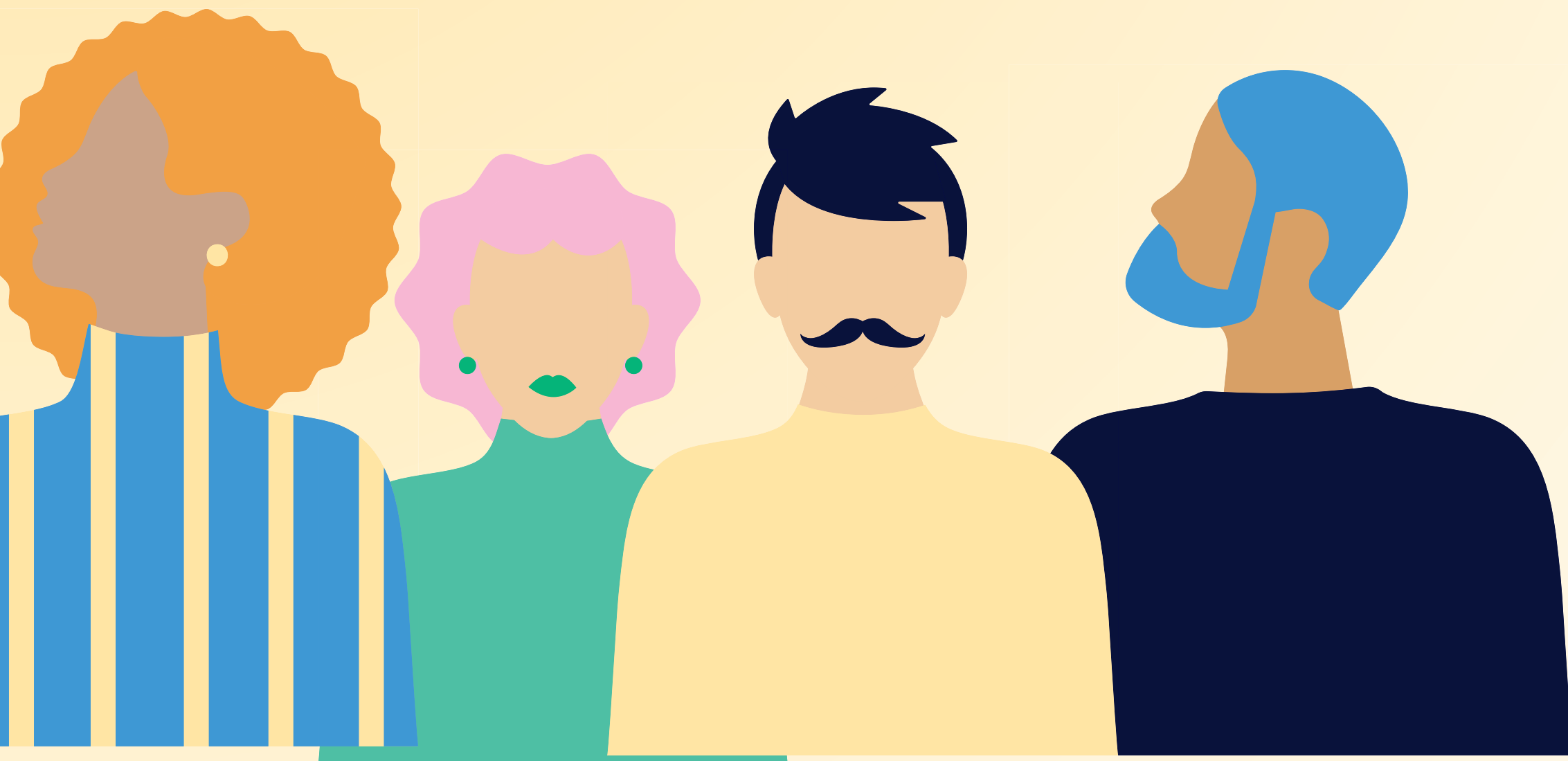
Trauma and adverse childhood experiences
Poor coping mechanisms for stress or emotions

Social & Environmental Factors:

Peer pressure or cultural norms
Lack of support systems
High-stress environments
(e.g., workplace, family dynamics).

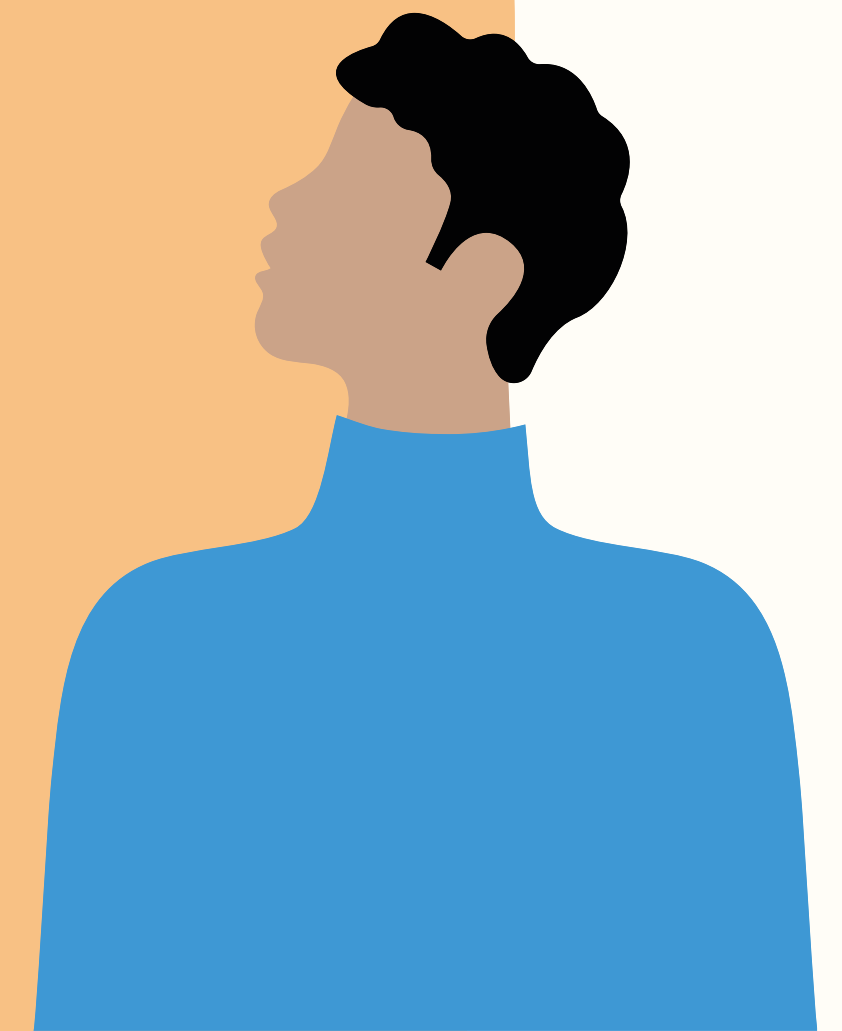


Per the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 50% of Americans will be diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder at some point in their lifetime.



The pandemic was associated with a high prevalence of anxiety and depression symptoms in adults, as well as increased loneliness.

What is Stigma?

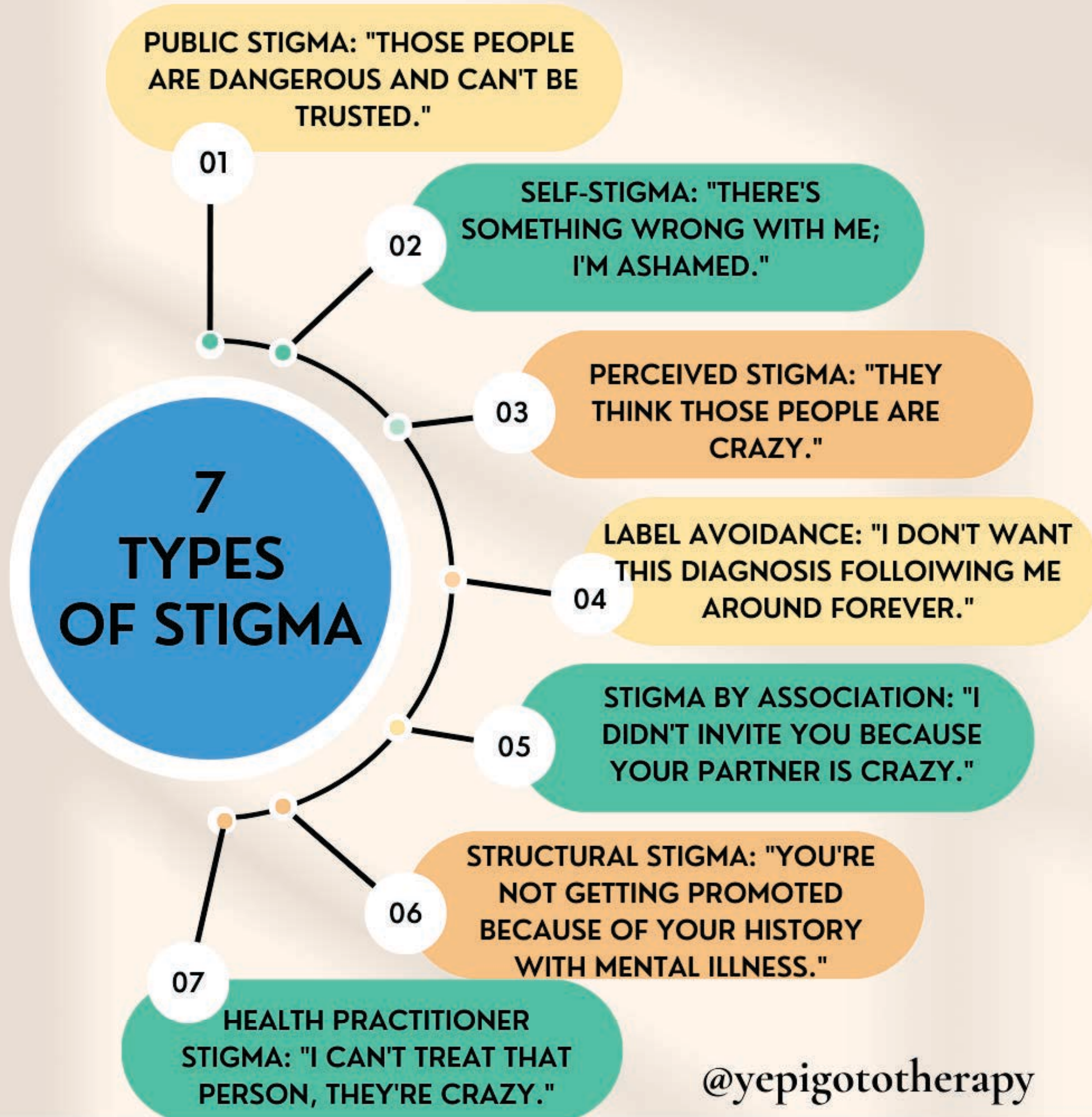


Mental Health Stigma

"The disgrace, social disapproval, or social discrediting of individuals with a mental health problem."
(International Journal of Mental Health Systems)

Mental health-related stigmas can contribute to difficulty, or resistance to, accessing treatment.





Mental Health Stigma for Attorneys



- A Culture of Perfectionism and High Achievement
- Competitive and High-Stakes Environment
- Traditional Norms and Resistance to Change
- Confidentiality Concerns
- Unique Stressors in the Profession
- Subtle Barriers to Wellness
- Lack of Systemic Support

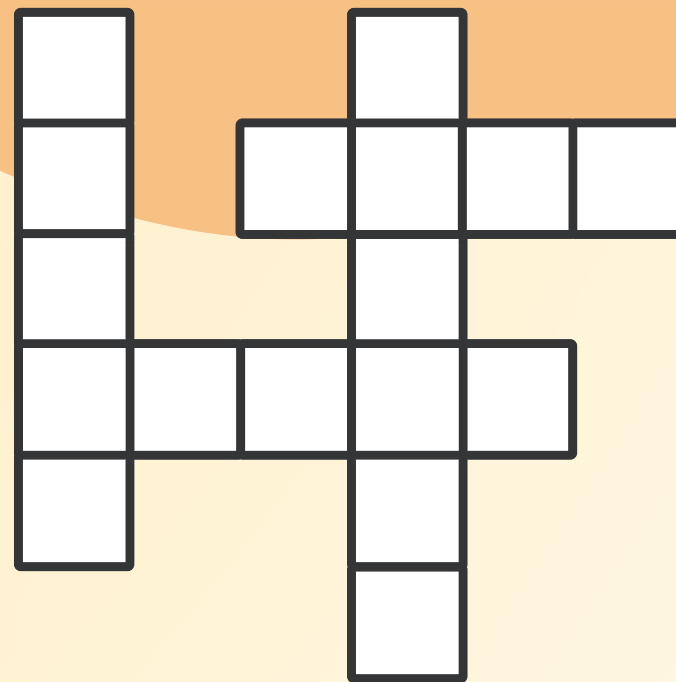
Three Tips

Beyond leadership support, education,
and cultural changes....



Tip 1

Understand different
types of mental health
related stigmas



Tip 2

Change the
language, change
the stigma



Tip 3

Practice
vulnerability and
authenticity

STOP SAYING THESE THINGS CASUALLY

OCD

"He's so OCD about keeping his car clean."

BIPOLAR DISORDER

"Did you wake up on the wrong side of the bed? You're so bipolar."

SUICIDE

"He's soooo annoying." (Miming gun to head)

SCHIZOPHRENIA

"You always change your mind. You're so schizo."

AUTISM

"What are you, autistic?! Read the room."



PTSD

"You're gonna give m PTSD if you keep saying that!"

NARCISSIM

"She's so selfish. What a narcissist!"

Trauma

"Ugh, I'm traumatized that I can't wear that outfit tonight!"

ANOREXIA

"I wish I was anorexic; I like pizza too much!"

ADHD

"Ok, ADHD brain, do you ever follow through?"

Practicing Vulnerability

Really pausing to check-in with yourself when someone asks how you are

Asking someone how they are truly doing and waiting for a response

Sharing something a little more honest and less superficial

Owning and acknowledging out loud when something is hard or stressful

Asserting yourself when your needs aren't being met or when a boundary is violated

Setting appropriate boundaries

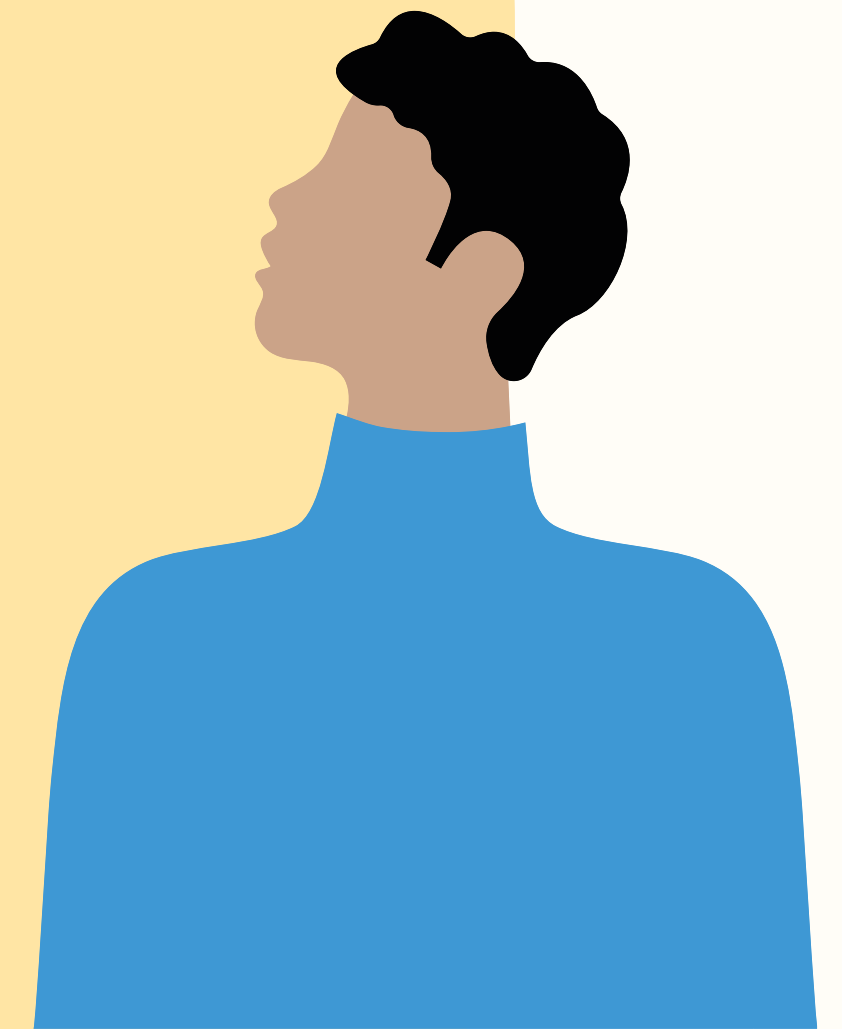
Expressing your feelings (i.e. not fighting back tears)

Getting out of your head and into your body when you feel uncomfy emotions like guilt, shame, or fear

Asking for what you need

Saying no to something that doesn't align or you don't have time for

Understanding your own mental health



Emotional Well-Being
having a healthy range of emotions and the ability to manage them effectively (coping)

Psychological Well-Being
cognitive processes and mental functioning; rational thought processes, problem-solving abilities, and coping skills

Social Well-Being
quality of our social connections and relationships; sense of belonging

Resilience
the ability to bounce back from life's challenges, setbacks, and stressors

Self-Esteem/Self Worth
valuing self, practicing acceptance and self-compassion

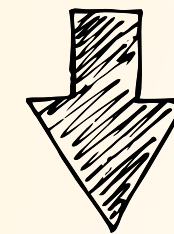
Wellness & Balance
achieving a fulfilled life with balance between work, relationships, leisure, and self-care

The Mind-Body Connection

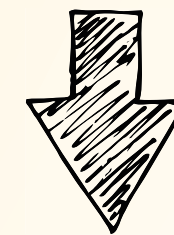
- The interaction between our thoughts, emotions, and physical state.
- The physical experience of emotions.



THOUGHTS



FEELINGS



BEHAVIOR

SIGNS OF STRESS & ANXIOUSNESS

Body

- Heart Racing
- Sweating
- Faintness
- Headache
- Tense Muscles

Mind

- Blanking Out
- Racing Thoughts
- Difficulty Concentrating
- Negative Thoughts

Behaviors

- Avoidance
- Procrastination
- Difficulty Relaxing
- Isolation/Withdrawing
- Disturbed Sleep

Common **WARNING SIGNS** of Mental Illness

Diagnosing mental illness isn't a straightforward science. We can't test for it the same way we can test blood sugar levels for diabetes. Each condition has its own set of unique symptoms, though symptoms often overlap. Common signs and/or symptoms can include:

- ! Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks
- ! Trying to harm or end one's life or making plans to do so
- ! Severe, out-of-control, risk-taking behavior that causes harm to self or others
- ! Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart, physical discomfort or difficulty breathing
- ! Significant weight loss or gain



- ! Seeing, hearing or believing things that aren't real*
- ! Excessive use of alcohol or drugs
- ! Drastic changes in mood, behavior, personality or sleeping habits
- ! Extreme difficulty concentrating or staying still
- ! Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities

*Various communities and backgrounds might view this sign differently based on their beliefs and experiences. Some people within these communities and cultures may not interpret hearing voices as unusual.

Substance Use



Stigma specific to substance abuse/addiction

- Misunderstanding addiction as a choice rather than a disease
- Historical and cultural narratives
- Fear and lack of education
- Perceived connection to personal responsibility
- Interpersonal impact
- Subtle barriers to wellness
- Lack of systemic support



Substance Use and Mental Health

Occasional, habitual, or compulsive use of substances that alter mood, perception, or behavior.

- Lawyers report higher rates of substance use and mental health concerns than many other professions.
- Nearly 1 in 5 lawyers struggles with alcohol misuse, and 28% report symptoms of depression.
- 50%+ of individuals with a substance use disorder (SUD) have a co-occurring mental health condition (e.g., depression, anxiety, PTSD).

Warning Signs of Substance Misuse

Early detection and compassionate inquiry can prevent substance misuse from escalating.



Behavioral Red Flags:

Missing deadlines, errors in work, or diminished productivity

Avoidance of clients or colleagues

Physical and Emotional Signs:

Increased irritability, fatigue, or unexplained health issues

Reliance on alcohol or other substances to manage stress

Cultural Cues:

Normalizing heavy drinking at firm events or celebrating "work hard, play hard."

Harm Reduction and Recovery in High-Stress Professions

Harm Reduction Approaches:

Encourage moderation and healthier coping mechanisms
Promote firm policies that prioritize well-being (e.g., mental health days, support programs)

Integrated Support:

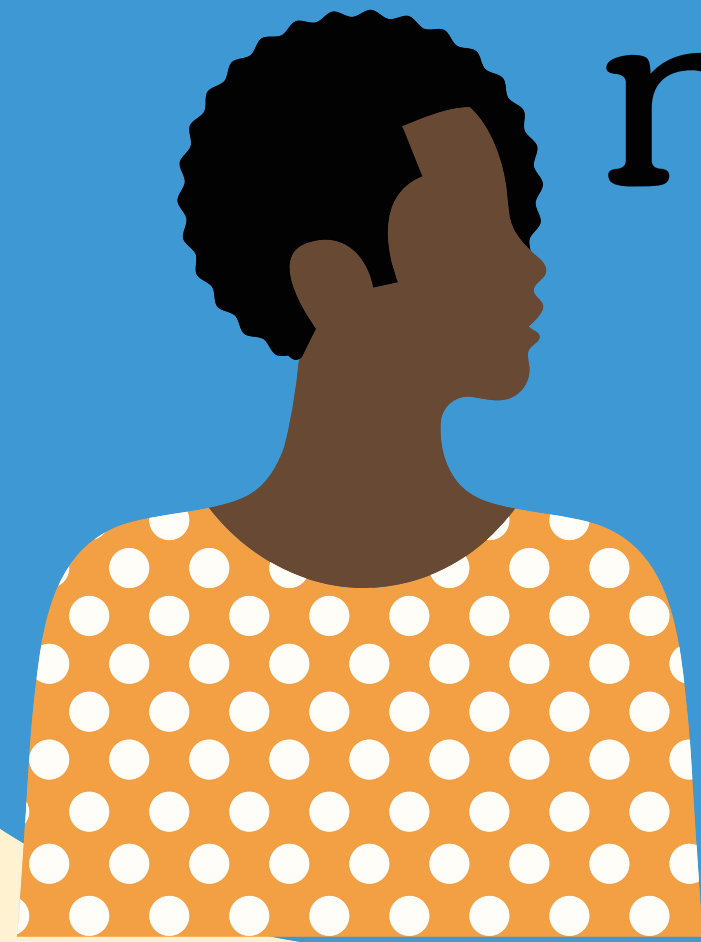
Use Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) confidentially
Seek peer support from lawyer-specific recovery groups (e.g., Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers, local bar associations)

Creating a Recovery-Friendly Culture:

Shift away from stigma and normalize discussions about mental health



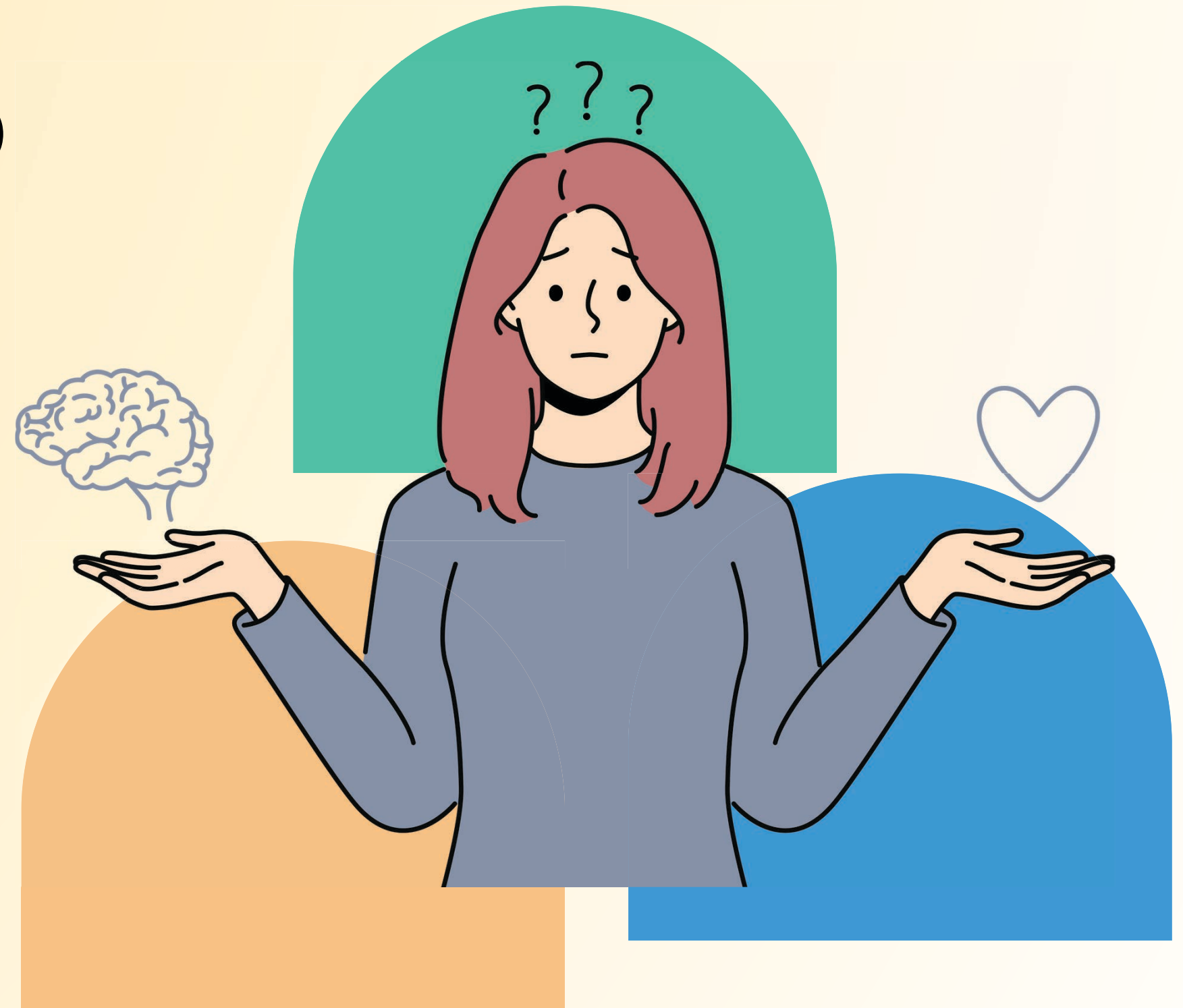
How do we
“tend to our
mental health?!”



**I don't have to
like it or want
it, but I can...**

TOLERATE

it!



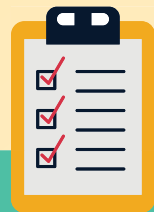
Coping Skills

Coping skills are the techniques we use to deal with stress or discomfort. They are things we put into place - either consciously or unconsciously - to problem-solve or reduce discomfort.

Adaptive coping skills will allow us to feel better physically and emotionally, and will increase our resiliency.



Develop Coping Skills



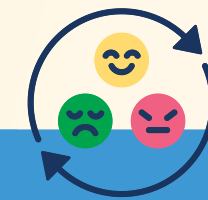
Task-oriented/solution-focused coping skills

These skills deal with the specific cause of the problem: we know what the problem is, and there's an identifiable solution.



Avoidance-oriented coping skills

These skills can only provide short-term "relief." It is important to use intentionally and infrequently.



Emotion-oriented coping skills

These skills are focused on emotional responses and tend to be more of the skills and concepts clients learn in therapy.

4 - 7 - 8

GAIN CONTROL OF YOUR BREATHING

1 Rest the tip of your tongue against the roof of your mouth, right behind your top front teeth.

2 Parting your lips, exhale any breath remaining in your lungs through your mouth.

3 Close your mouth and inhale through your nose while you count to **FOUR** in your head.

4 Hold in that deep breath for **SEVEN** seconds.

5 Parting your lips again, exhale from your mouth for **EIGHT** seconds. Repeat 4x.

It takes practice!

@suncounselingandwellness

Trying to will your body into relaxation can be tough! Breathing techniques, such as 4-7-8, have been carefully structured to help engage your body in a state of deep relaxation.

WHY?

Incorporating patterns that require you to hold your breath for a specific period of time fosters the body's natural desire to replenish its oxygen, providing our internal organs/tissues a helpful boost!

4-7-8

H

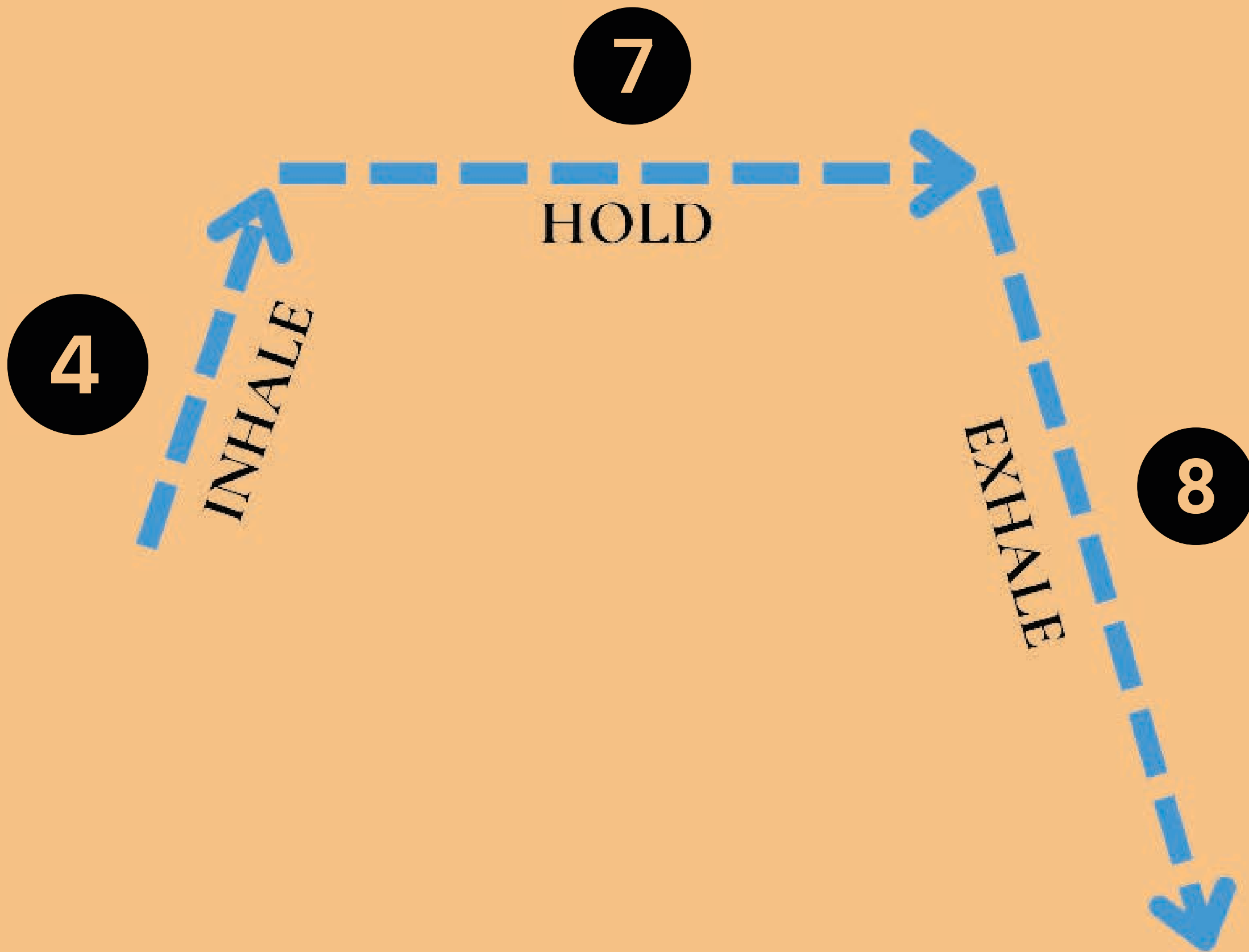
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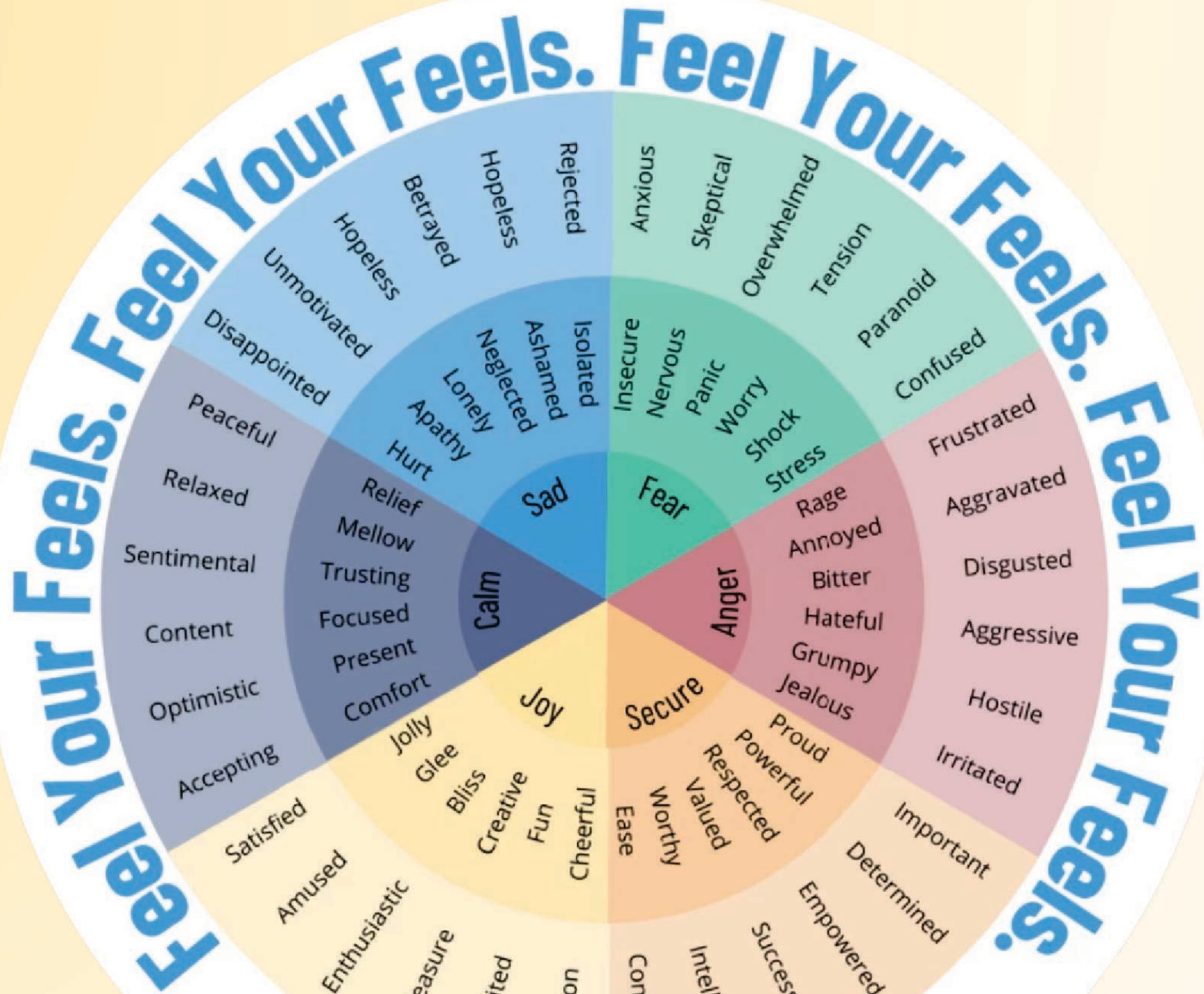
W

?

Restore your body's balance after a stressful day, isolated event, or in anticipation for a worrisome situation by giving 4-7-8 a try!

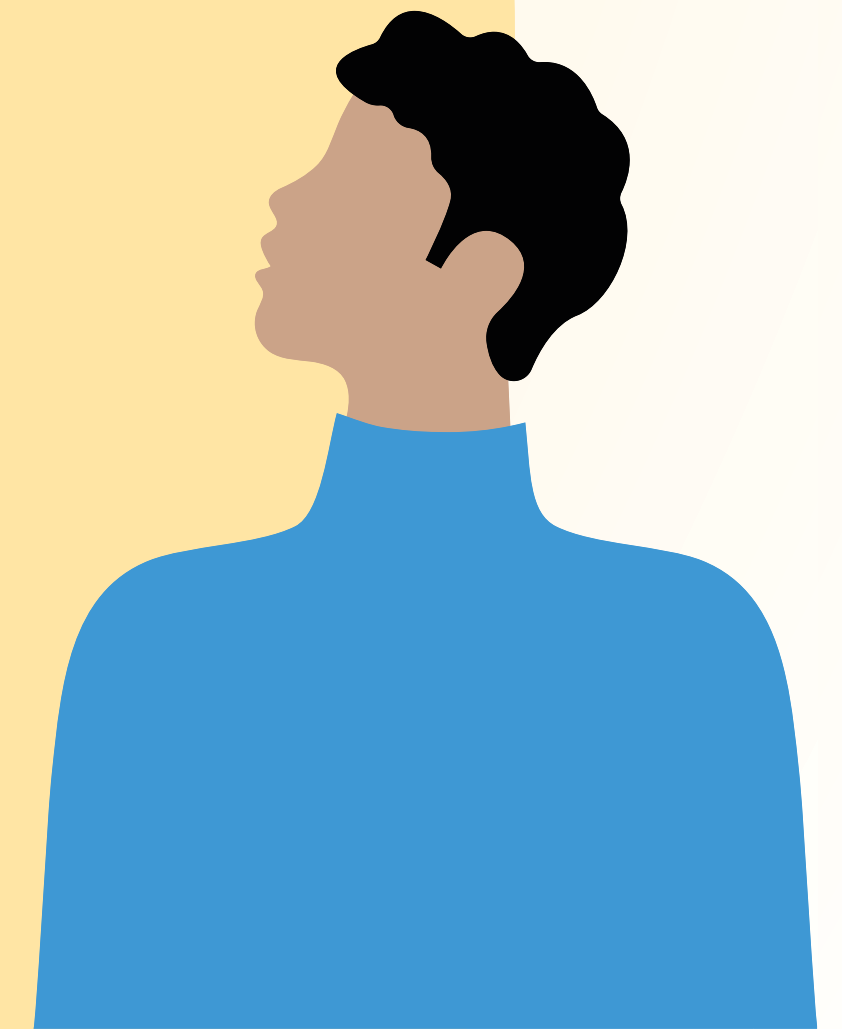






@yepigoTherapy

Where does
WORK fit
into this?





You simply can't have everything at 100% all the time.

Sometimes, what we think we're sacrificing for success is actually what's holding us back.

The pursuit of perfection often leads to burnout, and real balance comes from giving yourself permission to be human.

Moving up the ladder doesn't have to mean sacrificing everything else in your life. You just need the right strategies.

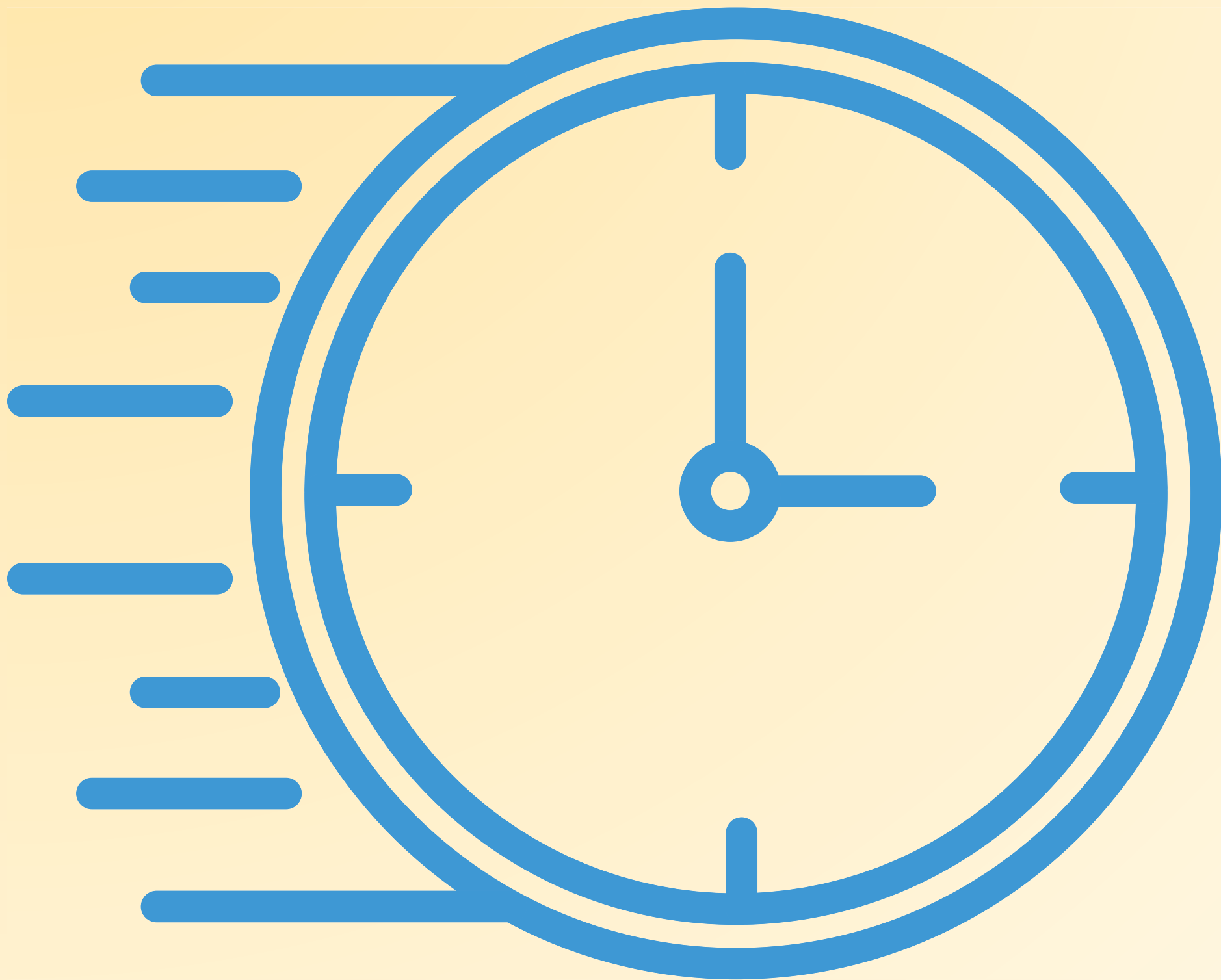
You get to define success for you and understanding that balance looks different at different stages of life.



Work/Life Flexibility



The potential fear of promotion/leadership



Successful leadership isn't about working more— it's about working smarter.

- Time blocking
- Two minute rule
- Delegation and Prioritization

Multitasking



Mental Health Buzzwords / More Coping Strategies



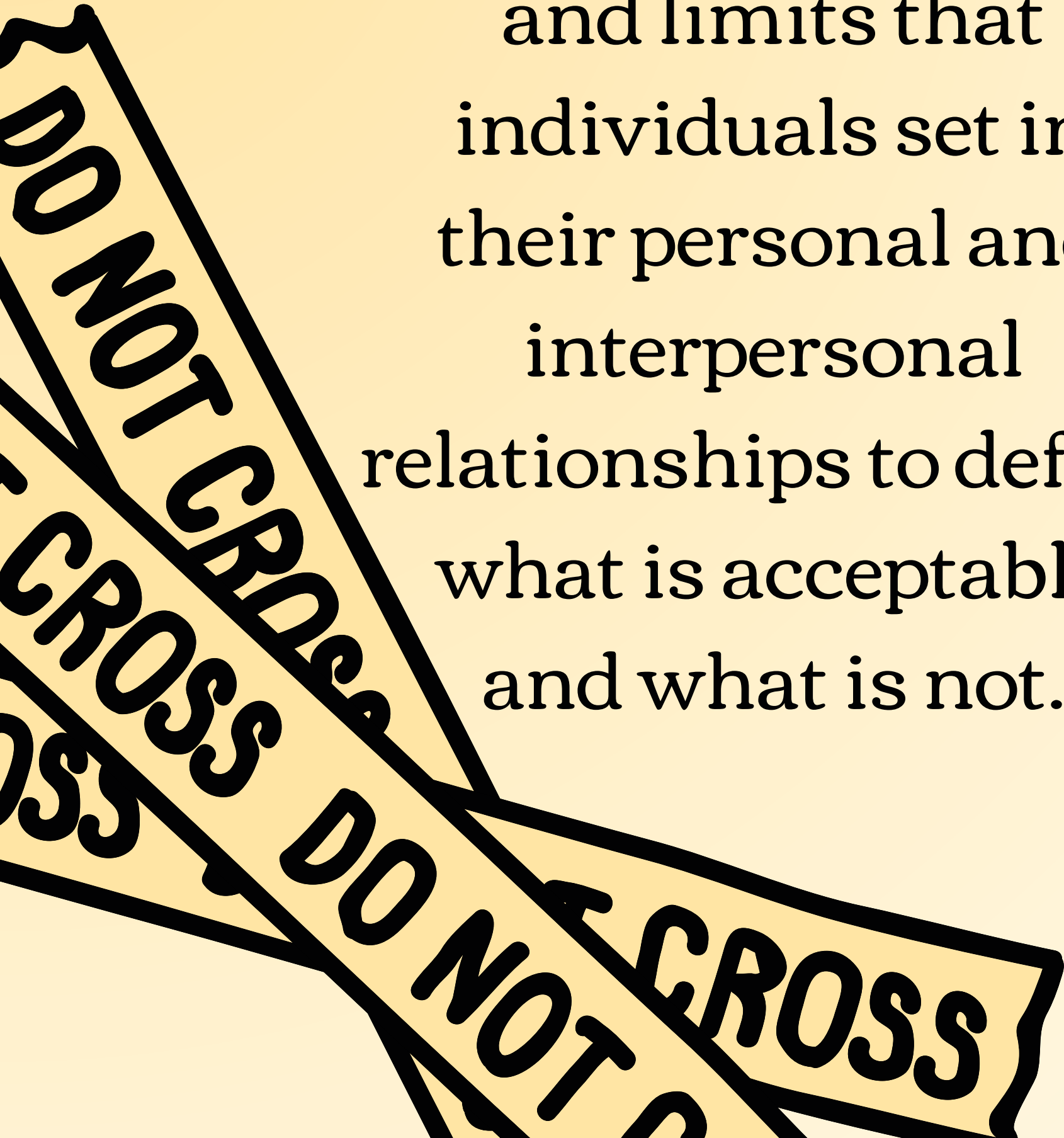
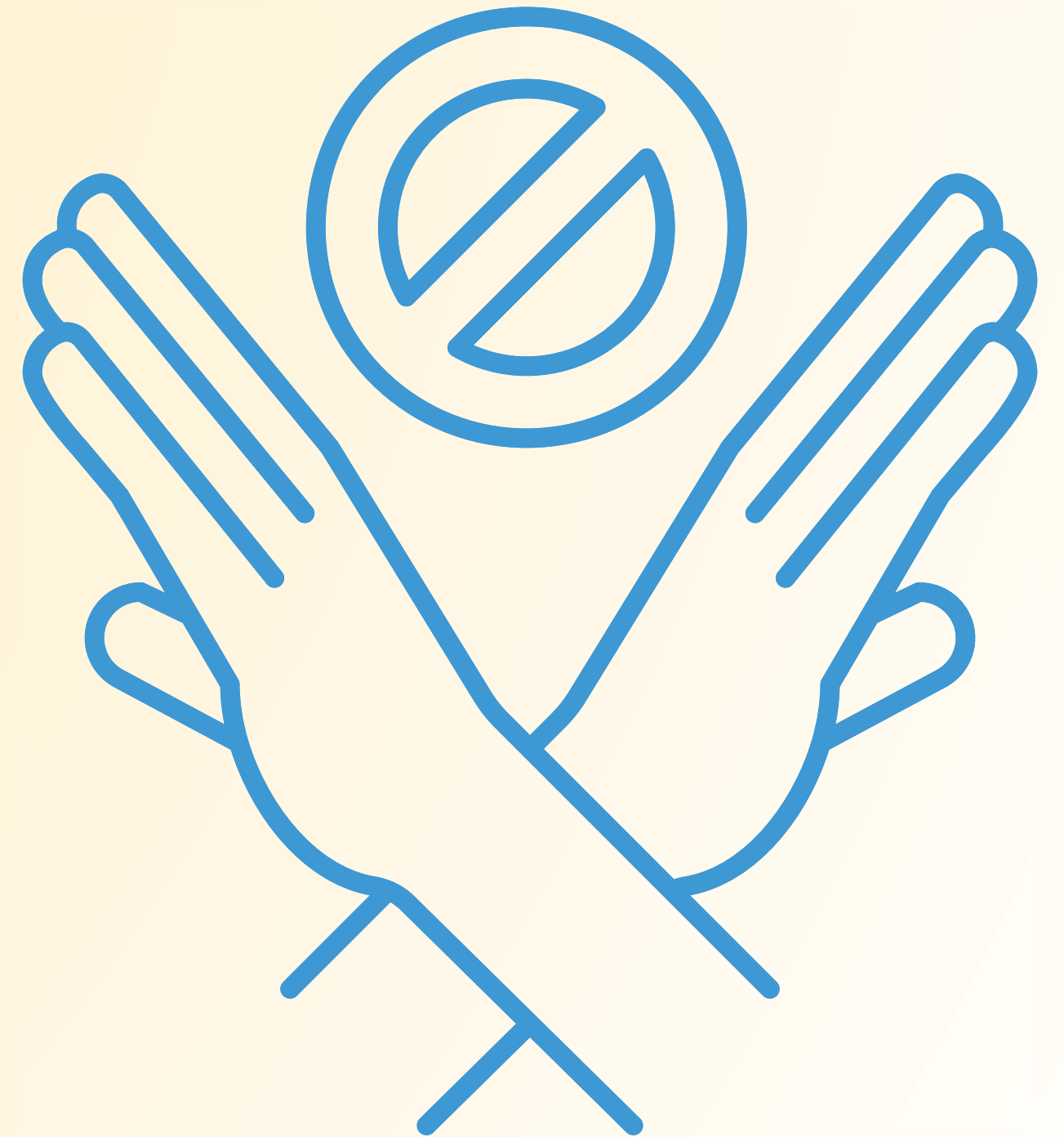
Mindfulness

Paying attention to the
PRESENT moment,
on **PURPOSE**,
without **JUDGMENT**.

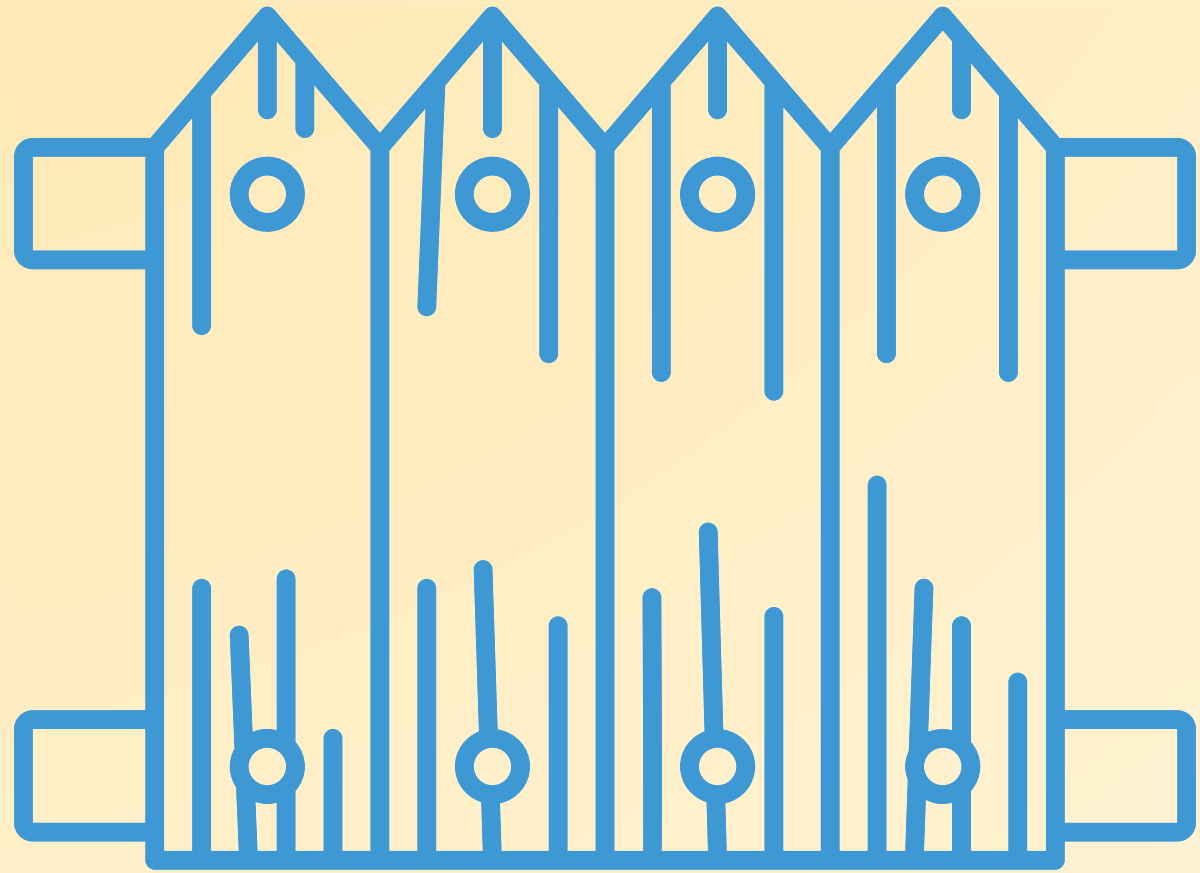


Essential guidelines
and limits that
individuals set in
their personal and
interpersonal
relationships to define
what is acceptable
and what is not.

Boundaries



Boundaries



Boundaries are not the enemy of success—they're the secret to sustainability.

- Three-tiered yes/no filter
- Assertiveness
- Microboundaries

Self-Care



Deliberate actions and practices individuals engage in to prioritize and promote their physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Self-Compassion



Treating oneself with the same kindness, care, and understanding that one would offer to a good friend in times of difficulty or suffering; being gentle and nurturing toward oneself rather than being self-critical, judgmental, or harsh.

I am a human

BEing, not a

human **DOing**.

Stress is not what happens to you, but how you **react** to what happens.

Trust
the
process.

Raise your hand if you
have mental health...



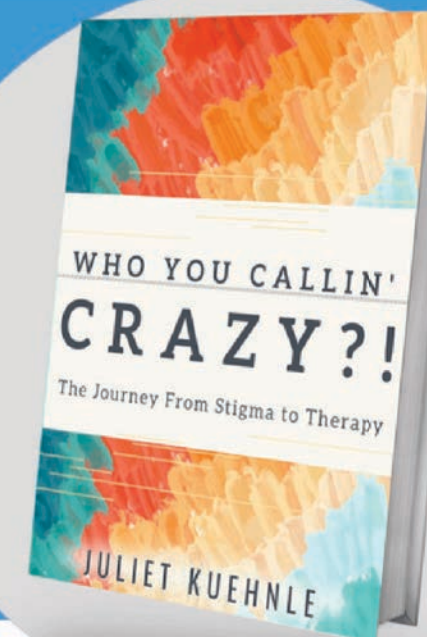
A FINAL REMINDER:

Mental health IS health and you
deserve to take care of your mental
health everyday!





Give feedback to Juliet!



1. Scan this QR code



2. Enter this code on the screen:



Let's stay in touch!

 @YepIGoToTherapy

 @juliet-kuehnle

or go to: talk.ac/julietkuehnle

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