

Stress Management & Stress Eating

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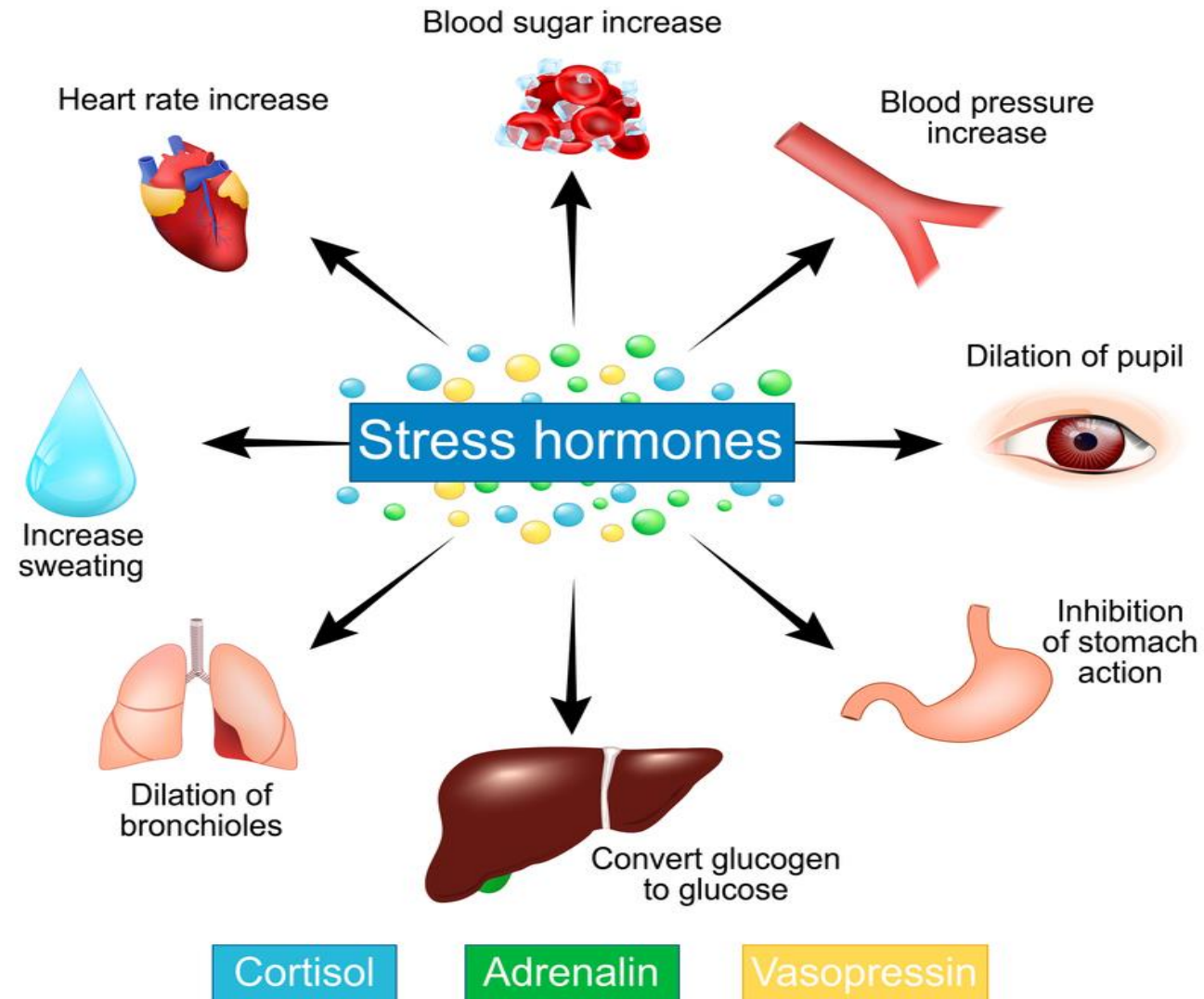
Disclosures: Cynthia Moore RDN, CDCES

Cynthia has no disclosures to report

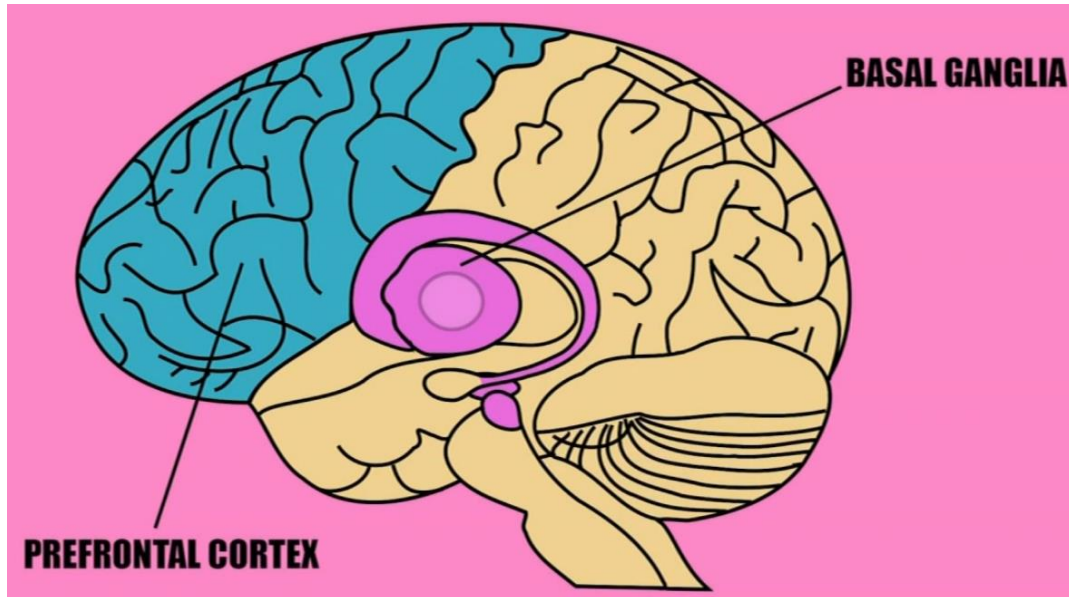
Today

- Effects of Stress
 - Stress management
 - Nutrition & lifestyle choices
 - Mind-body skills for self-regulation
 - Strategies for emotional eating
 - Participant case studies, strategies
 - Participant in overwhelm
 - Seasonal compulsive eating
 - Refreshers & Resources
- (from CDC, national DPP curriculum)

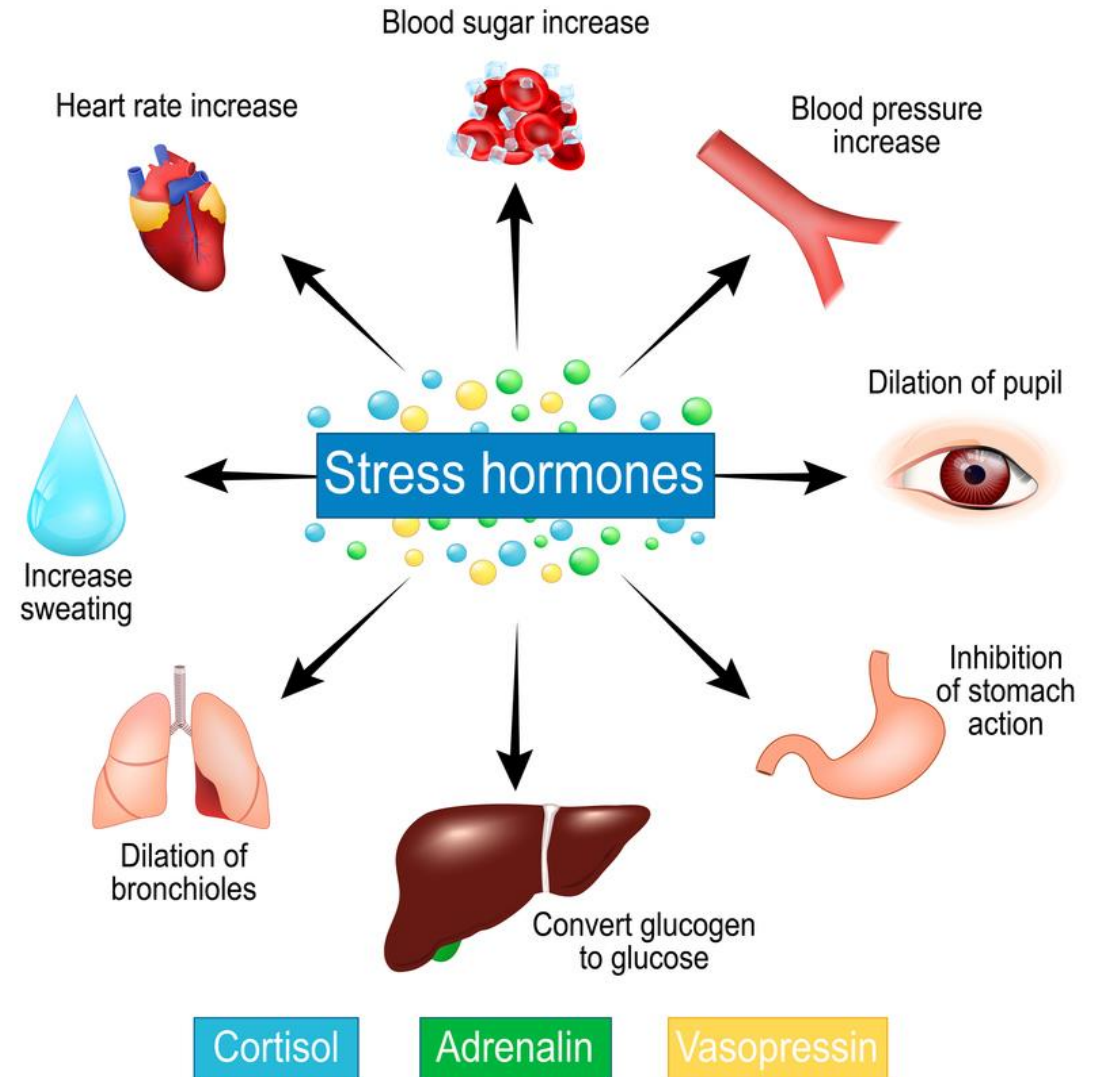
Stress response



WHAT HAPPENS TO BRAIN & BODY IN STRESS ?



Stress response



Balanced or Homeostatic Circuit

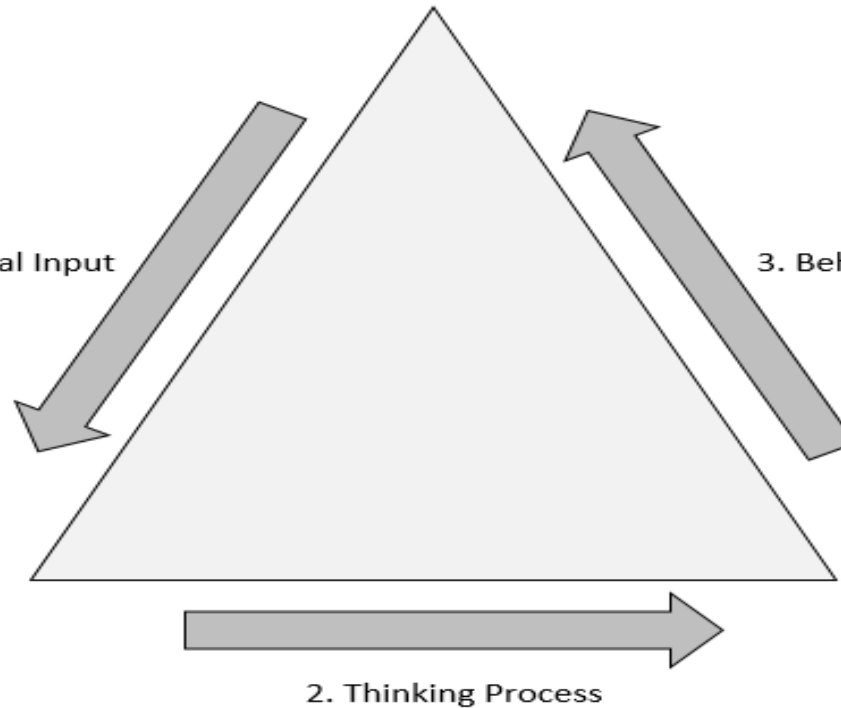
Effective Circuit

These circuits promote balance, ease, and beneficial lifestyle choices

CHECK-IN →

Can help us
notice our
feelings &
better point us
to our needs

1. Emotional Input



3. Behavioral Response

2. Thinking Process

Mitrovic, I, et al (2011) *Rewiring the Stress Response: A New Paradigm in Health Care* Hypothesis

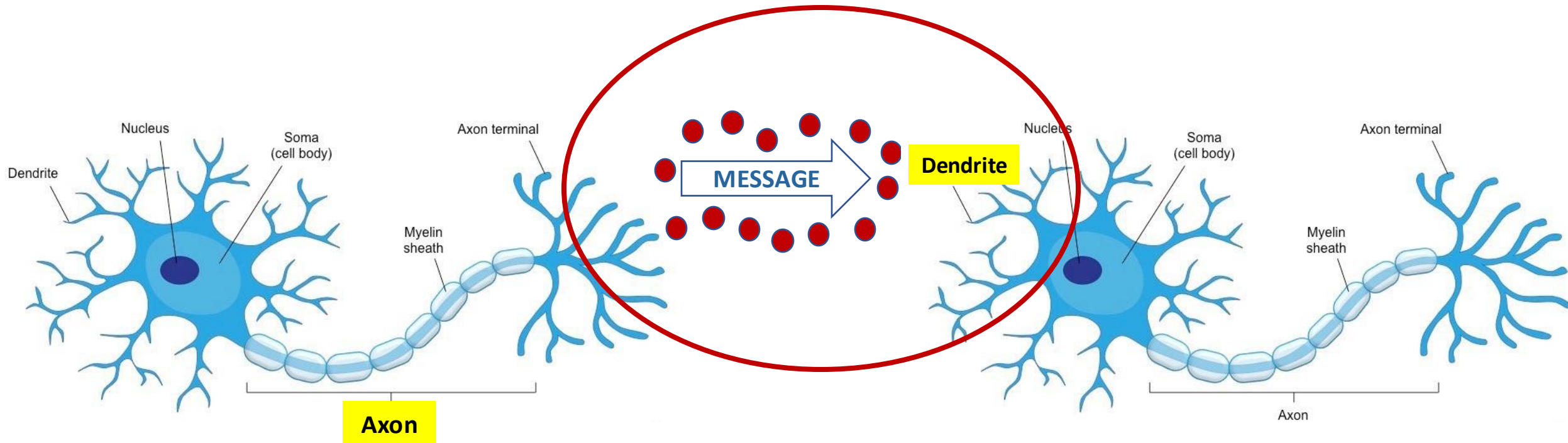
How do I do a Check-In?

- Few deep breaths
 - Body at “1” – body at Balance
 - Step inside & kindly observe
 - Notice if there is a wave of relaxation
-
- Subsequent step, learning to identify which brain state is active & apply a strategy accordingly



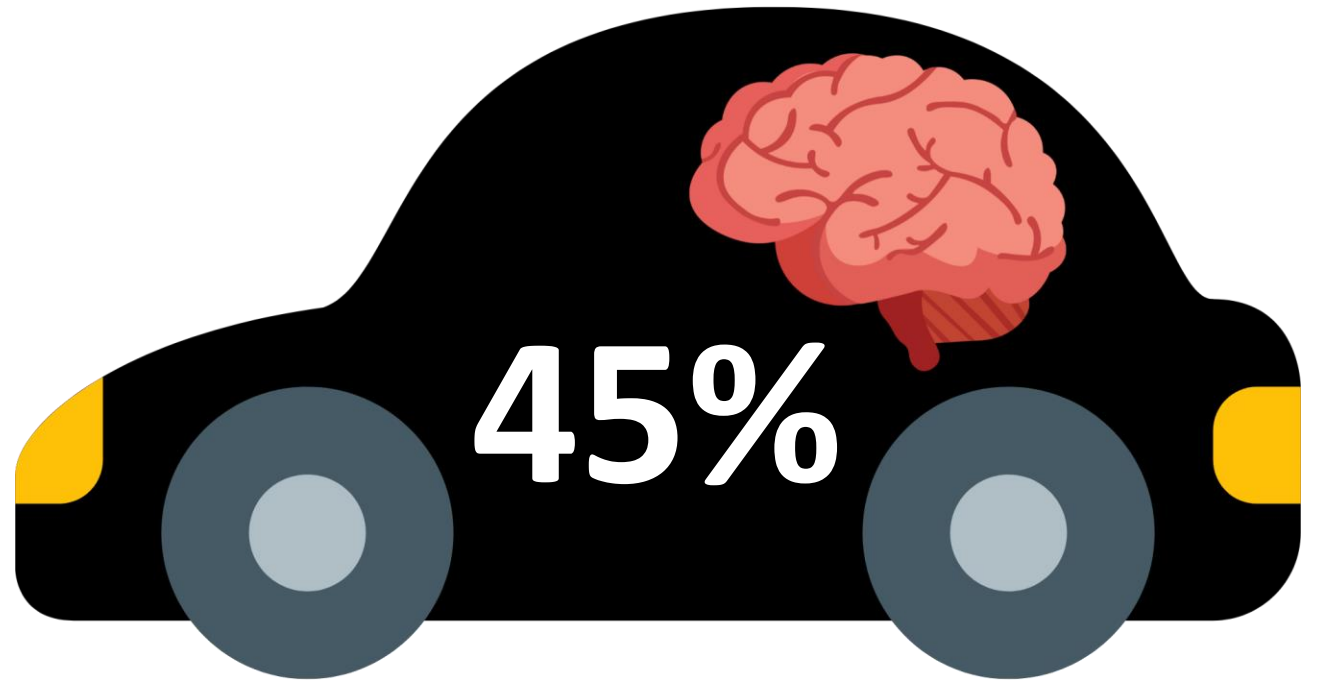
The BRAIN ON HABITS

- All our behaviors are dictated by the action of neurons, specialized cells that send and receive messages (signals) from the brain
- Information is transmitted from one neuron to the dendrite of the next neuron



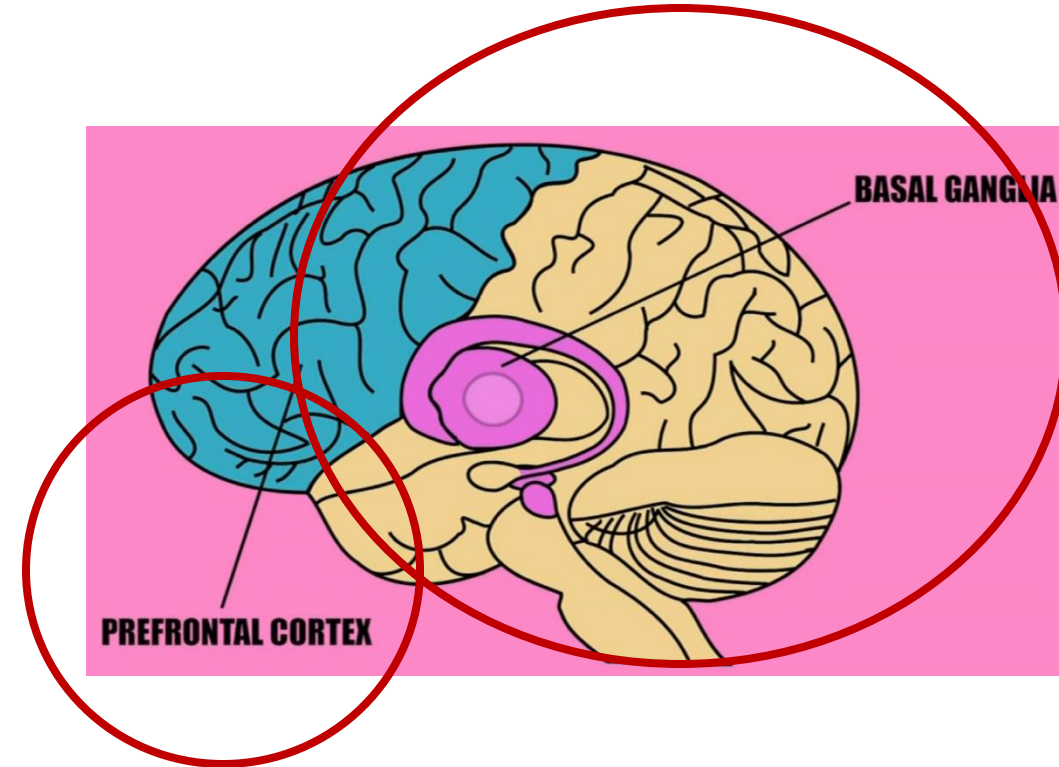
AUTOPILOT BEHAVIORS

More than 45% of the
actions people
perform each day
aren't actually
decisions, but habits



HABITS HELP US CONSERVE ENERGY

- Our habitual response isn't just for our survival; it is also **energy conserving** for the brain.
- New information is processed in the prefrontal cortex (working memory) – and **new learning takes a lot of energy**.
- When we **decide an experience is important to remember** as a pattern to repeat in the future, it gets stored in the basal ganglia, which takes less energy to run habitual reactions.



SELF COMPASSION



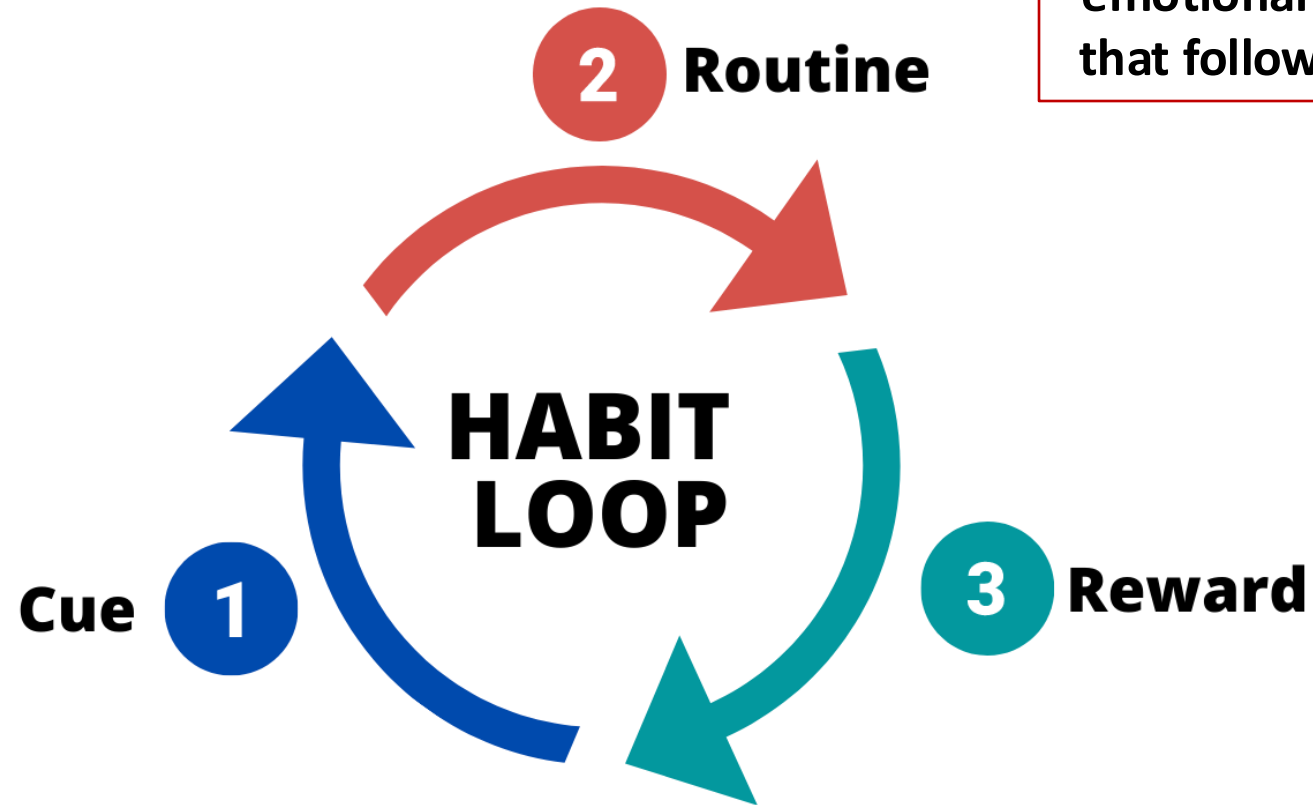
Kristen Neff PhD, Self-Compassion Break

<https://self-compassion.org/practices/general-self-compassion-break-2/>

Treating yourself with kindness, understanding and acceptance when you're facing challenges.

1. Notice. "This is a moment of suffering."
2. Common humanity. "Others also have felt this way."
3. Empathy. Care for self like a good friend would. "I'm so sorry."

THE HABIT LOOP



CUE: A trigger that tells your brain which routine to use

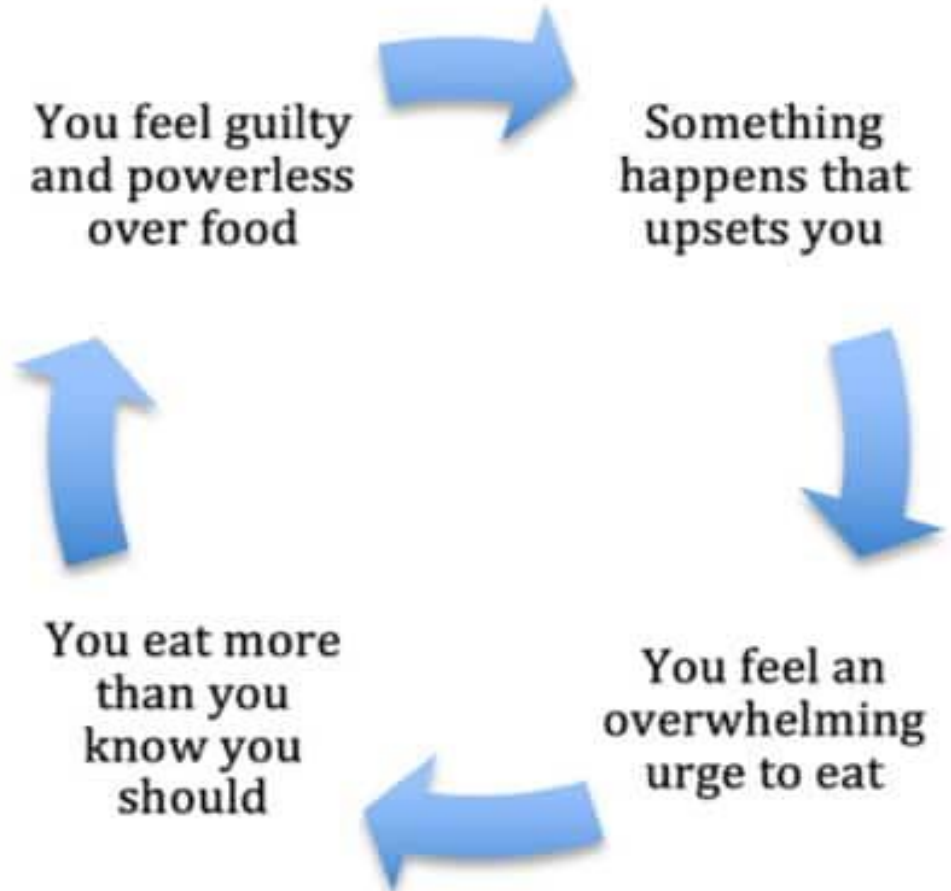
ROUTINE: The physical, mental, or emotional behavior that follows the cue

REWARD: A positive stimulus that tells your brain the routine works well

WHAT IS EMOTIONAL EATING?



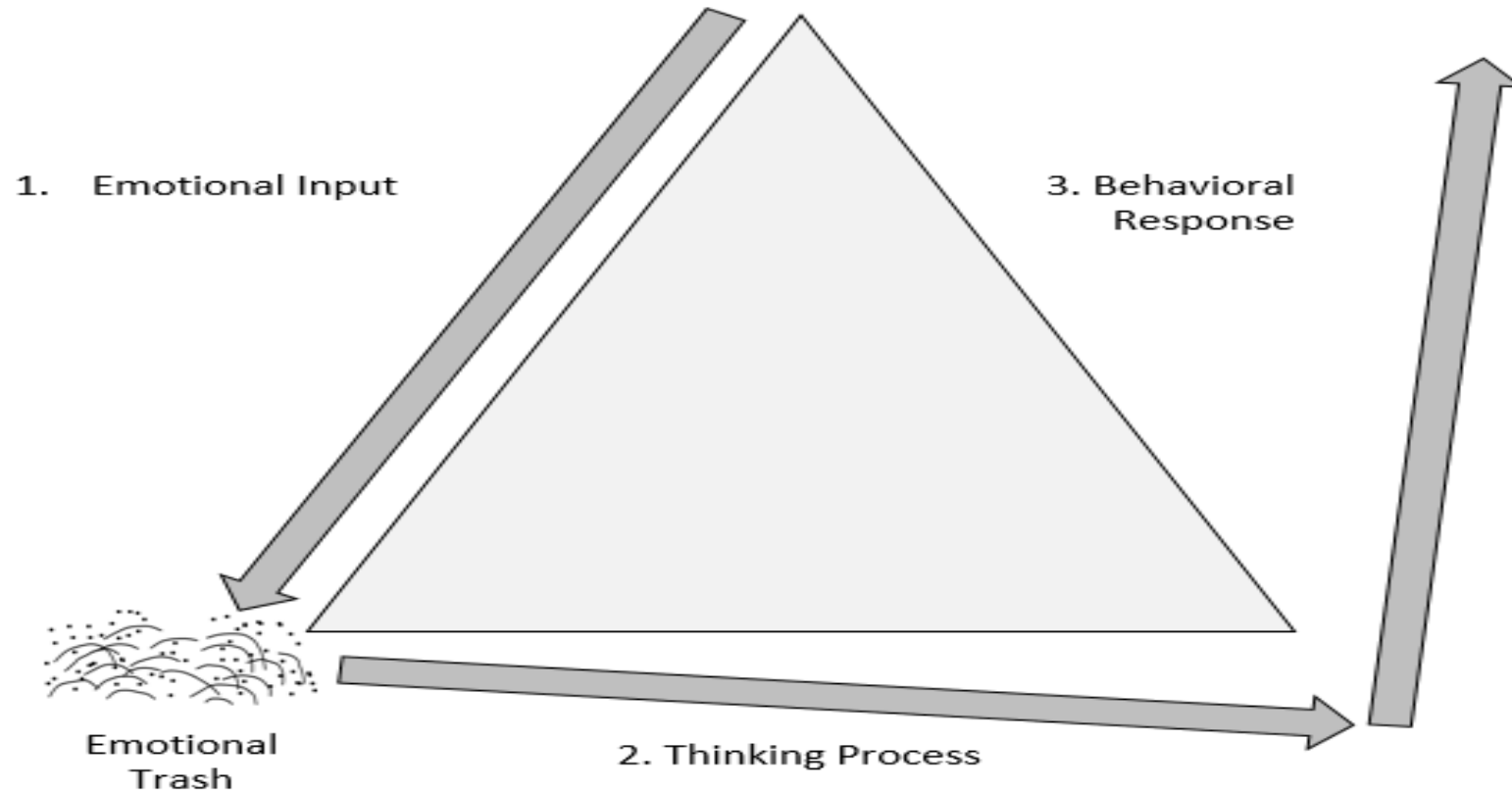
The Emotional Eating Cycle



Stress Circuit

Stress Circuitry

Reactions to old emotions often lead to thoughts and behaviors that amplify stress





Recognizing Emotional Triggers and Patterns of Stress Eating

Boredom

Feeling restless and seeking stimulation.

Loneliness

Using food for comfort when feeling isolated.

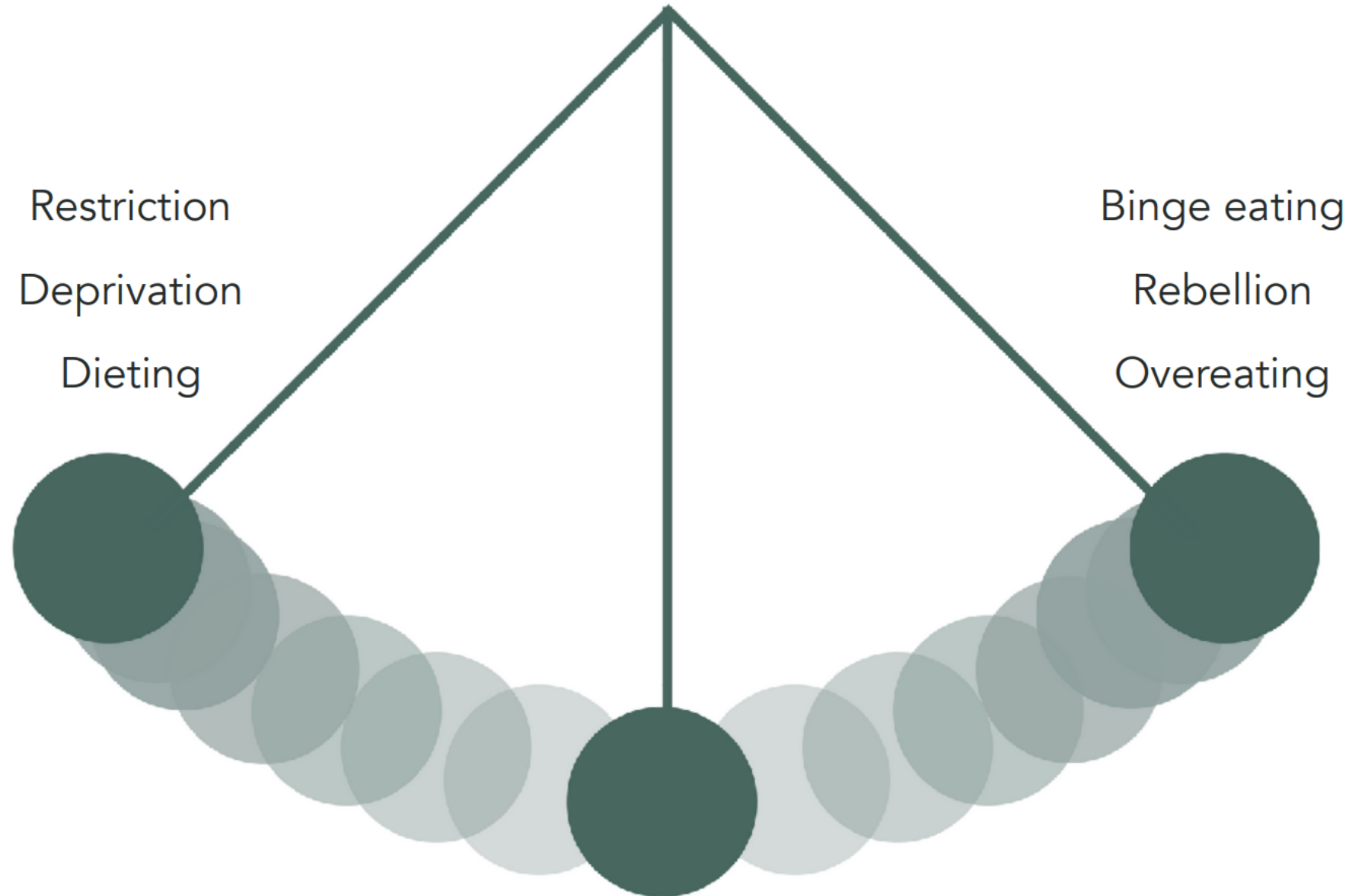
Anger

Seeking a release of tension through eating.

Restrict-Rebel-Repent

Part of the Emotional Eating Cycle can include:

- how I feel about my body
- negative thoughts
- can influence food behaviors
- contribute to the pendulum

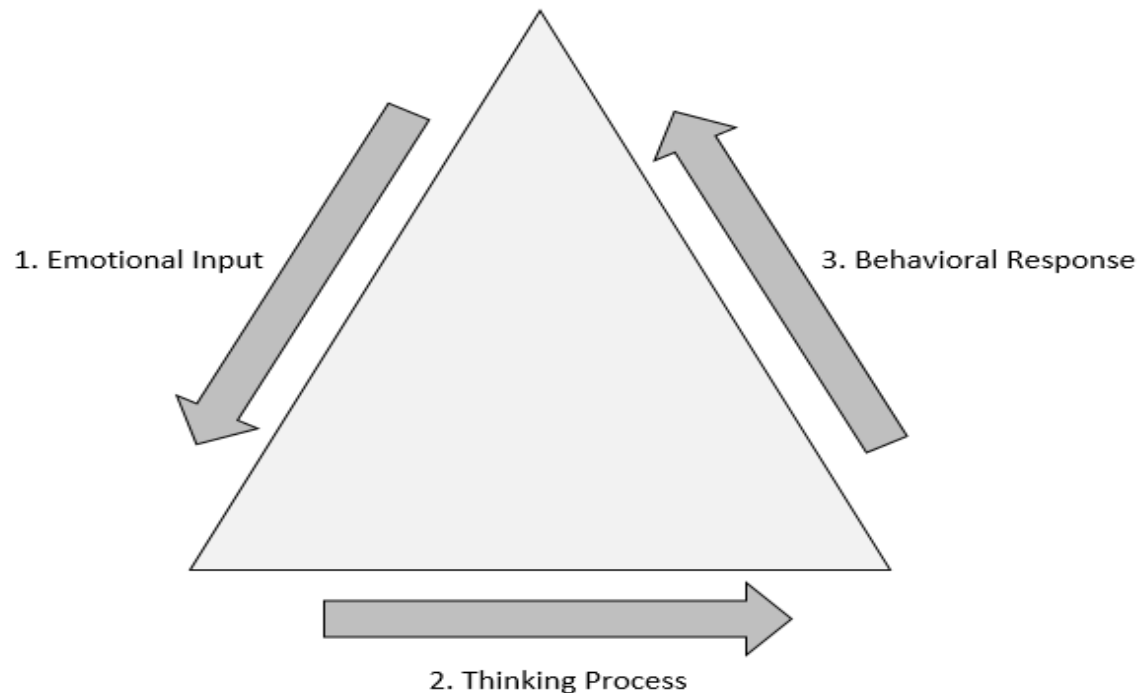


How do we have more balanced, effective patterns?

Effective Circuit

These circuits promote balance, ease, and beneficial lifestyle choices

**Check-in
Tool
or
Box
breathing**



**Supportive
Brain- Balancing
Behaviors
(good sleep,
regular movement,
healthful nutrition)**

**Cognitive Behavioral Skills
Setting Realistic Expectations
Self-Regulation Mind-Body Skills, Pause,
Mindful Eating**



Strategies for Breaking the Stress-Eating Connection

1

Check-ins, Breathing, Mindful Eating

Paying attention to hunger cues, cues, savoring flavors, and enjoying the experience of eating.

2

Thought /Cognitive Restructuring

Challenging negative thoughts and identifying healthier coping mechanisms. Using tools to identify and meet your true needs.

3

Brain-Body Balancing and Stress Management Techniques

Using foundational strategies like better sleep, more fluid, mixed meals and incorporating activities like yoga, meditation, or deep breathing exercises.

PARTICIPANT #1

Concerned, Overwhelmed

- Single mother working 2 jobs, little financial or childcare support.
 - Difficulty following through
 - Frequently has surprise events and/or surprise expenses
 - Difficulty tracking her food intake or putting skills talked about in class into practice on days when she's not in class
 - Has missed several classes even in the first 3 months



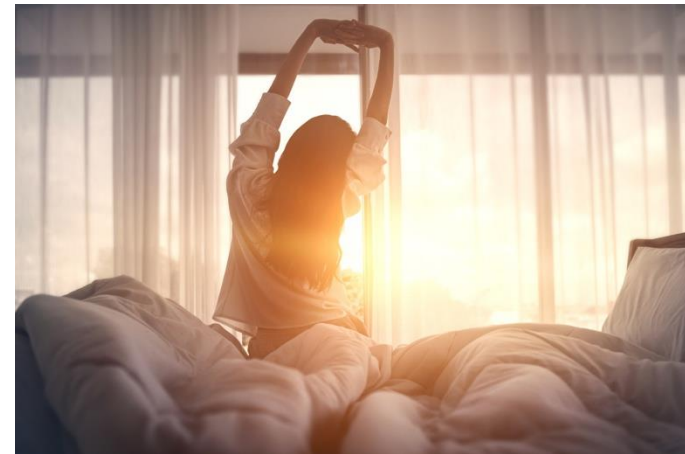
Building Strong FOUNDATIONS for Health



Eating



Moving



Sleep



Stress Resilience

What other approaches or ideas do you have to assist **participant #1** in coping with overwhelm?

MINDFUL AWARENESS

- Building on the strengths she has
- Guiding her to the CDC lessons/modules
 - #9 Manage Stress: recognize it in the body, common causes, strategies
- Individual inventory of her values, what's most important to her
- Identifying which foundational life skills might be important & setting a smart goal or action step

ENCOURAGE MIND BODY SKILLS

Check in

Box breath: 4 in, 4 hold, 4 out, 4 hold

Me time

Mini-meditation or prayer time

One day a week gym/yoga or friend time

PARTICIPANT #2-

Committed: Gets “off track” on holidays & vacations

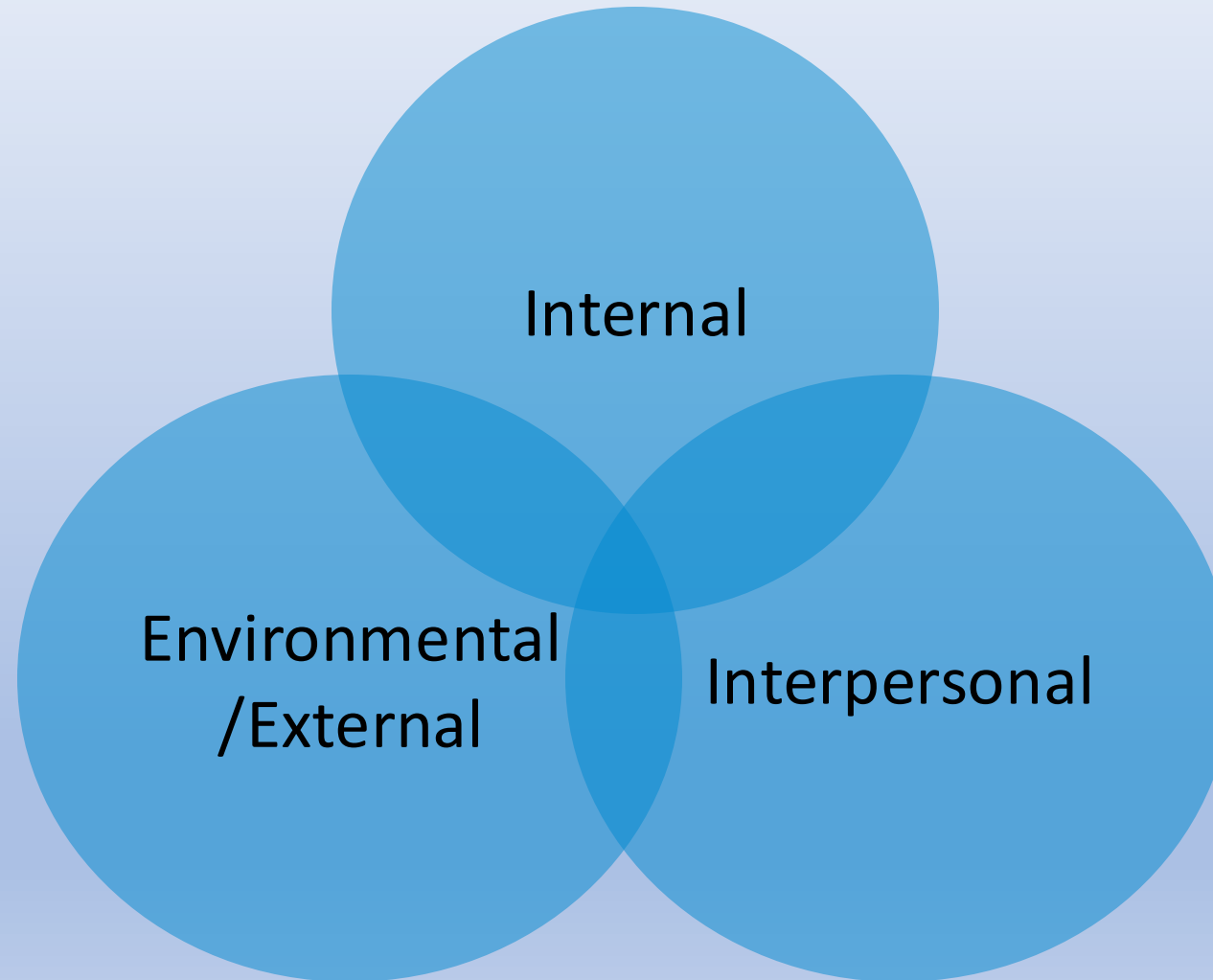
- Regular in her attendance
 - Participant is aware of the risks of developing type 2 diabetes and has been enjoying the group sessions.
 - After the first holiday, Thanksgiving, it took her a month to return to managing food & movement well.
 - She has high blood pressure, a family history of diabetes, hypertension and stroke.
- Notes she's a “people pleaser” and it is more important to maintain the upcoming Christmas holiday food traditions for her family, (and not to compromise) simply because she now needs healthier foods with fiber and less total carbohydrate.



POSSIBLE PARTICIPANT #2 STRATEGIES

- Is there an inner barrier, perhaps a values conflict? if so what is it?
 - How can she honor each value (culinary greatness, family, tradition AND her desire for health). Honoring both can cut down on stress activation
- Qualities of mindfulness – educational step
- Identifying barriers
- Use of box breathing to put a pause in between stimulus and action
- Practical use of a 1-10 hunger fullness scale
- **CDC Modules #11 Cope with Triggers: Eating triggers**

BARRIERS TO CHANGE

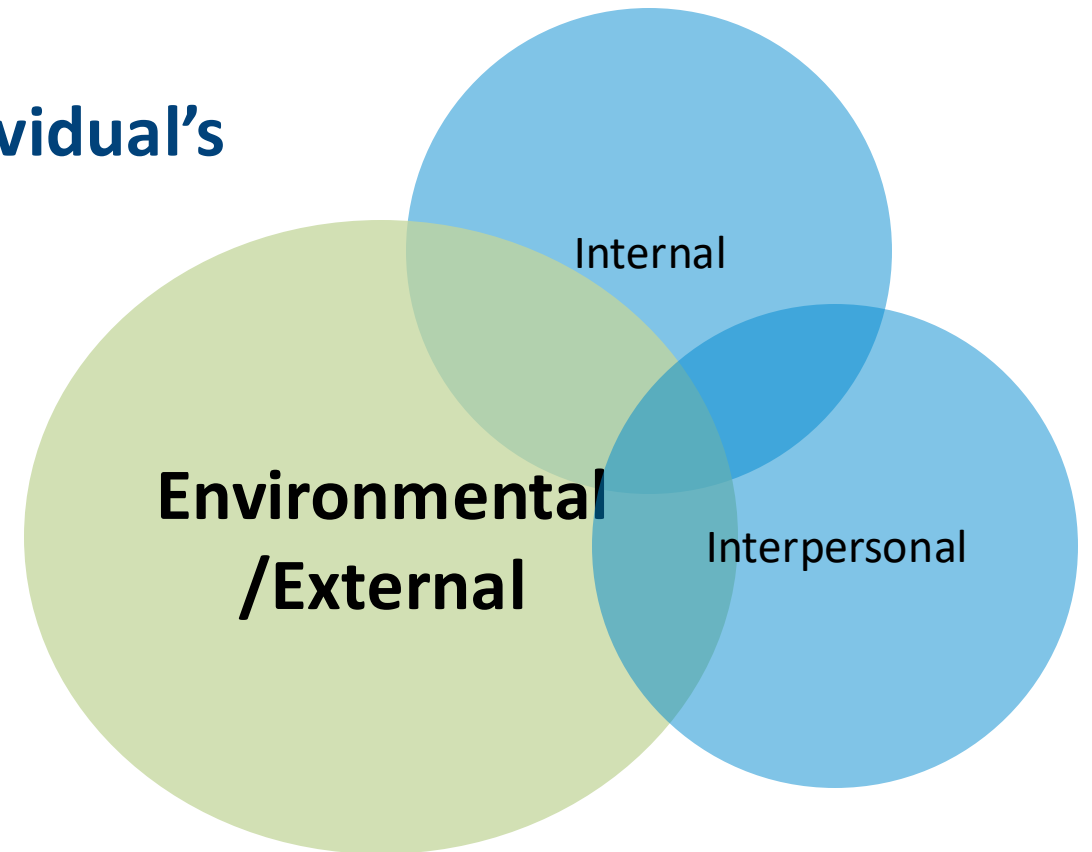


*From: Timmerman, GM (2007).
Addressing barriers to health
promotion in underserved women.
Family & Community Health, 30(1):
S34-S42*

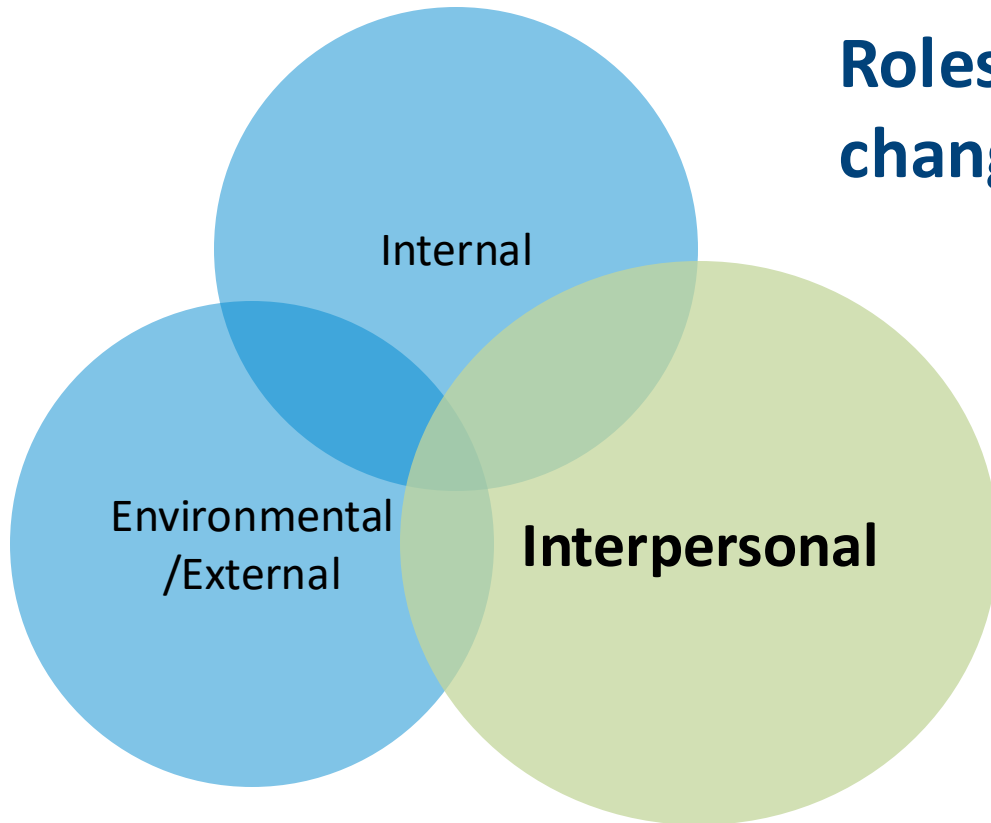
ENVIRONMENTAL/EXTERNAL BARRIERS

Obstacles perceived as outside the individual's control

- Work Demands/Schedules
- Weather
- Canceled Classes
- Illness/Injury
- Access to Resources (*e.g., affordable healthy food, gym*)



INTERPERSONAL BARRIERS

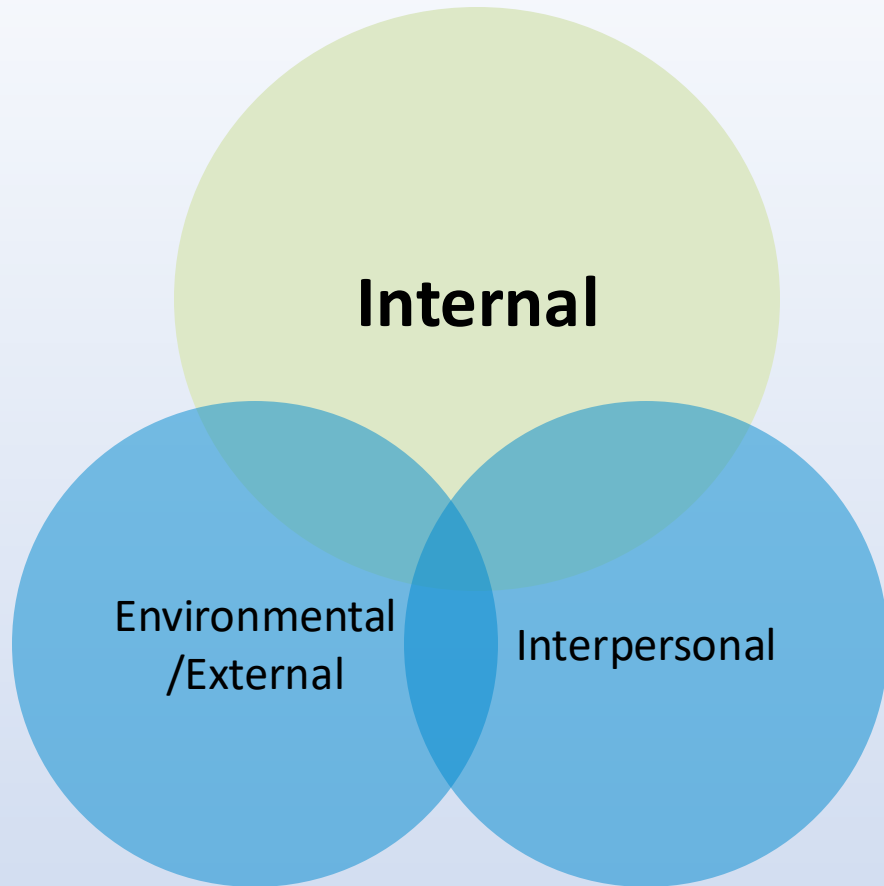


Roles and relationships that may impede making a change

- Family/Friends/Coworkers
- Peer Pressure
- Caretaking Responsibilities
- Lack of Support

Change may impact/affect others who are important

INTERNAL BARRIERS



Something within you that keeps you from moving forward

- Negative Self-Talk
- Gremlins (Inner Voice)
- Value Conflicts
- Limiting Beliefs
- Negative Perspective vs a Growth Mindset
- Lack of Knowledge, Skills, or Experience

COMPETING VALUES: ONE TYPE OF INTERNAL CONFLICT

Ideal Values - What is important to us in the ideal or long term, “Core Values”

Examples: God, Honor, Country, Health, Family, Culture Commitment, etc.

Operational Values – What is important to us in the moment

Examples: Pleasurable experiences, food, drink, comfort, time, energy, convenience, cost, caring for others, etc.



Many times, these are in conflict

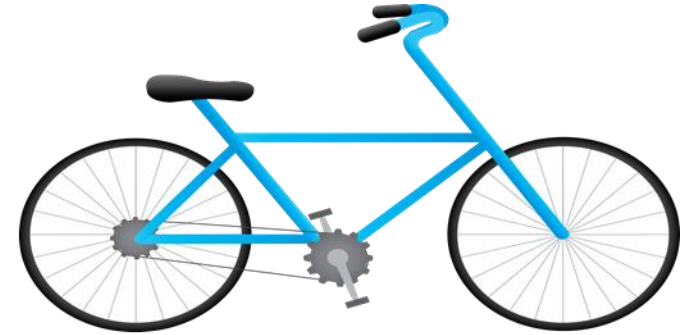
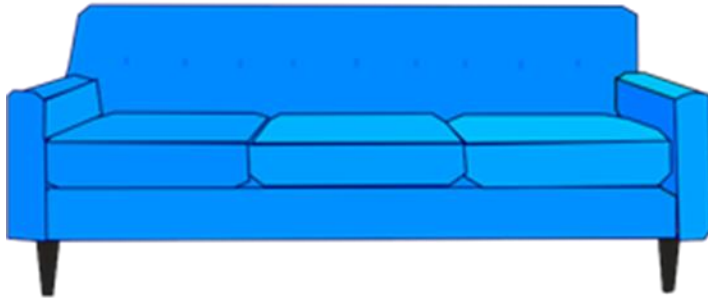
WORKING WITH VALUES CONFLICTS



- Choose one value over the other
- Compromise between/among the values
- Live with the values conflict
 - Live with values conflict in a stressful way
 - Live with the values conflict by simply observing
 - Wait to make a future decision

DOUBLE SIDED REFLECTION: TOOL FOR NAMING VALUES CONFLICT

On one hand I could use some
down time on the couch



On the other hand, I'd like to
get back on the bike

“Getting some rest is important to you AND you’d like to get back to moving your body.”







PROCESS OF CHANGE:

PREPARE, BE KIND, GIVE OURSELVES TIME

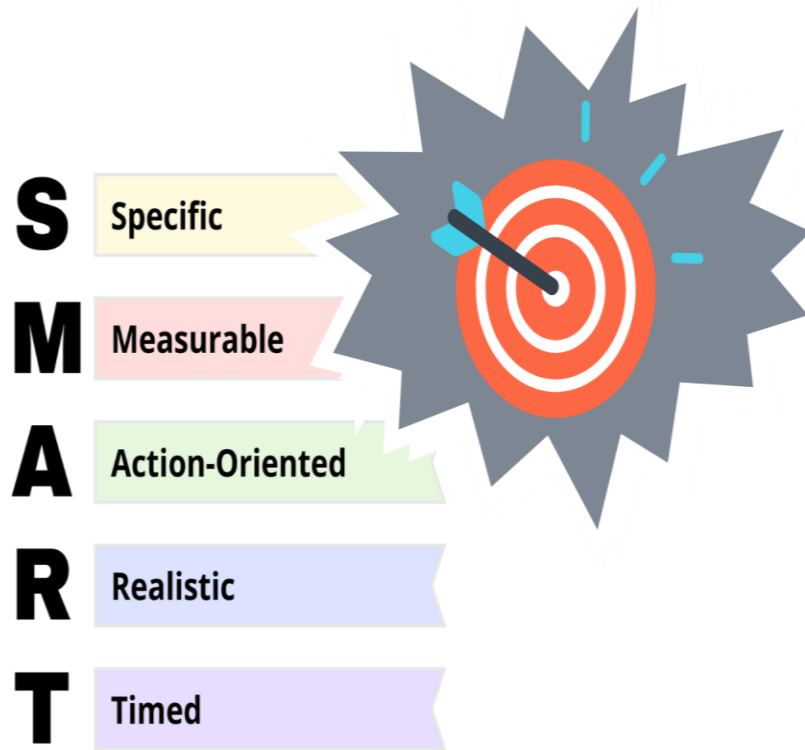
- Our **neurons fire in ways that work for us**
- Takes **preparation, repetition, time, effort, and energy**
- When everyday challenges arise, have **self-compassion and kindness**, and begin again the next day



STAGES OF CHANGE

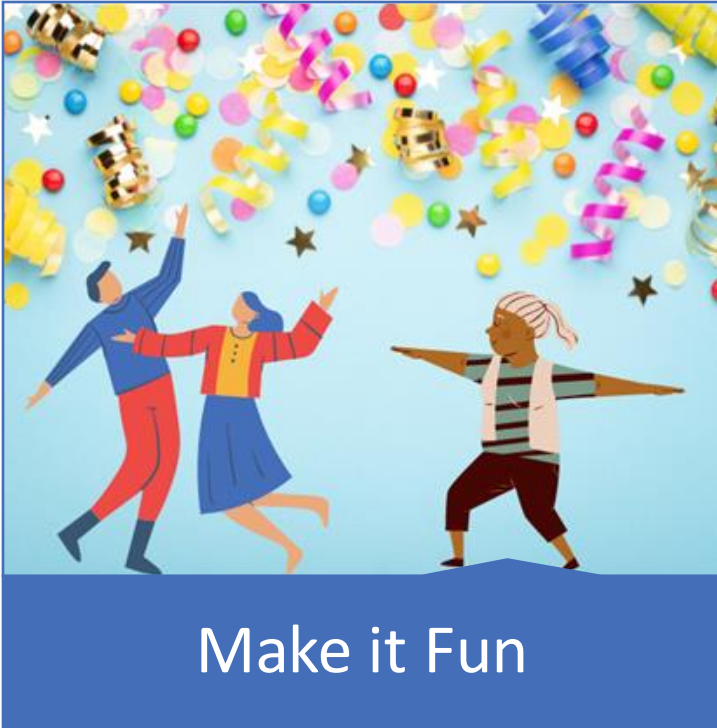
-  **Pre-Contemplation:** Not ready to change
-  **Contemplation:** Ambivalent about change
-  **Preparation:** Preparing for change
-  **Action:** Implementing change
-  **Maintenance:** Sustaining change
-  **Termination/Adoption (Recycle/Relapse):** Completion, restart or new change

SETTING EXCITING GOALS & ACTION STEPS



- Want a stretch that is just the right amount **exciting and challenging**
- Challenging goals with emotional resonance will **alter brain structure** more quickly and effectively
- **3- to 6-month timeframe** is long enough to achieve a meaningful goal and short enough we'll want to get started right away
- SMART goals provide **clarity and focus** to set us up for success

HABIT REINFORCEMENT



SUMMARY:

TIPS FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT & STRESS EATING

1. Multiple strategies for interrupting the stressful input → thought → eating /behavior

- a. Check in, mindful moment, box breathing or other mind-body skills
- b. Substituting other thoughts or actions, noting feeling & needs for the feeling
- c. Practice, repetition, forming new patterns/habits

2. Attend to the four foundations for health

- a. Eating, moving, sleep, stress (resilience)
- b. SMART action steps in one of these areas of health when participants are overwhelmed or as one possibility if their attendance is faltering

RESOURCES

1. CDC-Centers for Disease Control Diabetes Prevention Modules

**#9 (Manage Stress), #11 (Cope with Triggers),
#13 (Taking Charge of Thoughts), #14 (Support)**

2. Books

- **The Mindful Diet.** Ruth Wolever PhD, Beth Reardon, RDN, 2015.
- **Resilient:** How to Grow an Unshakable Core of Calm, Strength, and Happiness. Rick Hanson, PhD, 2018.
- **The Stress Prescription:** 7 Days to More Joy and Ease. Elissa Epel, PhD, 2022.

BONUS: SKILLS & STRATEGIES FOR EACH STAGE

Preparation

- Goal Setting & Action Steps
- Confidence
- Barriers & Back-up Plans
- Accountability & Support

Contemplation

- Values, What want health for?
- Self-Assessment
- Importance/Confidence

Precontemplation

- Values
- Importance/Confidence
- Elicit-Provide-Elicit

Action

- Follow-Up on Action Steps
- Lessons Learned
- Barriers
- Continue or Adjust Focus

Maintenance

- Acknowledgement
- Accountability & Support
- Possible New Goals

Termination/Adoption (Recycle/Relapse)

- Acknowledgement
- Lessons Learned & Barriers
- Accountability & Support

