

# Mental Health Literacy

5 in 5 people have mental health.



1 in 5 people have mental illness.

## **MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY IS...**

A component of health literacy-and has been shown to have a strong positive correlation to healthy outcomes of populations and people.

Able to be taught (to teachers, support staff and students alike)

Ideally taught in schools (that's what schools do)

Life-long knowledge that can be used for self, family, friends and others

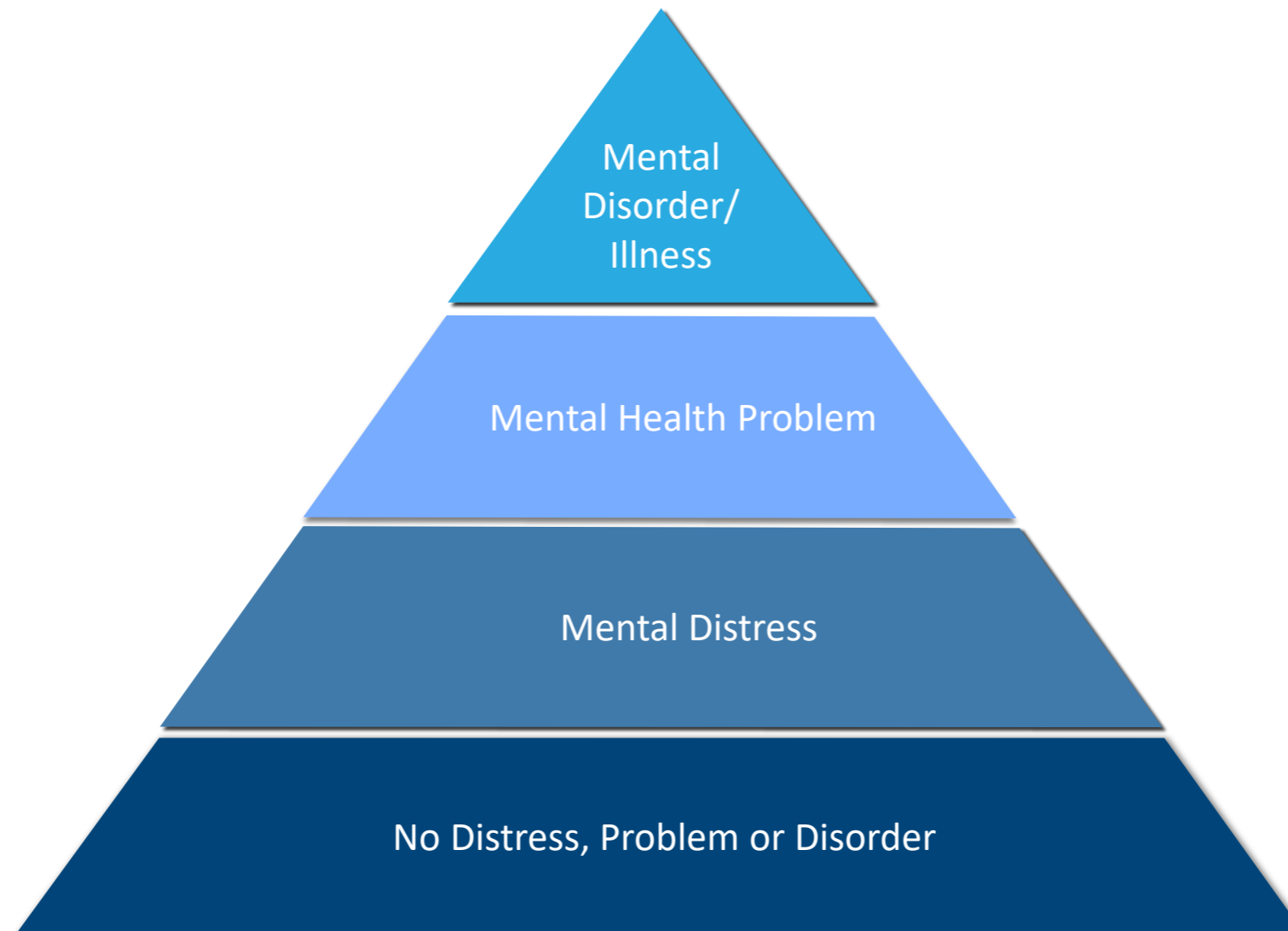
# MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY GOALS

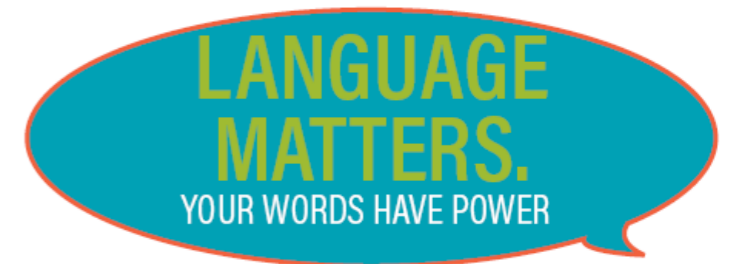
- Understand how to obtain and maintain good mental health
- Understand and identify mental disorders and their treatments
- Decrease stigma
- Enhance help-seeking efficacy:
  - know where to go
  - know when to go
  - know what to expect when you get there
  - know how to increase likelihood of “best available care” (skills and tools)

# Compassion, Humility and Connection



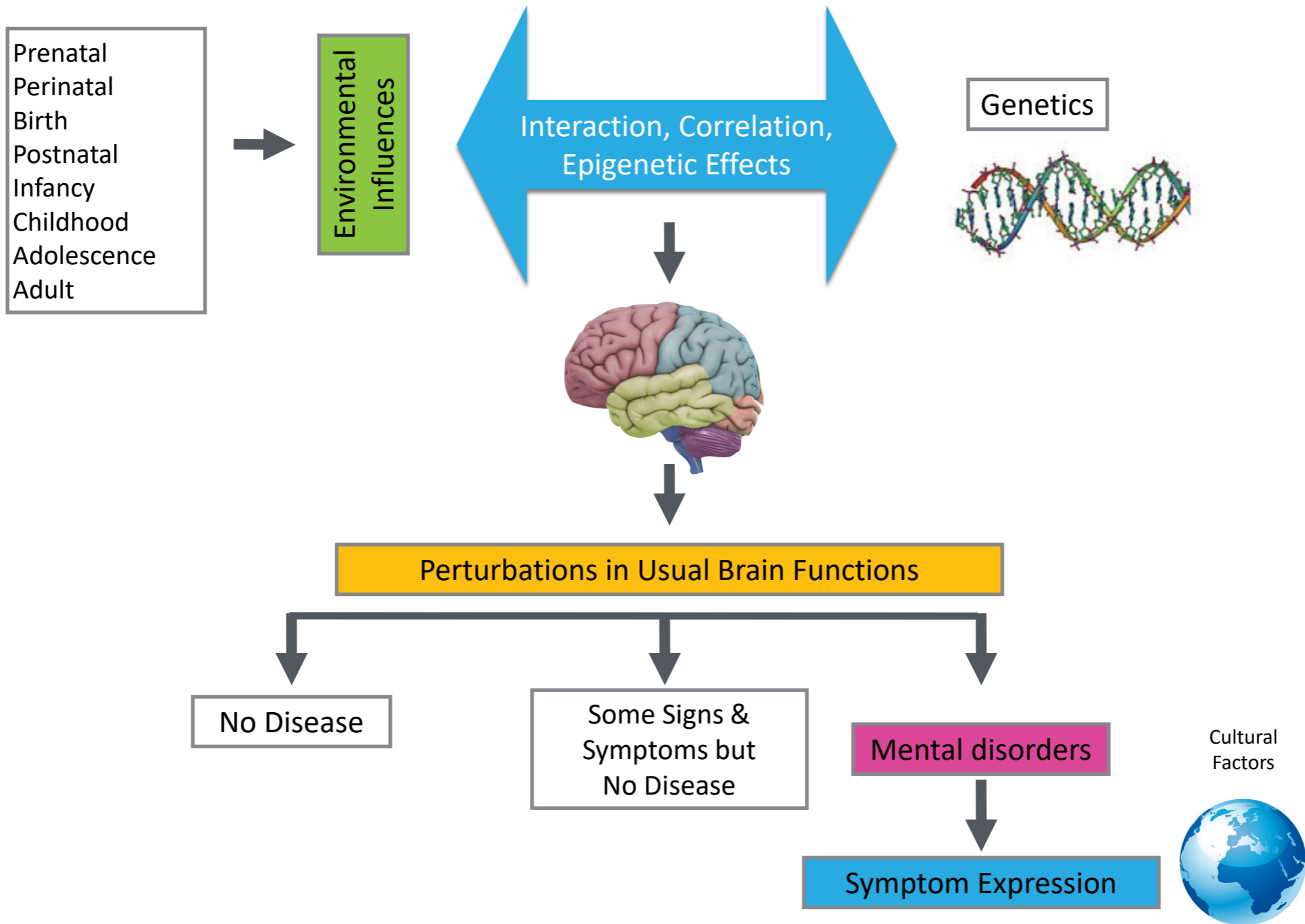
# What do these words mean?





# USE THE RIGHT WORDS

Pyramid Position	Event	Word
Distress	Lost my keys	Agitated
Distress	Did not make the team	Disappointed
Distress	Going on a first date	Nervous
Problem	Parent dies	Grief
Problem	Lost my Job	Demoralization
Problem	Romantic Breakup	Devastated
Disorder	None necessary	DEPRESSION



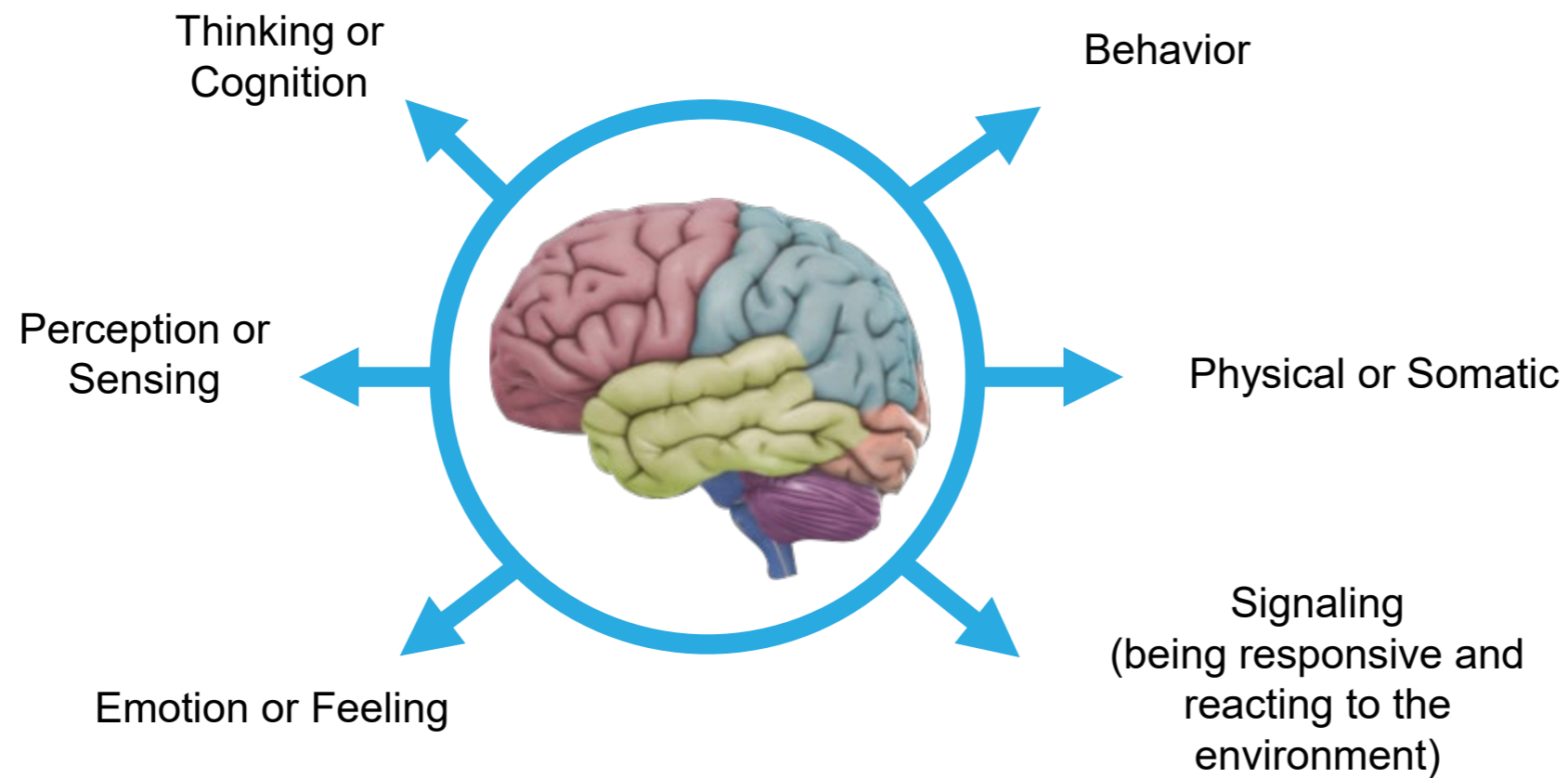
# Prevalence of Mental Health

## Prevalence in general population

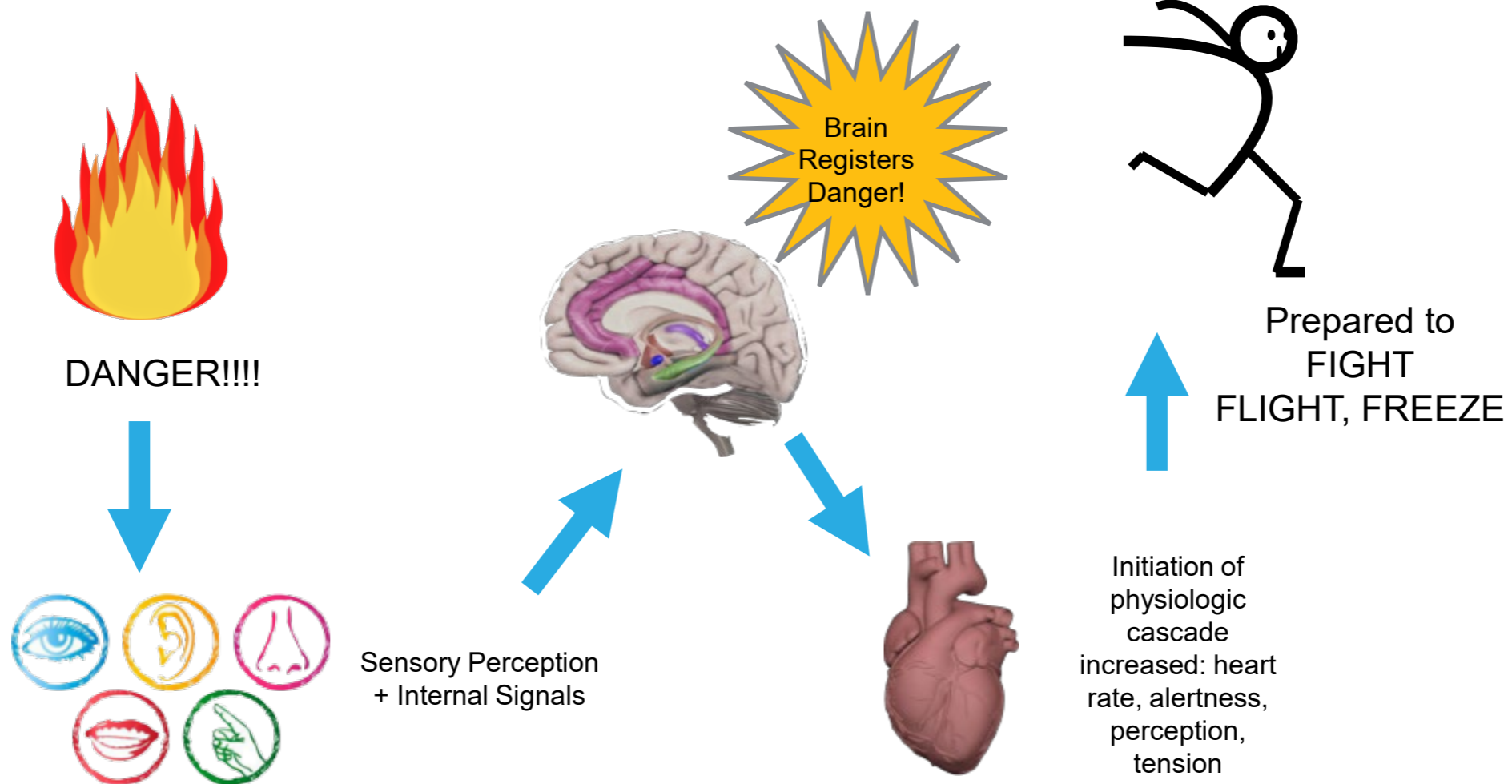
- Depression (4-6%)
- Psychosis (0.5-1.0%)
- Anxiety Disorders (6-10%)
  - ADHD (2-4%)
- Anorexia Nervosa (0.1-.2%)
  - Total (15-20%)
- SUICIDE: RARE (4-5/100,000)



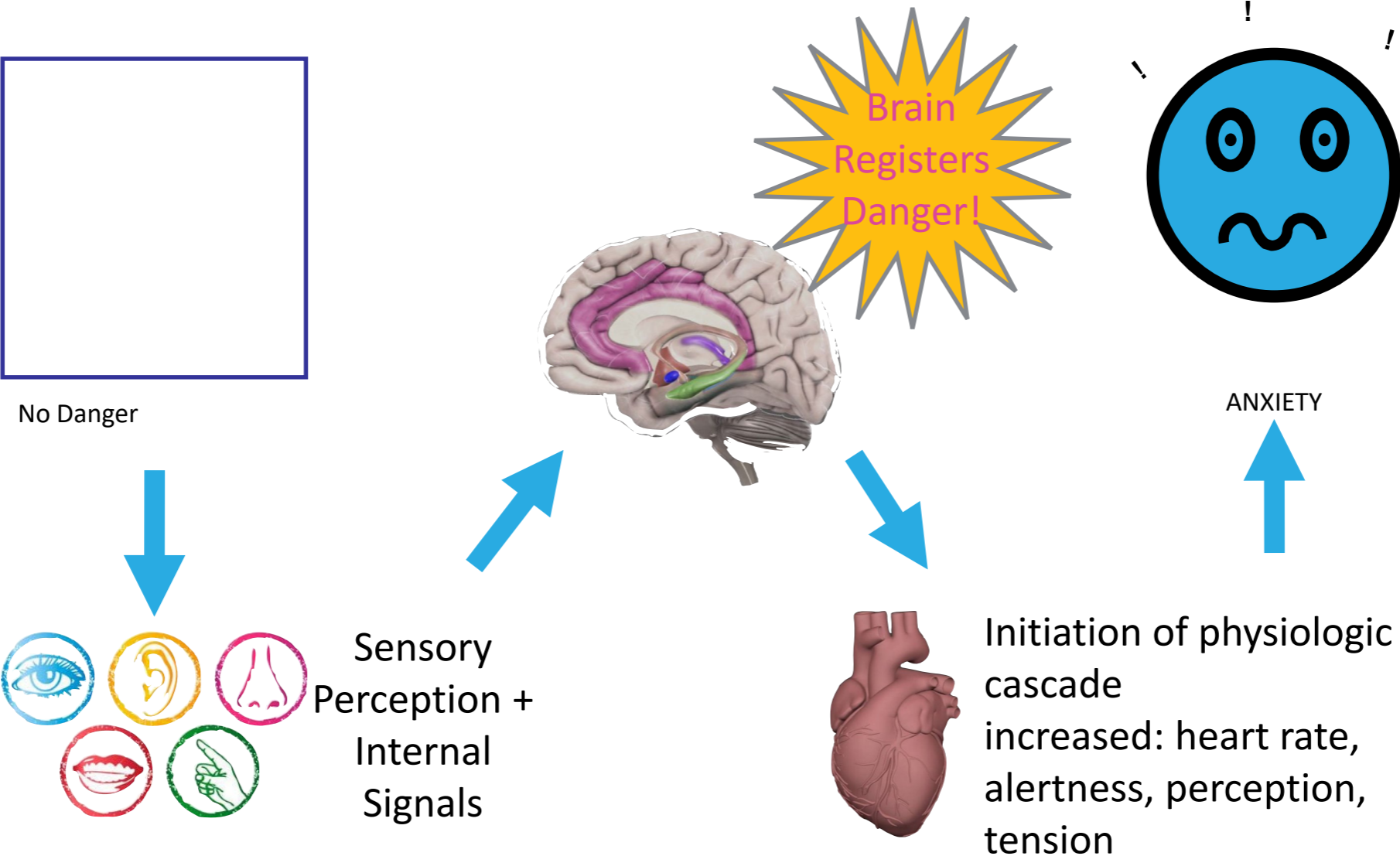
# FUNCTIONS OF THE BRAIN



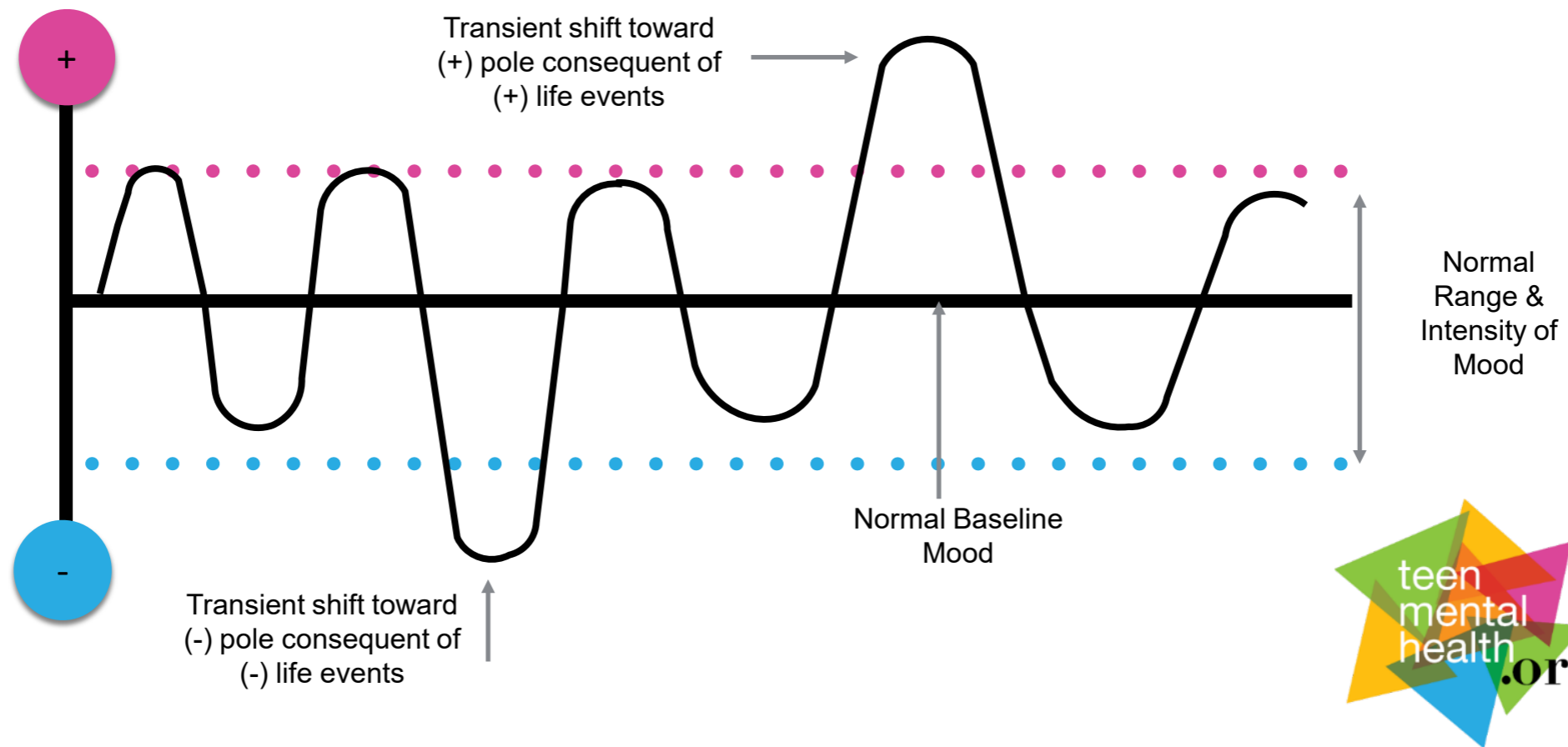
# WHAT IS SIGNALING?



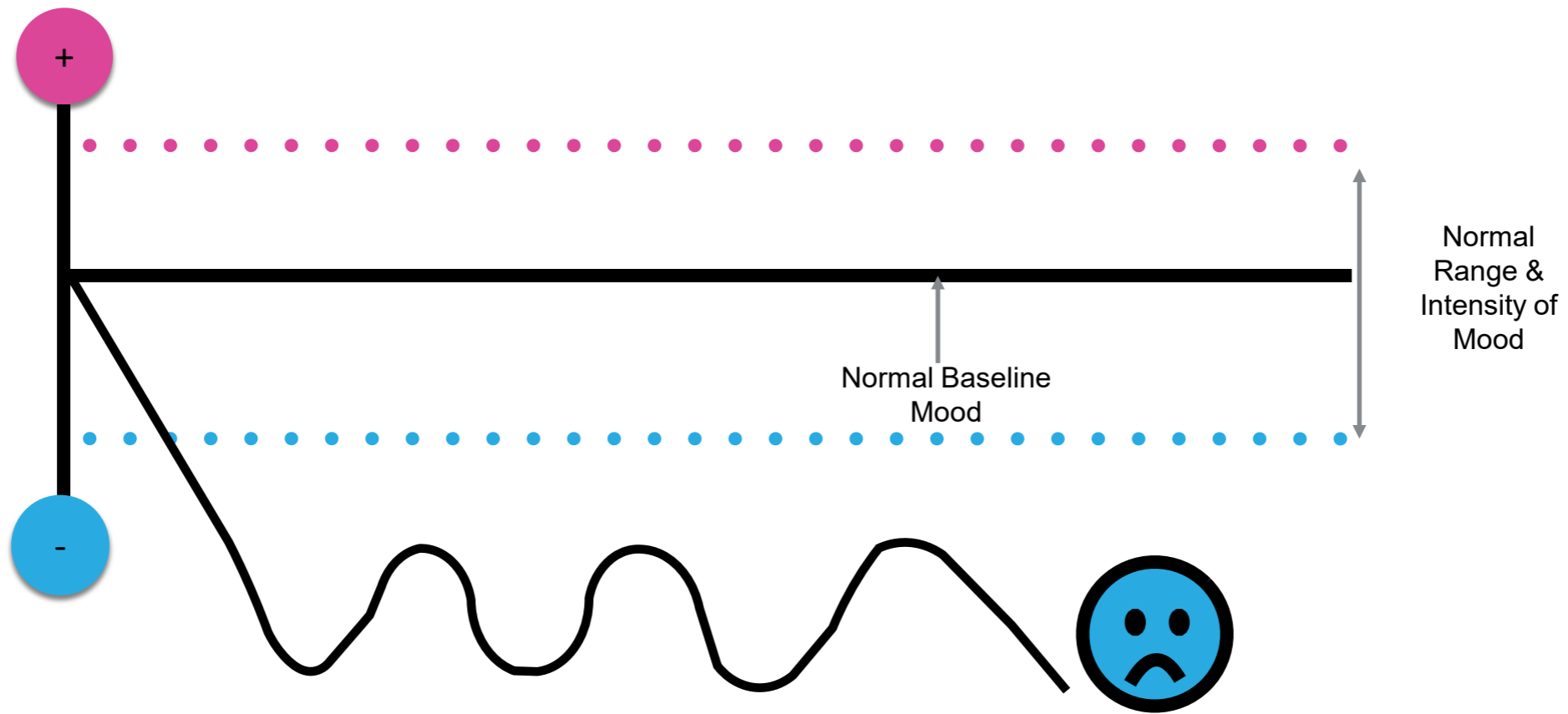
# What is Anxiety?



# NORMAL MOOD GRAPH



# A BASELINE SHIFT TO THE NEGATIVE POLE: DEPRESSION



# Identification May Be Difficult in the School Setting

- The “presentation” of the illness may be different at different times
- Sometimes the student does not share the symptoms (such as low mood or hallucinations)
- If a student is using drugs or alcohol the effects of those substances can be confusing
- Sometimes the student baseline is not known to the school



# Identification Keys

- Has there been a recent significant change in mood, cognition, behavior?  
Or is the youth known to have a mental disorder that continues – ADHD?
- Are the person's problems causing distress to them or to others or is there a lack of social convention?
- Has there been a noticeable decrease in functioning: social, academic, other?
- Is the student previously known to have significant mental health problems or a mental disorder? (family member)
- Are there substantial and unexplained major changes in peer group participation – especially peer group “slide”?
- Are parents or others raising concerns?
- Does a close friend have a mental disorder or a major mental health problem?
- Has there been a recent head injury (concussion)?



# Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

- ▶ **ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) can include:**
- ▶ Abuse: Emotional / physical / sexual
  - ▶ Bullying/ violence of / by another child, sibling, or adult
- ▶ Homelessness
  - ▶ Household: Substance abuse/ mental illness/ domestic violence
  - ▶ / incarceration / parental abandonment, divorce, loss
- ▶ Involvement in child welfare system
- ▶ Medical trauma
- ▶ Natural disasters and war
- ▶ Neglect: Emotional / physical
  - ▶ Racism, sexism, or any other form of discrimination
- ▶ Violence in community



# Trauma Informed Systems



Understand how Adverse Childhood Experiences(ACE's) impact learning, wellness and mental health.

ACEs are an **Educational** concern not just a mental health problem.

ACEs are prevalent in our classrooms

ACEs have a profound impact on school success (Difficulty with self regulation, attendance, academic performance, behaviour, emotion and relationships)

Educators have tremendous power to perpetuate ACEs/further distress OR buffer impact of trauma

# Trauma

- Threat to survival or emotional well-being
- Adverse childhood and life events

Peter Levine

- Experiences that overwhelm an individual's capacity to cope.

TIP Guide

- Defined by the central nervous system

# Connected



You BELONG!

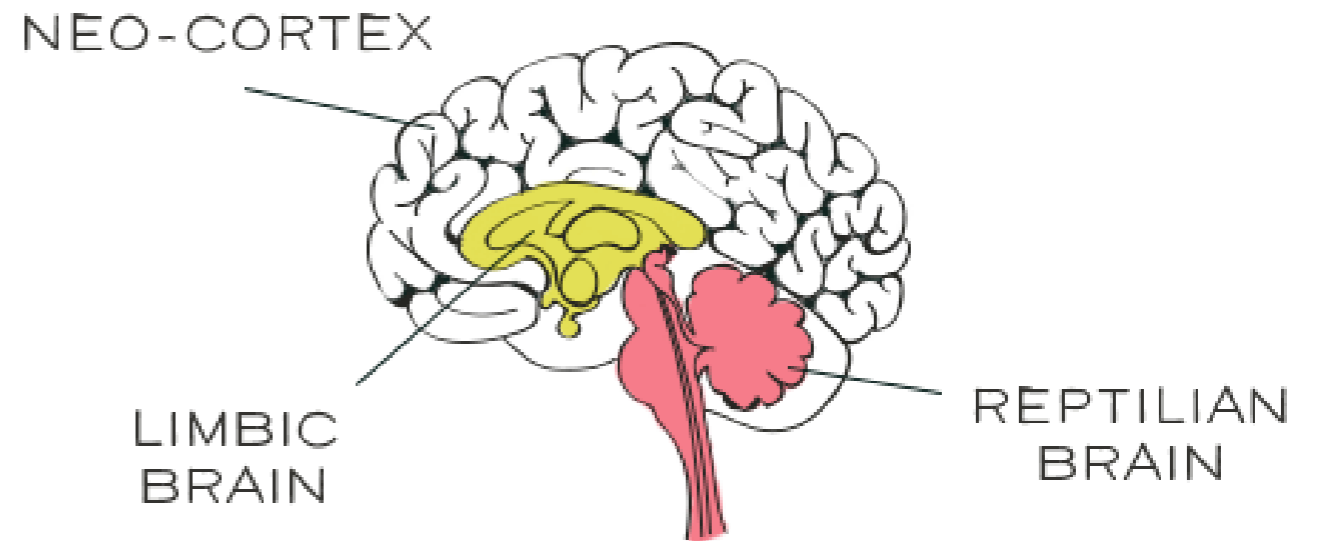
- Responsive caregiving provided by trusted adults in a school setting can moderate the effects of stress, trauma and emotional distress associated with mental health concerns.
- Explicitly make efforts to connect student to school community
- Authentic, congruent, positive relationship is everything, strategy much less important than quality of relationship... relationship is the change agent.

# Trauma Informed Practice Applied

- ▶ Understanding Brain Science
- ▶ Pro-active Work
- ▶ It does not mean let things slide
- ▶ Start the process with listening and ensuring everyone is calm
- ▶ Carry out the process to keep your school safe
- ▶ Be fair, honest and consistent

# Toxic Stress and the Brain

- **Neo-Cortex;** the outer surface where higher thinking skills arise; includes the pre-frontal cortex, the thinking brain.
- **Limbic System;** centre of the brain, where emotions evolve.
- **Brain Stem (Reptilian Brain) ;** controls survival functions.



# Brain States are worked from the bottom up....

What can I learn here? (PFC)

Reason

Do you like me? (Emotional Brain)

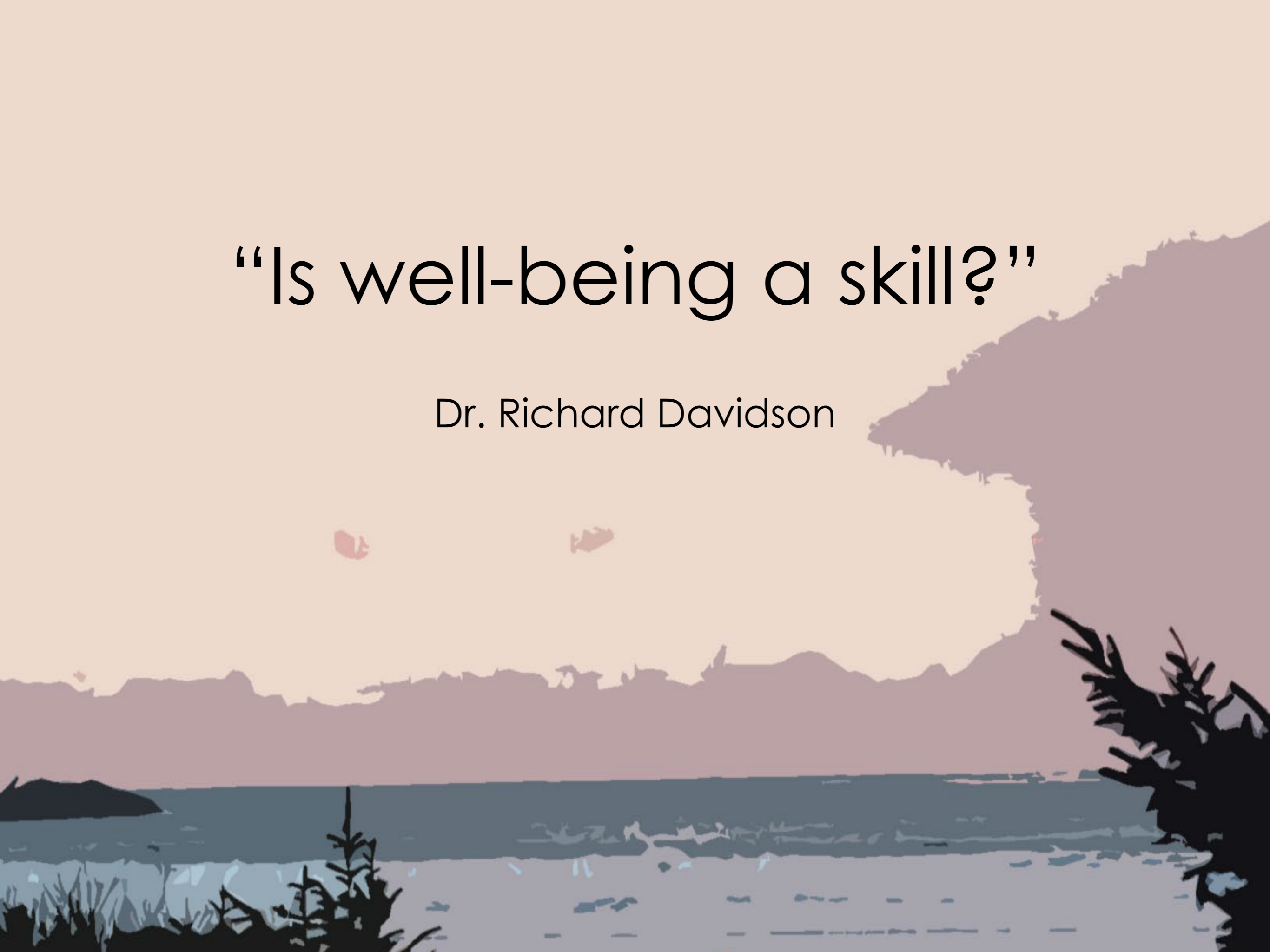
Relate

Am I safe here? (Reptilian Brain)

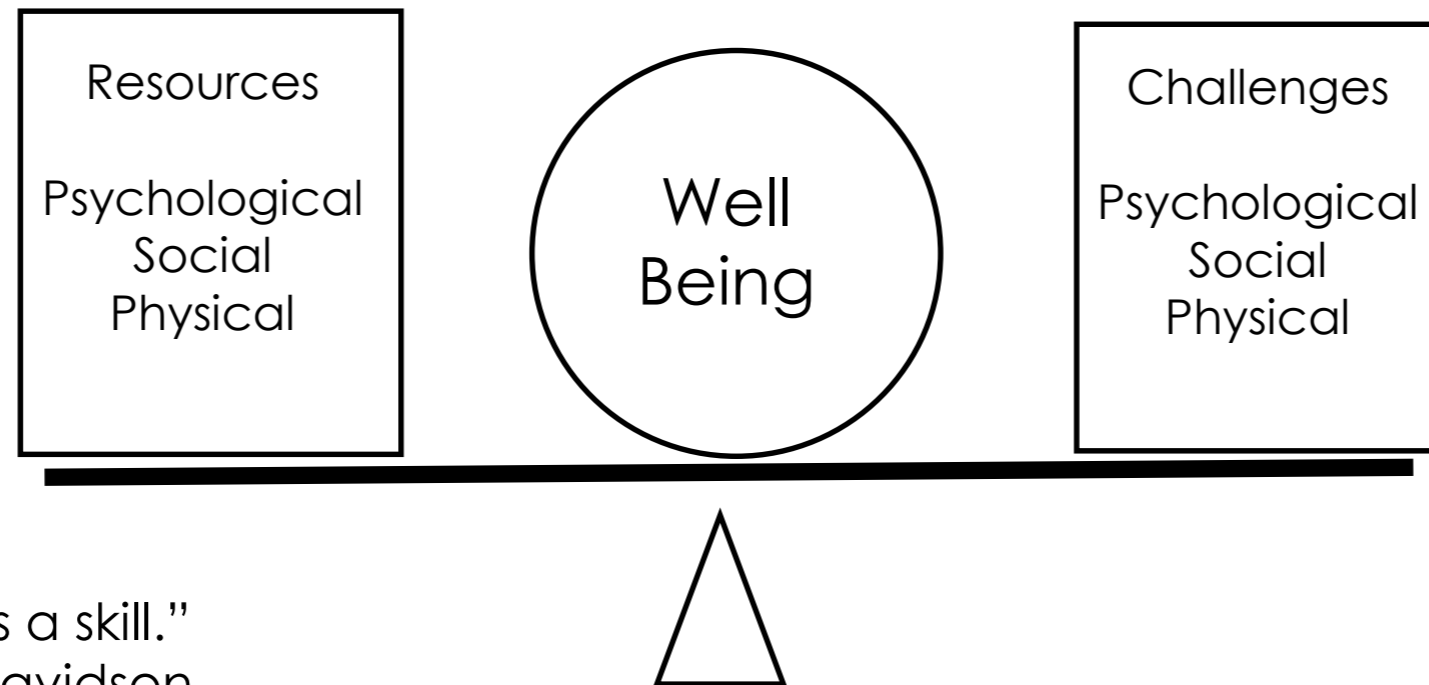
Regulate

# “Is well-being a skill?”

Dr. Richard Davidson



# Definition of Well-being



“Well-being is a skill.”  
Dr. Richard Davidson

Dodge, R., Daly, A., Huyton, J., & Sanders, L. (2012). The challenge of defining wellbeing.





Scientists grew trees in a sealed biosphere and couldn't work out why they fell over before they matured. They eventually figured out whilst they provided the perfect growing environment, it was lacking wind which provides the stress to ensure the trees grew strong enough to support themselves.

# A working definition of stress

Stress is what arises when something you care about is at stake.

# Reasoning

This definition is broad enough to hold both the frustration over traffic and the grief over a loss. It includes your thoughts, emotions, and physical reactions when you're feeling stressed, as well as how you choose to cope with situations you'd describe as stressful.

This definition also highlights an important truth about stress – that stress and meaning are inextricably linked.

# The Importance of Stress

The vast majority of stress is your friend.

Your mindset (how you think about stress) greatly influences how stress affects you.

Fight or flight are just 2 of 4 stress responses.

You are building resilience (getting stronger/ gaining skills) every day through your stress responses.

# Latest Science

Aha! The latest science reveals that stress can make you smarter, stronger, and more successful. It helps you learn and grow. It can even inspire courage and compassion.

Wait there is more! The new science also shows that changing your mind about stress can make you healthier and happier. How you think about stress affects everything from your cardiovascular health to your ability to find meaning in life.

# Unfortunately...

- ...most people ONLY think of two survival strategies – throw a punch or run like hell, which worked in prehistoric times. But now we know there are several stress responses, each with a different biological profile that motivates various strategies for dealing with stress.
- For example a **challenge response** increases self-confidence, motivates action, and helps you learn from the experience; while a **tend and befriend** response increases courage, motivates caregiving, and strengthens your social relationship. Along with the fight or flight these make up your stress response repertoire.



# Key Principles for Trauma Sensitive Schools

- Trauma Awareness
- Focus on Safety and Trustworthiness
- Opportunity for Choice, Collaboration, and Connection
- Strengths Based and Skill Building



# Changing the question

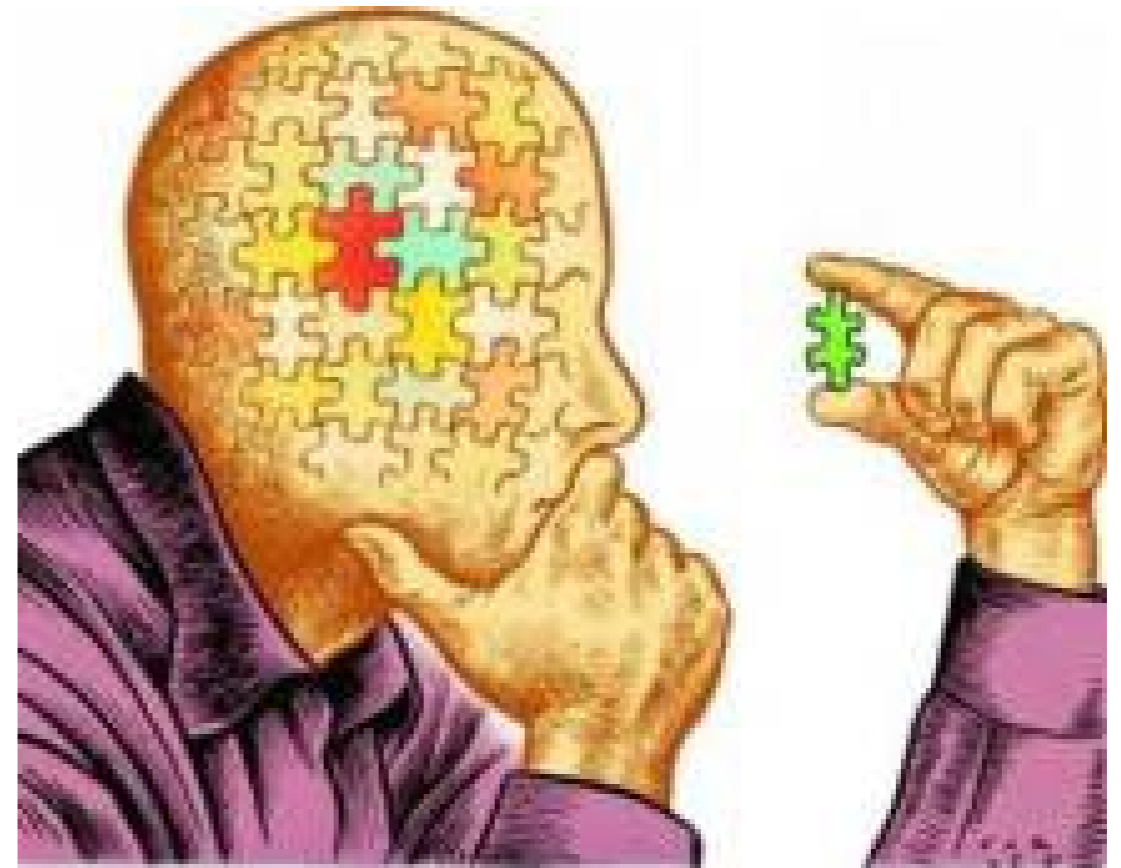
What is wrong with this child? → What happened to this child?

# Primary Goals

- Understand the coping strategies the child is using
- Minimize the chance of inadvertently re-traumatizing

# What is the story we tell ourselves about students with disruptive/challenging behaviours ?

- Our Brain needs a story. The story we tell ourselves shapes our practice.
- Re-focus on a new question instead of “what is wrong with this person ?” rather “what happened to this person ?”
- Next ask what does this child need to feel safe, connected and ready to learn?



# PEACE as it pertains to Mental Health

## Strategies for Trauma Sensitive Schools

**P**redictable Routines

**E**mootional Literacy

**A**ttuned Relationship

**C**alming Activities

**E**mpowerment

# Self-Care is Critical

“It is not uncommon for school professionals who have a classroom with one or more students struggling from the effects of trauma to experience symptoms very much like those of their students are exhibiting.”

# Self Care and Wellbeing

## BE KIND to YOURSELF

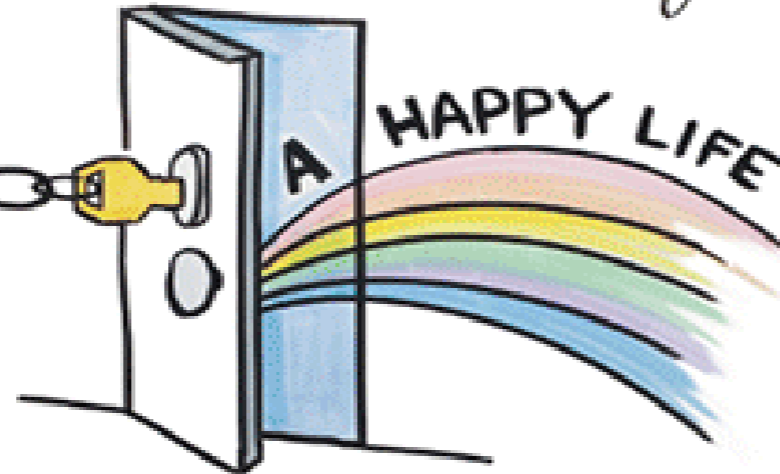
by KRISTIN NEFF



RESEARCH AND MORE RESEARCH

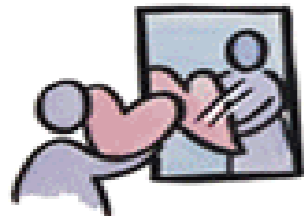


self-compassion



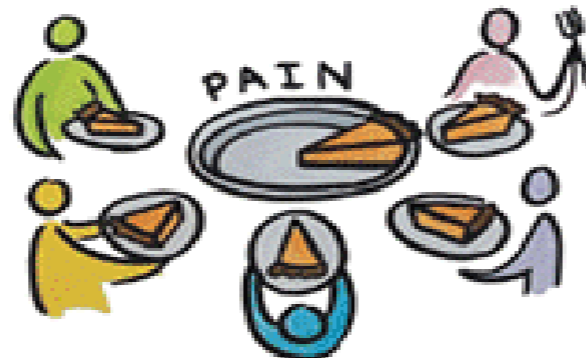
SELF-COMPASSION  
A SOURCE OF STRENGTH  
and RESILIENCE

### 1 SELF KINDNESS



WE ARE AS CARING  
TOWARD OURSELVES  
AS WE ARE TOWARD  
OTHERS

### 2 RECOGNIZING OUR COMMON HUMANITY



SHARED HUMAN  
EXPERIENCE

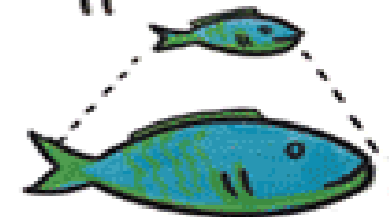
### 3 MINDFULNESS

BEING OPEN TO THE  
REALITY OF THE  
PRESENT MOMENT



YOU ARE  
HERE

ACKNOWLEDGE  
OUR SUFFERING  
WITHOUT  
EXAGGERATING  
IT



MOMENT  
of CONNECTION  
WITH OTHERS

