



Flourishing under
harsh conditions

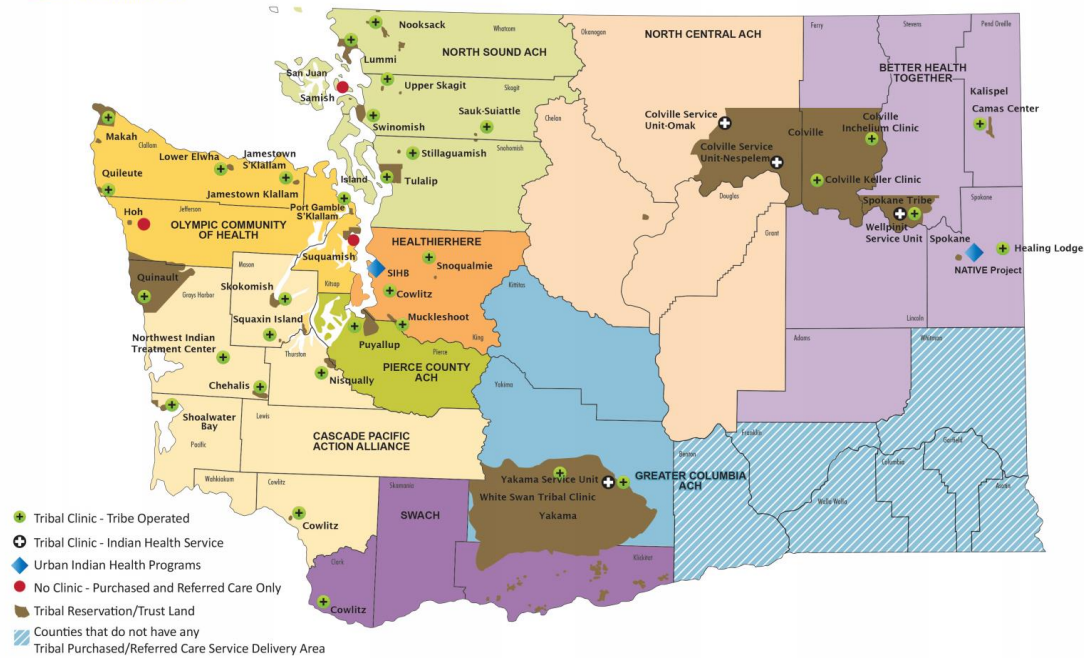
***FINDING THE 'NEW NORMAL'
LIFE AFTER CANCER
TREATMENT***

Ty W. Lostutter, Ph.D.
Psychologist, FHCC
Associate Professor, UW Dept of Psychiatry &
Behavioral Sciences

17th Annual Moving Beyond Cancer to Wellness , June 2, 2023



Washington State Tribes and Tribal Health Clinics



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- We acknowledge that Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center sits on the traditional land of the first people of Seattle, the Duwamish People past and present, and honor with gratitude the land itself and the Duwamish Tribe.

BACKGROUND & DISCLOSURES

- Faculty within the UW Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences since 2009
- Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center since 2015
- No Financial Disclosures





LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- *Learning about “the new normal” narrative in relation to one’s emotions*
- *Identifying and accepting changes in your life post treatment*
- *Discovering new ways of finding meaning and fulfillment*



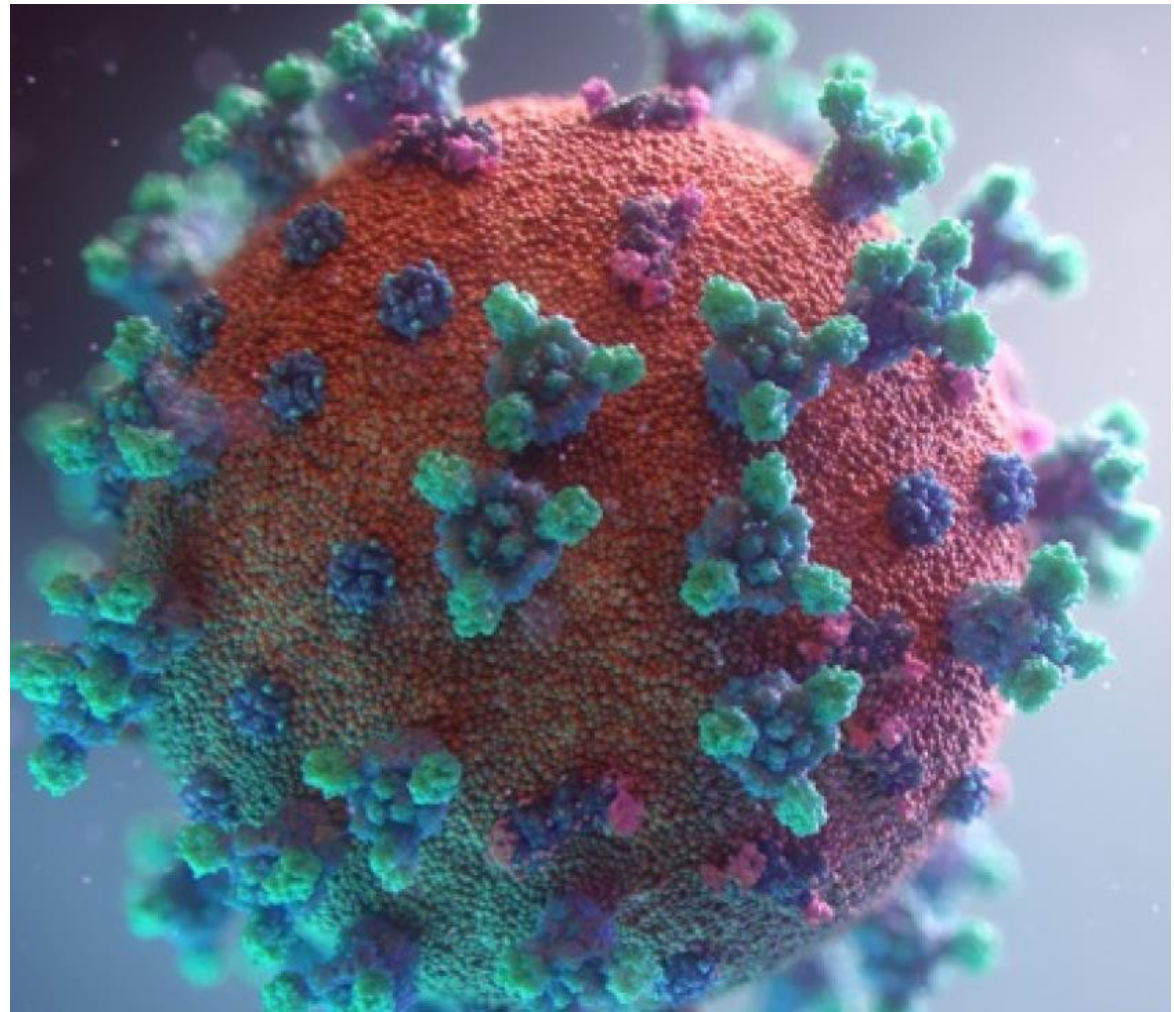
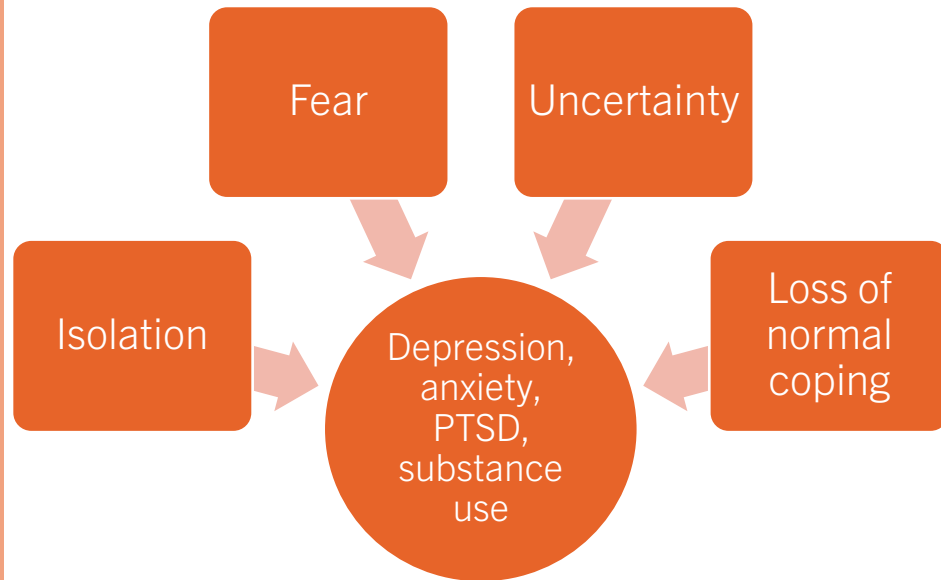
**INDIVIDUAL
UNIQUENESS**

**SELF-ACCEPTANCE
“NORMAL ENOUGH”**



Cancer Can Affect All Aspects of a Person's Life

MENTAL HEALTH IN COVID-19





DISTRESS

- An **unpleasant emotional experience** that can interfere with effective coping in cancer
- Ranges from **normal** sadness and vulnerability to **disabling** depression, anxiety, isolation, or existential crisis

EFFECTS OF DISTRESS

During treatment

- Worse physical symptoms
- Longer hospital stays
- Less satisfaction with medical care
- Lower functioning
- Worse quality of life
- Higher mortality
- Psychiatric disorders

After Treatment

- Physical burdens
- Cognitive and mood changes
- Fears of the unknown
- Loss of social connections
- Loss of function
- Being a lifelong patient

FEAR OF RECURRENCE

Fear of cancer recurrence (FCR), typically defined as the fear that cancer could return or progress in the same place or in another part of the body

- FCR is prevalent with estimates of between 22% and 99% of cancer survivors experiencing FCR

FEAR OF RECURRENCE

- Fear is an emotion.
- The fear of recurrence can be real and is entirely normal.
- When we experience fear our brain can go on to automatic pilot which was designed to keep us safe.
- All information that comes through our five senses passes through the amygdala.



THE AMYGDALA

- This is a tiny structure of the limbic system.
- The amygdala “monitors” everything that happens within and around us. The second it detects a possible threat; it activates a bunch of different neural pathways to create a kaleidoscope of complex reactions.

The Amygdala

Location

- Deep within temporal lobes
- Part of the limbic system

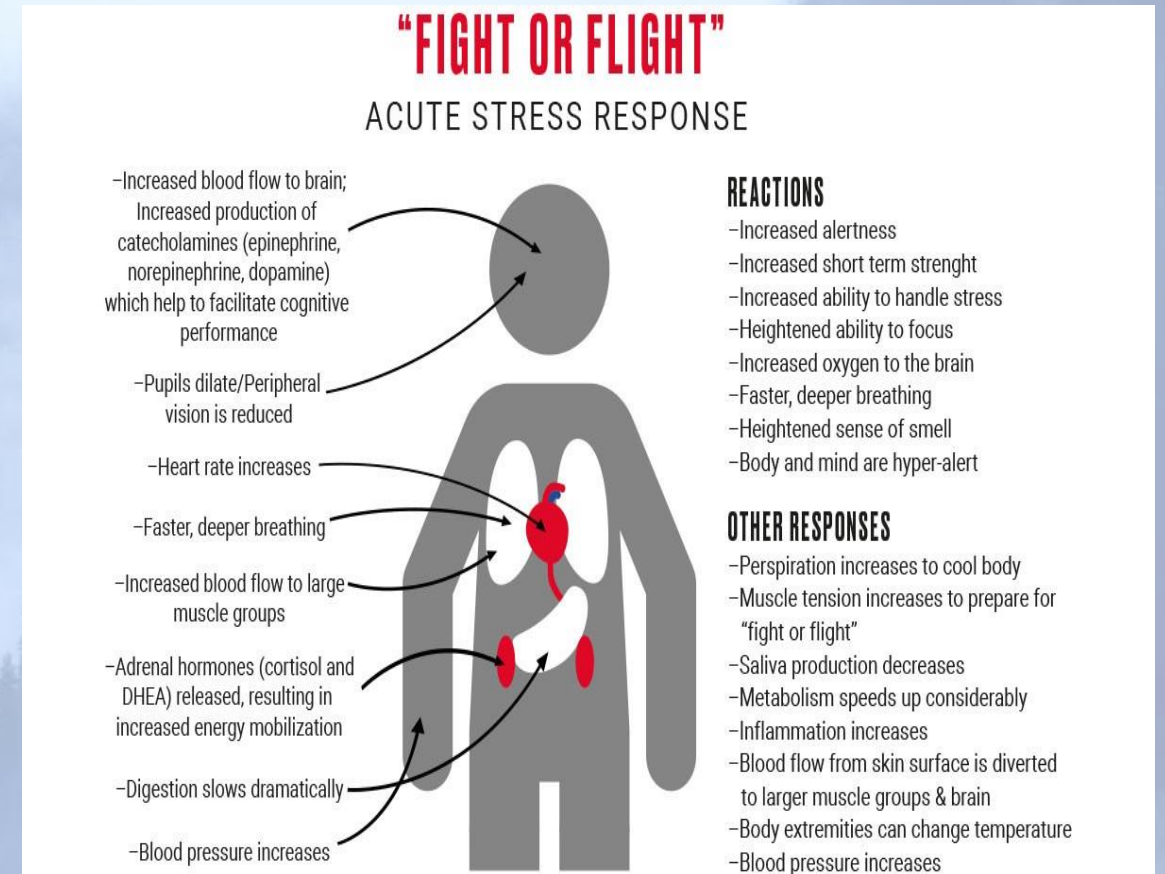
Functions

- Autonomic responses associated with fear
- Emotional responses
- Processing and consolidating memory
- Hormonal secretions



AUTOMATIC RESPONSE SYSTEM

- It raises blood pressure
- Most of the blood is directed to the body's large muscles
- Adrenaline courses through the body, causing the immune system to slow down because the brain does not consider it essential to the task at hand.





FEAR RESPONSE



1. Fight
2. Flight
3. Freeze





4th Response: Face
Your Fear

COPING

- There is no one way or “right way” to be a cancer survivor, rather there is YOUR way
- Psychological research can inform you about the choices you can make which can be more effective or less effective ways to cope with distress/fear or recurrence



TIME



PATIENCE

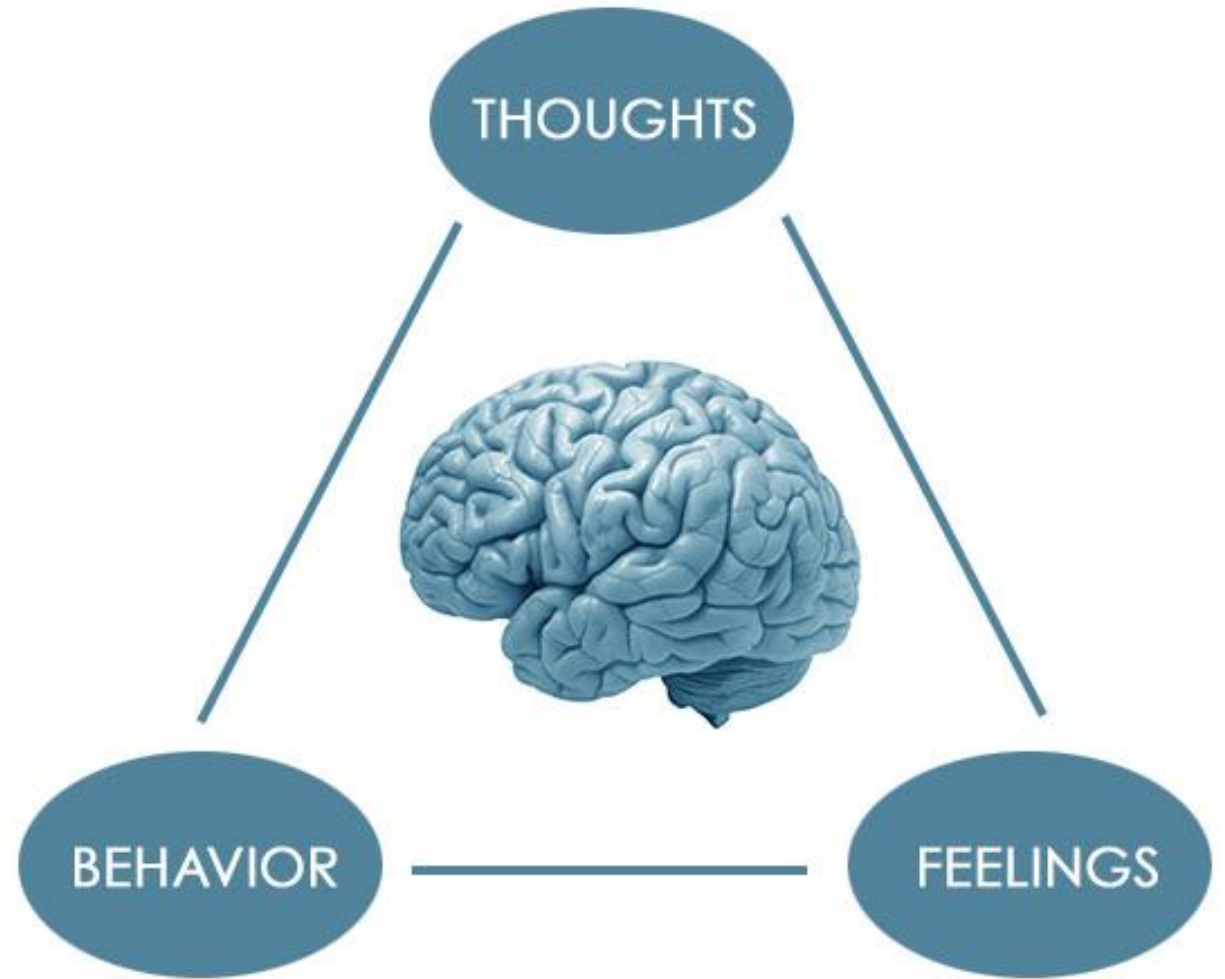
CHOICES

Stay the Same or Make a Change?

- New Perspective on Life
- Return to Non-Cancer Life
- A bit of both – Some Changes and Some Stay the Same



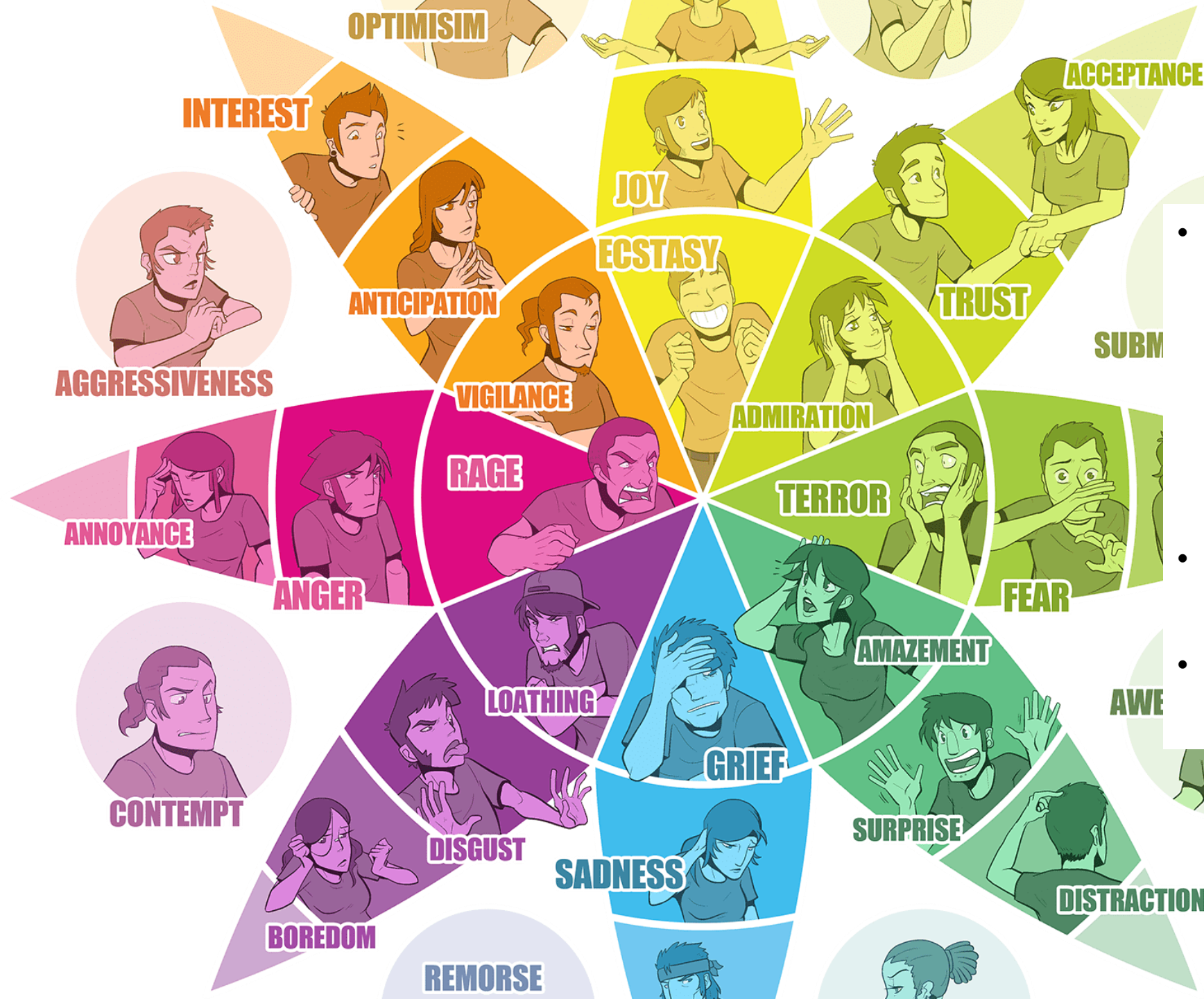
WHAT IS COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT)



Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

EMOTIONS

- a conscious mental reaction (such as anger or fear) subjectively experienced as strong feeling usually directed toward a specific object and typically accompanied by physiological and behavioral changes in the body
- During any stressful event, people typically feel extreme emotions.
- Emotions are connected to your thoughts

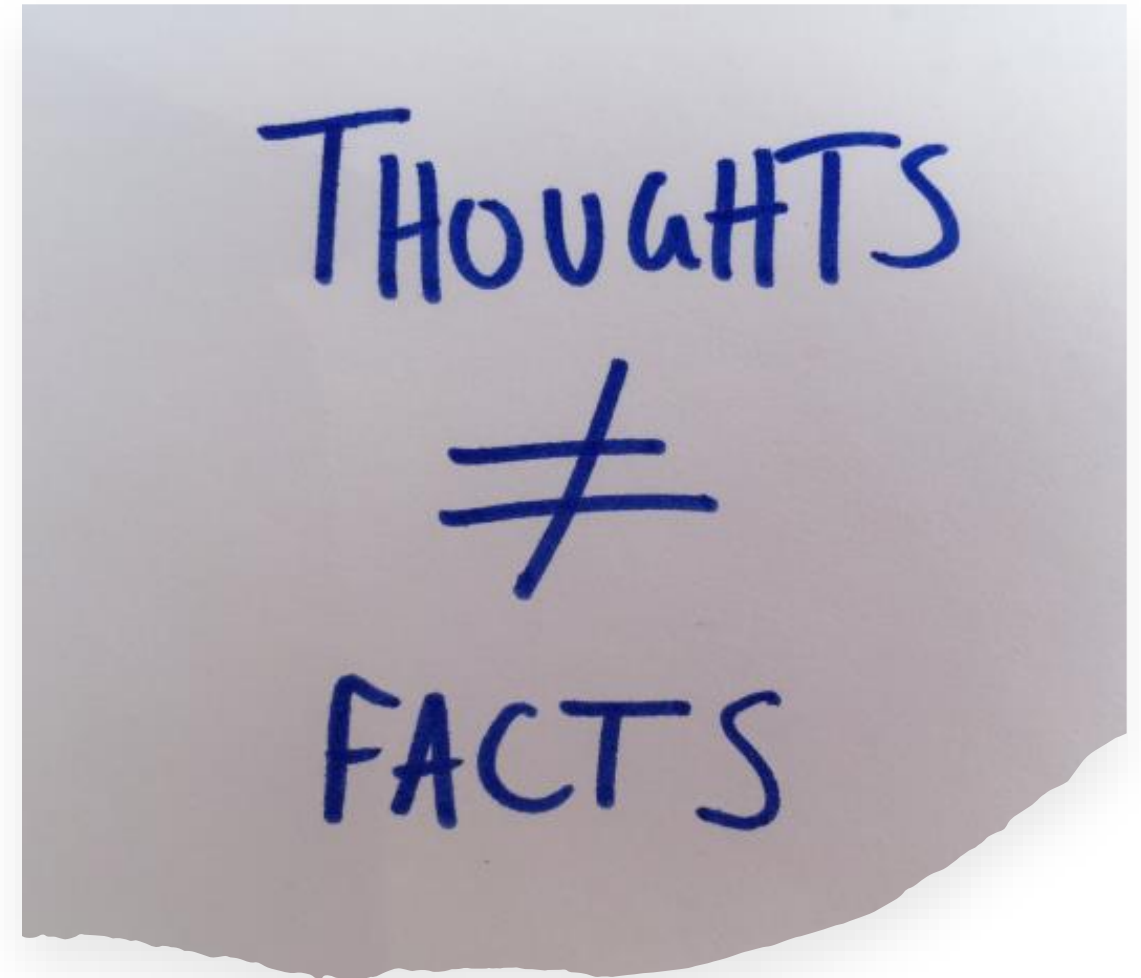




THOUGHTS (COGNITIONS)

something (such as an opinion or belief) in the mind

- Some of your thoughts about cancer or recurrence may not be facts.
- If you learned to change them to be more balanced your emotions get easier to manage.
- Since they are your thoughts, you are the only one who can change them.
- In order to have a more balanced way of thinking about yourself, other people, and the world can happen by not fully believing your thoughts.





OLD WAY



NEW WAY

COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING

- What am I thinking?
- How does that thought make you feel?
- Is that thought, Realistic or Helpful?
- If no, then you need to modify that thought to be more helpful and more realistic.
- Practice the new thought – because thoughts become habits (automatic).

COGNITIVE THERAPY IS NOT POSITIVE THINKING

- Don't go overboard, you can just think the world is Rainbows and Unicorns, the new thought needs to be realistic and helpful in the words you use and you have to believe it more than the old thought.



COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING: ABC WORKSHEET EXAMPLE

A Activating Event WHAT HAPPEN	B Belief/Thought WHAT AM I THINKING	C Consequence/ Emotion HOW DO I FEEL
I have pain in my back.	Oh no, my cancer is back.	Scared Anxious

Is the thought in B, realistic or helpful? _____

What can you say to yourself in the future?

COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING: ABC WORKSHEET EXAMPLE

A Activating Event WHAT HAPPEN	B Belief/Thought WHAT AM I THINKING	C Consequence/ Emotion HOW DO I FEEL
I have pain in my back.	Oh no, my cancer is back.	Scared Anxious

Is the thought in B, realistic or helpful?

- No, it's not realistic because I had breast cancer and my recent scans so no signs of cancer. It is not helpful to think every pain I feel is cancer – because it makes me anxious.

What can you say to yourself in the future?

- My back pain is due to my exercise and not a symptoms of anything more.

What Are the Key Principles of Narrative Therapy?



Interpretation of experiences is done through language



Individuals can have different realities of the same experience



Narrative can help us make sense of our experiences

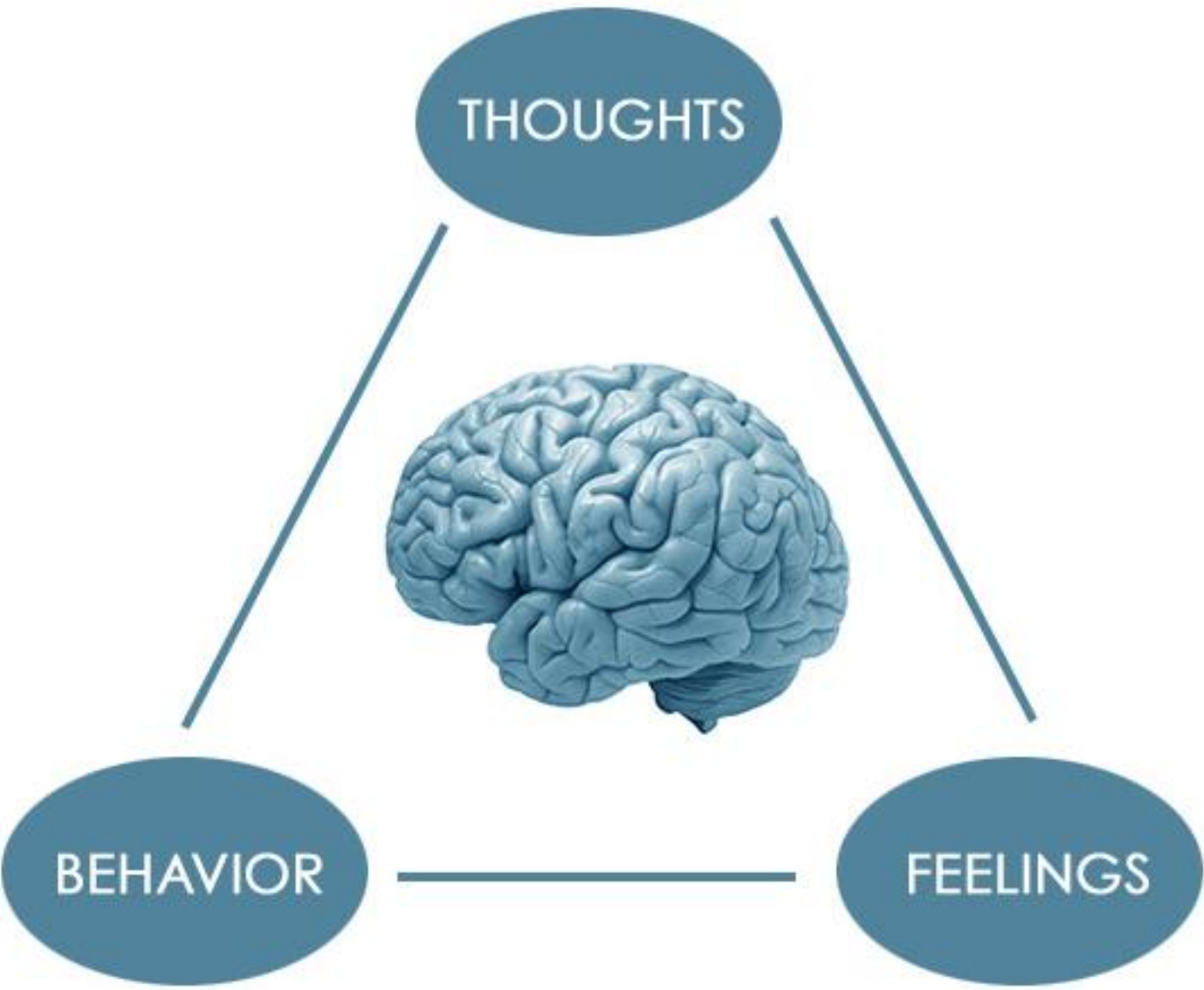


Interactions with others impacts how we experience reality

6/5/2023

LANGUAGE/STORIES MATTERS BECAUSE IT MAKES US FEEL

- Think about your own cancer journey, what is the story to tell yourself (others)?
- If the story is filled with extreme language – it might be useful to write the narrative – change the story and to find some positives statements to tell yourself.
- Researchers found a positive relation between psychological health and a greater number of “redemption episodes” (going from an emotionally negative life event to an emotionally positive one) as well as fewer negative emotional expressions.



COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT)

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy



BEHAVIORS

the way in which someone conducts oneself or behaves



MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

“Awareness that emerges through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment”

(Kabat-Zinn, 2003)



KEY ELEMENTS TO MINDFULNESS

Attention



```
graph TD; A[Attention] --> B[Present Moment]; B --> C[On Purpose]; C --> D[Non-judgementalness]
```

Present Moment

On Purpose

Non-judgementalness



FORMAL PRACTICE

- The formal mindfulness meditation practice can be practiced as sitting meditation, walking meditation, lying down meditation (body scan) and as mindful yoga. The length of the practice is up to each practitioner, most often it ranges between 10 and 45 minutes per day.
- Research suggest that frequency of formal practice is important.

INFORMAL PRACTICE

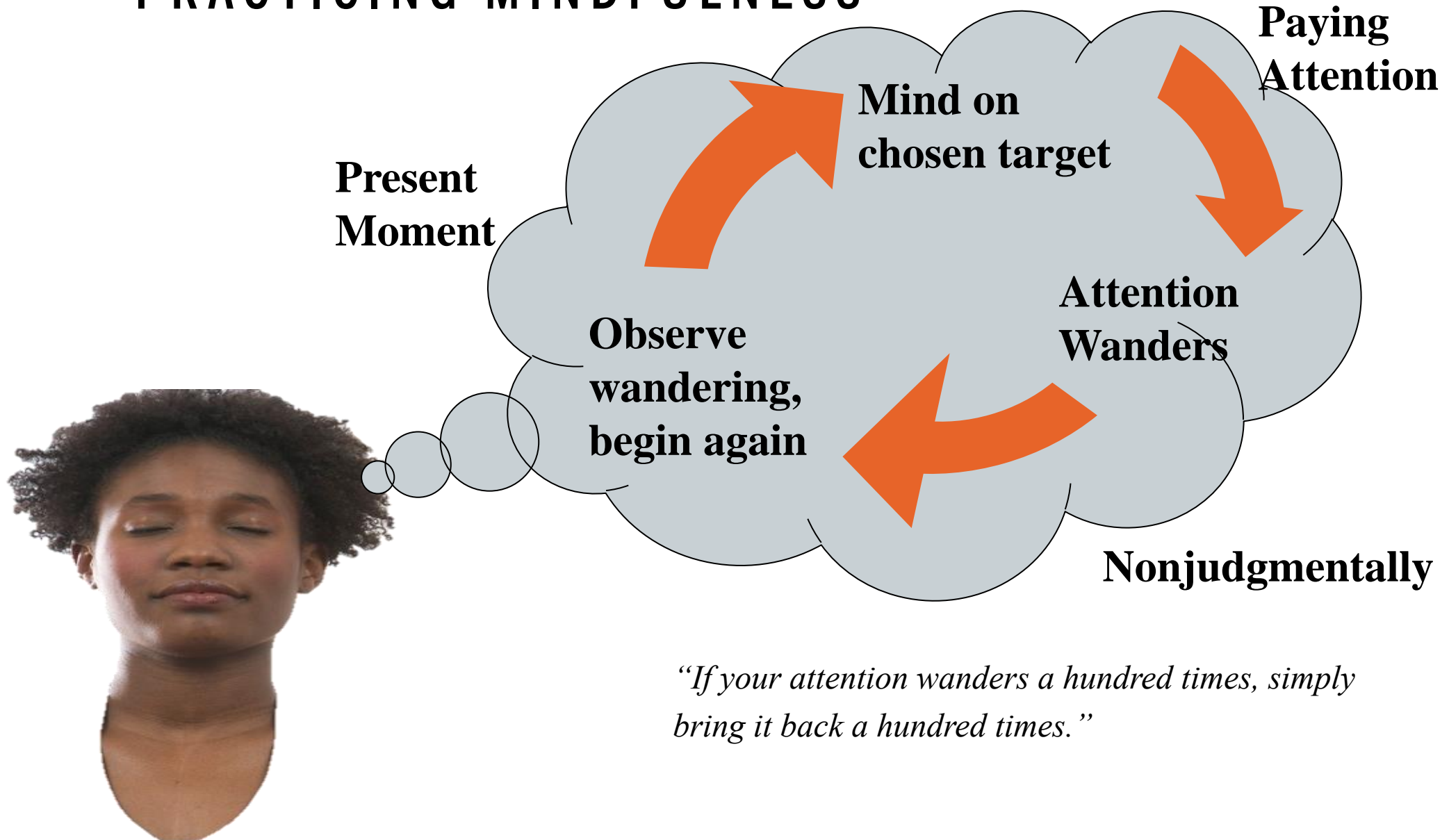
- Everyday mindfulness
- When we practice mindfulness in a more informal way we are noticing our experience from moment to moment and bringing our attention to one thing as many times as we can throughout the day.
- Activities including gardening, painting, washing dishes, etc.



ish Washing
MEDITATION



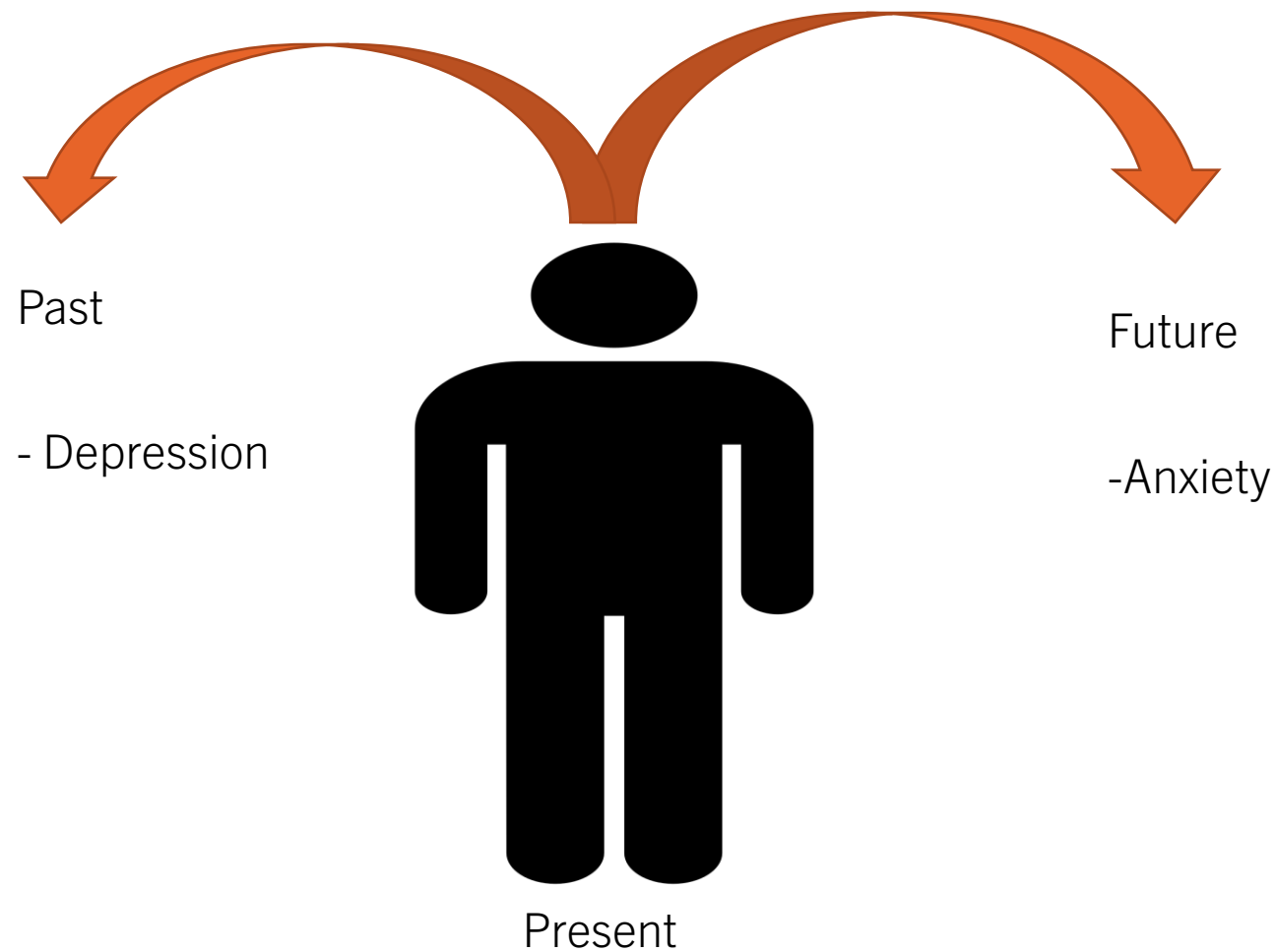
PRACTICING MINDFULNESS



“If your attention wanders a hundred times, simply bring it back a hundred times.”

**WHY DOES
MINDFULNESS
WORK?**

MINDFULNESS MODEL OF MENTAL HEALTH





ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/neubiorev

Review

Is meditation associated with altered brain structure? A systematic review and meta-analysis of morphometric neuroimaging in meditation practitioners

Kieran C.R. Fox^{a,*}, Savannah Nijeboer^a, Matthew L. Dixon^a, James L. Floman^b,
Melissa Ellamil^a, Samuel P. Rumak^a, Peter Sedlmeier^c, Kalina Christoff^{a,d}

^a Department of Psychology, University of British Columbia, 2136 West Mall, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z4, Canada

^b Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education, University of British Columbia, 2125 Main Mall, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z4, Canada

^c Institut für Psychologie, Technische Universität Chemnitz, 43 Wilhelm-Raabe Street, Chemnitz, Germany

^d Brain Research Centre, University of British Columbia, 2211 Wesbrook Mall, Vancouver, BC V6T 2B5, Canada

NEUROSCIENCE SUPPORTS MINDFULNESS PRACTICES

These 8 regions of the brain included:

- Rostrolateral prefrontal cortex
- Sensory cortices
- Insular cortex
- Hippocampus
- Anterior cingulate cortex
- Mid-cingulate cortex
- Superior longitudinal fasciculus
- Corpus callosum

Consistent changes were seen across all studies found the following:

- Changes in brain density
- Changes in thickness of brain tissue
- An increase in the number of neurons, fibers, and glia in a given region
- Changes in cortical surface area
- Changes in white matter fiber density

NEUROLOGICAL CHANGES = INCREASED COGNITIVE ABILITIES

The meta-analyses and supporting research suggests through a sustained meditation practice an individual can have neurological changes (neuroplasticity) over time which results in cognitive changes (cognitive flexibility) in several domains of person's life including:



Improve the quality of attention.



Increase greater empathy and compassion for self and others.



Optimization of mental health (decreases in anxiety, depression, and PTSD symptoms).



Decrease perceived stress.



Positive impact on the brain and immune system.



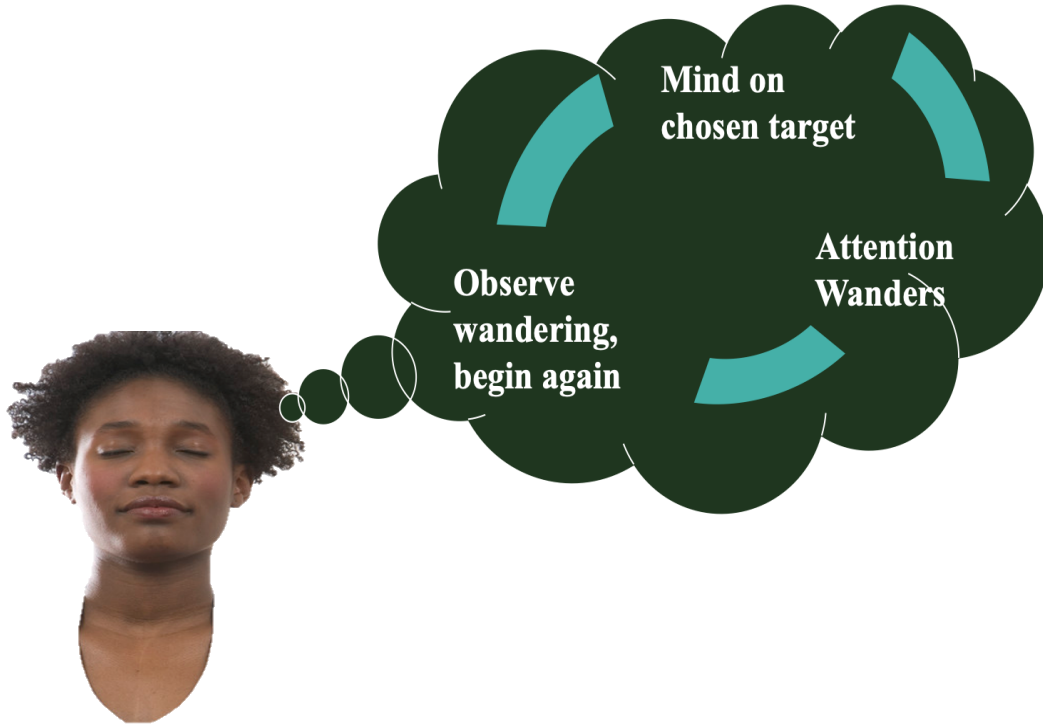
Help with chronic pain.



Help overcome insomnia.



Help with caregiver burnout healthcare providers may face.



**MINDFULNESS IS EXERCISE FOR YOUR
BRAIN
AND REPETITION IS THE KEY**



Developing
Greater
**Mind
Body**
Awareness

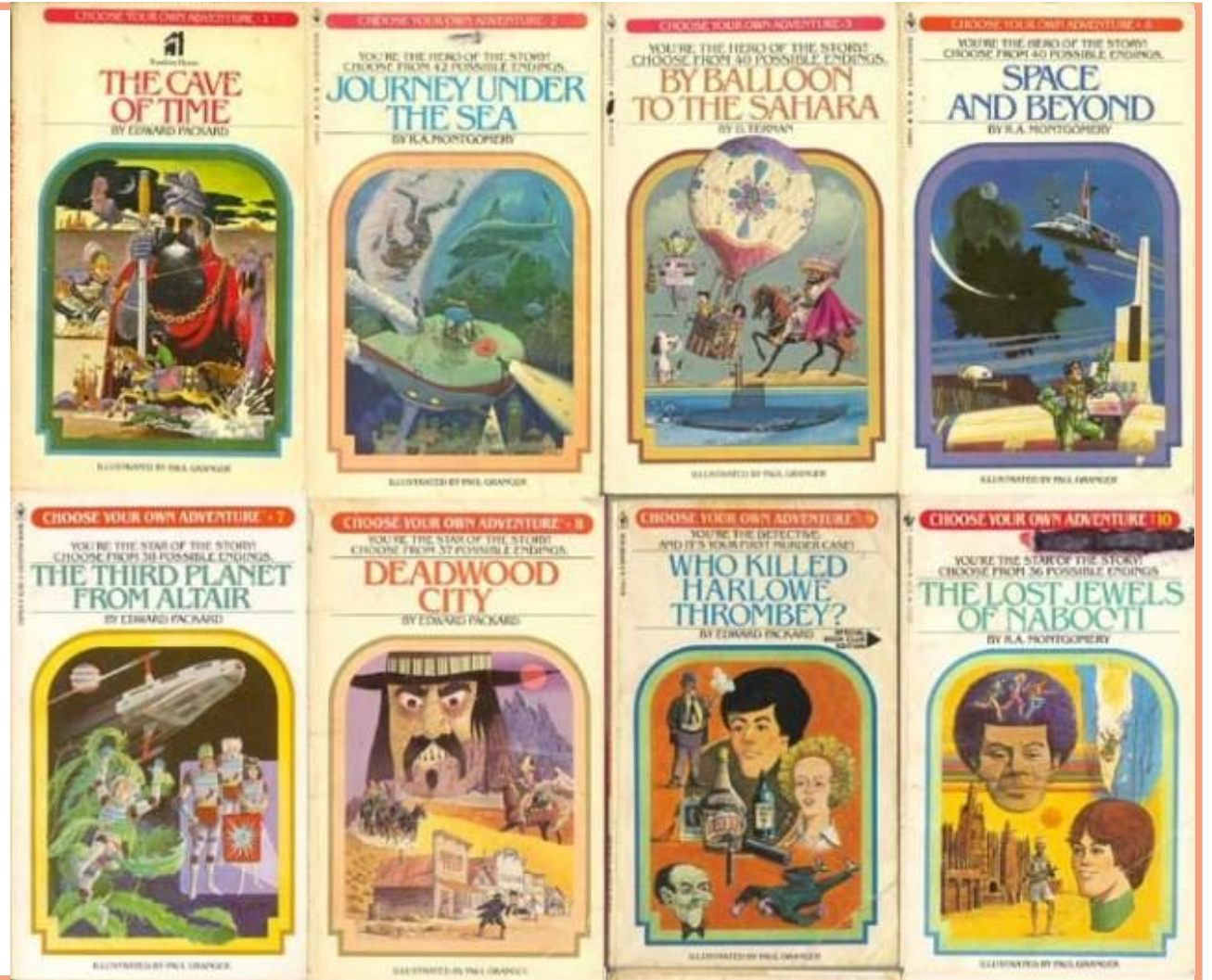


UCLA MINDFULNESS AWARENESS CENTER (MARC)

[HTTPS://WWW.UCLAHEALTH.ORG/MARC/](https://www.uclahealth.org/marc/)

SUMMARY

- Cancer recovery is not a one size fits all approach.
- Focusing your attention on the things under your control helps reduce anxiety.
- Choosing behaviors that help you feel a sense of completion or doing the things you love can improve your mood.
- Monitor your thoughts. Change thoughts to have realistic and helpful thoughts to improve your mood.



A rectangular wooden block with a hole on the left side, through which a black string is threaded. The block is placed on a wooden surface. The background is filled with vibrant green leaves, some in sharp focus and others blurred. The text 'Thank you!' is written in a black, cursive font on the front of the block.

Thank
you!