

Navigating the survivorship Abyss:



Your map for
emotional healing
and thriving.

Harmony Hill
& ORION
COMMUNITY OF HEALING

Bonnie A. McGregor, Ph.D.

Clinical Research Director Harmony Hill

Founder and Program Director Orion Center for Integrative Medicine

You are not alone

Over 2 million people will be newly
diagnoses with cancer in 2024

The number of cancer survivors
is increasing

4 million deaths have been
averted between 1991 and
2021

The Abyss!



Survivorship comes at a price

- Changes in physical appearance and functioning
- Fatigue
- Cognitive difficulties
- Foreshortened future/ fear of recurrence
- Pain
- Changes in sexual functioning
- Altered financial status
- Change in social relationships

The Emotional Cost

- $\geq 30\%$ report clinically significant distress
- Depression rates 3 times higher than the general population (58% report sx)
- 34% report clinically significant anxiety
- Those with early childhood trauma or multiple concurrent life events more vulnerable to emotional difficulties.

Survivorship Stages and Challenges

Fear of Recurrence

Depressive sx

Fatigue

Cognitive difficulties

Pain

Cancer Spec. Sequelae

Finding Benefit

Return to work

Fear of Recurrence/Anxiety

Depressive sx

Fatigue

Cognitive difficulties

Pain

Cancer Spec. Sequelae

Finding Benefit

Fear of Recurrence/Anxiety

Fatigue

Cognitive difficulties

Pain

Cancer Spec. Sequelae

Finding Benefit

Re-entry

Early survivorship

Long term survivorship

Treatment
Completion

2 years
After diagnosis

5 years
After diagnosis

Psychological distress occurs across the cancer continuum

- Before diagnosis among those at increased risk due to family history
- Diagnosis and Treatment
- Immediately post treatment
- Survivorship

Effects of chronic stress

- Increased vulnerability to common cold
- Slower wound healing
- General decrements in immune function
- High blood pressure and high cholesterol
- Heart disease
- Weight gain (central fat storage)
- Poor control of blood sugar among diabetics
- Poor health behaviors (e.g., diet, smoking, no exercise)
- Shortened telomeres and telomerase activity
- DNA damage and poor repair
- Increased VEGF production and vascularization of tumor cells
- Increased rates of tumor cell metastases
- Resistance to chemotherapy

Effects of chronic stress



Before work

After work

Bio Behavioral cancer risk factors

- Increased vulnerability to common cold
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How stressed are you right now?



Take a deep breath...

How stressed are you right now?



The map for emotional healing and thriving



Psychological Interventions

- Reduce distress, anxiety, depressed mood
- Improve social support
- Enhance quality of life
- Enhance emotional growth
- Improve immune function
- May improve survival

Does anyone want to learn a few stress management and coping techniques?

Living SMART: for cancer survivors



1. STRESS



2. AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS



3. RATIONAL THOUGHT



4. ACT



5. COPING



6. SOCIAL SUPPORT



7. COMMUNICATION



8. ANGER



9. LIFE GOALS



10. WRAP UP

- Based on an empirically validated 10-week program for breast cancer survivors.
- Mindfulness enhanced cognitive coping strategies, including fear of recurrence.
- Training in 10 different relaxation exercises.

What is stress?

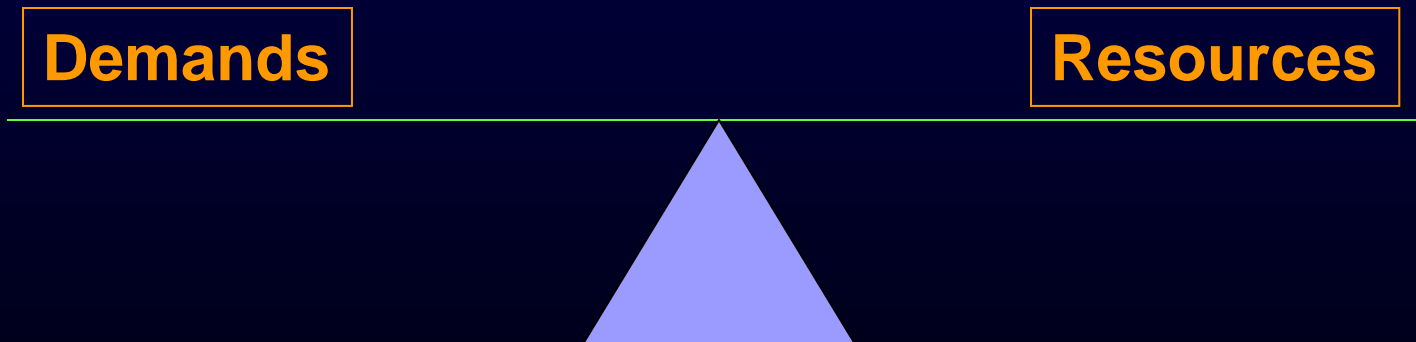
What is stress?

The physical, mental, or emotional tension experienced in reaction to an event.



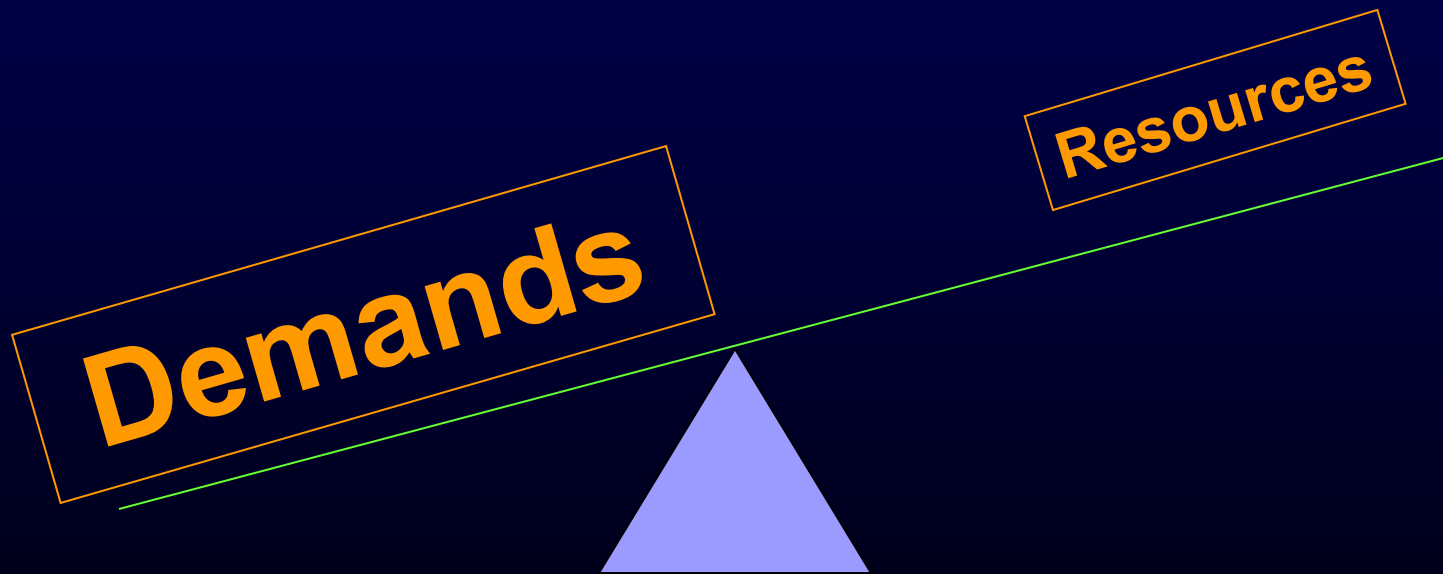
What is stress?

- Typically experienced when we perceive demands exceeding our resources



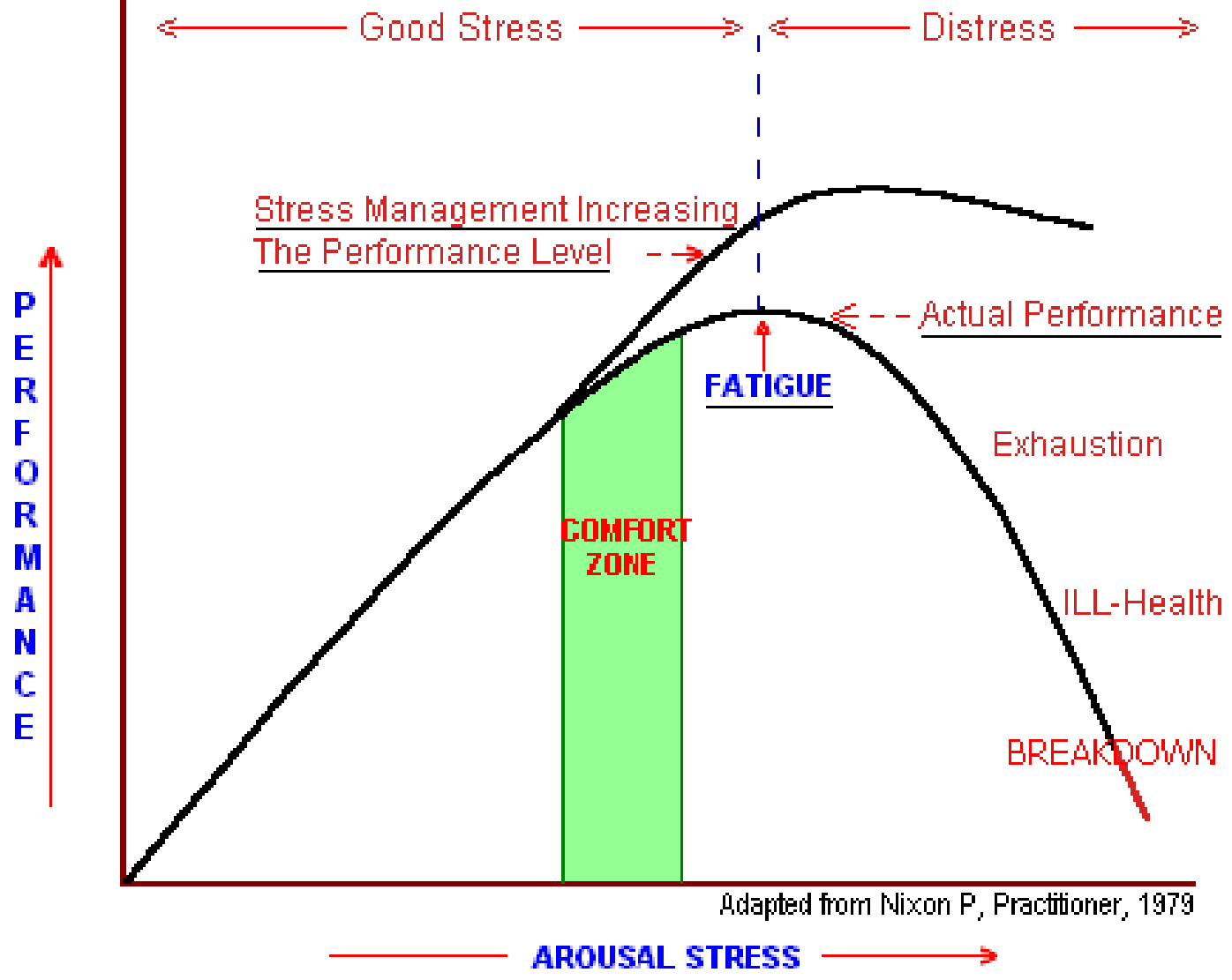
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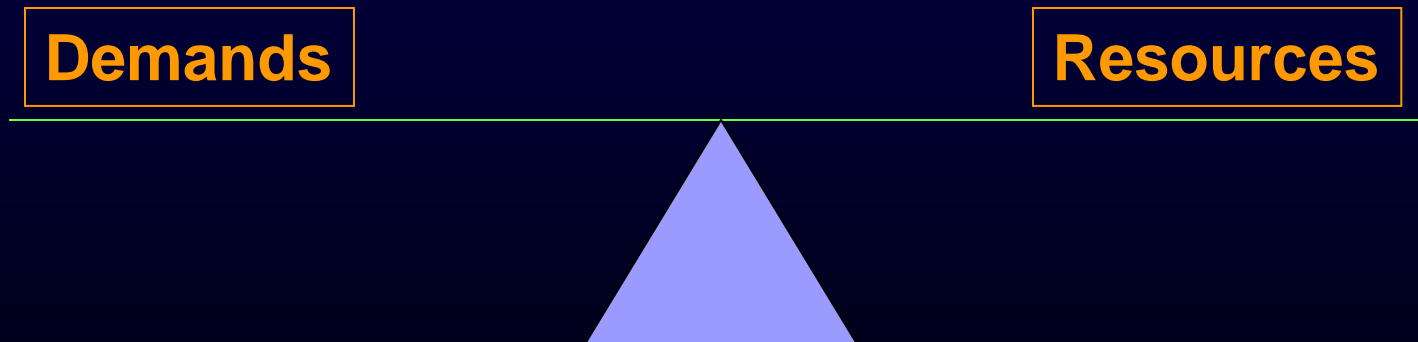
THE STRESS RESPONSE CURVE



Adapted from Nixon P, Practitioner, 1979

How can we manage stress?

- Decrease perceived demands
- Increase perceived resources



How can we manage stress?

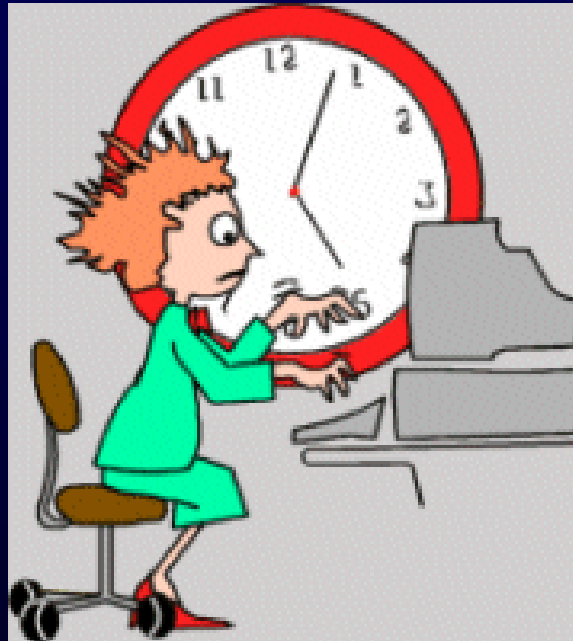
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"Try these relaxation methods. If they don't work, I'll prescribe a tranquilizer dart."

step 1. Increase Awareness:



How do you know when you are stressed?

Symptoms of stress

Hostility

Resentment

Headaches

Backaches

Ulcers

Muscle Spasms

Sleeping Difficulties

Depression

Drinking/Drug Use

Irritability

Fears

Neck Aches

Anger

Irritable Bowel

Muscle Tension

Indigestion

Constipation

Poor Concentration

Obesity

Low Self Esteem

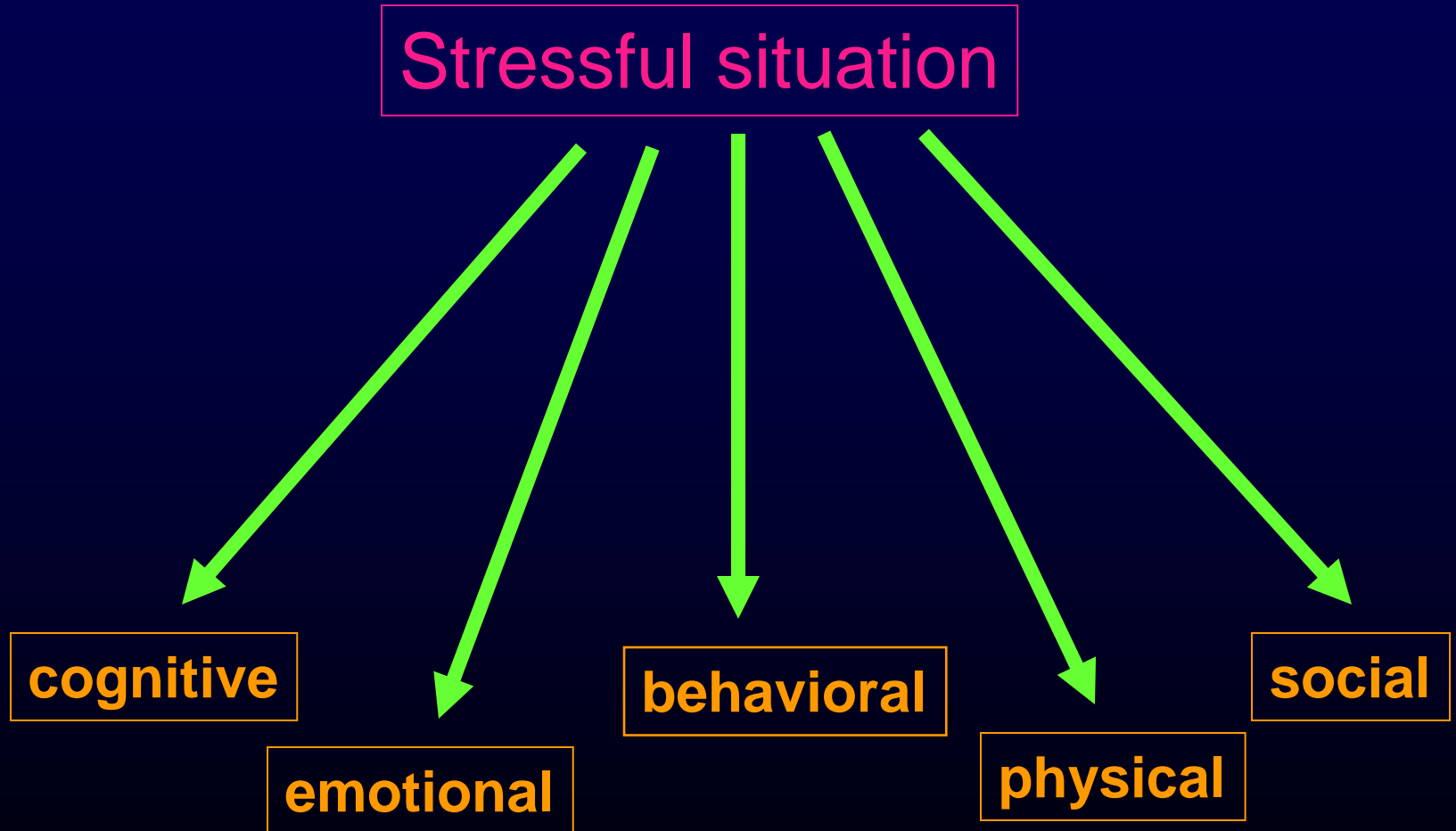
Chronic Diarrhea

Insomnia

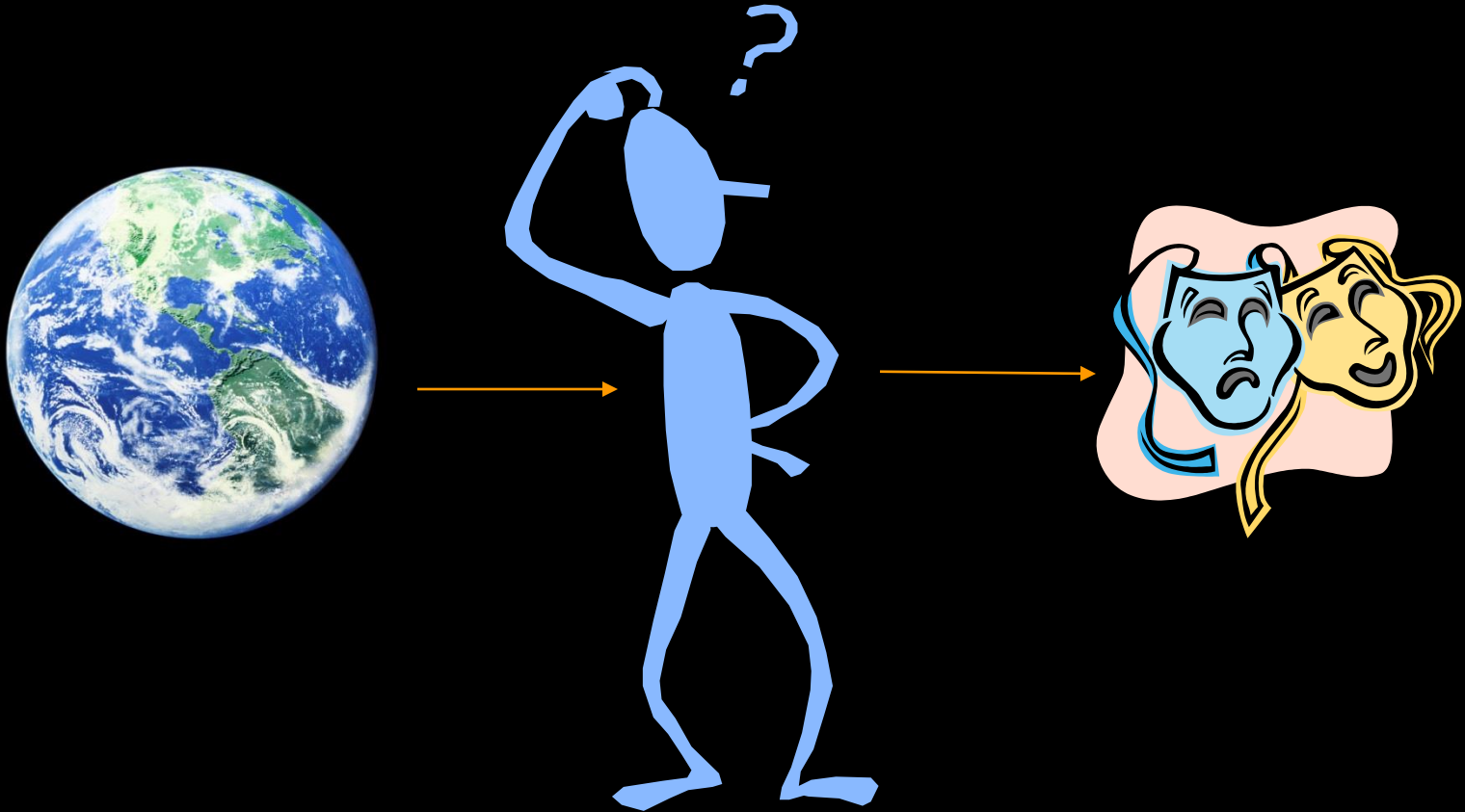
Physical Weakness

Withdrawal

Symptoms of stress

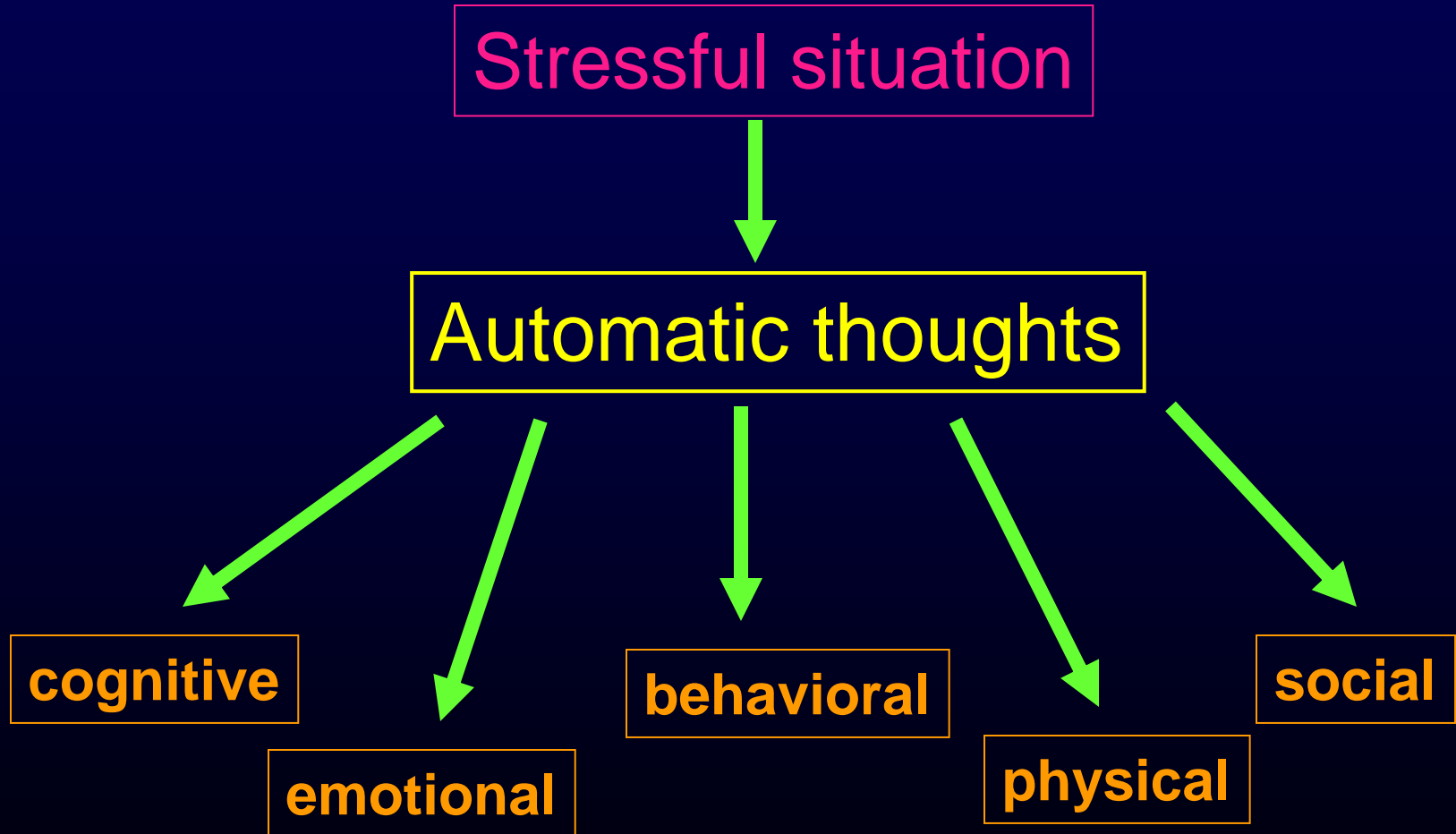


Thoughts determine feelings

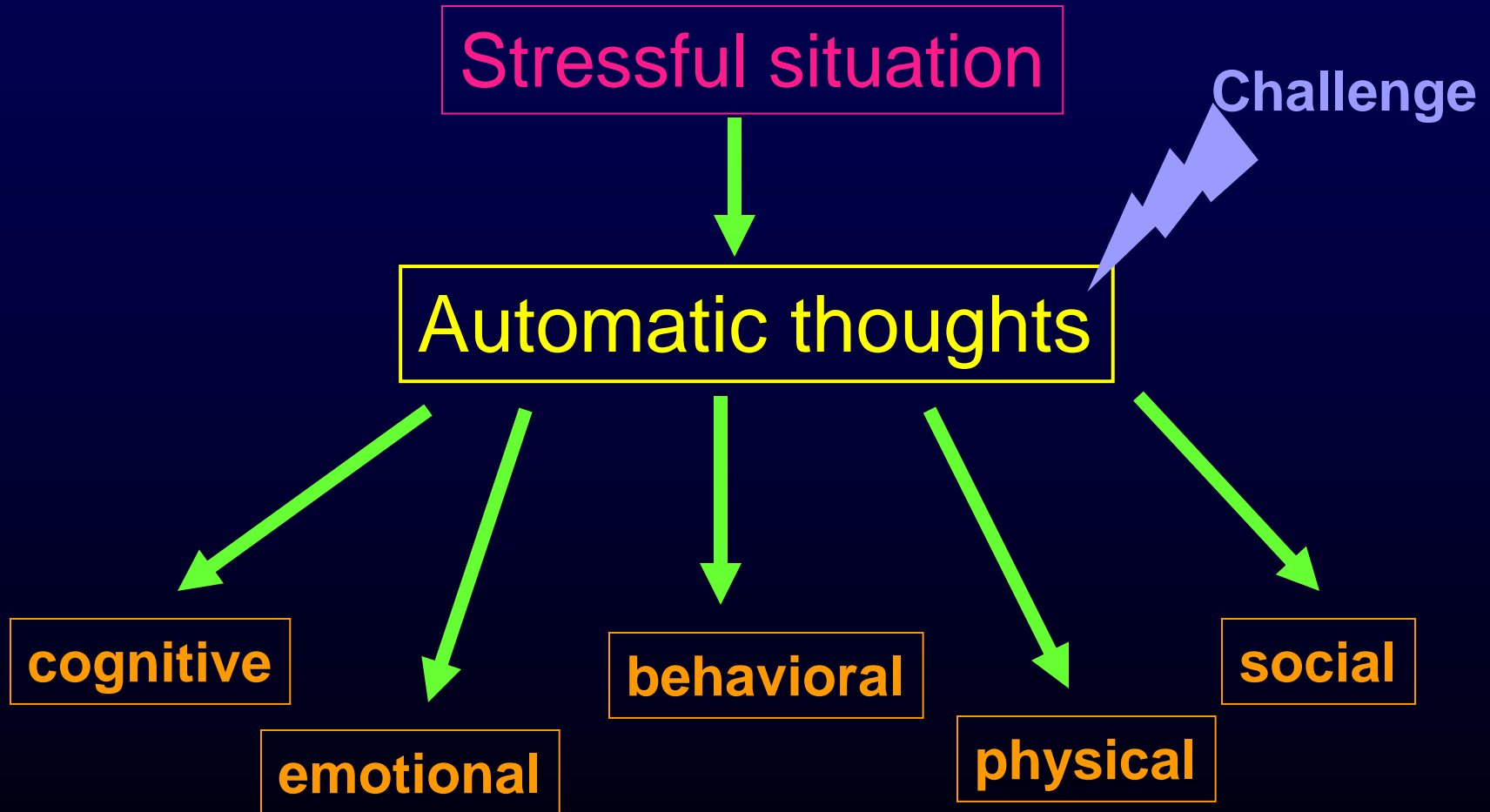


Imagine a lemon

Symptoms of stress



Symptoms of stress



Step 3: Coping with stress

- Problem focused coping
 - Ask for help
 - Get more information
- Emotion focused coping
 - Talk to a friend
 - Relaxation practice



Dark chocolate helps ease emotional stress



J. Proteome Res., Article ASAP
DOI: 10.1021/pr900607v
Publication Date (Web): October 7, 2009
Copyright © 2009 American Chemical Society

Coping with stress

- Exercise
- Yoga
- Social support
- Meditation



YOUR STRESS LEVEL IS HIGH.
FOLLOW ME TO THE LAB...



Coping with stress

5 a day:

- Gratitude
- “Wins”



Mindfulness and Stress

- Staying present in the moment reduces stress
- Living in the past or future brings the past and future demands into the present – adding to your perception of stress in this moment
- Planning is good, but when you plan, just plan, then execute your plan moment by moment.

Coping w Fear of Recurrence

- Every cancer survivor experiences this.
- Worse in the days or weeks before a scan.
- 1.) Name it.
- 2.) Thank it.
- 3.) Put it in the back seat.
- 4.) Head toward something you value, or something that gives your life meaning.
- You can move forward in life with you at the wheel and with fear of recurrence in the back seat.



Your compass

- What do I want?
- What do I need?
- What is important to me?
- What gives my life meaning?
- What do I value?



We can help!

Psychotherapy



Acupuncture



Nutrition

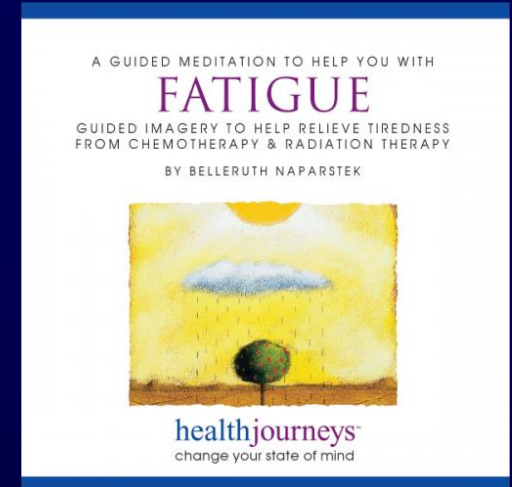
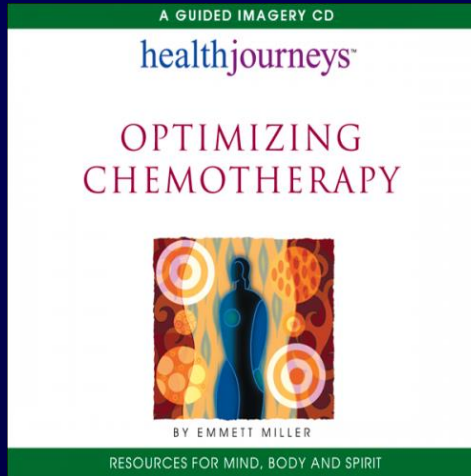
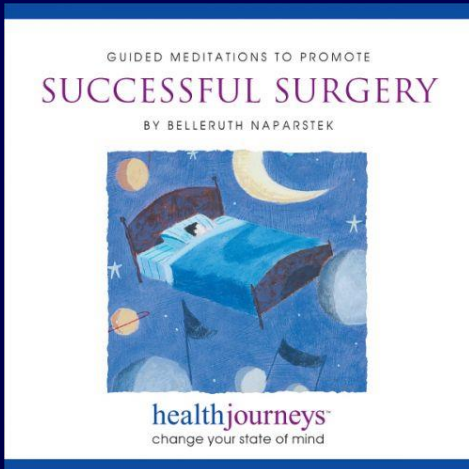


Oncology
Massage*

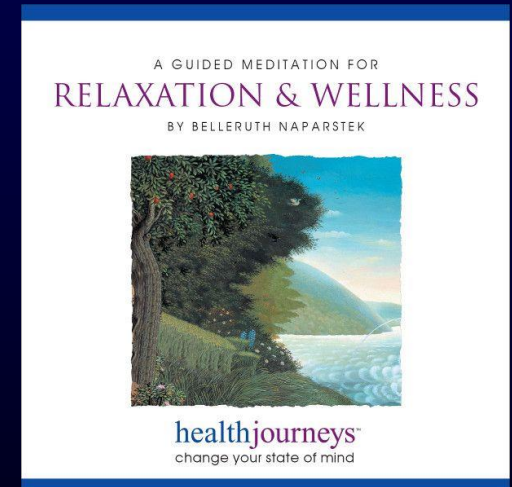
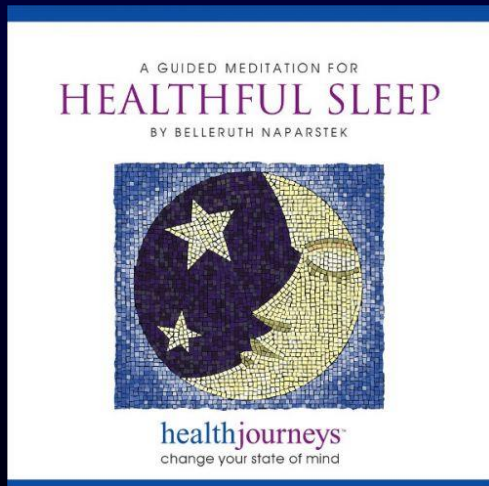


Reiki /
Energy Medicine

<https://www.orionskywellness.org/>



Guided Imagery can help

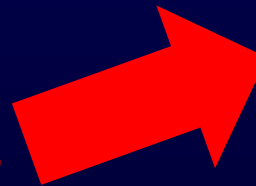


<https://www.healthjourneys.com>

Living SMART: for cancer survivors

- Next session Sept 9 – Nov 18
- Group meets Mondays from 3-5 via zoom
- Enrollment limited to 8.

Register here



- 11, 2 hour sessions
- Workbook
- 11 relaxation recordings



What participants have said:

- “I didn’t know I needed this workshop... but I did!”
- “Living SMART has been a game changer for me!”
- I don’t feel alone anymore.
- “I think every cancer patient take this course.”



Questions?
...or guided relaxation?

<http://www.HarmonyHill.org>