



## HEALTHCARE WORKERS CARE NETWORK

Caring for the Carers by the Carers



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## Website

[healthcareworkerscarenetwork.org.za](http://healthcareworkerscarenetwork.org.za)

Free confidential individual counselling sessions  
available for all healthcare workers.





HEALTHCARE WORKERS  
**CARE NETWORK**

Caring for the Carers by the Carers

# THE MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS OF HEALTH CARE WORKERS DURING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC

DR ANTOINETTE MIRIC (PSYCHIATRIST)

[WWW.HEALTHCAREWORKERSCARENETWORK.ORG.ZA](http://WWW.HEALTHCAREWORKERSCARENETWORK.ORG.ZA)



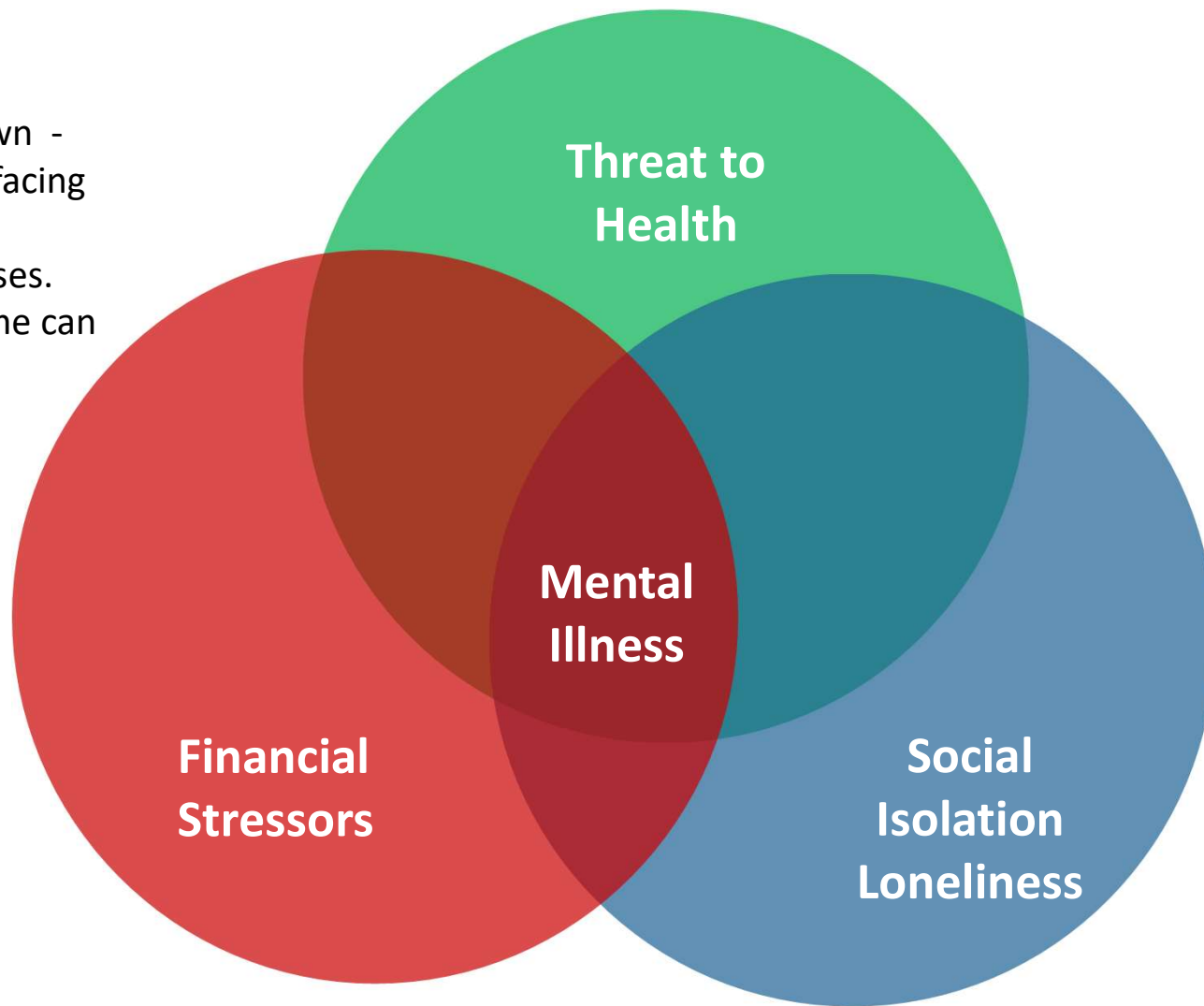
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## HOW IS THIS PANDEMIC TRAUMATIC FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS?

- Trauma is often associated with something overtly violent, such as a car accident or a shooting.
- *A situation is traumatic when “violates” familiar expectations about someone’s life and world, sending them into a “state of extreme confusion and uncertainty.” - Ciano Aydin*
- *“In the case of this pandemic, prolonged uncertainty is compounded by the moral anguish health care professionals face when they do not have adequate resources to treat critically ill patients”*  
Wendy Dean (psychiatrist and co-founder of the nonprofit Moral Injury of Healthcare)



Due to the lockdown - many families are facing major economic challenges, job losses. HCW- loss of income can be significant .



New infectious agent – direct threat to health and life. No vaccine yet .



HCW – from their colleagues and patients  
Social distancing requirements  
Lack of personal interaction



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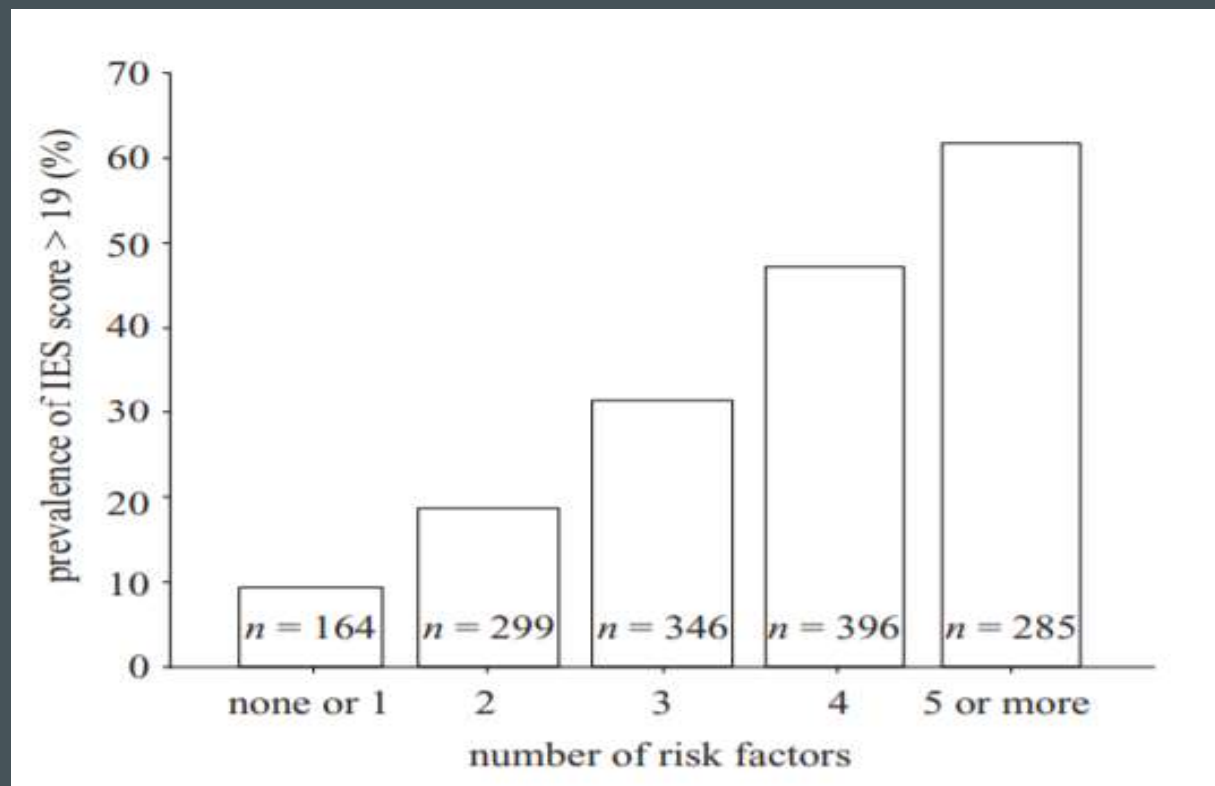
## PREVALENCE STUDIES OF HEALTHCARE WORKERS IN PREVIOUS VIRAL OUTBREAKS – SARS 2002/2003



- Beijing hospital healthcare workers , n = 549
- 10 % in the 3 years afterwards had PTSS symptoms
- 5 % still had symptoms at 3 years related to the stress of the SARS epidemic
- Major stressors
  - Healthcare workers who were quarantined
  - Healthcare workers in close contact with a SARS infected patient
  - Close family member/ friend affected



## PREVALENCE STUDIES OF HEALTHCARE WORKERS IN PREVIOUS VIRAL OUTBREAKS – SARS 2002/2003



Canadian Healthcare Workers in Toronto 2-3 months after SARS

n= 1557

- PTSS scores taken 2-3 months after event – 36 % highly traumatized.

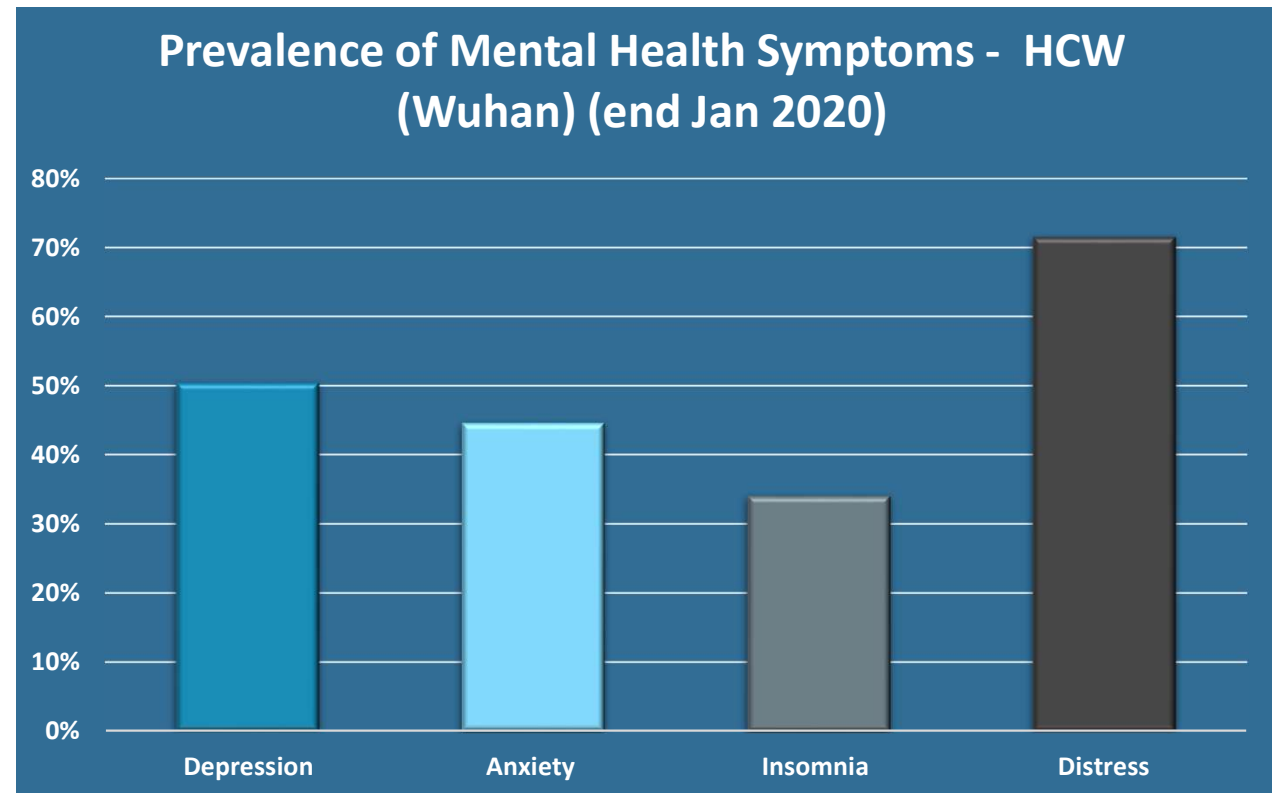
Risk factors which increased PTSS score

- Exposure to Virus
- HCW who are parents
- Nurse
- Society Rejection
- Behavioural Avoidance
- Attachment Insecurity



## PREVALENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH SYMPTOMS: HCW (WUHAN) (END JAN 2020)

- Cross sectional /Hospital based survey
- N = 1257
- Hospital Based Nurses and Doctors
- Nurses = 60.8%
- Doctors = 39.2 %
- Age = >65 % between 26- 40 years old
- Female = 76.5%



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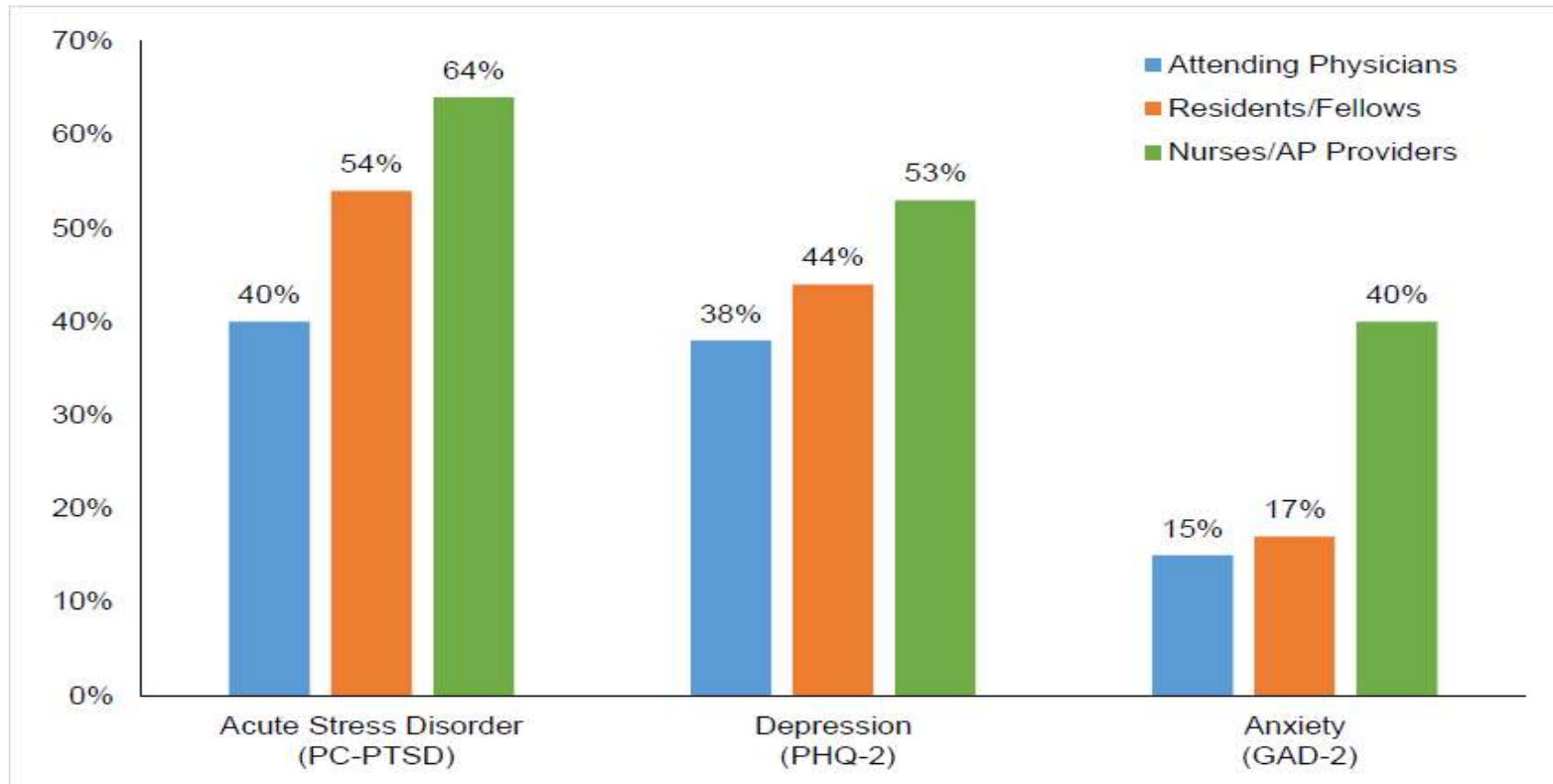
## COVID-19 HEALTHCARE PROVIDER STUDY – NEW YORK

- Healthcare workers – Wide Range, all working in a Tertiary Centre in NY
- N = 657 (response rate 13.7%)
- These are the first results of these Healthcare Workers in New York from the COVID-19 Healthcare Provider Study
- In Mid April the number of COVID19 Cases in New York were > 230 000
- NY(mid April) >13 000 deaths.





## COVID-19 HEALTHCARE PROVIDER STUDY – NEW YORK



PC-PTSD – Primary Care Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Screen; PHQ-2 = Patient Health Questionnaire-2  
GAD-2 = 2 Item Generalized Anxiety Disorder scale

Scheter A Et Al. Psychological Distress, Coping Behaviors, And Preferences For Support Among New York Healthcare Workers During The COVID-19 Pandemic, Gen Hosp Psych, June 2020 (Preprint)



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## COMMON FACTORS ACROSS ALL STUDIES

- Females are more likely to experience mental health difficulties
- Nurses are affected more than doctors
- Younger less experienced healthcare workers are more affected
- Healthcare workers on the frontline – struggle more



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## COMMON FACTORS ACROSS ALL STUDIES

- Healthcare workers experience more signs of significant distress when
  - A colleague is unwell or hospitalised
  - A colleague passes away
  - A colleague is in quarantine
- Healthcare workers are more prone to depression if they are
  - Directly exposed to the virus
  - Are infected with the virus



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## WHY WORRY ABOUT THE MENTAL HEALTH OF SOUTH AFRICAN HEALTH CARE WORKERS?

1

We have very limited numbers of healthcare workers in comparison to the population of SA

2

We need a emotionally strong working healthcare work force

3

South African health care workers were already struggling before this pandemic

4

Research from around the world indicates that Healthcare workers are struggling emotionally from this pandemic



## PRIOR TO THIS PANDEMIC

- Mental Health of Health Care workers in South Africa prior to this pandemic was already worrying.
- High rates of Burnout – most commonly researched topic

- 2019 Study, SAMJ , *C Zeijlemaker et al*
- Looked at 170 registrars in Clinical Medicine.
- 84 % rate burnout – high Emotional exhaustion and Depersonalization scores
- Highest in emergency medicine registrars and Anesthetists
- 2015, Van der Walt et al, SAJAA, Anesthetists – public and private sector. –40% public and around 20 % pvt high levels of emotional exhaustion / burnout
- Consistently South African studies compared to more developed health care systems show high levels of burnout



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## CHALLENGES FACING HCW

Traumatic  
Exposure

insufficient PPE, risk of infection and infecting loved ones

Moral Injury

psychological distress that results from actions or the lack of them, which violates someone's moral or ethical code

Workplace  
Stress

challenges of acquiring PPE, of wearing PPE for long periods of time, of making life or death decisions, long work hours

Home Stress

family and children at home – their anxieties, their needs, financial stresses



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## WITHOUT AN HEALTHCARE ARMY WE CANNOT WIN THE WAR

Psychological Preparation and Crisis Intervention plays a pivotal role in the prevention of chronic mental health difficulties.

Good physical and mental health are important to manage the intense and persistent workload. We are in a marathon relay race.

is useful to be aware of which psychological factors have been shown to improve or worsen mental health outcomes.



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FACTORS THAT  
INCREASE RISK OF  
ADVERSE  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
OUTCOMES



Individual factors : Workplace



Personal factors



Service factors





# FACTORS THAT INCREASE RISK OF ADVERSE PSYCHOLOGICAL OUTCOMES



## INDIVIDUAL WORKPLACE

- Contact with COVID-19 positive patients
- Forced redeployment
- Highest in Nurses
- Less experience
- Lower education level
- Part time workers



## WORKPLACE

- **Perceived lack** of employer support
- **Perceived lack** of adequacy of training
- Lack of confidence in infection control
- No compensation for staff by organization
- Societal stigma against hospital workers



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## FACTORS THAT INCREASE RISK OF ADVERSE PSYCHOLOGICAL OUTCOMES



### PERSONAL

- Younger, single females with children at home
- Infected family member
- Lower household income
- Comorbid health conditions or mental condition
- Lower perceived personal self-efficacy
- History of psychological distress
- History of mental health disorders, or substance

misuse



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# UNDERSTANDING STRESS AND STRESS RESILIENCE

Prof Rita Thom



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## BAD STRESS VS STRESS RESILIENCE

- Stress is basic to our everyday survival and our responses help us prepare and face challenges
- We are and will continue to experience high levels of stress in the months to come
- We therefore need to monitor our stress levels and patterns wisely



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## DON'T BE AFRAID OF STRESS

Stress is a demand on one or more of our body's physiological systems

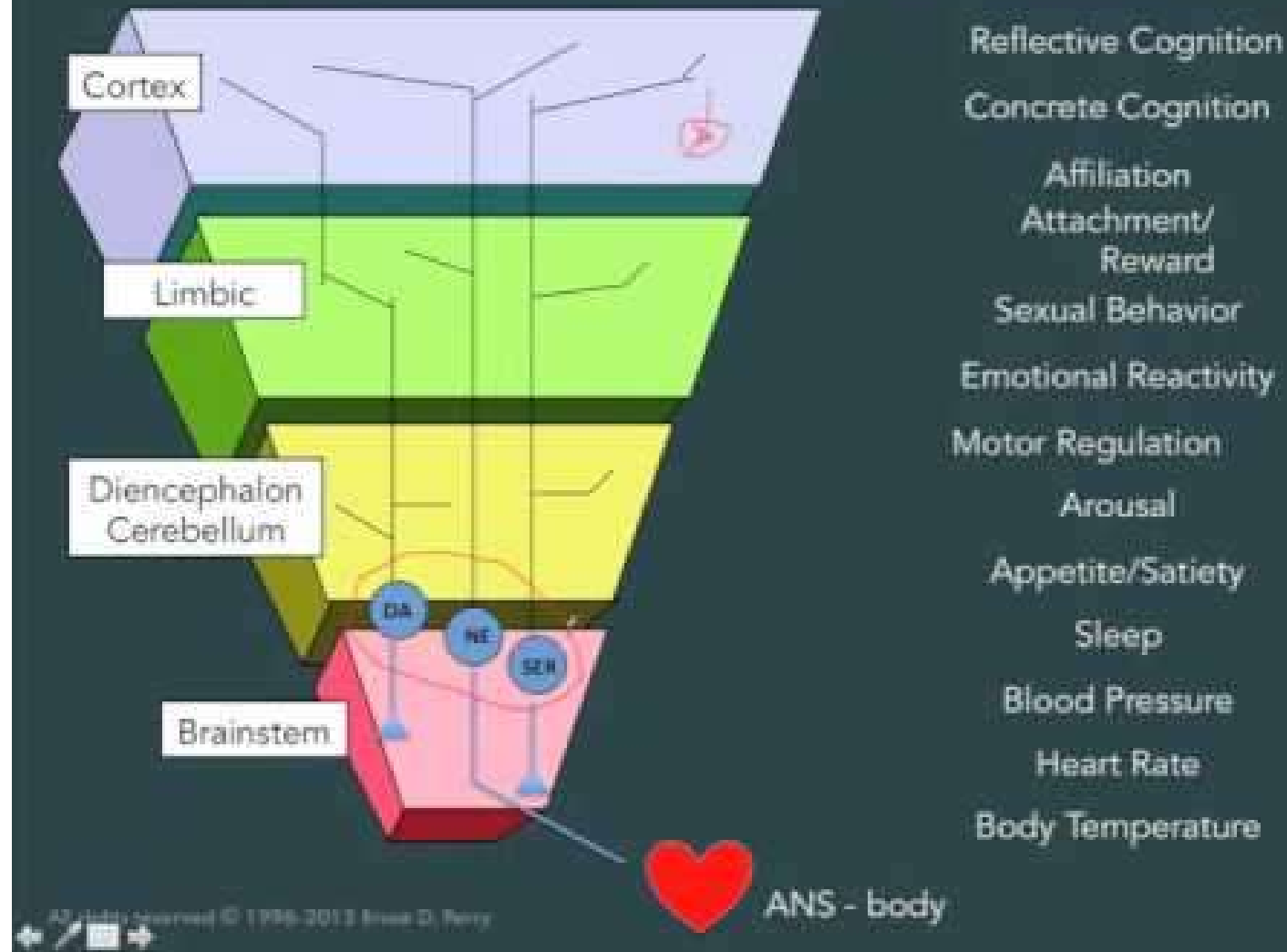
Our body has a host of stress response capabilities which keep us in equilibrium

It is especially important to keep a close eye on what **pattern of stress** you are experiencing and keep it in equilibrium during this stressful time during the pandemic.

It is important to recognise what your levels of stress are and respond appropriately.

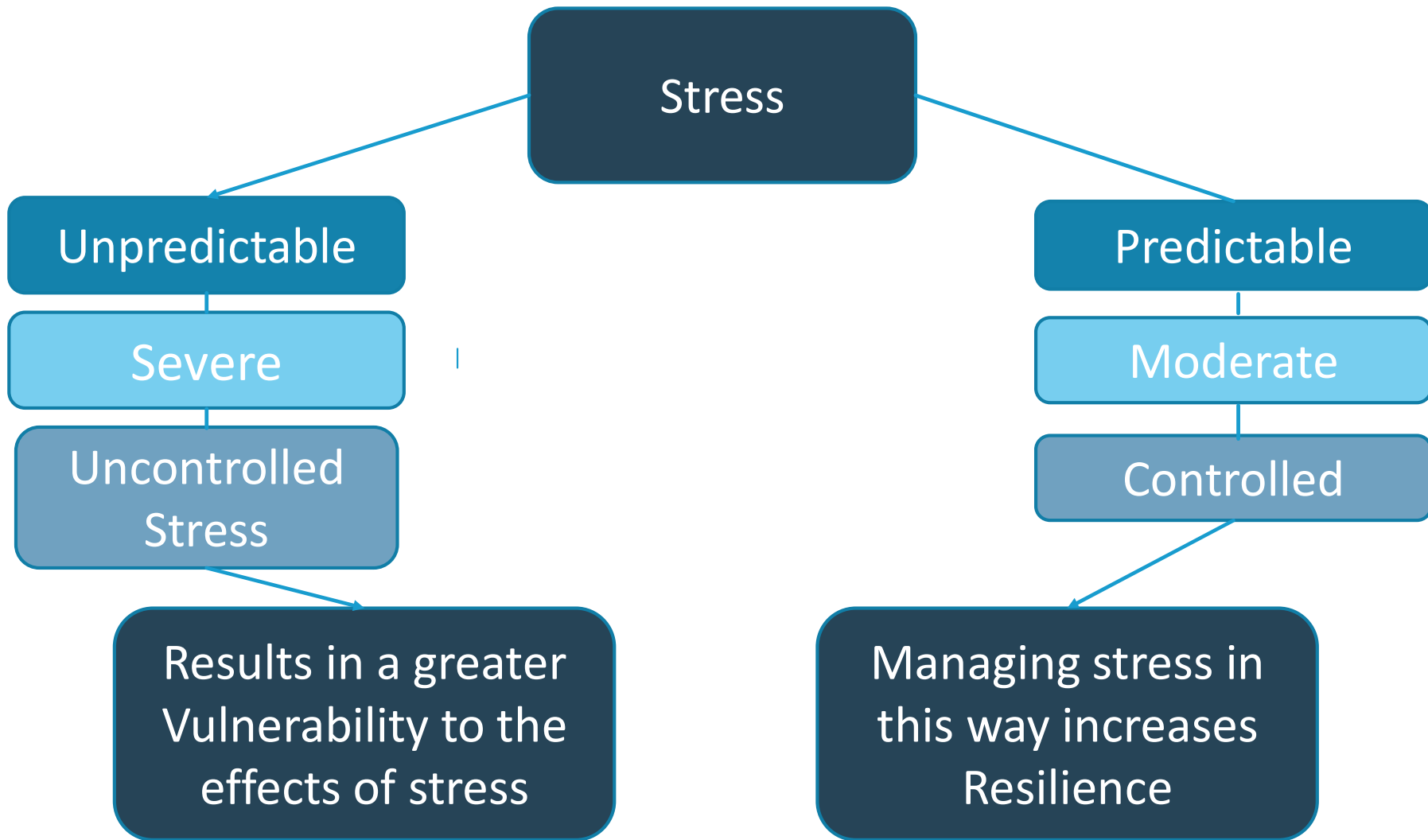


## Efferent Distribution of Primary Regulatory Networks

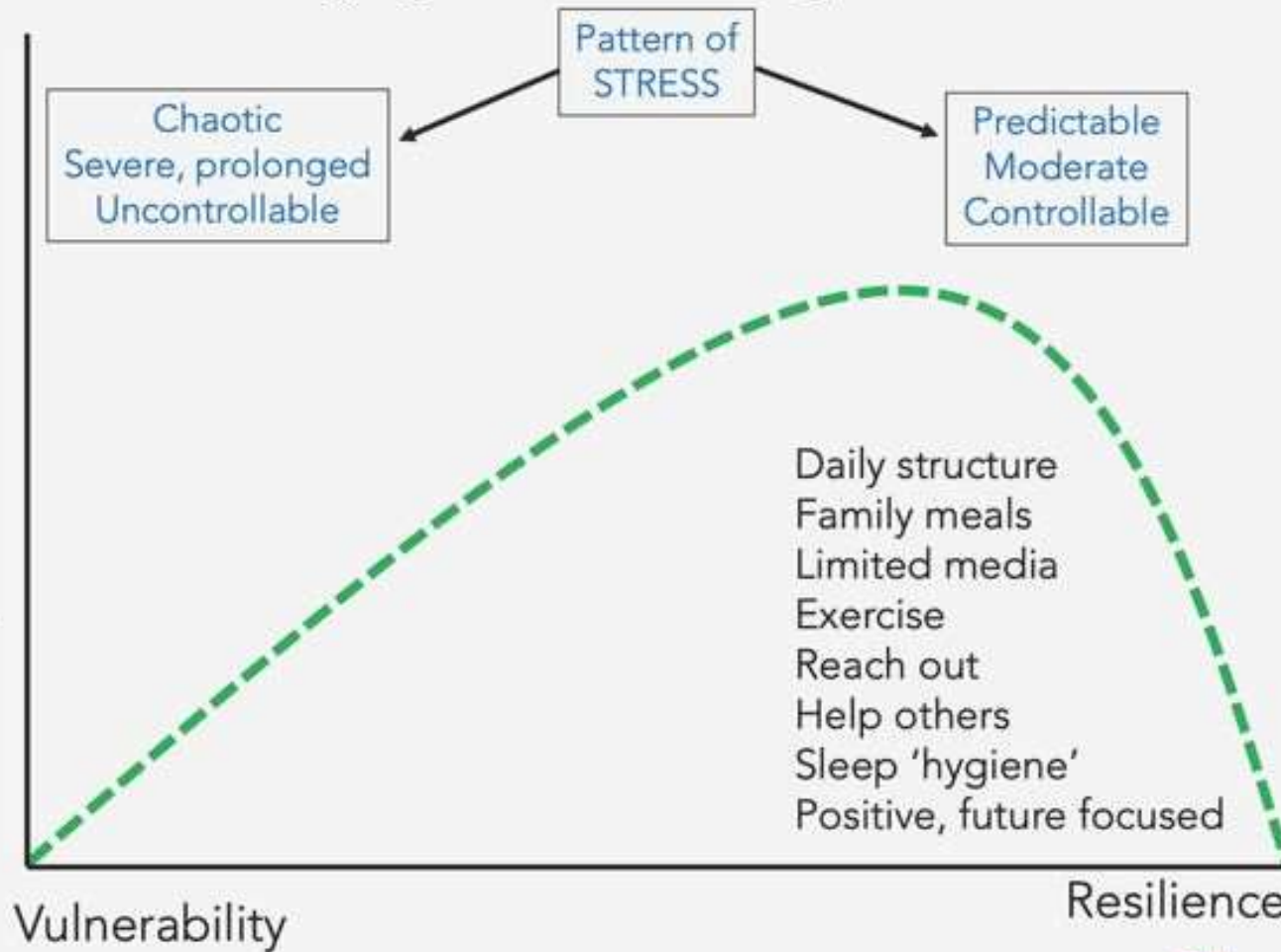


<https://www.neurosequential.com/> - Dr Bruce Perry



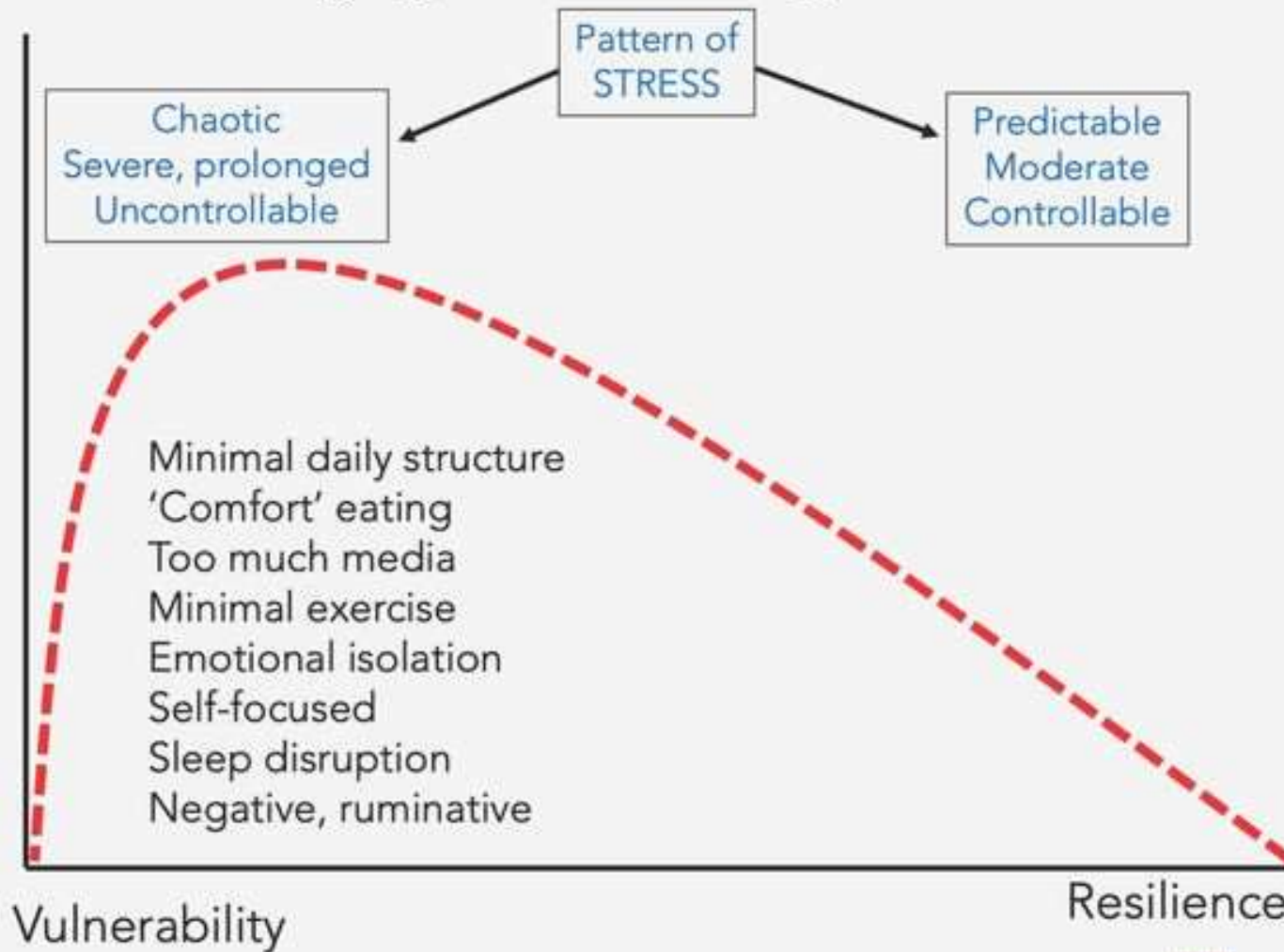


# Managing Stress: Shifting Your Pattern

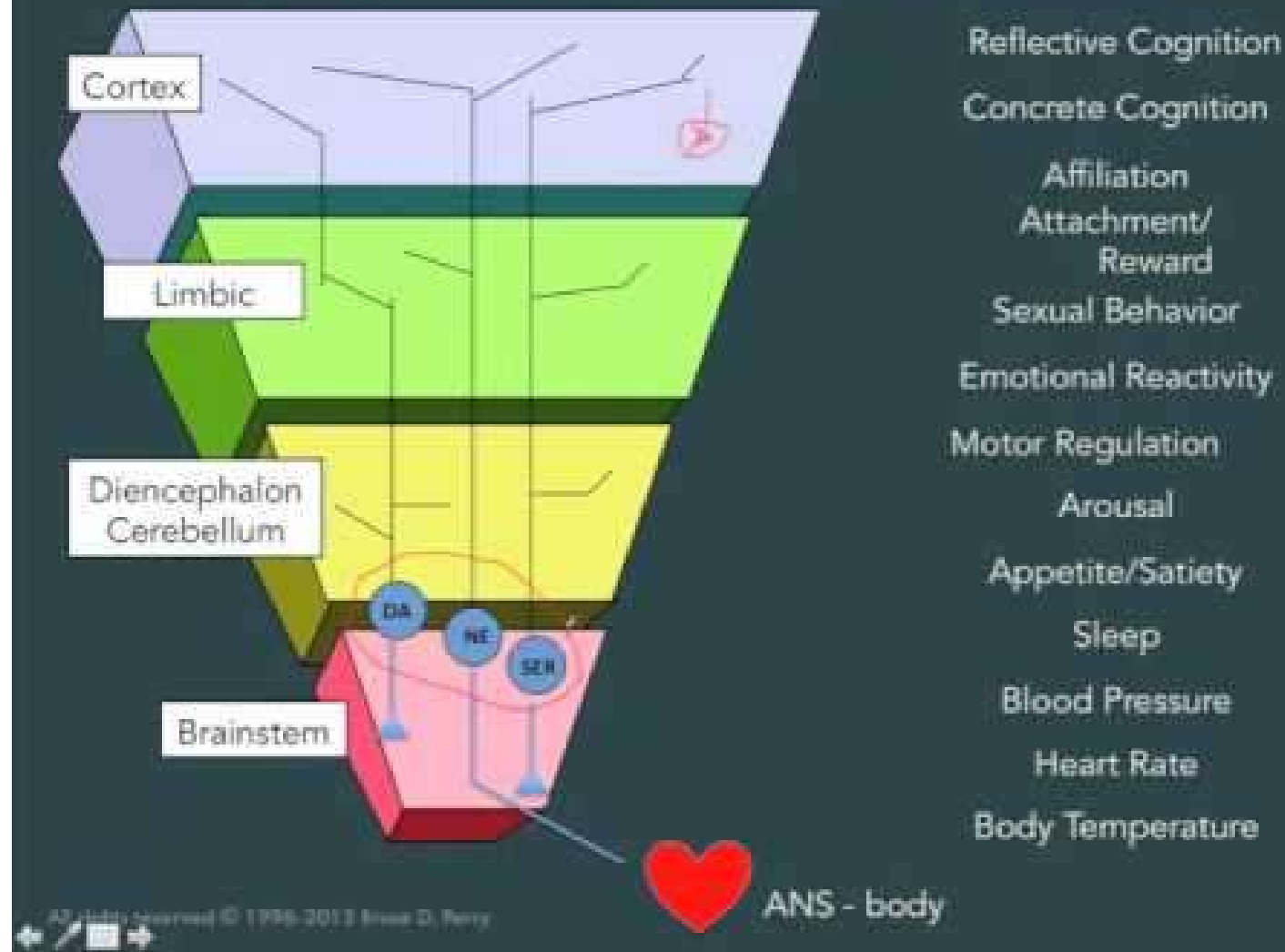




# Managing Stress: Shifting Your Pattern



## Efferent Distribution of Primary Regulatory Networks



<https://www.neurosequential.com/> - Dr Bruce Perry



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# THE AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION

- SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM – survival: fight or flight
- PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM homeostasis; calming
- Breathing techniques can activate one or other of these systems



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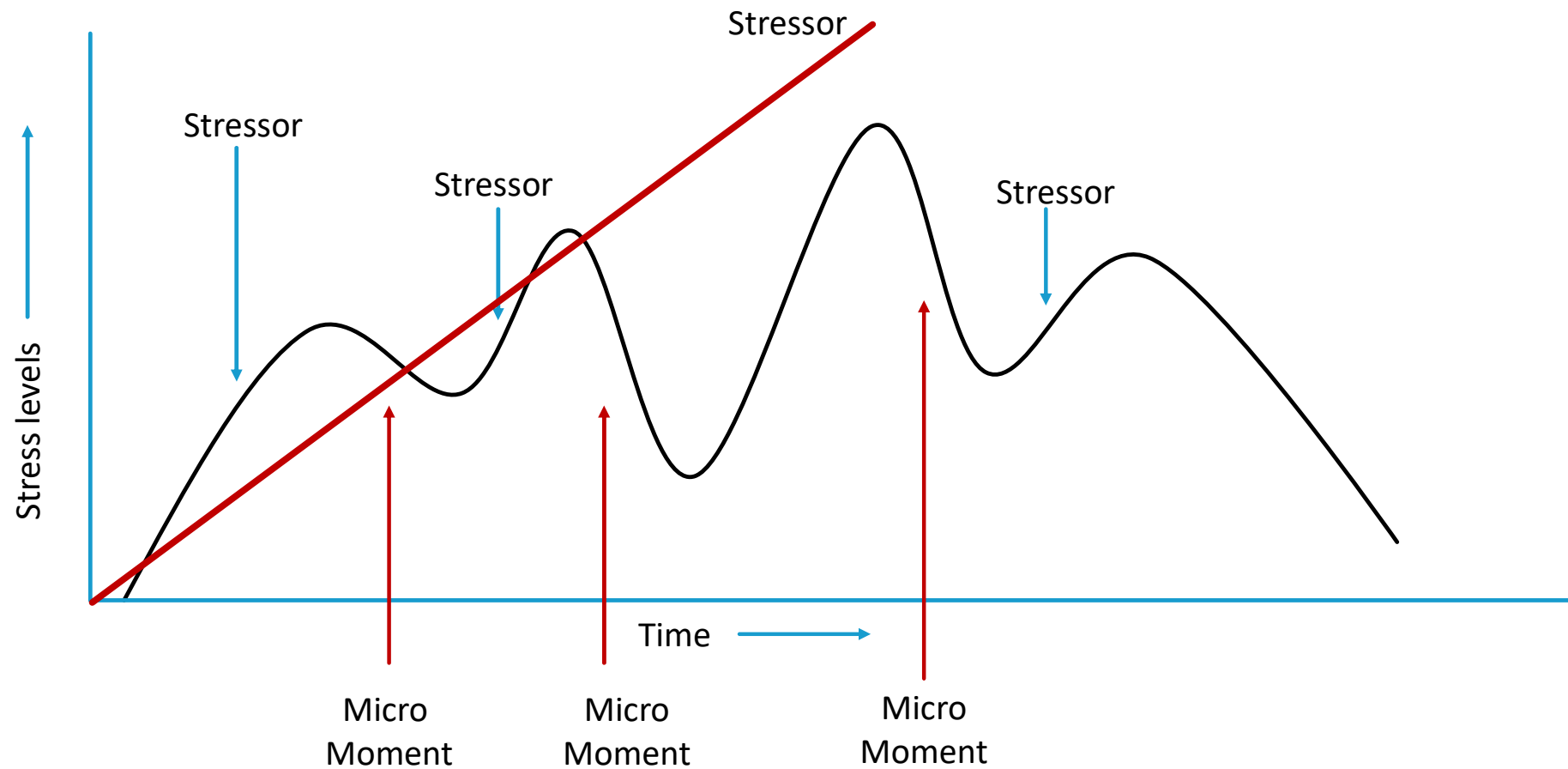
## TOOLS TO MANAGE STRESS

- MICRO RECHARGES

- MACRO RECHARGES



# DAY TO DAY STRESSORS – BRING IN MICRO MOMENTS TO MAKE STRESS MORE MANAGABLE



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## MICRO RECHARGE MOMENTS

### PAUSE TO SELF-REGULATE

- When you wash your hands do it mindfully and slowly, taking deep breaths as you do so. This will downregulate your sympathetic nervous system
- Breathing exercises – see next slide
- Connect with others – laugh, make eye contact, share frustration.
- Increase social connection at every opportunity
- Be compassionate with yourself.
- ‘I am doing the best I can’ / Spiritual verses / Positive Affirmations
- Headspace app
- Walk up the stairs, mindfully counting the stairs
- Doffing on and off / Mindfully



A grayscale photograph of a person standing on the peak of a mountain. The person is silhouetted against a lighter sky. The mountain's ridges and slopes are visible, with some sparse vegetation. The overall atmosphere is misty or hazy. The text 'JUST REMEMBER TO BREATHE' is overlaid in a white, sans-serif font, centered horizontally and split into two lines.

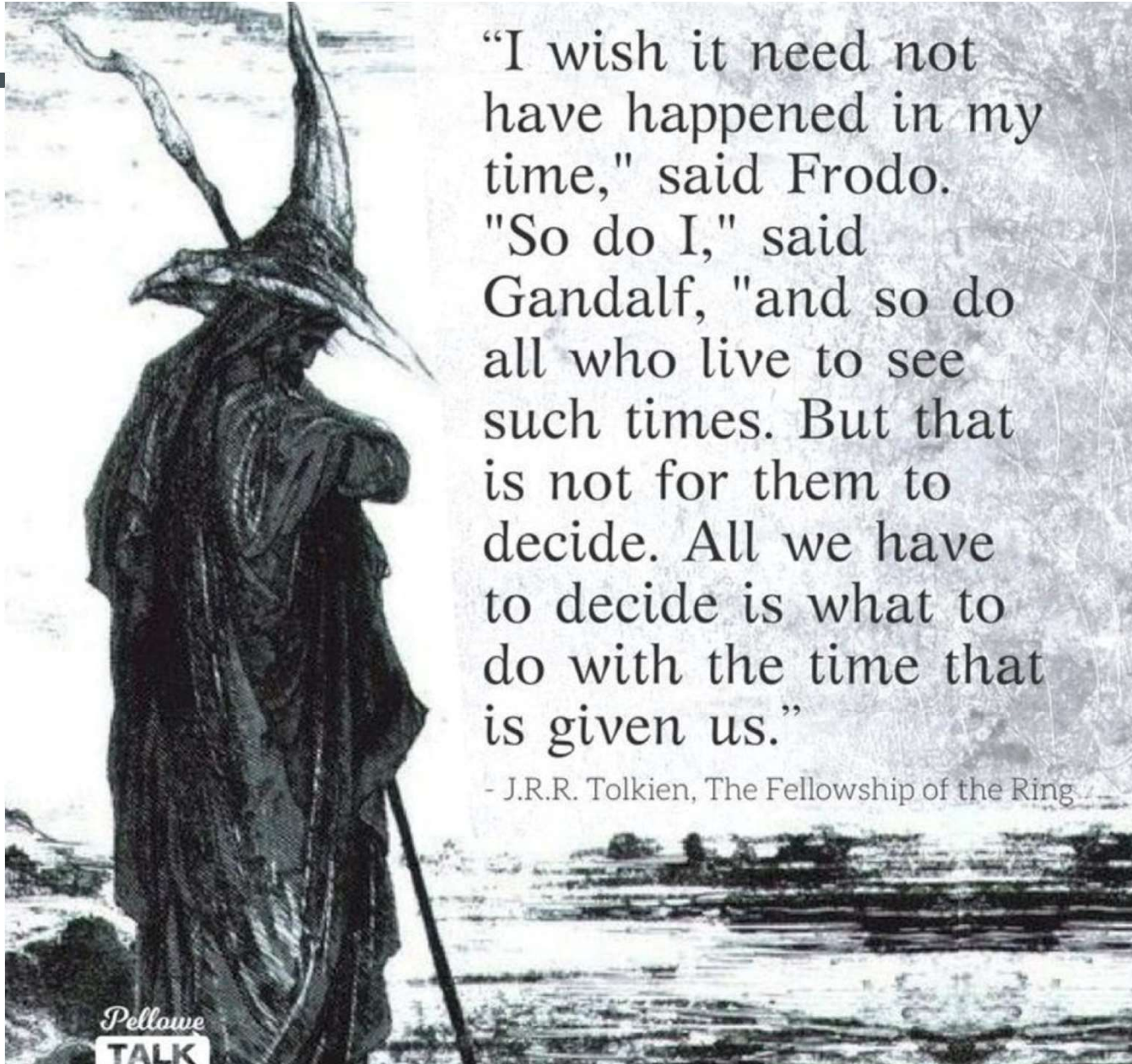
JUST REMEMBER  
TO BREATHE



STRATEGIES FOR LEADERS AND HEALTH CARE WORKERS FOR  
OPTIMAL COPING DURING THE PANDEMIC

Judith Ancer





“I wish it need not have happened in my time,” said Frodo. “So do I,” said Gandalf, “and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.”

- J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*



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## WHAT HAPPENS TO TEAMS DURING PANDEMICS

Flattening hierarchies

All hands on deck – role diffusion

Staff absences, shift changes

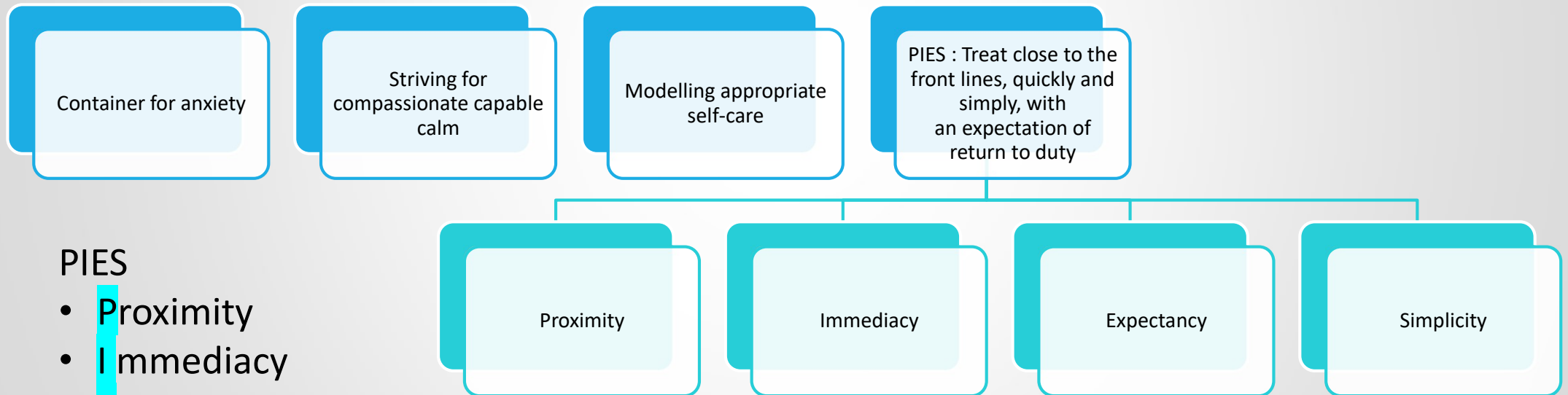
Stress and burnout

Flareups of old conflicts, emergence of new

Essential = collaborative approach



## SOME PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP DURING CRISIS:



### PIES

- Proximity
- Immediacy
- Expectancy
- Simplicity



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## CONNECTION AND COMMUNICATION ARE VERY IMPORTANT

- Regular meetings + dedicated comms channels
- Share protocols and treatment plans
- Accurate info vs fake news
- Risk – information overload
- End of shift debriefs



## STAFF ARE PEOPLE TOO

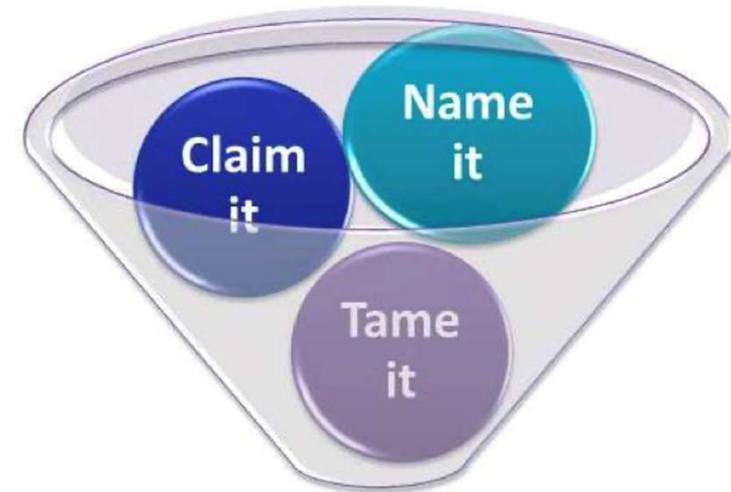
- Practicalities
  - PPE
  - Childcare, shifts, leave
  - Quarantines/ self isolations
- At work : time out spaces
- Support systems – buddy system



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## SHARE STRESS REDUCTION TECHNIQUES

- Breathing
- Grounding
- Mindfulness
- Naming – Claiming – Taming feelings
- 30 seconds – 3 minutes – 30 minutes



**Get Unstuck**

**Name it, claim it, tame it**



### The 30-3-30 approach

The suggestions below are grouped into things that take about 30 seconds, things that you can do in about 3 minutes, and things that might take 30 minutes or longer. The 30 second ones are quick fix 'emergency' actions you can do if you suddenly feel panicky, scared or unable to cope.

| 30 seconds  | 3 minutes   | 30 minutes  |
|---|---|---|
| Take a few slow deep breaths. Breathe in, count to 3, breathe out, count to 3.  | Phone a loved one or friend for a quick chat. Leave a message if they don't answer.   | Pamper yourself with a luxurious bath, and maybe have scented candles and soothing music.   |
| Close your eyes, hold one hand in the other, squeeze gently and repeat 'I can get through this'.                                  | Do a household task, like a quick bit of washing up, cleaning the bathroom mirror or making a bed.  | Do 'proper sort-out' of a cluttered kitchen cupboard, drawer, wardrobe or bookcase. Feel the satisfaction of having done something!   |
| Sit on a chair and focus on the sensation of the chair pressing onto your back and bottom.  | Make a hot drink in a mug and sip it slowly, feeling the warmth of the mug in both hands.   | Enjoy a TV or radio programme, either a recording of an old favourite or something new.   |
| Take a few sips of cold water, focusing on the cooling feeling as you swallow it. Even better if very cold or if you can add ice. | Quick brain workout, such as 3 minutes doing a wordsearch, crossword, sudoku. Try the 'Alphabet Game' choose a category, then using the alphabet in order, list as many as you can. | Do something 'mindful'. This means just focusing on the one thing you are doing: such as bit of gardening, spending time on an indoor hobby, doing a jigsaw puzzle, listening to a recorded book. |
| Look out of a window or doorway. What can you see and hear? Anything new or unusual?  | Listen to a favourite piece of music, something soothing or uplifting depending how you feel.   | Prepare a tasty meal or snack, perhaps a new recipe, and eat it slowly, savouring every mouthful.   |
| Pick up a special photo or object that evokes happy memories and focus on what it means to you.                                   | Brush your teeth and brush or comb your hair. (even if you don't really need to!)   | Sing. At the top of your voice, sing all the songs you know, or just your favourites several times.   |
| Learn a favourite, inspiring quote by heart, or keep a written version handy to read.   | Write a worry list. Getting things down on paper can help stop them going around in your head. Now tackle them one by one.  | Go out for some fresh air, if it's safe and allowed. If not, are there any indoor exercises, yoga or stretches you can do?  |
| Think of 2 things that are 'Just about OK'.   | Phone someone for a quick 'hello'   | Phone a helpline. Ask the person who sent you this leaflet to recommend a couple of helplines if you can't think of any yourself.   |



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DO

- Feelings : acknowledge and normalize
- Be real with staff
- Check in with staff/ colleagues regularly



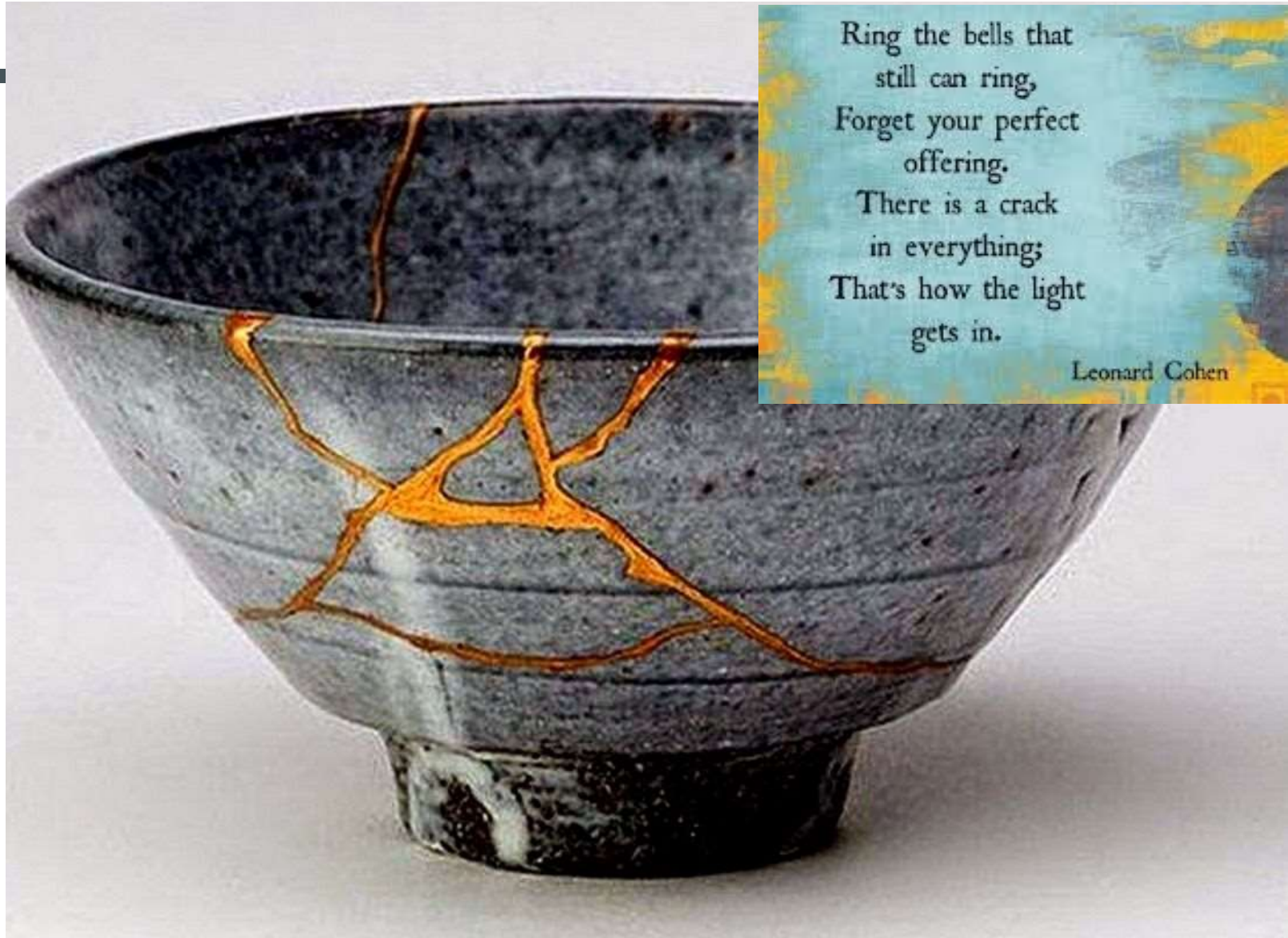


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## MEANING

- Help staff remember the WHY of the
- Honour your work
- Be real about the limits of our powers, tolerate all our imperfections
- Be kind and don't judge
- Be brave





Ring the bells that  
still can ring,  
Forget your perfect  
offering.  
There is a crack  
in everything;  
That's how the light  
gets in.

Leonard Cohen

## KINTSUGI: The Art of Precious Scars

