

Reclaiming our connection to hope and inspiration as
we close out the school year.



2022 BEST/VTmtss Summer Institute

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We do have a lot of wisdom & experience
when it comes reclaiming hope after adversity.





We know that....

- The impact of adversity is in part related to the associations that we form as we go through an experience.
- The impact of adversity is influenced by the meaning that we make of it.
- While we don't have control over much of adversity, we do have influence over the associations and meaning making that we continue as we move forward. They are fluid and can change at any time.
- Moving forward is about integrating our experiences into our identity and life story.

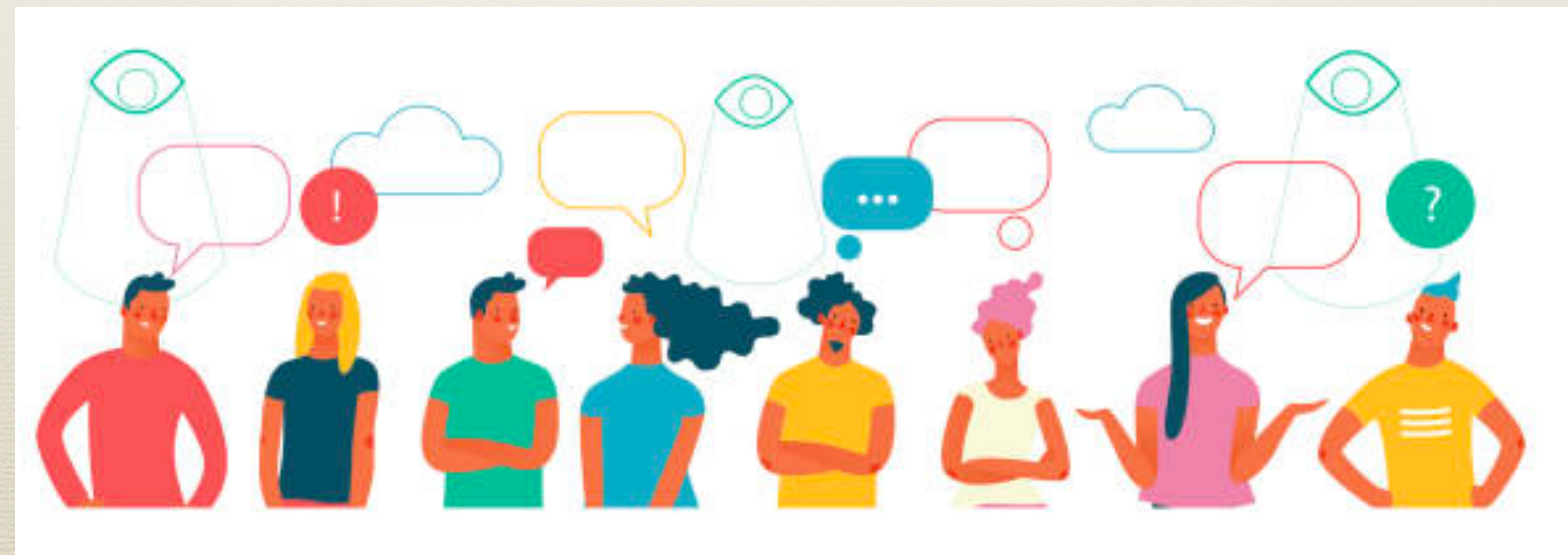
What is an association & how
does it form and change?



Can you think of an association that you have formed during the
past two years?

Does it continue to serve you well?

Will you reinforce it or change it?



What about meaning making?
How are you narrating your experience?





Listen to your own comments & notice your internal script.

Listen to the comments of others and notice what they suggest about their meaning making.

Pay attention to cognitive distortions that challenge your ability to create and maintain a resilient narrative.

Examples of perceptions that will challenge our resilience.

- “The kids twenty years ago weren’t like this, we are failing the kids by not holding them accountable.”
- “How do you make kids care? These kids do not care about anything or anyone.”
- “I don’t have the training for this situation. I cannot do this job.”



A resilient narrative includes:

- A shift in focus to what the individual can control.
- A balance of attention to the challenges & the lasting good that is developing in response to the situation.
- The prediction of a positive outcome (i.e. hope, the belief that a better time will come).
- Owning your fair share of accountability.

“We went into this pandemic as ordinary students and we came out as extraordinary people.”

“We had a choice to make. Were we going to be angry for what we missed or fully embrace everything we still have to experience.”





Cognitive Distortions are entrenched patterns of thinking that are inaccurate and negative.

Mental shortcuts are necessary to help us function.

We make more more mental shortcuts & make them less effectively when stressed.

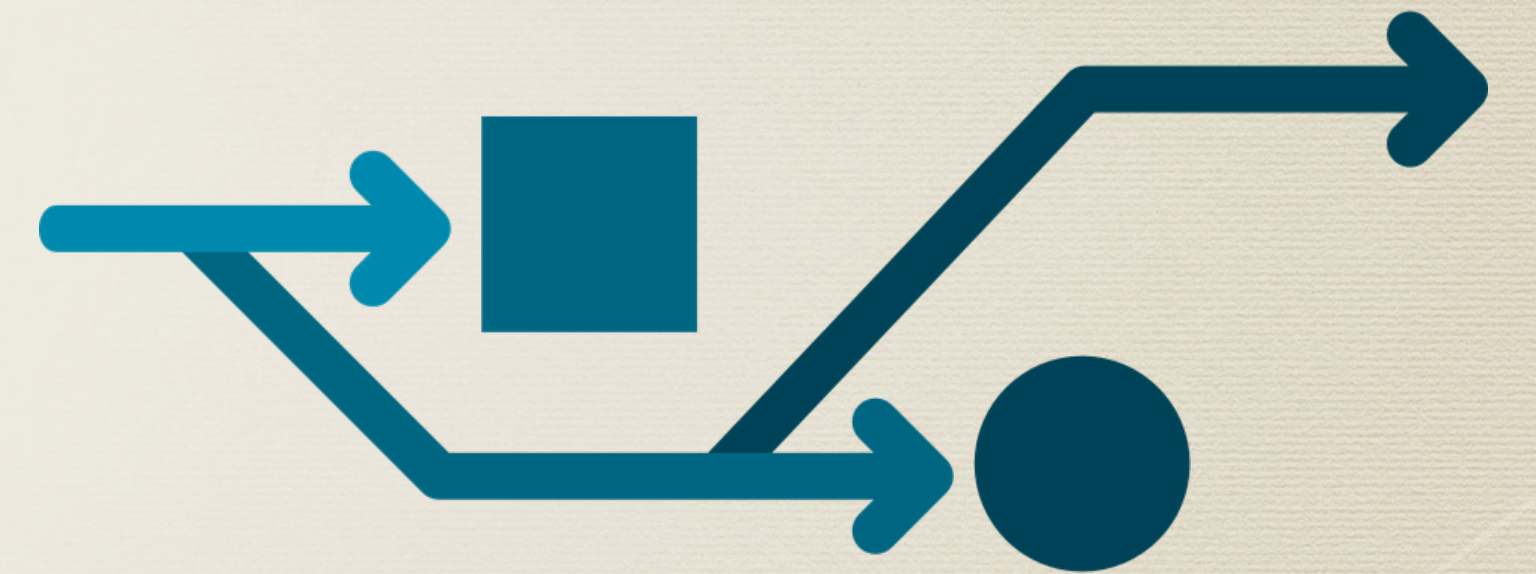
- **Rigid Thinking**- right/wrong, all/nothing, no grey. ex. "If it isn't going the way I hoped, it's a failure."
- **Overgeneralizing**- always or never ex. "No one ever asks my opinion."
- **Catastrophizing**- Thinking everything will go wrong. ex. "This is going to be a hot mess."
- **Mental Filtering**- Drawing conclusions based on a selected fact.
- **Personalizing**- Taking responsibility or blame for something you had no control over OR assuming everything negative is about you somehow. ex. "My coworker was grumpy, they must be irritated with me."
- **Mind reading**- Interpreting other people's behaviors without checking assumptions or seeking information/clarity.
- **Disqualifying the positive**- Ignore or explain away the positive facts or aspects of a situation.
- **Magnifying or minimizing**- Giving something more or less credit than it deserves. Putting emphasis on less essential aspects of a situation.

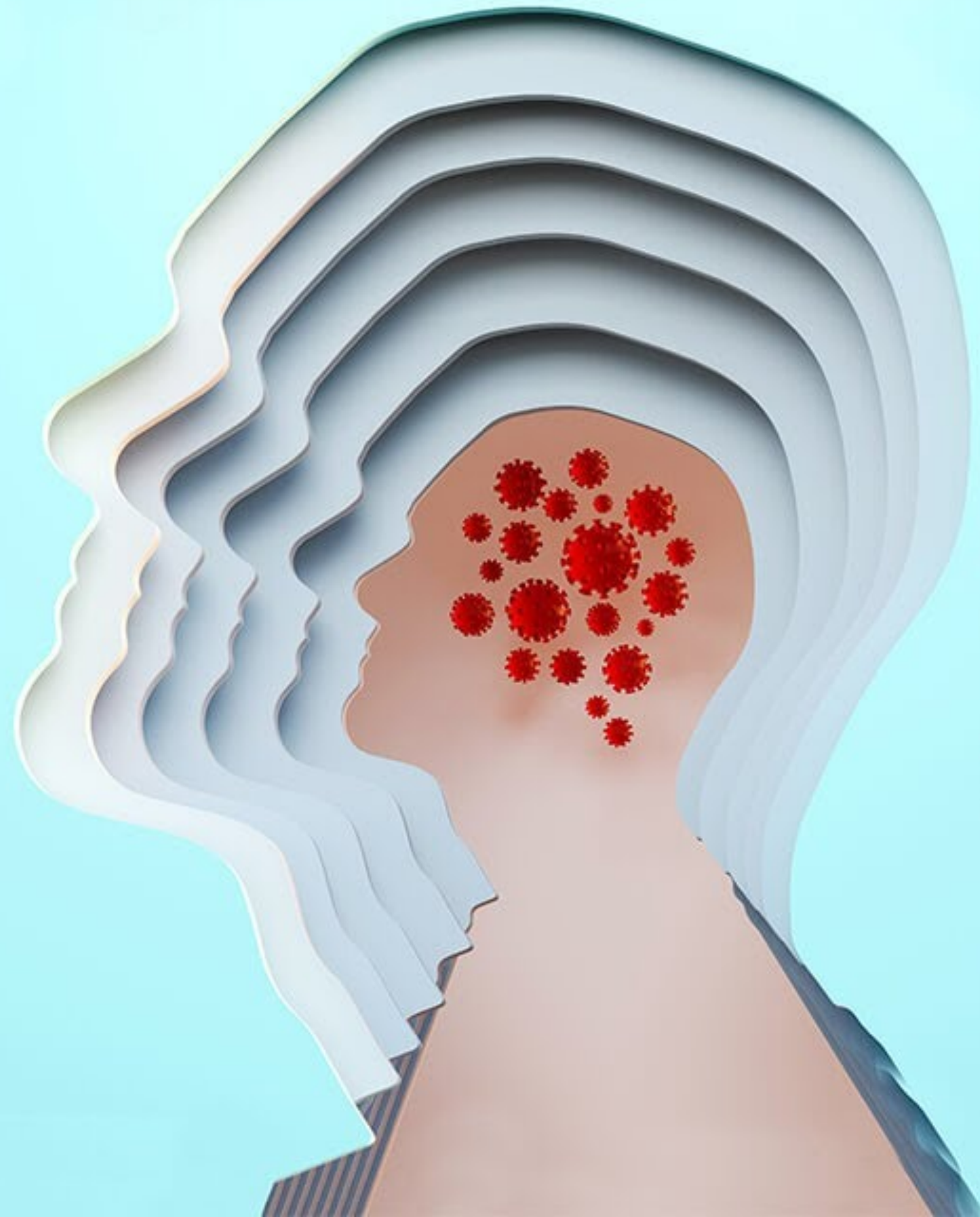
What is your go to??



How do you shift the narrative?

- For yourself & others, the key is dosing and the gentle redo.
 - Simply try to restate it.
 - Offer an alternate point of view.
 - Reinforce what is accurate.
 - Use growth mindset- “I haven’t figured out how to do this ... yet.”





COVID-19, EMOTIONS & THE PROMISE OF **REAPPRAISAL**

[https://www.hks.harvard.edu/faculty-research/policy-topics/health/study-helping-people-rethink-their-response-covid-19-can-lead?utm_source=SilverpopMailing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Daily%20Gazette%2020210806%20\(1\)](https://www.hks.harvard.edu/faculty-research/policy-topics/health/study-helping-people-rethink-their-response-covid-19-can-lead?utm_source=SilverpopMailing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Daily%20Gazette%2020210806%20(1))

Reappraisal

Reconstrual

Change emotions by shifting our thoughts to be more accurate and adaptive.

Ex. “No one ever asks my opinion. I am not valued”

Shifted to-

“I am disappointed that no one asked my opinion in this situation. That made me feel like I am not valued.”

Repurposing

Shift our focus to the potential positive outcomes of the adverse event.

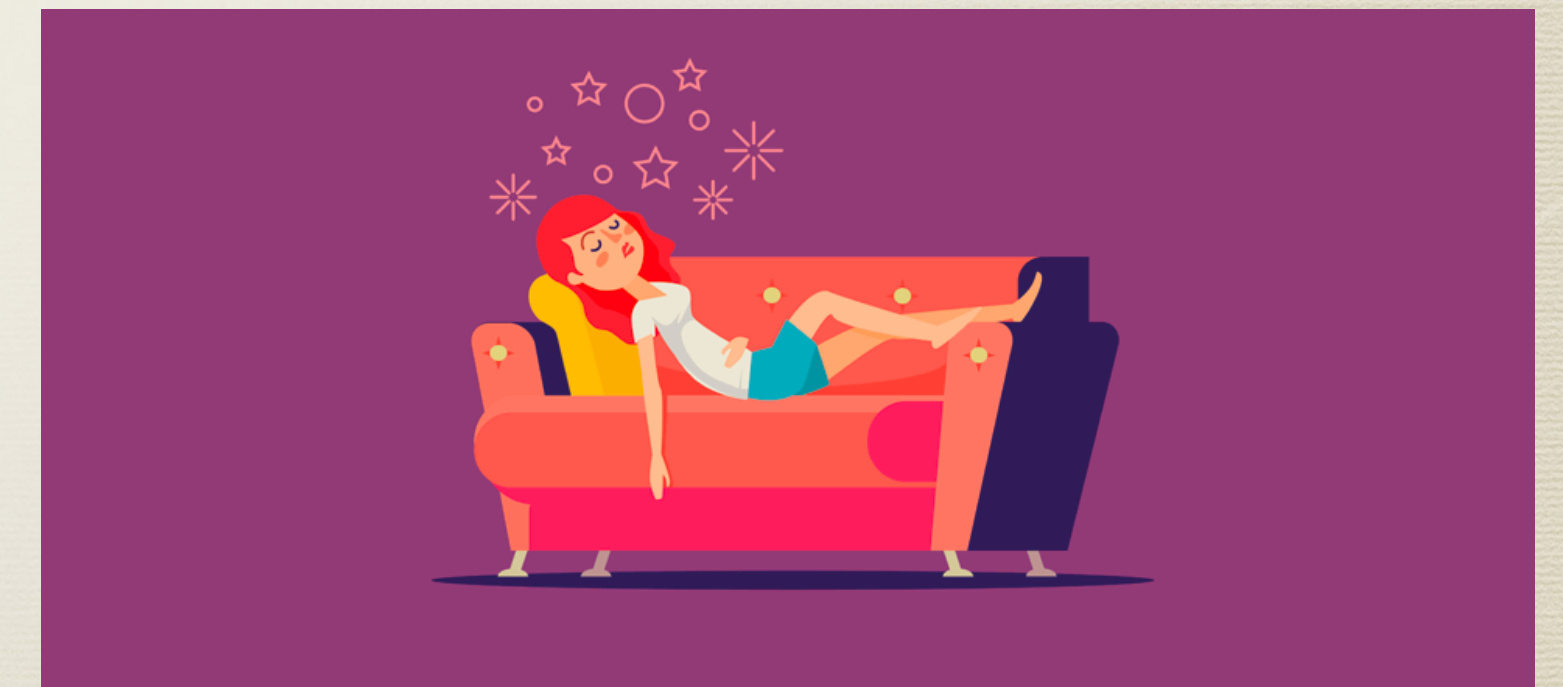
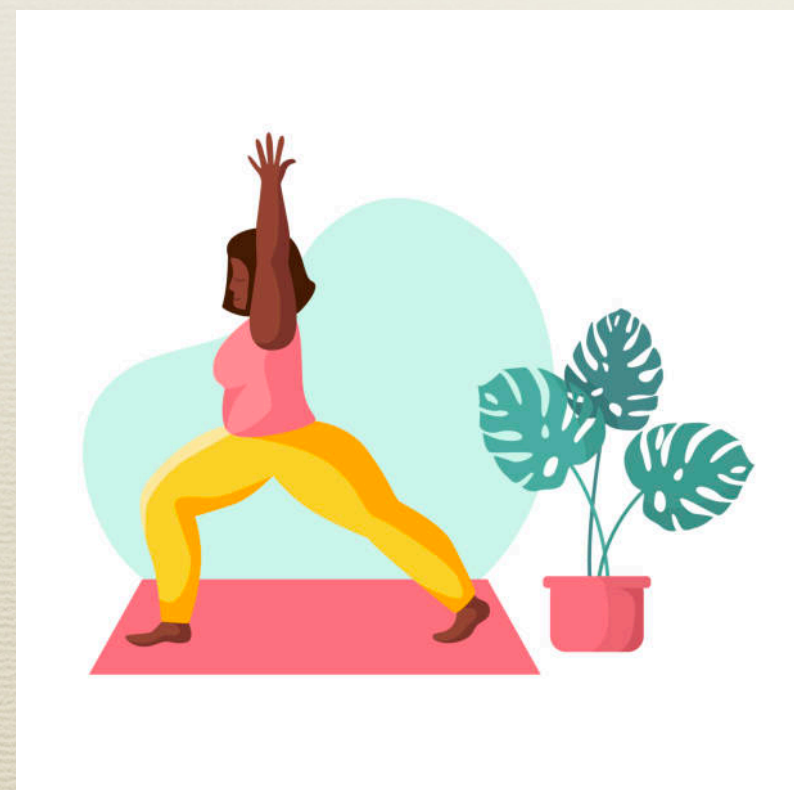
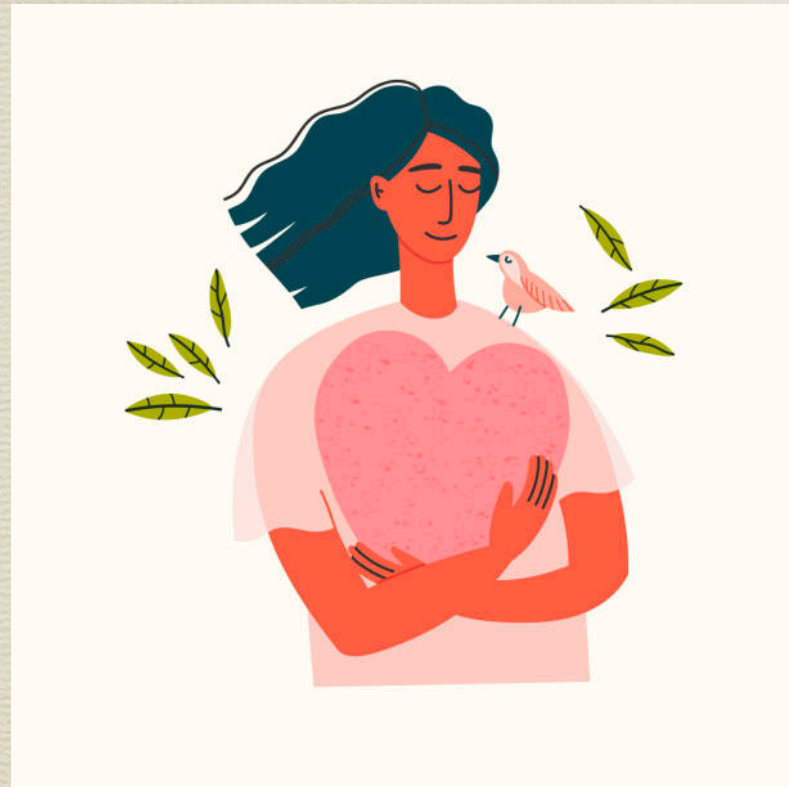
“I might end up more assertive when this is all said and done. That would be good for me anyway.”

Consider this idea of reappraisal & practice!
If you need examples, remember:

- “The kids twenty years ago weren’t like this, we are failing the kids by not holding them accountable.”
- “How do you make kids care? These kids do not care about anything or anyone.”
- “I don’t have the training for this situation. I cannot do this job.”



Could you over this summer set aside some time at least once a week to tend to your resilience?



Summer Path to Resilience



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Consider creating a routine for a weekly pause to intentionally check-in on your resilience.

One of many options during this time is to work through the following videos, articles, and thought exercises.

Self-compassion



Self-compassion is not a fair weather friend- it stays with you regardless of what happens. Self-esteem is contingent on you meeting your own standards or what you perceive to be other people's expectations of you.

Self-compassion is

- self-kindness (treat yourself like you would treat others)
- common humanity (how we are like others- recognition that our lives are as imperfect as everyone else's)
- mindfulness (being with what is in the present moment)

Take the self-compassion self-test!

<https://self-compassion.org/self-compassion-test/>

Kristin Neff Ted Talk on self-compassion

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11UOhODPu7k&t=4s>

Self-compassion

Myth- If we are too kind to ourselves, we will be self-indulgent & lazy.

The research in fact shows:

- Self-criticism undermines motivation.
- Offering others & yourself compassion increases motivation.
- Self-compassion increases your grit.
- When people speak self compassionately out loud - others start speaking that way.
- When you hold self-compassion, it frees up mental space that allows you to release biases that feed inequity.
- When we are not reliant on social downward comparison to feel competent, we are not threatened by the competence of others.



Tips to increase self-compassion

- Watch your words (remember the cognitive distortions)
- Try a re-do
- Write a letter to yourself
- Learn to stabilize (backdrafting)
- Meditate
- Keep practicing to reap the rewards



<https://medium.com/better-humans/why-successful-people-choose-self-compassion-over-self-esteem-b89b9c3567c1>

Interested in learning more on self-compassion?

- The goop podcast interview with Kristin Neff
 - <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-science-of-self-compassion/id1352546554?i=1000492083392>
- Another Ted Talk with Kristin Neff
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvTZBUSplr4>
- This link further describes the 3 elements of self-compassion
 - <https://self-compassion.org/the-three-elements-of-self-compassion-2/>
- An article in The Medium
 - <https://medium.com/better-humans/why-successful-people-choose-self-compassion-over-self-esteem-b89b9c3567c1>



Establish some anchoring concepts as you prepare for next school year.

2 ideas:

Establish a metaphor & re-center your core values.

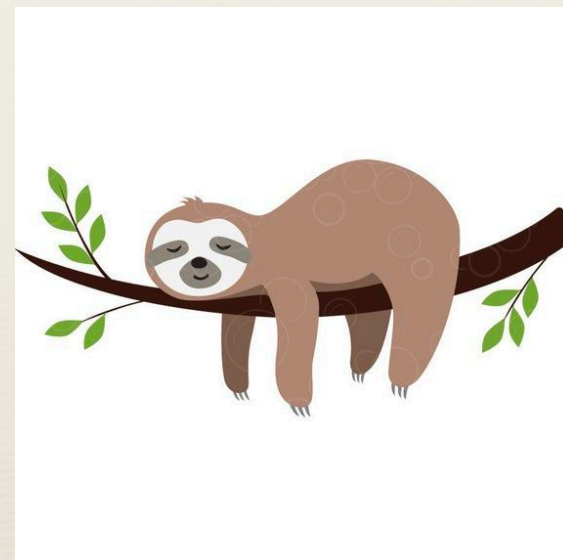
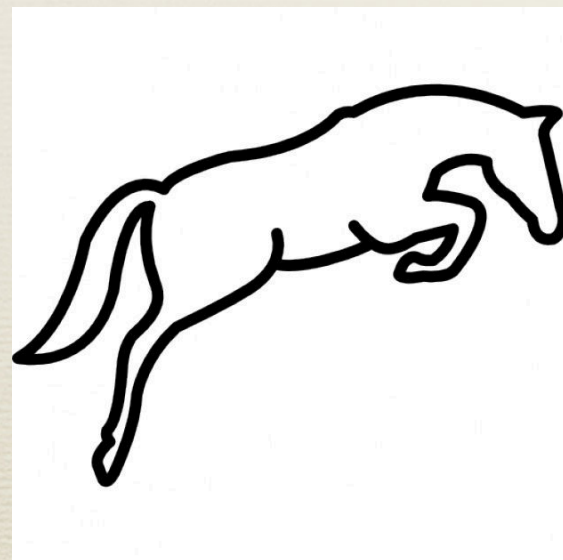


Find a metaphor that you can use as a reference point.
For example, do you sometimes feel like you need “a runaway truck ramp”?
Or maybe something less dramatic...



Can you think of a metaphor for...

- Your current pace?
- The pace that would be optimal for you right now?





Anchor in your values

- Values
 - guide our behavior.
 - ground us when we are overwhelmed/stressed.
 - help set priorities & boundaries.
 - help us measure success in meaningful ways.

This is an exercise to consider your core values.
Create a list & then post it in your work space next year.

<http://webmedia.jcu.edu/advising/files/2016/02/Core-Values-Exercise.pdf>

This is a great read on the science of self-affirmations that connects to the values work.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/wellness/2022/05/02/do-self-affirmations-work/>



The Power of Visualization-

Visualize what a successful school year will look like!

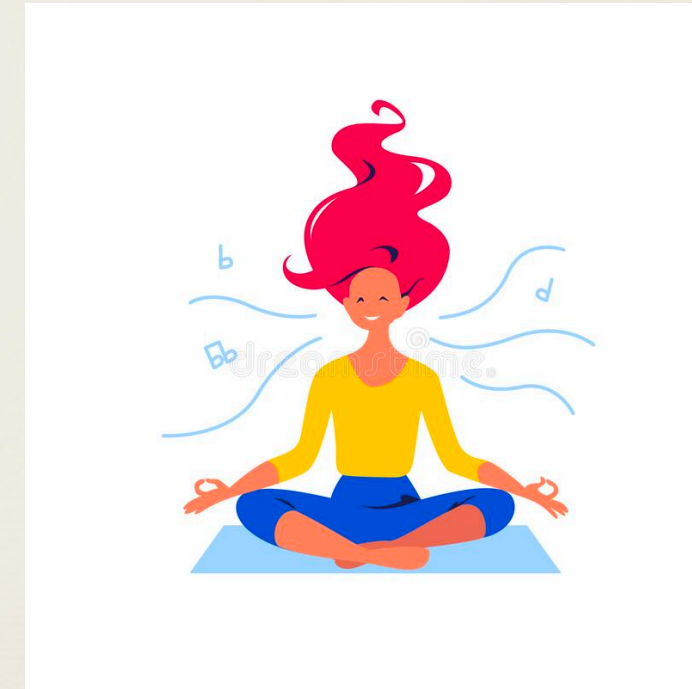
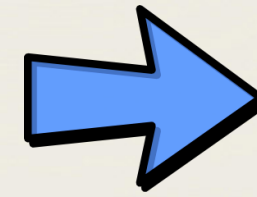
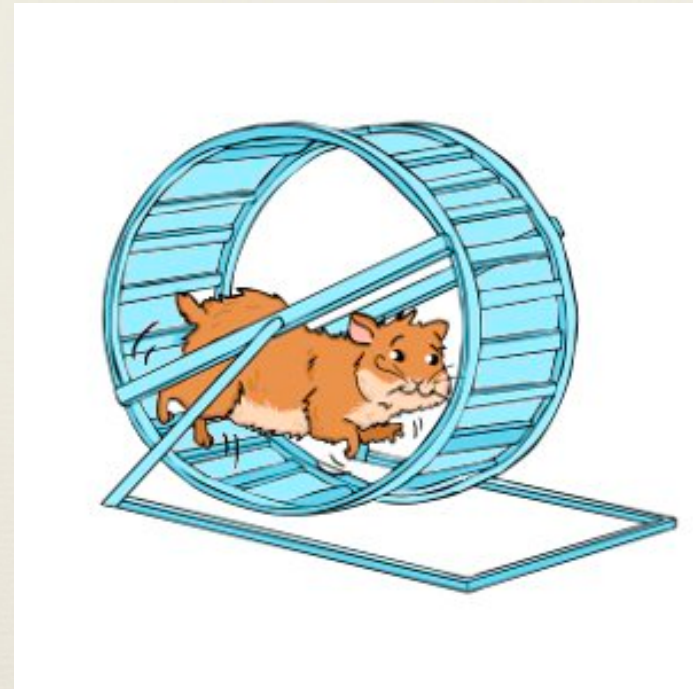
<https://medium.com/@troyerstling/why-you-should-start-practicing-visualization-as-backed-by-science-7dbd1d326b4a>

“There is an extremely tight link between our visual system and our physiology: once we can actually see ourselves doing the impossible, our chances of pulling it off increase significantly.” Michal Gervais





Strategies to shift unproductive worry.





Why do we worry?

- Repeatedly seeking ways in which we were “at fault” are ways to try to regain control. We are seeking to find comfort in the idea that we could prevent a repeat of this event or prevent something we are worried about from happening in the future.
- Our brains are wired to keep thinking through a problem until it is solved.

But what if the solution is not within our control?



Ideas for when you are stuck in a worry cycle.

- Remember why we worry (your brain is trying to help you feel better & stay safe).
- Make a plan for the worry:
 - Set a time limit to think through solutions & learn from the situation.
 - Create a ritual to end the worry.
 - Ask trusted people to help you review things you could have done differently.
 - Learn from the experience & move forward with that wisdom - then LET IT GO!
 - Develop a self-talk script for when the worry returns.
 - “I did my best. Let that be good enough. Tomorrow is another opportunity.”
 - Cognitive distraction/ Mindlessness
 - Seek sensory input (cold, hot, smells, movement, dance, music, etc.)

The Parking Lot

Set aside time to worry



How to Worry More Mindfully. It's possible. Here's how to cope when stressful thinking seems constant.

The New York Times. Jenny Talz. November, 2020

<https://nyti.ms/380t5pl>

If you must worry, do it on paper. Thomas Oppong. June, 2020

<https://medium.com/kaizen-habits/if-you-must-worry-do-it-on-paper-85caa22b1712>



What if you had a GPS to guide you through your work day?



The GPS or navigational system in your car is designed to specifically assist your ability to function while stressed.

The GPS:

- Provides information one step at a time.
- Repeats the direction at intervals until you've completed it.
- Provides a visual guide along with verbal instruction.
- Calmly helps you recover if you make a mistake.

Ideas

- Do one thing with intention/reduce multi-tasking
- Keep a “parking lot” to reduce mental clutter & distraction
- Provide clear expectations & set norms - this will help you as much as the students
- Establish routines individually before you combine multiple steps
- Learn new skills one at a time before you begin to combine tasks
- Use visual time tracking & clear time management strategies
- Gradually rebuild stamina for sustained focus & mental effort
- Take the time to prioritize efforts & plan





Set a goal to engage in productive venting next year & practice all summer as you talk to people about anything!

Share the title/not the whole article.



Practice what to do if others are verbally vomiting on you!

When others are in an unproductive vent-

intentionally interrupt

intentionally interrupt

make a graceful exit



An article & a video to review to reinforce the effort toward productive venting & authentic connection.

Signs of Toxic Positivity



Experiencing guilt for being sad or angry



Reciting "positive" quotes about hard situations



Dismissing others' difficult feelings



Hiding painful emotions



Ignoring your problems

verywell



Fault finding missions

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZWf2_2L2v8&t=29s

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If you are struggling this summer, ask yourself if you are grieving and remind yourself about grief.



<https://www.verywellmind.com/five-stages-of-grief-4175361>

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Hope Through Action

Jane Goodall's The Book of Hope is an amazing read and audiobook.

“The cumulative effect of thousands of ethical actions can help to save and improve our world for future generations.”

Hope is a crucial survival trait.

Hope is stubborn persistence through action.

Optimism is a disposition.

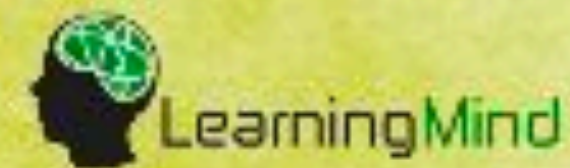


A great read with practical suggestions!

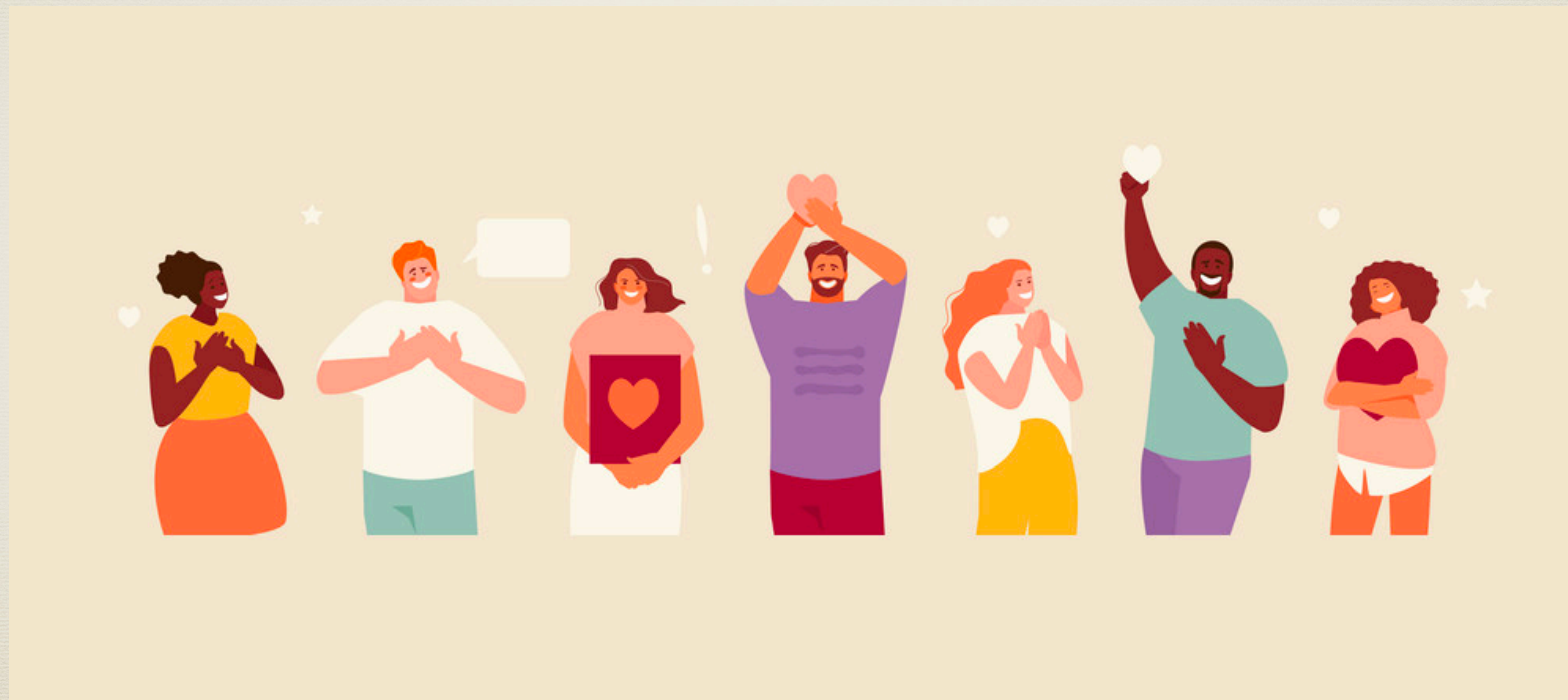
<https://jak292.medium.com/the-pandemic-stress-hack-that-just-might-keep-you-going-27f21b2330ca>

- Work with intervals- ex. cardio exercises with stations
- Try/Learn something new - cognitive challenges like cooking, a new hobby, etc.
- Express yourself- ex. creative expression
- All of these offer patterned, repetitive, often rhythmic, and rewarding experiences. They can introduce and intentional challenge that helps your nervous system return to baseline.

**Forgive yourself for not
knowing what you didn't
know before you
learned it.**



Thank you for your dedication to the children and families of Vermont!



Joelle van Lent, Psy.D.