



Finding Balance, Building Resilience, and Overcoming Imposter Syndrome in the Time of COVID-19

Gail Gazelle, MD, MCC

Master Certified Coach for Healthcare Professionals

**Harvard Medical School, part-time Assistant Professor
of Medicine**





Distress in healthcare



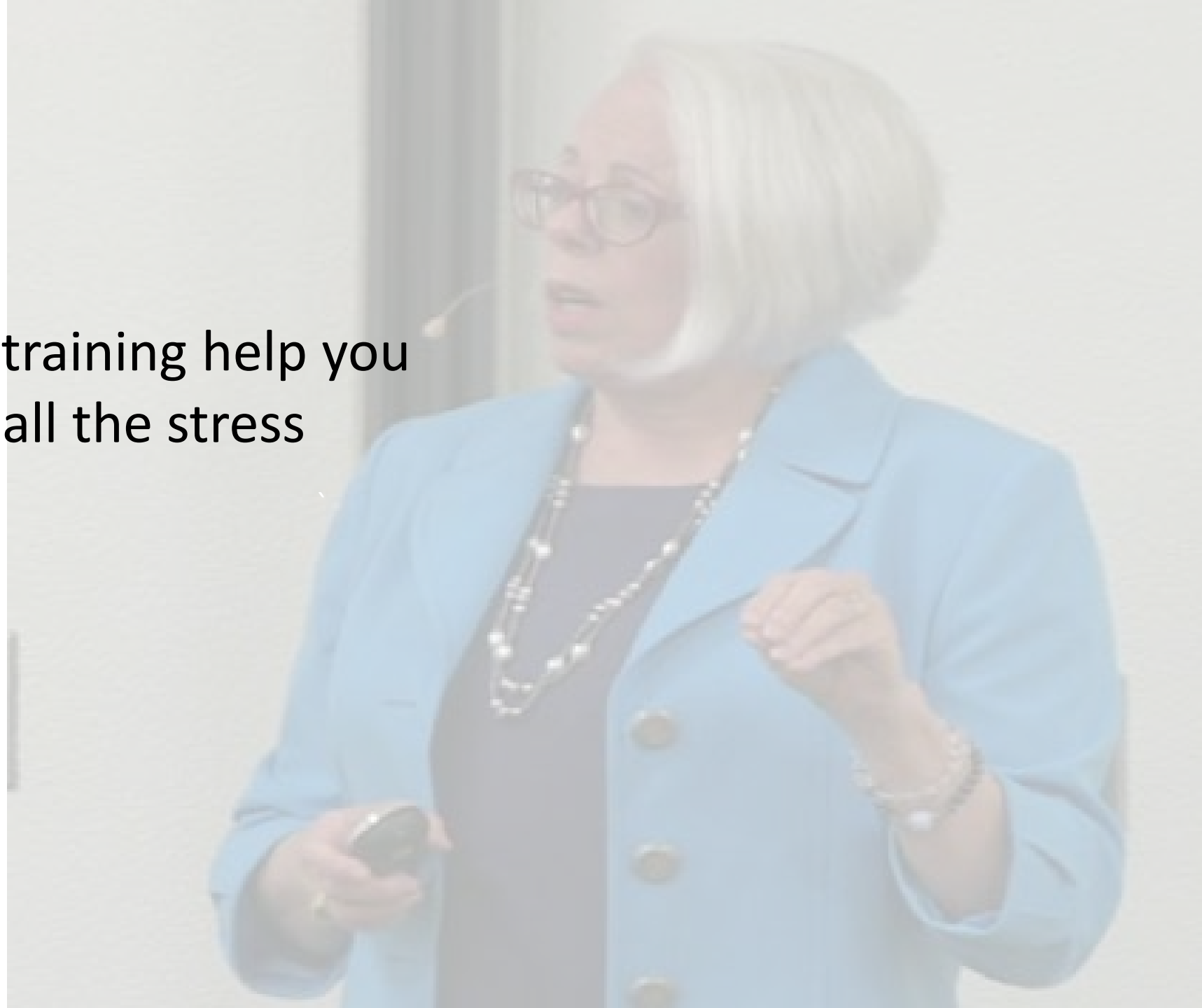
ELECTIONS

A hand is holding a white rectangular sign. The word "ELECTIONS" is printed in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The letter "O" in "ELECTIONS" is replaced by a white five-pointed star. Below the word "ELECTIONS" is a horizontal line with a gradient from red on the left to blue on the right. Below this line, the year "2020" is printed in a bold, red, sans-serif font. The background is a blurred bokeh of various colors including green, yellow, orange, and blue.

2020

Did your professional training help you learn how to manage all the stress of this time?

- A. Yes
- B. No

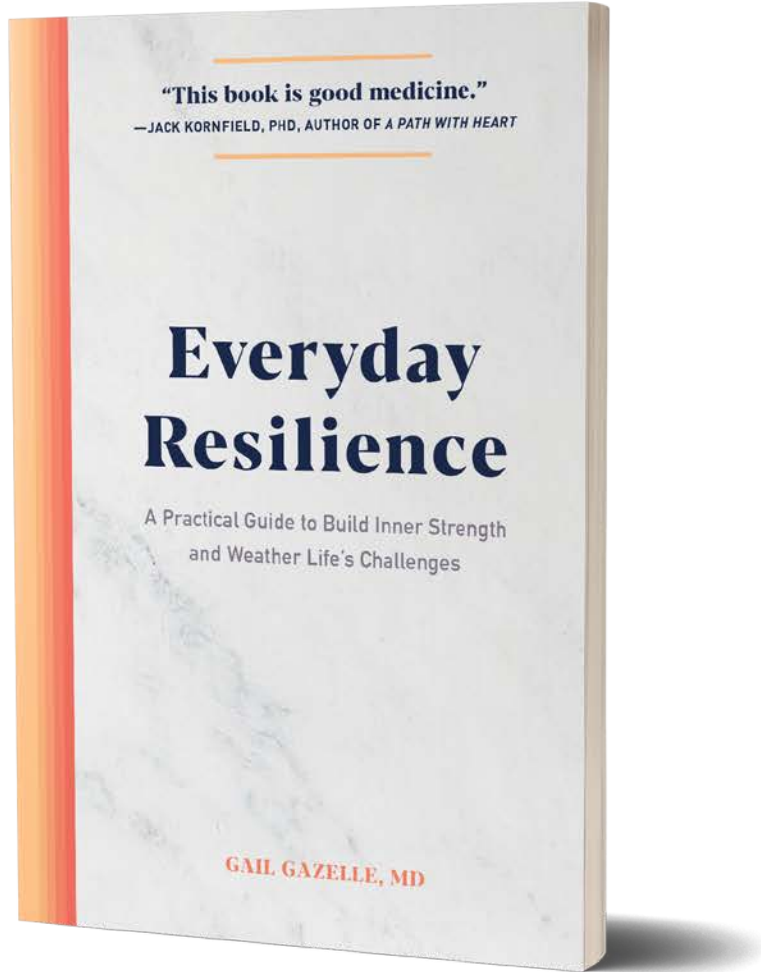


Objectives:

By the end of this session, participants will:

1. Understand why building mindfulness and resilience is critical for well-being
2. Be able to explain the cycle that fuels the Imposter Syndrome
3. Demonstrate competency in a variety of personal resilience strategies

What is resilience?



Resilience pillars

1. Connection
2. Perseverance
3. Flexibility
4. Self-regulation
5. Positivity
6. Self-care



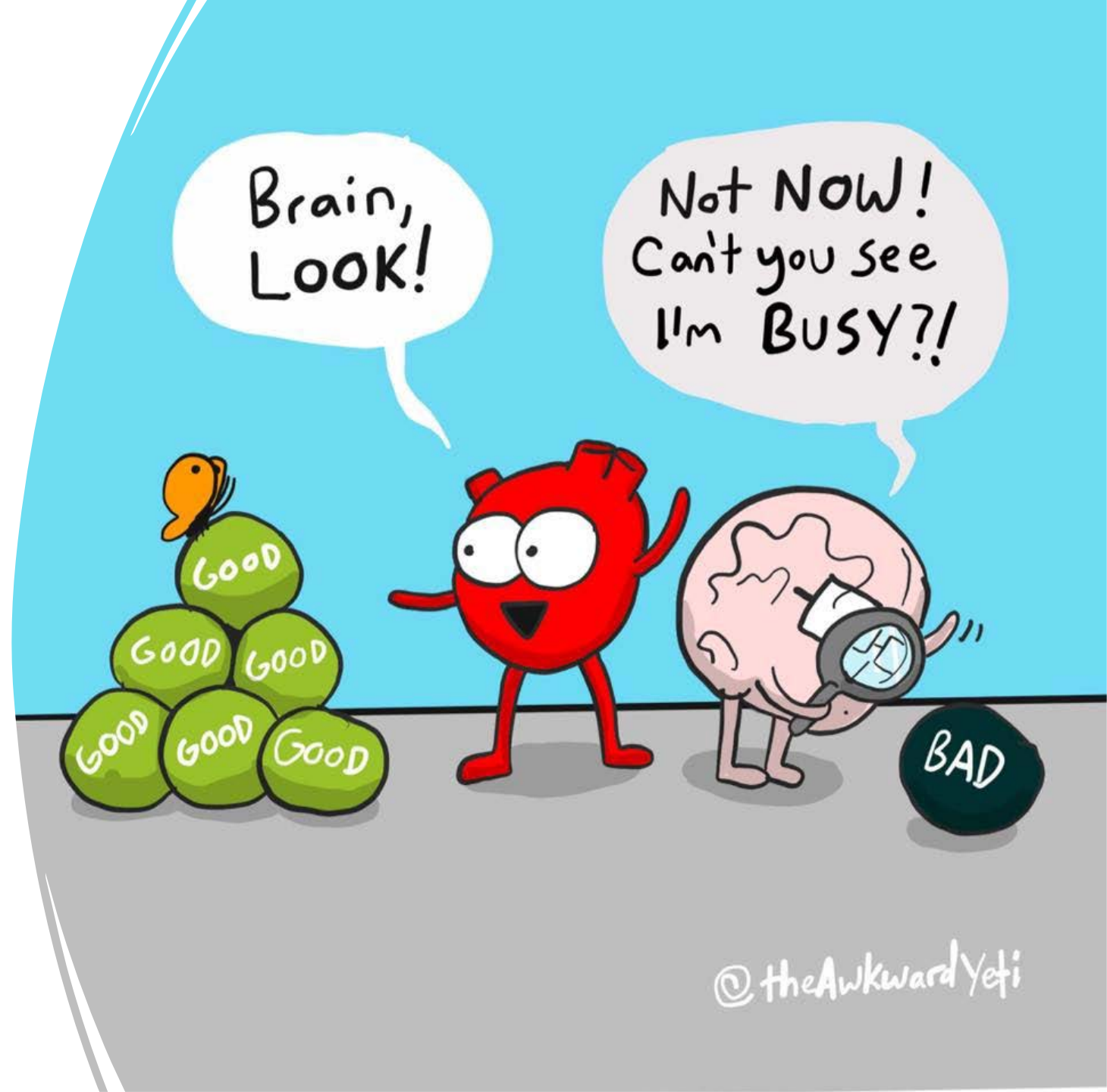
Resilience and neuroplasticity



Fight, flight, freeze



The role of the negativity bias



The stress response in modern times...



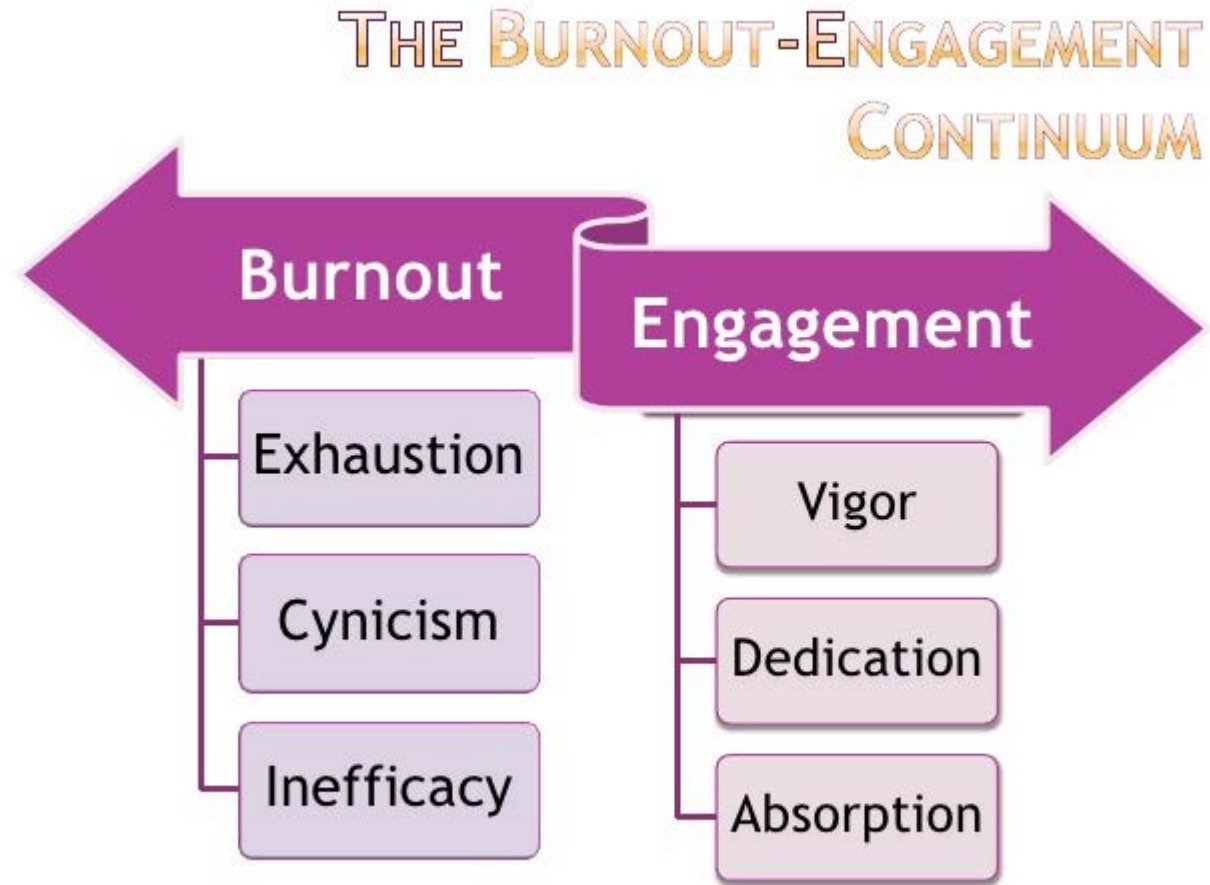
DOCTOR I'M TIRED ALL THE TIME

Chronic stress effects


- Decreased immune function
- Increased aging
- Heightened inflammatory state
- Premature CV disease
- Early cognitive decline
- Migraines
- Fibromyalgia
- Ruminative thinking
- Depression
- Anxiety



The chronic stress of burnout



(Maslach, 1982; Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006)



Here lies
Dr. Jones
Lifetime RVU
below the median

Resilience pillars

1. **Connection**
2. Perseverance
3. Flexibility
4. Self-regulation
5. Positivity
6. Self-care



Resilience: The importance of connection



Resilience pillars

1. Connection
2. **Perseverance**
3. Flexibility
4. Self-regulation
5. Positivity
6. Self-care



Resilience strategy #1:

Focus on your strengths and accomplishments

Do you:

- Notice your strengths or your weaknesses?
- Focus on what you've accomplished or what you haven't?
- Pay more attention to what's going well or what isn't?



Strengths exercise

1. Briefly tell me about a moment when you felt you were acting at your best at work. This could be with a coworker, a trainee, a patient, at a meeting, giving a presentation...
2. Let's identify what strengths you evidenced in this situation.
3. Utilizing these strengths, let's brainstorm at least one action you can take this week to overcome a workplace challenge you are facing.

Strengths vocabulary



Wisdom

- creativity
- curiosity
- judgement
- love of learning
- perspective



Courage

- bravery
- persistence
- honesty
- zest



Humanity

- love
- kindness
- social intelligence



Transcendence

- appreciation of beauty
- gratitude
- hope
- humor
- spirituality



Justice

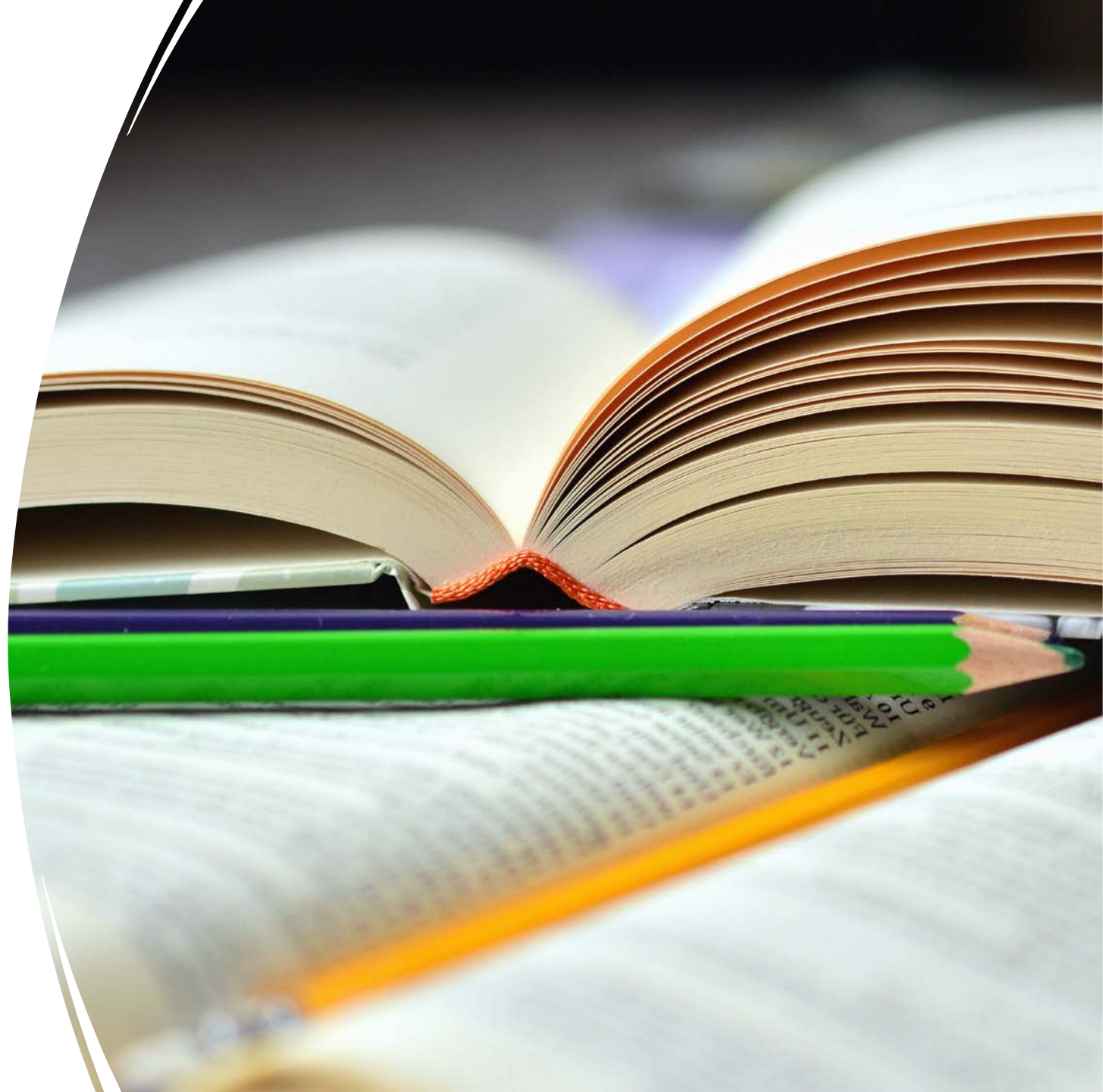
- teamwork
- fairness
- leadership

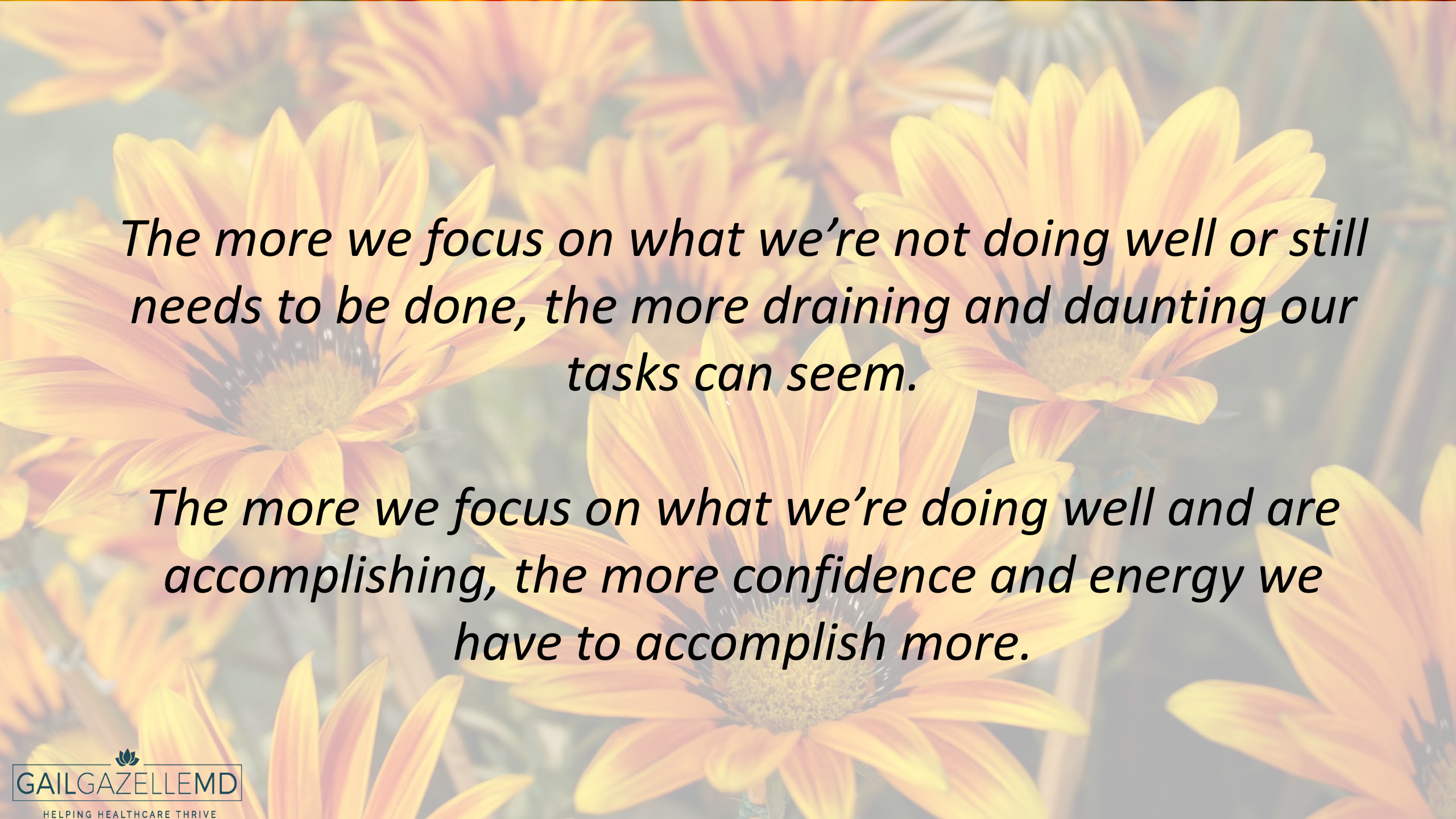


Moderation

- forgiveness
- modesty
- prudence
- self-control

What's the
learning for you?





The more we focus on what we're not doing well or still needs to be done, the more draining and daunting our tasks can seem.

The more we focus on what we're doing well and are accomplishing, the more confidence and energy we have to accomplish more.



Resilience pillars

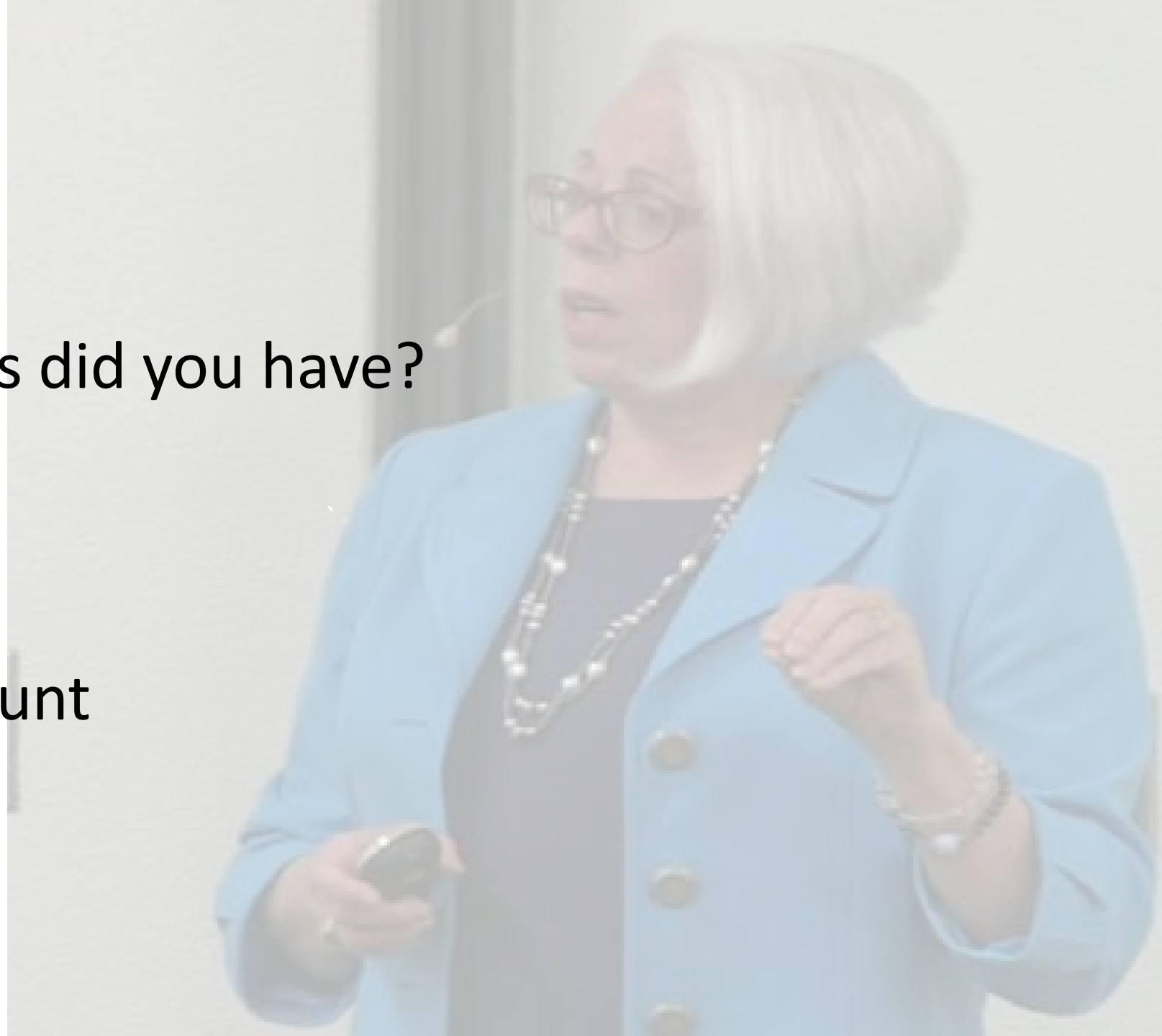
1. Connection
2. Perseverance
- 3. Flexibility**
4. Self-regulation
5. Positivity
6. Self-care





How many thoughts did you have?

- A. 1
- B. 2-5
- C. 6-10
- D. Too many to count



The nature of thought...





Mindfulness and resilience

- The awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the moment by moment unfolding of experience
- Leads the mind back from theories, attitudes, and abstractions to the experience itself prevents us from falling prey to our own prejudices, opinions, projections, expectations
 - ❖ enables us to free ourselves from the straight jacket of unconsciousness

The nature of thought...

"What is thought?

Thought is your friend.

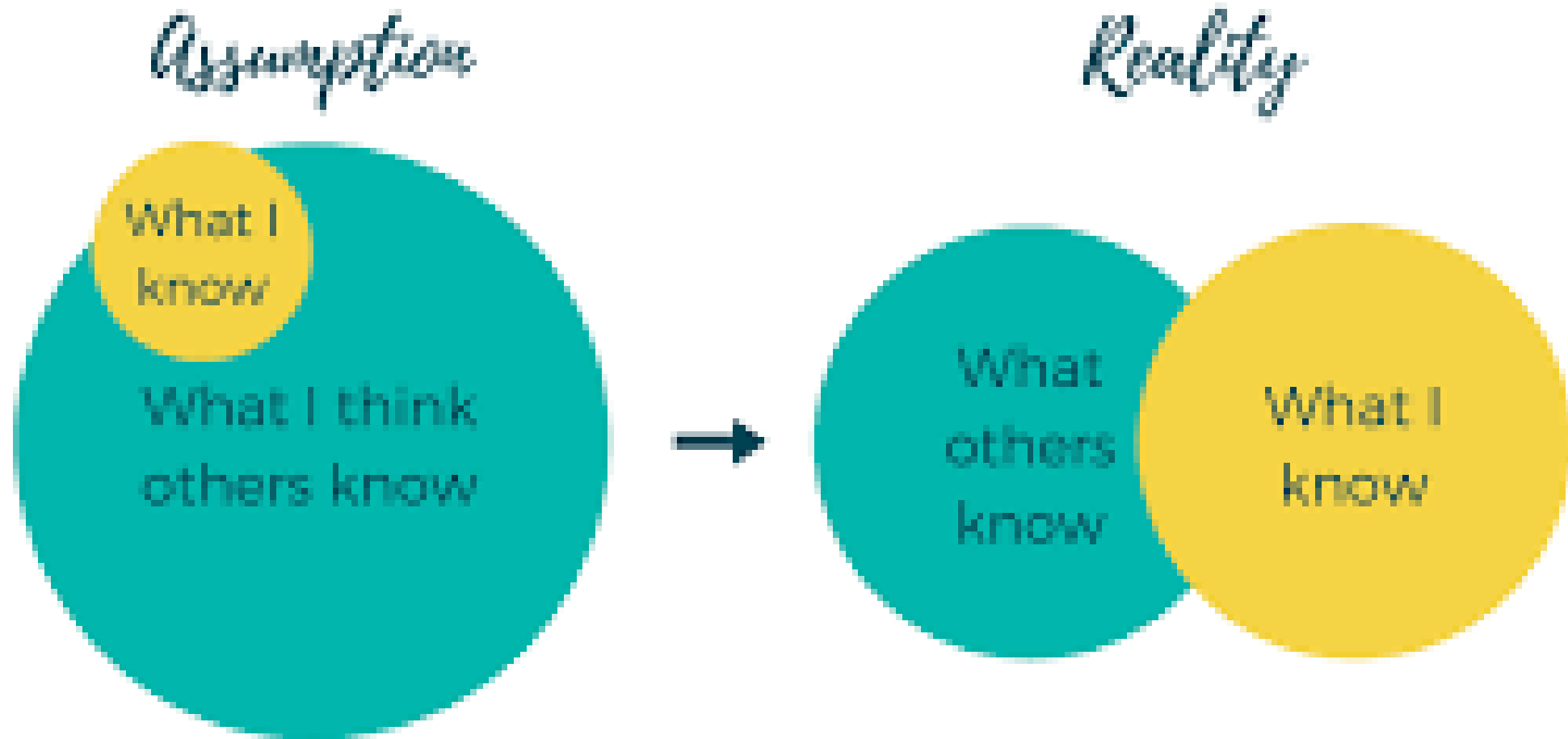
Thought is your enemy.

*No one can harm you
as much as an unwise thought.*

*No one can help you more
than wise thought."*



The Imposter Syndrome



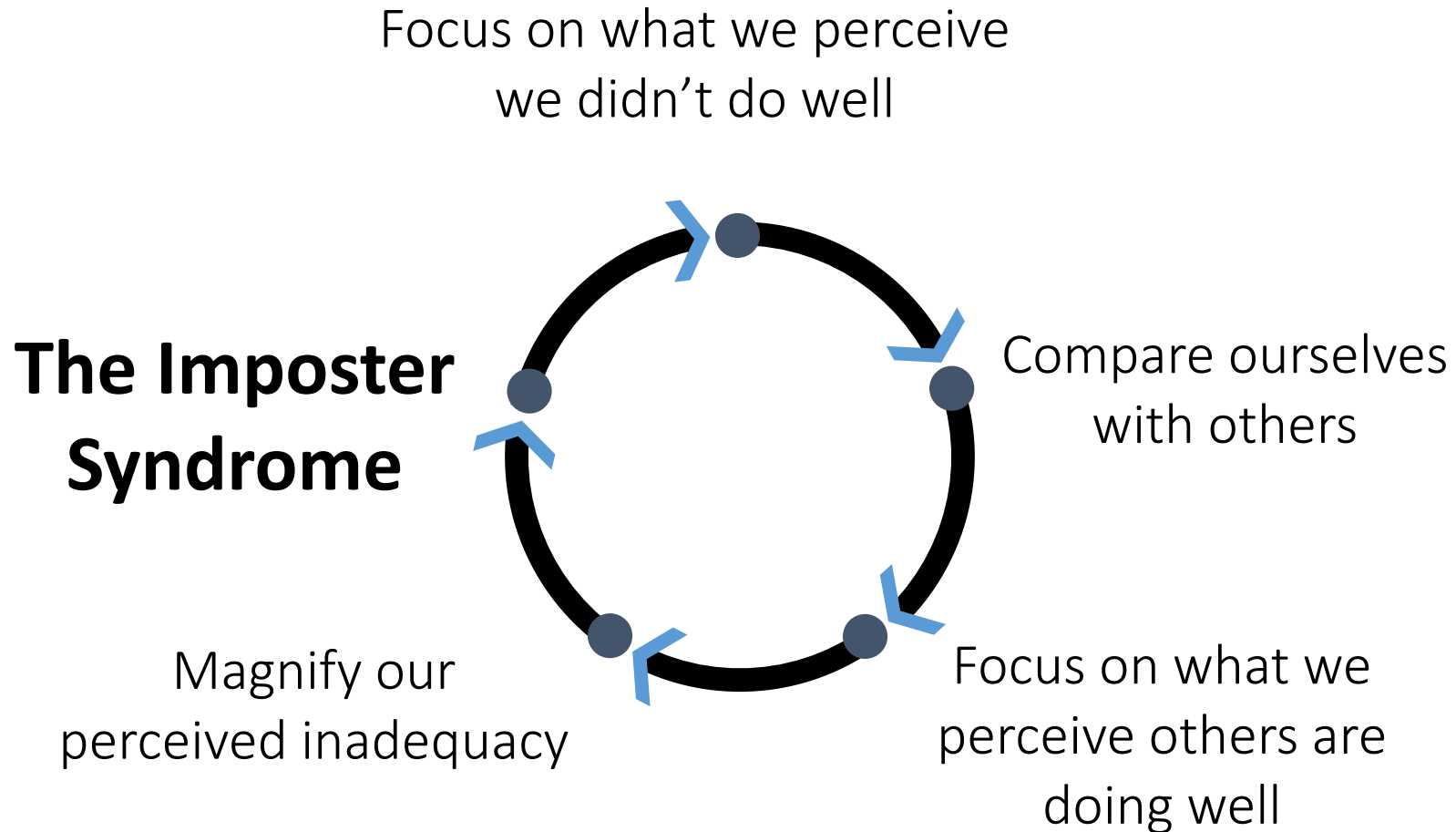
Resilience strategy #2: Work with your imposter beliefs

- What are your top imposter beliefs?
- Are these true?
- How do you know?
- How can you lean into your strengths to overcome these beliefs?

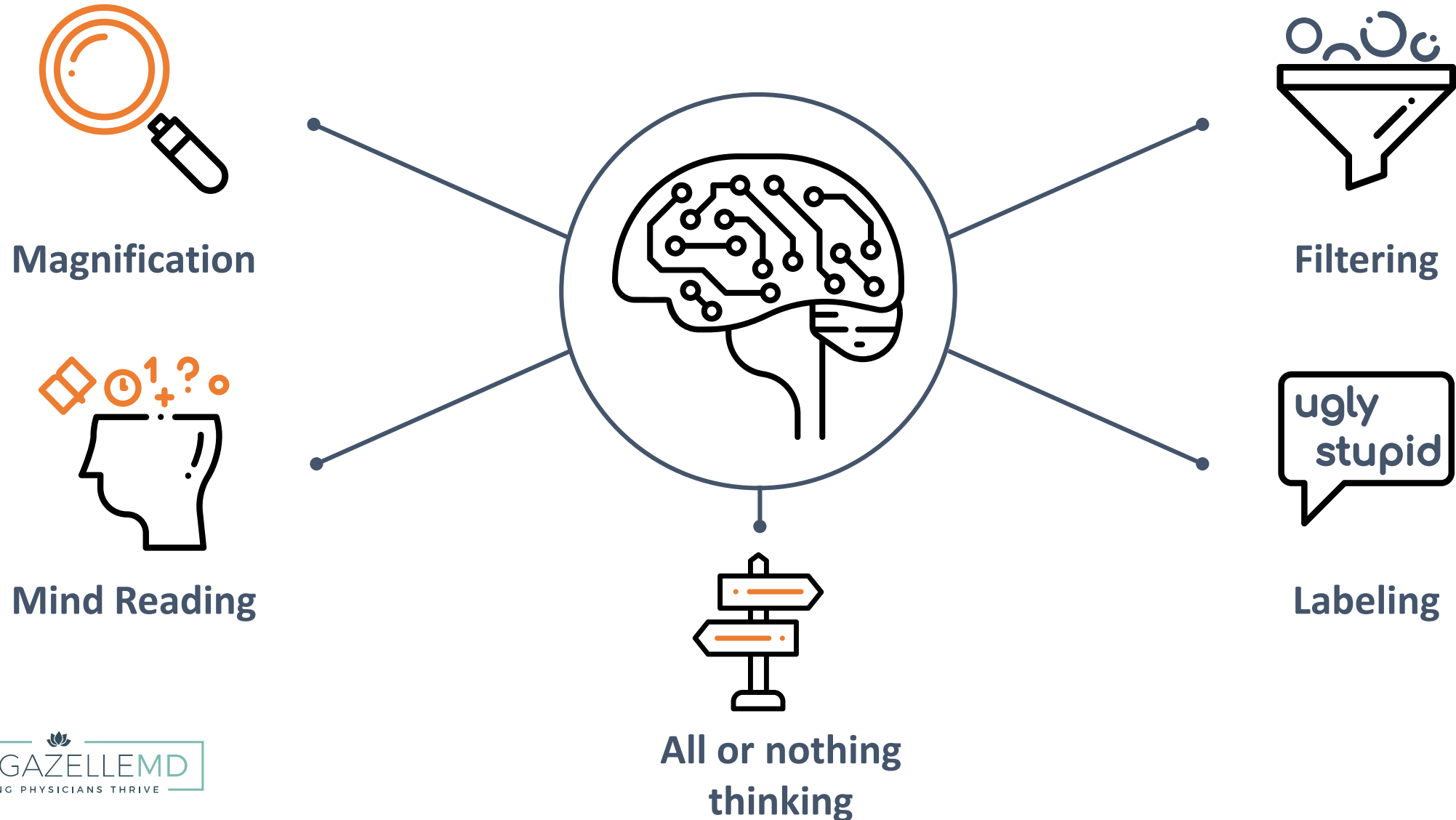


[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

Question your imposter beliefs



Learn your cognitive distortions



Association of an Educational Program in Mindful Communication With Burnout, Empathy, and Attitudes Among Primary Care Physicians

Michael S. Krasner, MD

Ronald M. Epstein, MD

Howard Beckman, MD

Anthony L. Suchman, MD, MA


Benjamin Chapman, PhD

Christopher J. Mooney, MA

Timothy E. Quill, MD

P RIMARY CARE PHYSICIANS REPORT alarming levels of professional and personal distress. Up to 60% of practicing physicians report symptoms of burnout,¹⁻⁴ defined as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (treating patients as objects), and low sense of accomplishment. Physician burnout has been linked to poorer quality of care, including patient dissatisfaction, increased medical errors, and lawsuits and decreased ability to express empathy.^{2,5-7} Substance abuse, automobile accidents, stress-related health problems, and marital and family discord are among the personal consequences reported.^{4,8-10} Burnout can occur early in the medical educational process. Nearly half of all third-year medical students report burnout^{2,11} and there are strong associations between medical student burnout and suicidal ideation.¹²

For editorial comment see p 1338.

 CME available online at www.jamaarchivescme.com and questions on p 1374.

Context Primary care physicians report high levels of distress, which is linked to burnout, attrition, and poorer quality of care. Programs to reduce burnout before it results in impairment are rare; data on these programs are scarce.

Objective To determine whether an intensive educational program in mindfulness, communication, and self-awareness is associated with improvement in primary care physicians' well-being, psychological distress, burnout, and capacity for relating to patients.

Design, Setting, and Participants Before-and-after study of 70 primary care physicians in Rochester, New York, in a continuing medical education (CME) course in 2007-2008. The course included mindfulness meditation, self-awareness exercises, narratives about meaningful clinical experiences, appreciative interviews, didactic material, and discussion. An 8-week intensive phase (2.5 h/wk, 7-hour retreat) was followed by a 10-month maintenance phase (2.5 h/mo).

Main Outcome Measures Mindfulness (2 subscales), burnout (3 subscales), empathy (3 subscales), psychosocial orientation, personality (5 factors), and mood (6 subscales) measured at baseline and at 2, 12, and 15 months.

Results Over the course of the program and follow-up, participants demonstrated improvements in mindfulness (raw score, 45.2 to 54.1; raw score change [Δ], 8.9; 95% confidence interval [CI], 7.0 to 10.8); burnout (emotional exhaustion, 26.8 to 20.0; Δ = -6.8; 95% CI, -4.8 to -8.8; depersonalization, 8.4 to 5.9; Δ = -2.5; 95% CI, -1.4 to -3.6; and personal accomplishment, 40.2 to 42.6; Δ = 2.4; 95% CI, 1.2 to 3.6); empathy (116.6 to 121.2; Δ = 4.6; 95% CI, 2.2 to 7.0); physician belief scale (76.7 to 72.6; Δ = -4.1; 95% CI, -1.8 to -6.4); total mood disturbance (33.2 to 16.1; Δ = -17.1; 95% CI, -11 to -23.2), and personality (conscientiousness, 6.5 to 6.8; Δ = 0.3; 95% CI, 0.1 to 0.5 and emotional stability, 6.1 to 6.6; Δ = 0.5; 95% CI, 0.3 to 0.7). Improvements in mindfulness were correlated with improvements in total mood disturbance (r = -0.39, P < .001), perspective taking subscale of physician empathy (r = 0.31, P < .001), burnout (emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment subscales, r = -0.32 and 0.33, respectively; P < .001), and personality factors (conscientiousness and emotional stability, r = 0.29 and 0.25, respectively; P < .001).

Conclusions Participation in a mindful communication program was associated with short-term and sustained improvements in well-being and attitudes associated with patient-centered care. Because before-and-after designs limit inferences about intervention effects, these findings warrant randomized trials involving a variety of practicing physicians.

JAMA. 2009;302(12):1284-1293

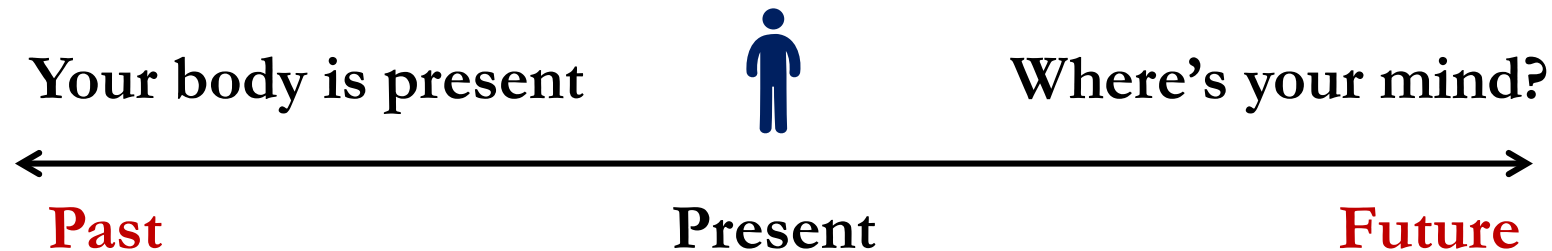
www.jama.com

The consequences of burnout among practicing physicians include not only poorer quality of life and lower quality of care but also a decline in the sta-

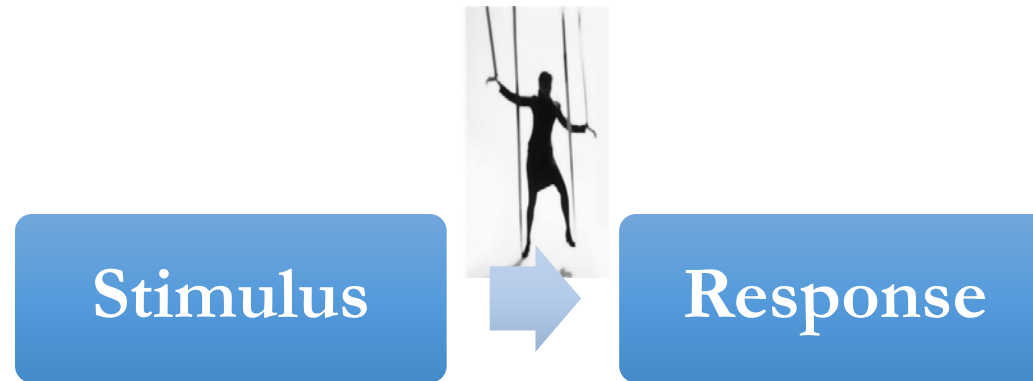
Author Affiliations are listed at the end of this article. Corresponding Author: Michael S. Krasner, MD, Department of Medicine, University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, Olan Medical Group, 2400 S Clinton Ave, Bldg H, #230, Rochester, NY 14618 (michael_krasner@umc.rochester.edu).

Mindlessness

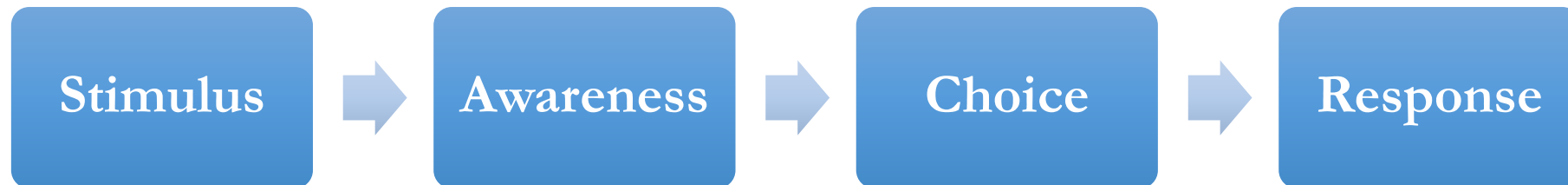
- On autopilot
- Lack of awareness of what's happening right in front of us
- Focus is on the past or future
- Stuck, rigid, judgmental
- Reactivity rather than poised professional response



Without mindfulness:



With mindfulness:



Mindfulness benefits

- Shrinks size of the amygdala
- Decreases signs of aging of neurons
- Decreases blood pressure
- Minimizes chronic depression recurrence

Lazar SW et al. Neuroreport. 2005.

Epel E et al. Annals New York Acad of Sc. 2009.

Fox K, et al. Neurosc and Behav Reviews. 2014.



Resilience pillars

1. Connection
2. Perseverance
3. Flexibility
4. **Self-regulation**
5. **Positivity**
6. Self-care

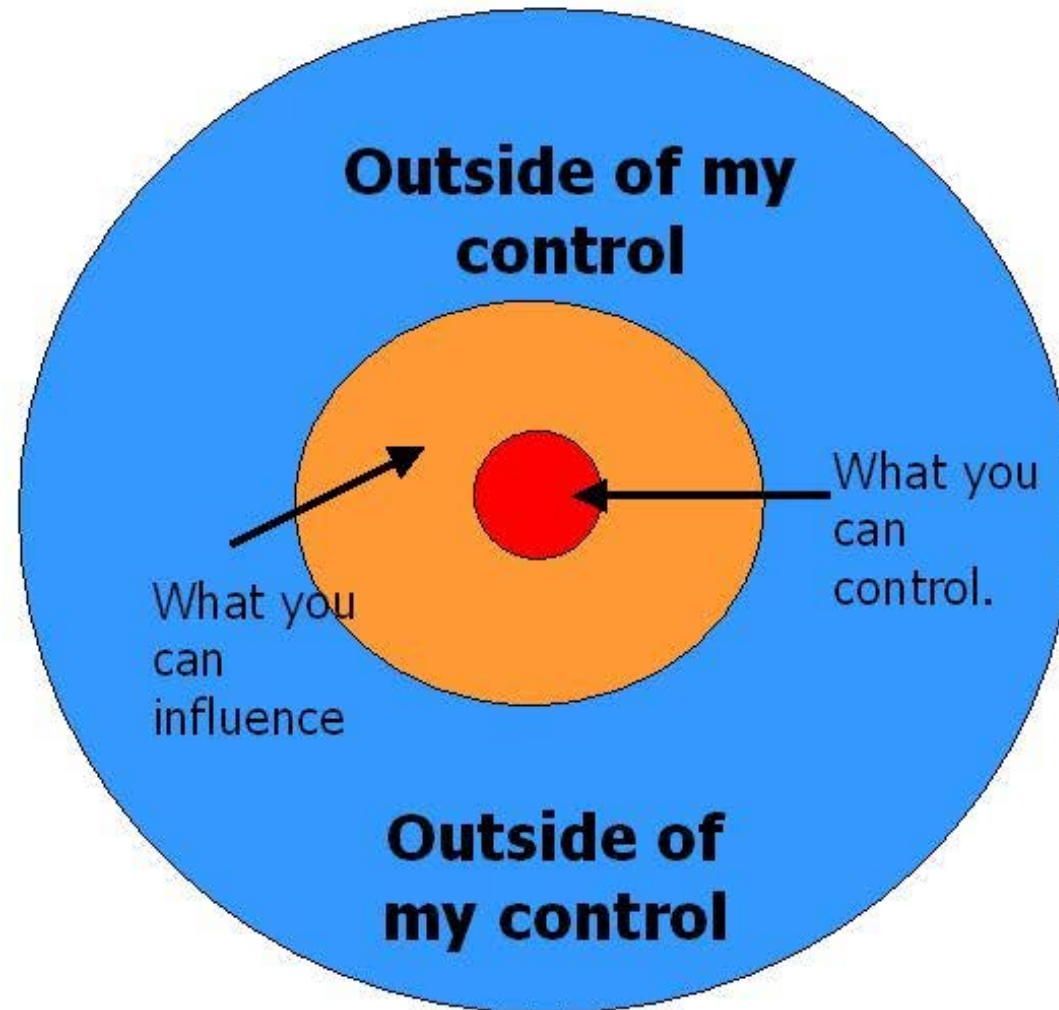




Resilience strategy #3: Build self-regulation and positivity with gratitude



The 3 Spheres of Control



Bonus resilience
strategy:
Let go of things that are
beyond your control



Resilience pillars

1. Connection
2. Perseverance
3. Flexibility
4. Self-regulation
5. Positivity
6. **Self-care**



Resilience strategy #4: Build compassion for yourself

“What would you say to a friend or family member who was struggling in the same way?”

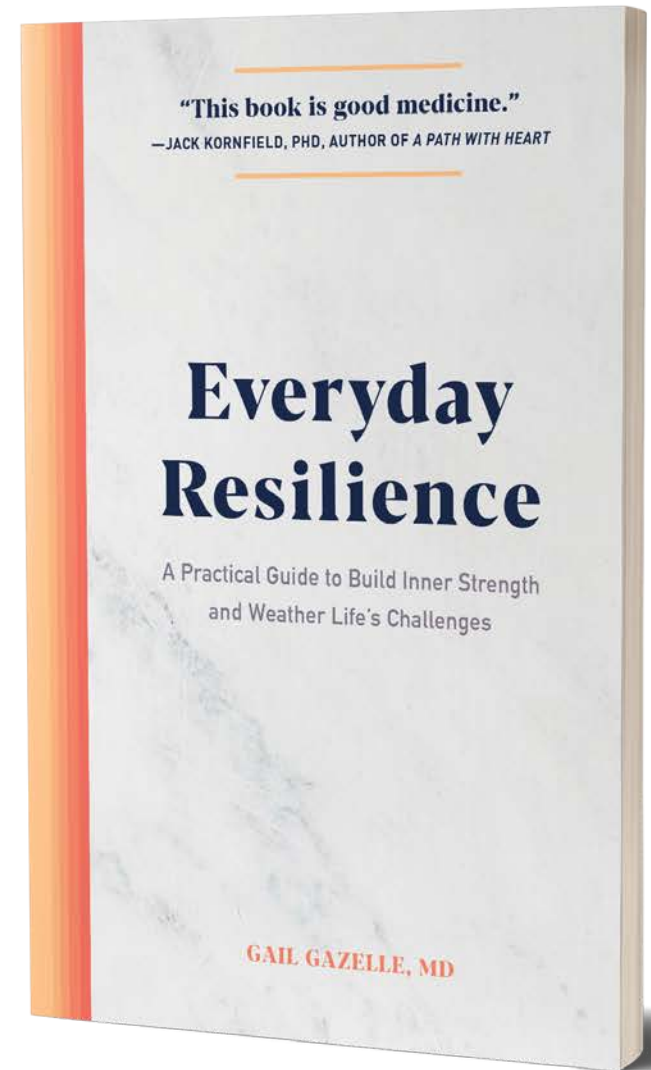
Kristin Neff, PhD



Download a free chapter
of Dr. Gazelle's new book
Everyday Resilience.

*A Practical Guide to
Build Inner Strength and
Weather Life's Challenges*

[https://www.gailgazelle.com/resilience-
book/](https://www.gailgazelle.com/resilience-book/)



Get Dr. Gazelle's free mindfulness mini course for anyone in healthcare

- Spending less than 10 minutes/day, learn about mindfulness and get started meditating
- Get started at <https://www.gailgazelle.com/doc-sign-up/>



In summary...

Building resilience strategies:

1. Focus on your strengths
2. Utilize mindfulness
3. Grow your gratitude
4. Build self-compassion



Let's connect



Join the Facebook Everyday Resilience group!

For further information about mindfulness, resilience, coaching, or related topics, contact Dr. Gazelle at info@gailgazelle.com.



@GailGazelleMD



@GailGazelleMD



@GailGazelleMD