



FORDHAM UNIVERSITY
THE JESUIT UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK



**MASSACHUSETTS
GENERAL HOSPITAL**

RESILIENCY THROUGH STRESS MANAGEMENT AND LIFESTYLE MODIFICATION SKILLS

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My Story



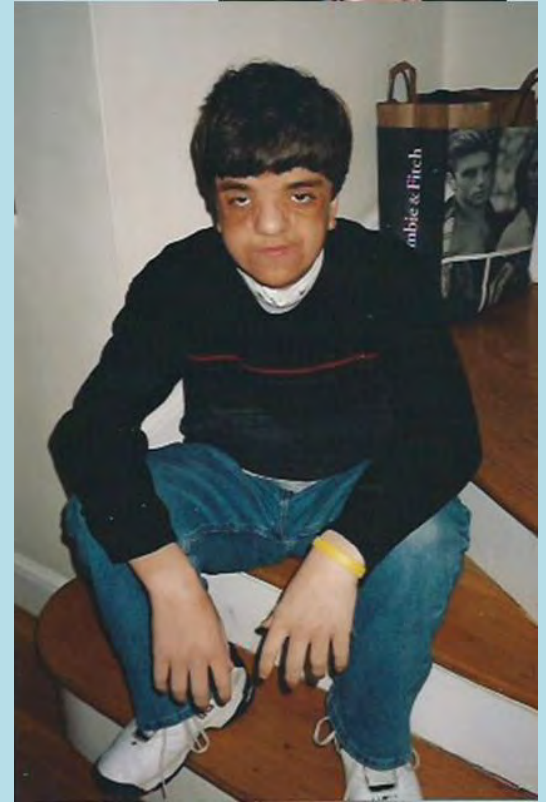
My Story



My Story



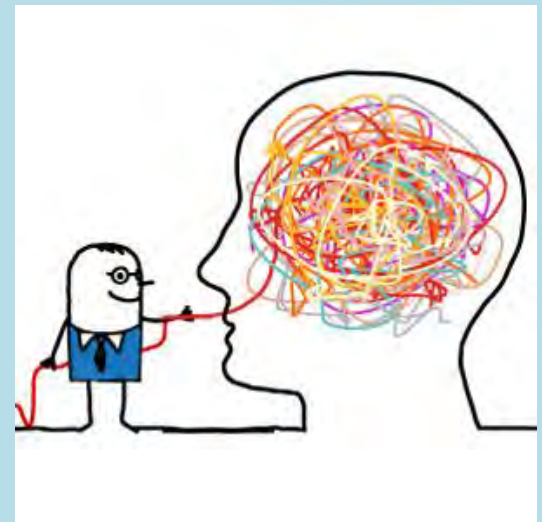
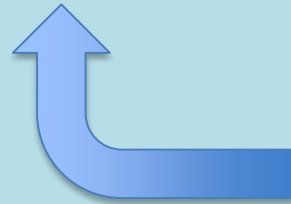
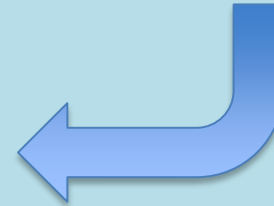
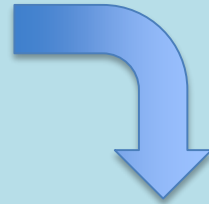
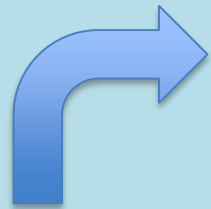
My Story



My Story



My Story



My Story



- **What is resiliency?**
- **What are the benefits of resiliency?**
- **Strategies to become more resilient:**
 - **Stress management skills**
 - **Lifestyle modification skills**
- **How can we implement resiliency skills into our lives?**

WHAT IS RESILIENCY?



The ability to bounce back when faced with difficulties.



Resiliency

- The ability to overcome adversity and maintain healthy physical and emotional functioning.
- Factors associated with resiliency:
 - Adaptive behaviors
 - Problem solving
 - Optimism
 - Positive social functioning
 - Coping that elicits positive emotions

- **BENEFITS OF RESILIENCY:**

- * Improved well-being (mental and physical health)

- * Improved adjustment to NF symptoms and uncertainty

- * Improved health and happiness



Resiliency and Neurofibromatosis

Resiliency and Neurofibromatoses

- Neurofibromatoses:
 - Rare diseases
 - Tumor growth on skin (NF1), spine (SCH) and vestibular nerves (NF2)
 - Symptoms: disfiguration, pain, hearing loss/deafness, palsy, impaired QOL, social isolation and depression.
 - Biomedical treatment: surgeries and drug.

The biopsychosocial model of disease

My long-term health conditions are biological in origin, but the impact has been felt physically, psychologically and socially. My long-term health condition can't be treated just through the biological medical model alone. . . .



pathology
disease
symptoms
science
doctors
tests
treatments

depression
guilt
identity
tears
stress
anxiety

hobbies
isolation
career
burden
family
money
friends

“The medical support keeps me alive, but it is the psychological and social support that enables me to live.”

RESILIENCY THROUGH STRESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS

RESILIENCY THROUGH STRESS AND SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT SKILLS

3 MAIN CATEGORIES OF RESILIENCY SKILLS:

- Relaxation Response Skills
- Stress/symptom appraisal and coping
- Positive psychology skills

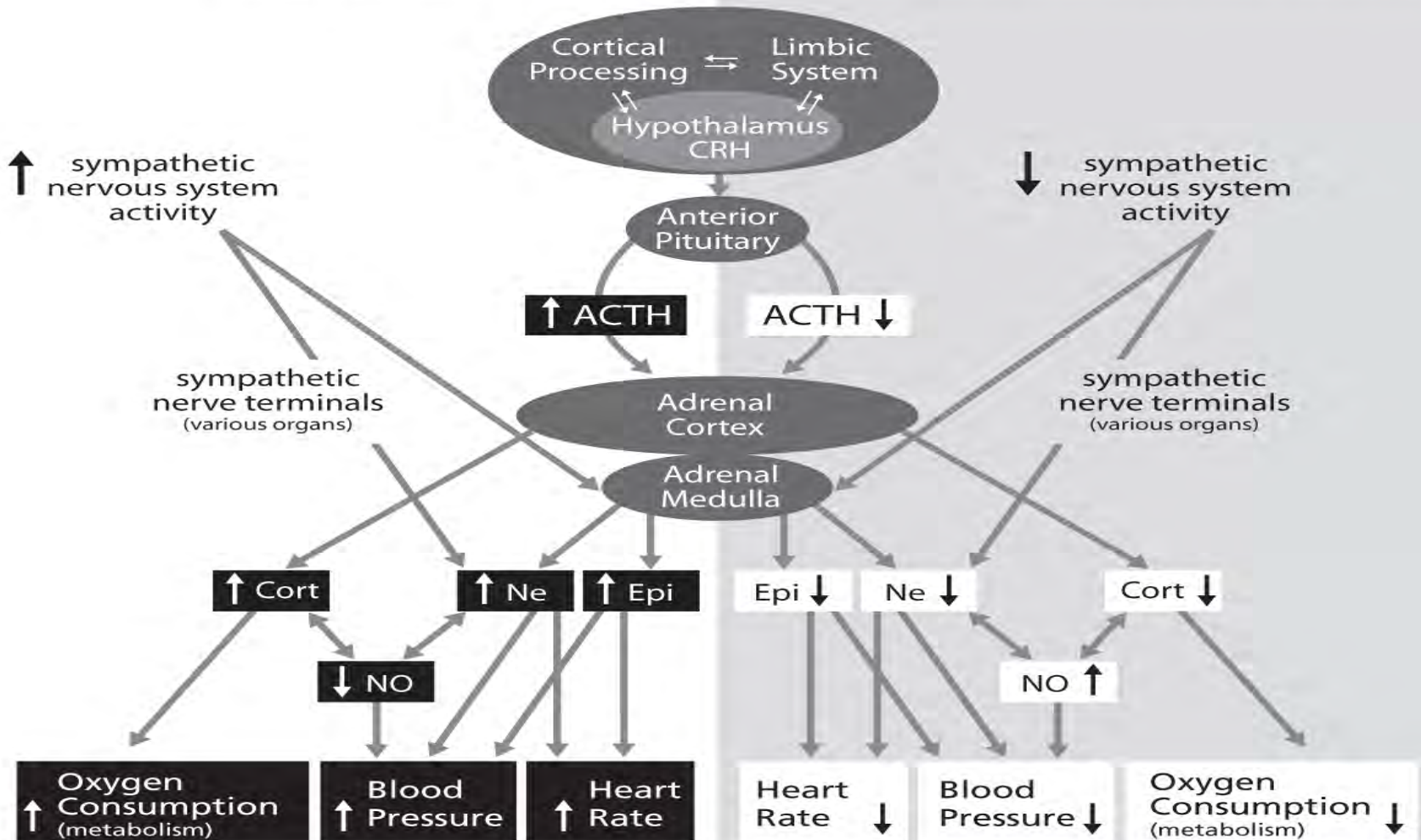
Relaxation Response Skills

STRESS RESPONSE

(Involuntary/reflexive)

RELAXATION RESPONSE

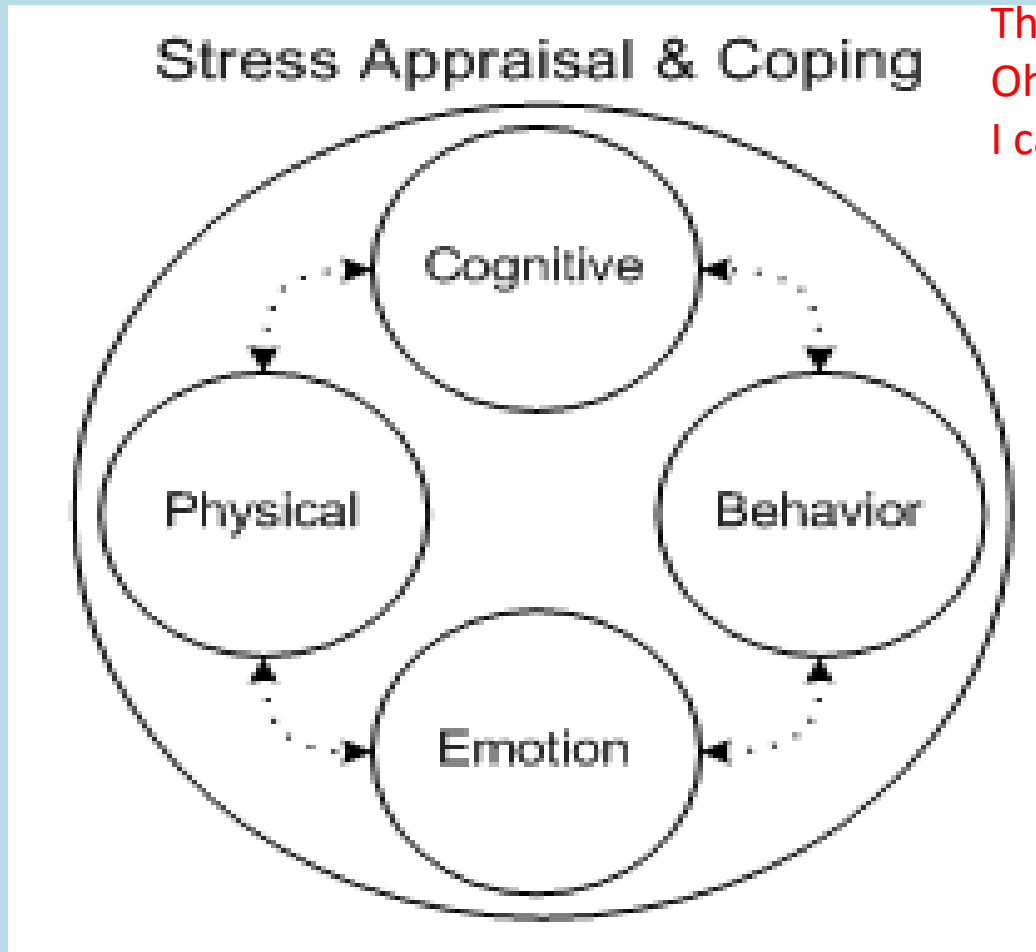
(Requires conscious elicitation and repeated practice)



Relaxation Response Methods

- Breathing exercises – deep and slow breath vs rapid and short breaths.
- Guided meditations – various themes
- Single pointed meditations – focus on an anchor (breath, image, word) and return mind to it when it wanders.
- Apps: Insight Timer; Headspace; Calm

Stress Appraisal and Coping



This is not fair
Oh, this will get worse
I can't stand it

Oh, here it is
again
It will be OK

I am too sick to go
out

I am going to go
out anyway

Anxiety, Anger,
Sadness

Improved
mood

Pain

Pain

PAIN

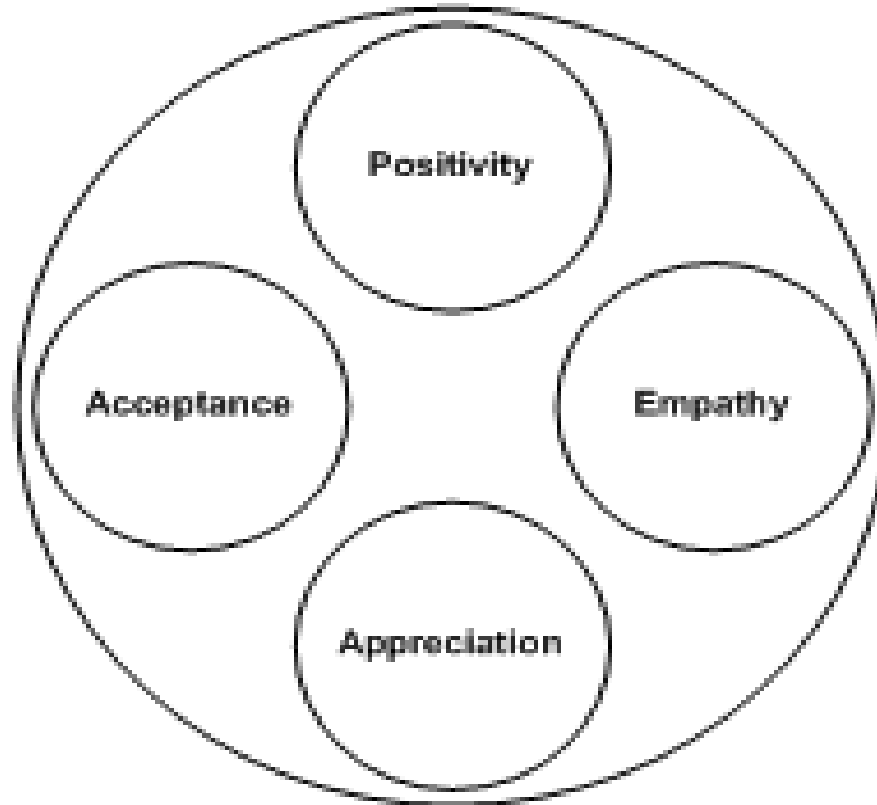
COGNITIVE REFRAMING

- **Questions to ask yourself:**
 - Is this thought true?
 - Is this thought helping me feel better?
 - What would I tell a friend?
 - Is there a different way I can think about this?
 - Is there a different explanation?
 - Am I being too tough on myself?



Positive Psychology

Growth Enhancement



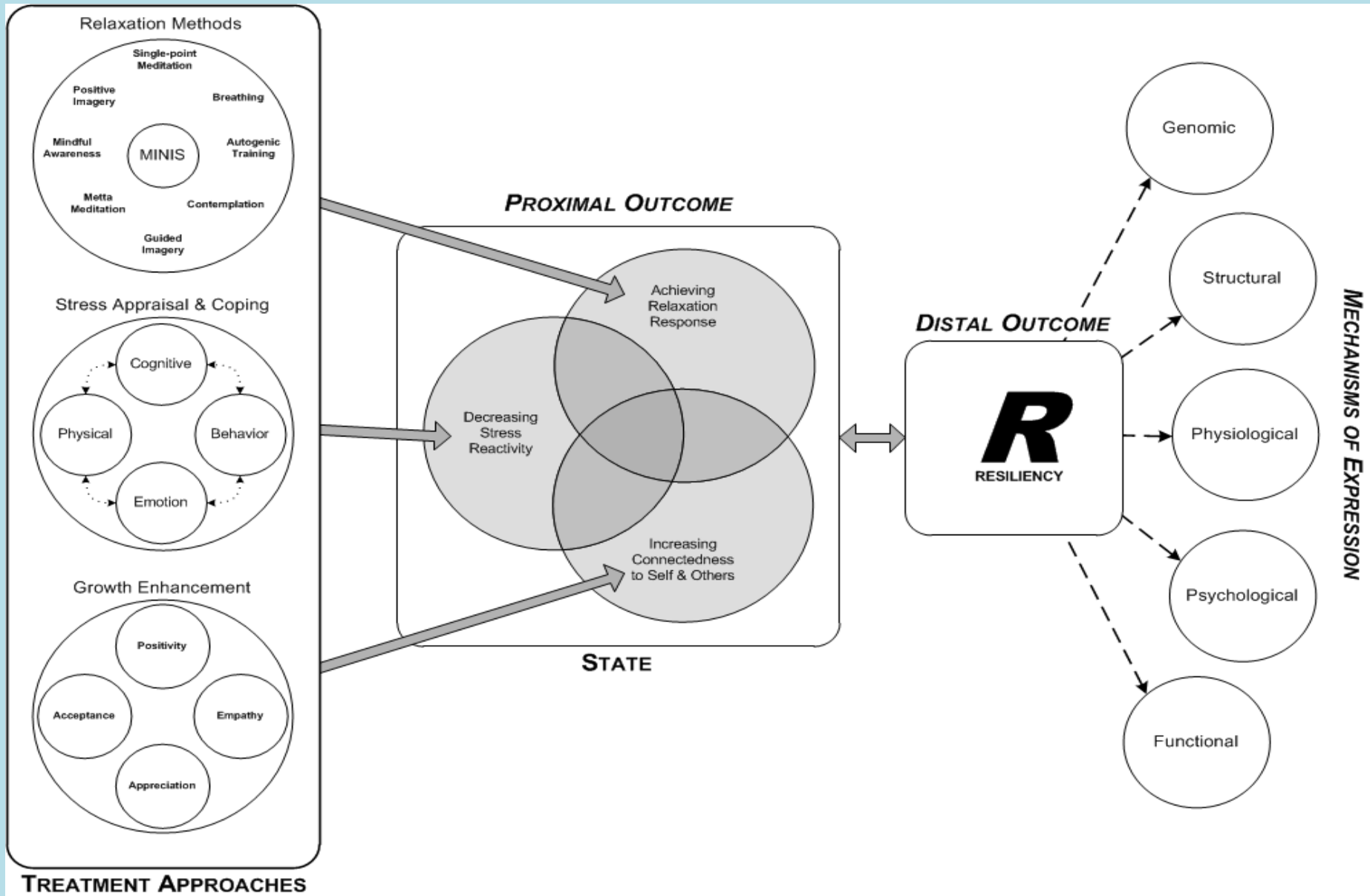
Optimism
Humor

Integrate into life
Find meaning

Toward self
Toward others

Gratitude

Overall Program



RESILIENCY THROUGH BEHAVIORAL
MODIFICATIONS/LIFESTYLE CHANGES

What are Lifestyle Factors?

- Smoking
- Substance Use (e.g., Alcohol)
- Diet
- Physical Activity
- Sleep

Benefits of Lifestyle Changes

- Lifestyle factors are associated with noncommunicable diseases:
 - Cancer; Diabetes; Cardiovascular Disease; Stroke
 - Responsible for 60% of our risk for premature death.
- Lifestyle changes:
 - Decrease inflammation and wear and tear on the body
 - Improve lifespan, quality of life, and well being
 - Allows one to focus on what is within control rather than on what is outside of control.

SMART Goals



SMART Goals

- Specific
 - Goal should be simple and clearly defined
 - “I want to get healthy” is a general goal
 - “I want to begin an exercise plan” is a specific goal



SMART Goals

- Measurable
 - Provides a metric by which to evaluate whether the goal has been accomplished:
 - “I want to exercise more” is not a measurable goal
 - “I want to walk for 30 minutes 3 times per week” is a measurable goal



SMART Goals

- Attainable
 - Should balance challenge with current resources (e.g., knowledge, skills) to achieve the goal
 - Larger goals that are not initially attainable might be broken into smaller, more attainable goals
 - This sets the pt up for a series of continued successes, which enhances motivation and self-efficacy



SMART Goals

- Realistic
 - Should anticipate and plan for barriers to success:
 - “I’m going to walk outside for 30 minutes every day” is not realistic in the winter for patients with mobility concerns or long work hours
 - “I’m going to take the stairs to the 3rd floor in my office building instead of taking the elevator” might be a more realistic way of increasing daily activity

SMART Goals

- Time limited
 - Larger goals may need to be broken into smaller with defined time periods:
 - “I want to lose 50 pounds” might be an overall goal that is not time limited
 - “I want to lose an average of 1 pound per week for 3 months” is a time limited goal



Tracking/Logging

- App-Based
 - On smartphones, throughout the day
 - On open ended note or download specific apps
 - E.g., myfitnesspal



HOW TO START?

- Pick one skill:
 - What is the most important thing?
- Set a SMART goal
- Pick another skill after you have made the first one a “habit” or you achieved your goal.
- Be flexible – forming new habits is hard.
- Be aware – change is happening even when you do not notice it.

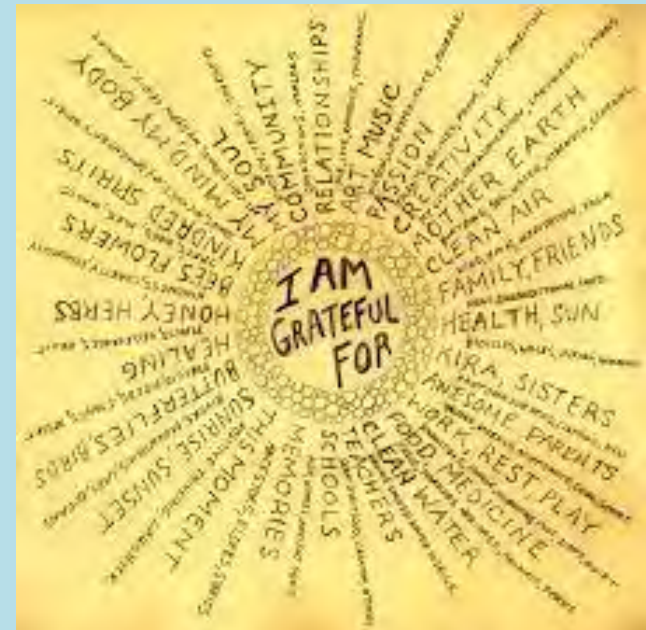


SIMPLE RESILIENCY SKILLS

Simple Resiliency Skills

1. Gratitude:

- Take 5 minutes every day to think of 3 things that you are grateful for
- Notice positive things around you
- Thank people who help you



Simple Resiliency Skills

2. Cognitive Awareness:

- Pay attention to your thoughts....but not too much.



Simple Resiliency Skills

3. Emotional Awareness:

- Pay attention to the ebb and flow of emotions



NOTICE:

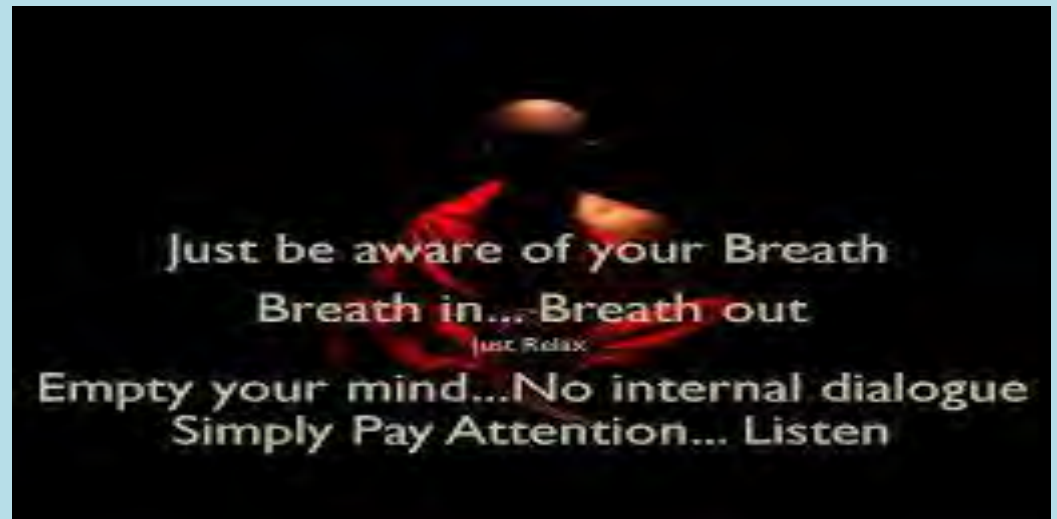
NAME IT:

LET IT BE:

Simple Resiliency Skills

4. Mindfulness:

- Pay attention to your breath
- Helpful apps:
 - Insight Timer (free).
 - Headspace.
 - Calm.



Simple Resiliency Skills

5. Social Support:

- Develop and use your support network



Simple Resiliency Skills

6. Intention:

- Develop a sense of purpose/meaning:
 - Engage in an activity
 - Work toward getting better
 - Develop positive attitude toward challenges



Conclusions:

- We all can learn to become more resilient in coping with stress and medical symptoms
- The brain is the most malleable organ of the body.
- We can improve our health and wellbeing by taking advantage of neuroplasticity and epigenetics.
 - Stress and symptom management skills
 - Lifestyle changes/behavioral modification skills.
- To start: pick one skill, make it habit, and then pick another one...



Resiliency for NF Study

A research project to enhance stress and symptom management

Are you feeling stressed? Are your NF symptoms bothersome?

The Family Center for Neurofibromatosis and the Integrated Brain Health Clinical and Research Program (IBHCRP) at the Massachusetts General Hospital are conducting a research study to compare 2 programs that teach stress and symptom management skills for adults with NF1, NF2, or schwannomatosis. The Department of Defense is paying for this study.

What does the study involve?

- 8 group sessions led by an MGH psychologist with expertise in NF.
- Completion of questionnaires on your own computer at the beginning, end, 6 months and 12 months after the sessions.
- All sessions will take place from your home, using Vidyo, a secure software program you can use with a computer and a webcam to have live video-conferences, that we will help you install for free.
- Sessions are 1.5 hours long and held once a week.
- This study DOES NOT involve taking medication.
- This study DOES NOT involve travel to MGH.

Who can participate?

We are looking for people ages 18 and older who have a diagnosis of neurofibromatosis 1 (NF1), neurofibromatosis 2 (NF2), or schwannomatosis.

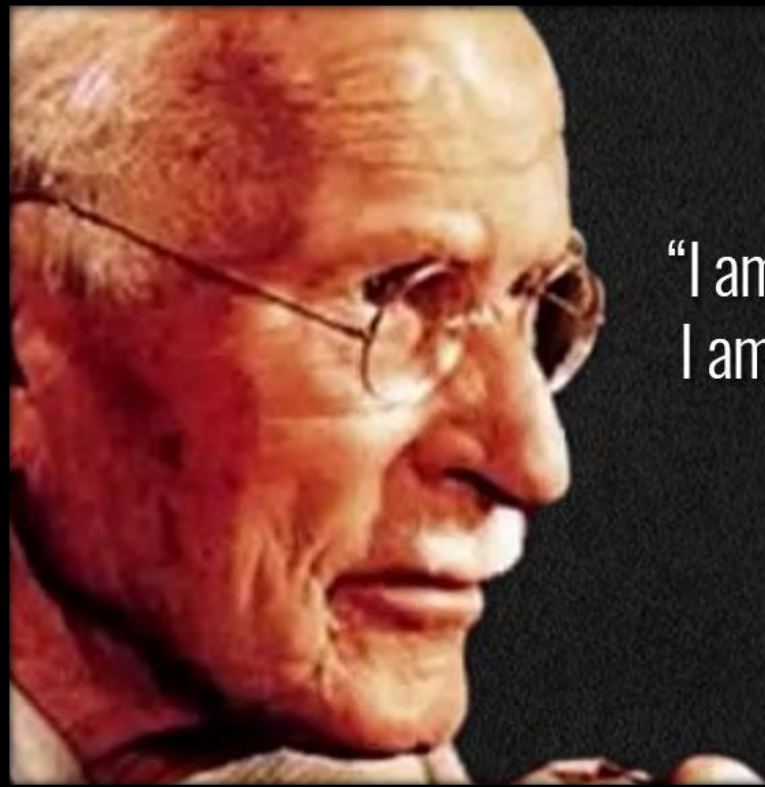
What are the benefits?

If you participate in this research study, you will learn stress and symptom management skills that you can continue to use after the study. You will also interact with other adults with NF like yourself. There is no cost to participate in this study and your decision to participate will not affect your medical care.

How do I join?

If you would like to learn more about this research study, please contact the study coordinator, [Sofia DiStefano, Sofia DiStefano, \[sdistefano1@mg.harvard.edu\]\(mailto:sdistefano1@mg.harvard.edu\)](mailto:Sofia.DiStefano@mg.harvard.edu), or the principal investigator, Ana-Maria Vranceanu, avranceanu@mg.harvard.edu.

Thank you for considering our research study! You will be helping us gather important information about a training that may help other patients in the future.



“I am not what **happened** to me,
I am what I **choose** to become.”

Carl Jung

THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?