



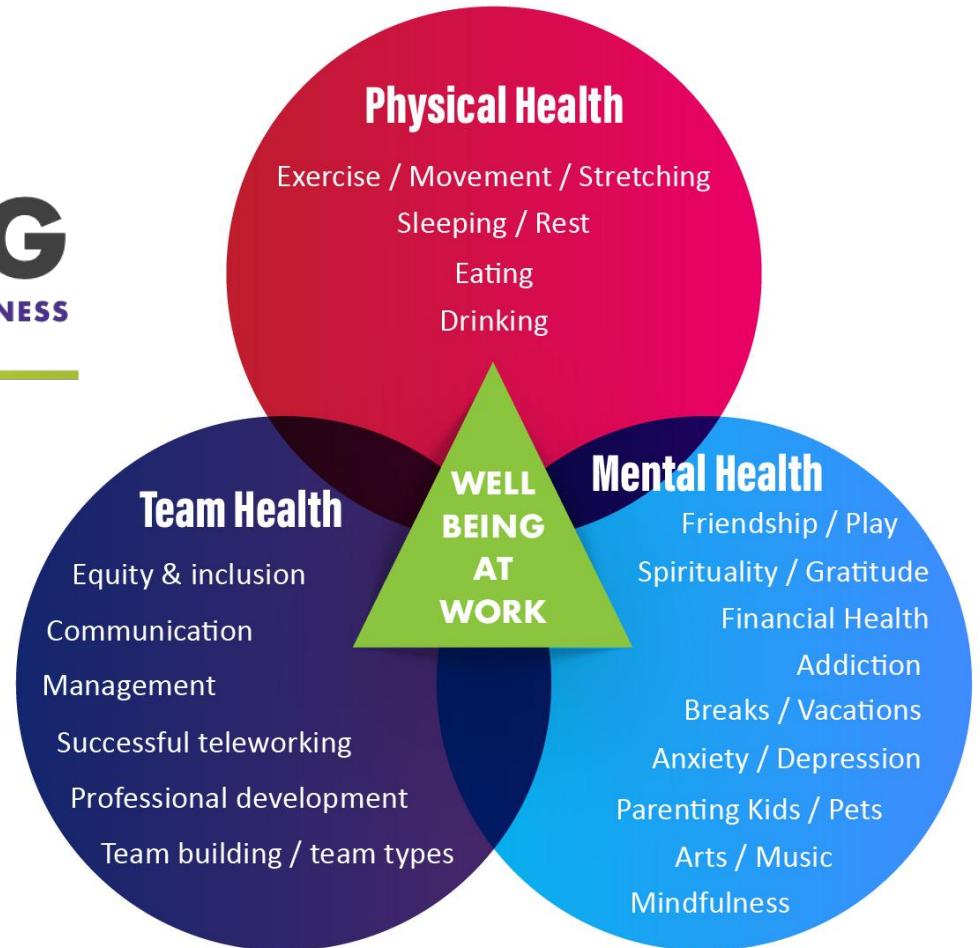
# Seven stress solutions for mentally-resilient work teams

Susan Comfort



[www.NonprofitComfort.com](http://www.NonprofitComfort.com)

## COHORT-BASED PROJECTS



# VUCA world

**Volatile**  
**Uncertain**  
**Complex**  
**Ambiguous**



100% of humans  
experience stress.

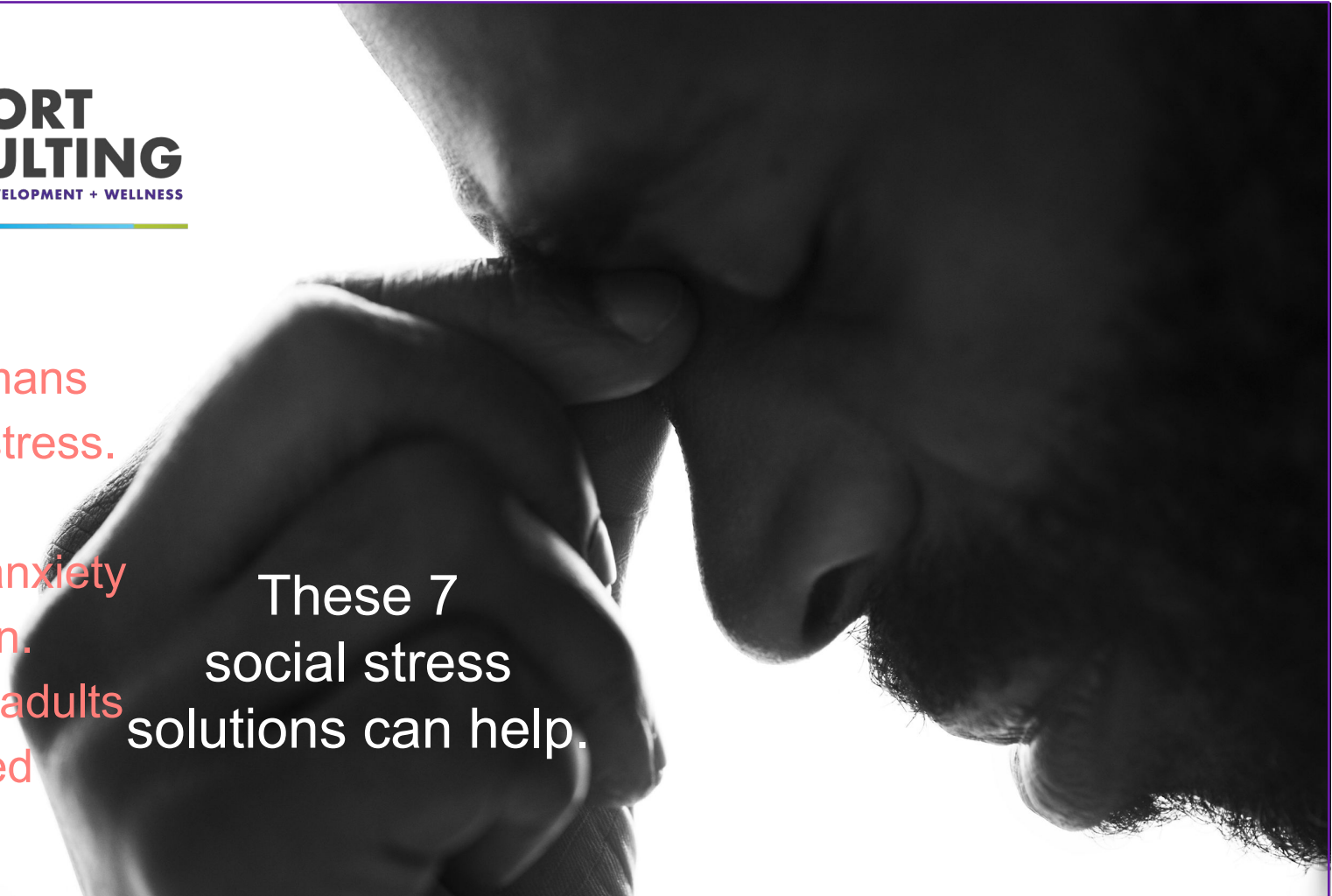
30-60%

experience anxiety  
or depression.

15% of U.S. adults  
are diagnosed

(a/d).

These 7  
social stress  
solutions can help.



# SOME STRESS LESS

The more layers, the more stress

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Nonprofit worker, Low-income,  
Female, Person of color, LGBTQ,  
Chronic illness, Immigrant,  
Caretaker, Religious minority,  
ACE exposure, Secondary  
trauma ...



# STRESS IS NATURAL

How do we react to stress?

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How do you “complete your stress cycle?” (Nagoski twins, Burnout)

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# WE'RE AUTOMATIC

Do you know the language of your autonomic nervous system?

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Develop Your Stress Rx

Lower cortisol = fewer health problems



## WE'RE PREDICTABLE

We experience daily cycles of mood, stress and productivity.

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Dan Pink says “2:55 pm is the least productive time of day”

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Goal: to be in calm, receptive, safe mode most of the time.





## 3 NERVOUS SYSTEM MODES

**“Fight or flight”**      Hyper-arousal;  
Stress, no learning

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**“Rest & Digest”** or  
**“Safe & Social”**      Comfort Zone, where  
learning can happen

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**“Freeze”**      Hypo-arousal;  
Numb, no learning



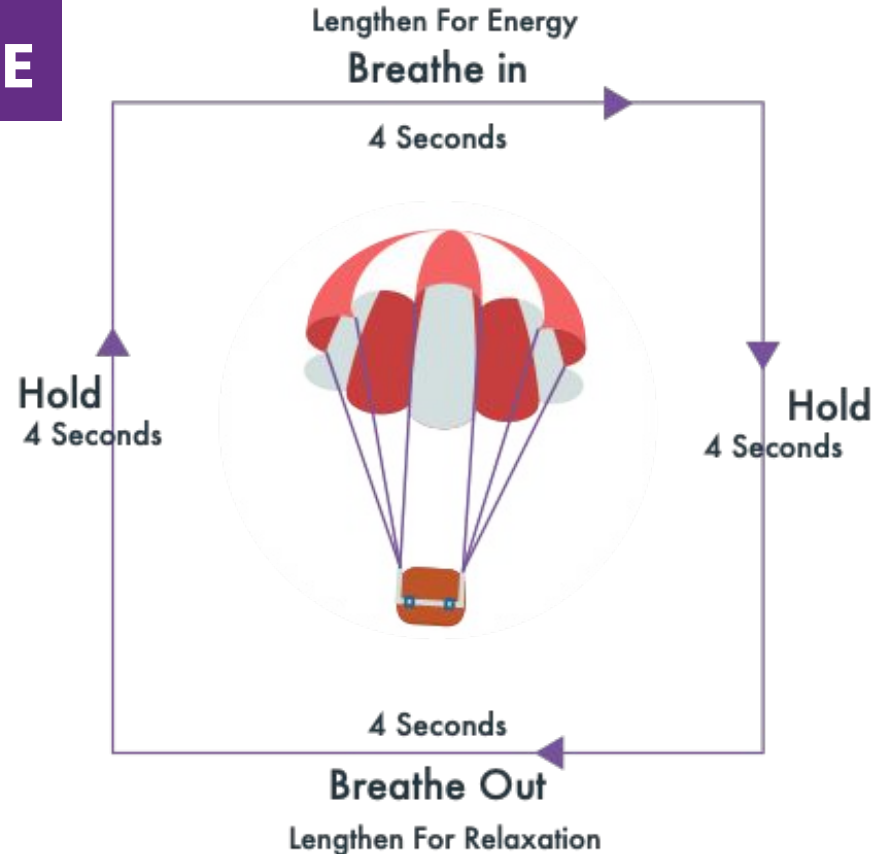
## SPEAKING OUR OWN LANGUAGE

Use “tactical” or “box” breathing

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Breathing speaks the language  
of your nervous system.

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## STRESS-RELIEF SKILLS TO PRACTICE

**Visual,  
perform or  
crafty arts**

**Listening/  
playing  
music**

**Sleep /  
Rest**

**Taking  
breaks in  
nature**

**Planning  
vacations**

**Pleasure  
principle**

**Friendship**

**Laughter /  
Smiling**

**Exercise**

**Dance**

**Hydration**

**Nutrition**

**Animal  
love**

**Family /  
Kids**

**Mindful  
practice**

**Play /  
Joy**

**Spirituality**

**Gratitude**



## Medication PRESCRIPTION

 @NonprofitWellness  
 [www.nonprofitwellness.org](http://www.nonprofitwellness.org)

### DOSAGE

Family / Kids

Dance

Spirituality

Mindfulness

Pleasure Principle

Friendships

Play / Joy

Exercise

Gratitude

Planning Vacations

Sleep / Rest

Laughter / Smiling

Taking Breaks, esp in Nature

Visual or Performing Arts

Listening to or playing Music

Hydration / Nutrition

Crafting

Animal Love



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**nonprofit  
wellness**

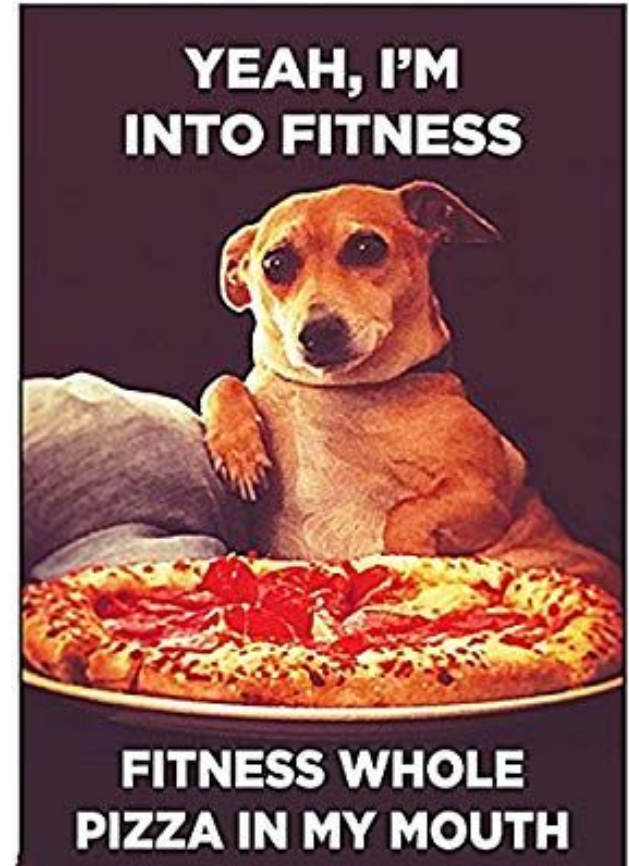
## STRESS-RELIEF SKILLS TO PRACTICE

# 1. LAUGHTER

Strengthens immunity, and your core.

Creates endorphins, which lower cortisol, even when you're faking it.

Endorphins also block physical pain, and ward off anxiety & depression.



## STRESS-RELIEF SKILLS TO PRACTICE

### 2. SPIRITUALITY, GRATITUDE

Invoke the relaxation response.

Spiritual communities are social  
& connect us to values/purpose.

Gratitude re-wires our “negativity  
bias.”



*Photo by Wisnu Widjojo @Wisnutin*



*Photo by Claudia Arango*



**“THE BRAIN IS LIKE VELCRO FOR NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES, AND TEFLON FOR POSITIVE ONES.”**

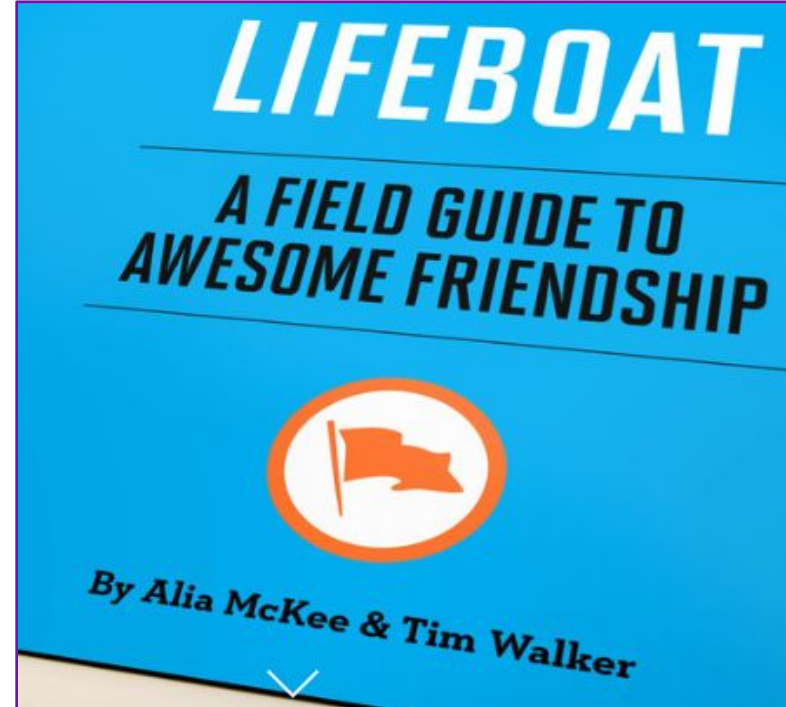
-- Dr. Rick Hanson

## STRESS-RELIEF SKILLS TO PRACTICE

### 3. FRIENDS & FAMILY

Who's in your Lifeboat?

*GetLifeboat.com*



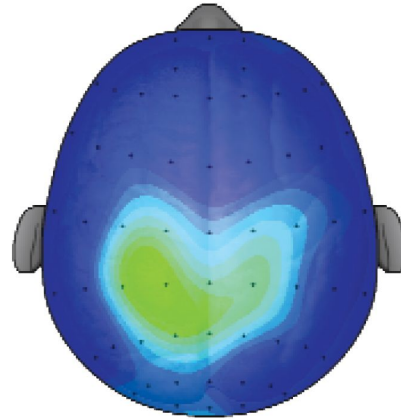


## STRESS-RELIEF SKILLS TO PRACTICE

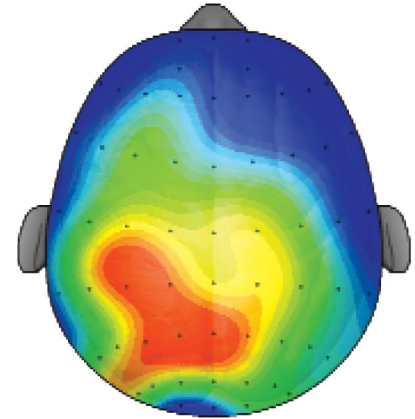
### 4. EXERCISE/DANCE

Effective in combating mild depression.

W/ buddy: you show up, go longer, go harder, and have more fun.



After 20 minutes of  
**Sitting Quietly**



After 20 minutes of  
**Walking**

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# Self - Medication PRESCRIPTION

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DOSAGE

Family / Kids

Dance

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Mindfulness

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Gratitude

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Laughter / Smiling

Taking Breaks, esp in Nature

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Animal Love

DOSAGE



## STRESS-RELIEF SKILLS TO PRACTICE

### 5. ADDICTIVE DISTRACTIONS

- Smartphones
- Alcohol
- Other drugs
- All can be addictive, unhealthy, and distracting. But tolerance is personal.



*Photo by @AnnieSpratt*

## STRESS-RELIEF SKILLS TO PRACTICE

### 6. BREAKS, VACATIONS, NATURE

5-minute breaks: “Take Five” talk

Plan-ticipate your vacations!

Get Vitamin N, or “shinrin-yoku”



## STRESS-RELIEF SKILLS TO PRACTICE

### 7. PET LOVE

Mental & physical health

Power of touch

Unconditional love



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DOSAGE



# BUILDING EFFECTIVE WORK-TEAMS



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@NonprofitWellness

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## Get Curious

1. How are you taking care of yourself?
2. Will this be a walking meeting?
3. Did you take a break yet today?
4. How can I support you?
5. What do you do for your mental health?
6. What makes you laugh?

## Get Coaching

1. Hire Comfort Consulting, or other coaches
2. Help each other (say “I need some coaching”)

## IN SUM...

1. Box breathe... and adjust as needed.
2. Laugh! (Fake it 'til you make it!)
3. Practice spirituality & gratitude
4. Exercise with others
5. Focus on a few friends & family
6. Avoid addictive distractions
7. Take breaks/vacations; enjoy nature
8. Love on those pets



## BUILDING MORE EFFECTIVE WORK-TEAMS

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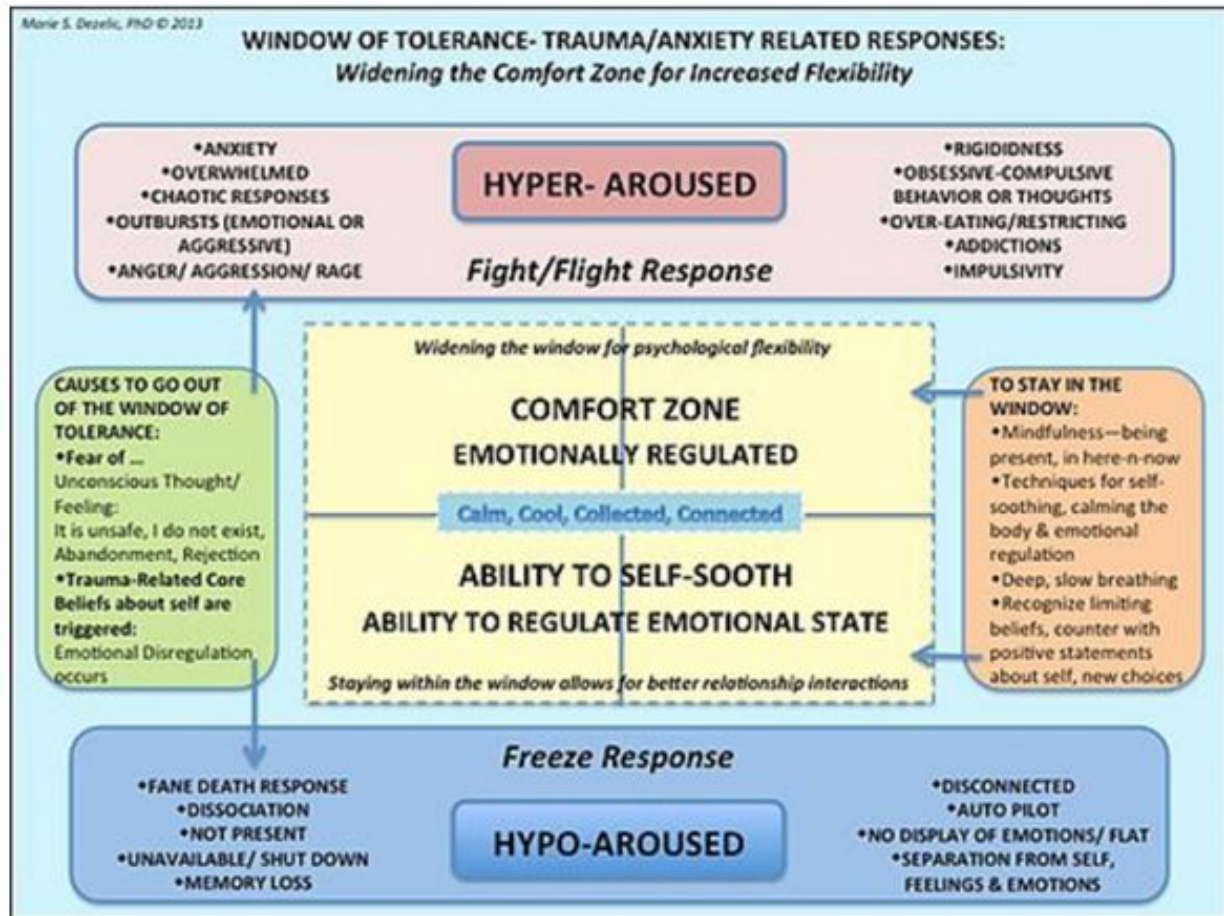


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# Polyvagal theory



# WHY THIS?

We want to bring our best selves to work.

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Strong relationships matter for mental health (and at work they prevent turnover).

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Culture of well-being supports teams, builds relationships, prevents burnout/turnover.

