

A photograph of a muscular man from the back, with his arms outstretched horizontally. The lighting highlights the contours of his back, shoulders, and arms against a dark background.

Working the Muscle of Resilience

Margaret Gavian, PhD

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BLUE PEAK

THIS IS FOR YOU IF:

- **Exhausted all the time**
- **Get snippy with your family**
- **Have difficulty unwinding from work**
- **Are motivated by a deep desire to care for your community**
- **Want to protect your friends & family from what you see & do**
- **Feel others don't really get it**
- **Memories of calls catch you by surprise**
- **Losing time to tv, phone, online, distractions**

THIS IS FOR YOU IF:

- **Sometimes drink a little more just to take the edge off**
- **Pulling back from activities you used to enjoy**
- **Feel “Fine”**
- **Just going through the motions**
- **Friends/family notice you’re different**
- **Tired, numb or bitter about how messed up the world is**
- **Growing frustration with leaders or morale**

#20

KEN SCHULZ

#19

DARREN LINDST







Dr. Margaret Gavian

- **PhD in Psychology with over 15 years working as a trauma & resilience therapist**
- **Worked with men & women in warzones (Israel, Gaza, Kosovo), FDNY 9/11, with veterans, first responders, departments, teachers, refugees, medical centers and in other emergency situations**
- **Director, First Responder Initiative - BCBS-MN**
- **Medical Director, MN Fire Initiative**
- **Leader in major health system**
- **Consultant & trainer to community and healthcare organizations**

Vantage Point

- Human tragedy & suffering but also on
- **GROWTH**
- **MISSION DRIVEN PURPOSE**
- **TEAMWORK**
- **COMMUNITY**
- **TRANSFORMATION**
- **GOODNESS**
- **GENEROSITY**
- **STRENGTH**
- **RESILIENCE**





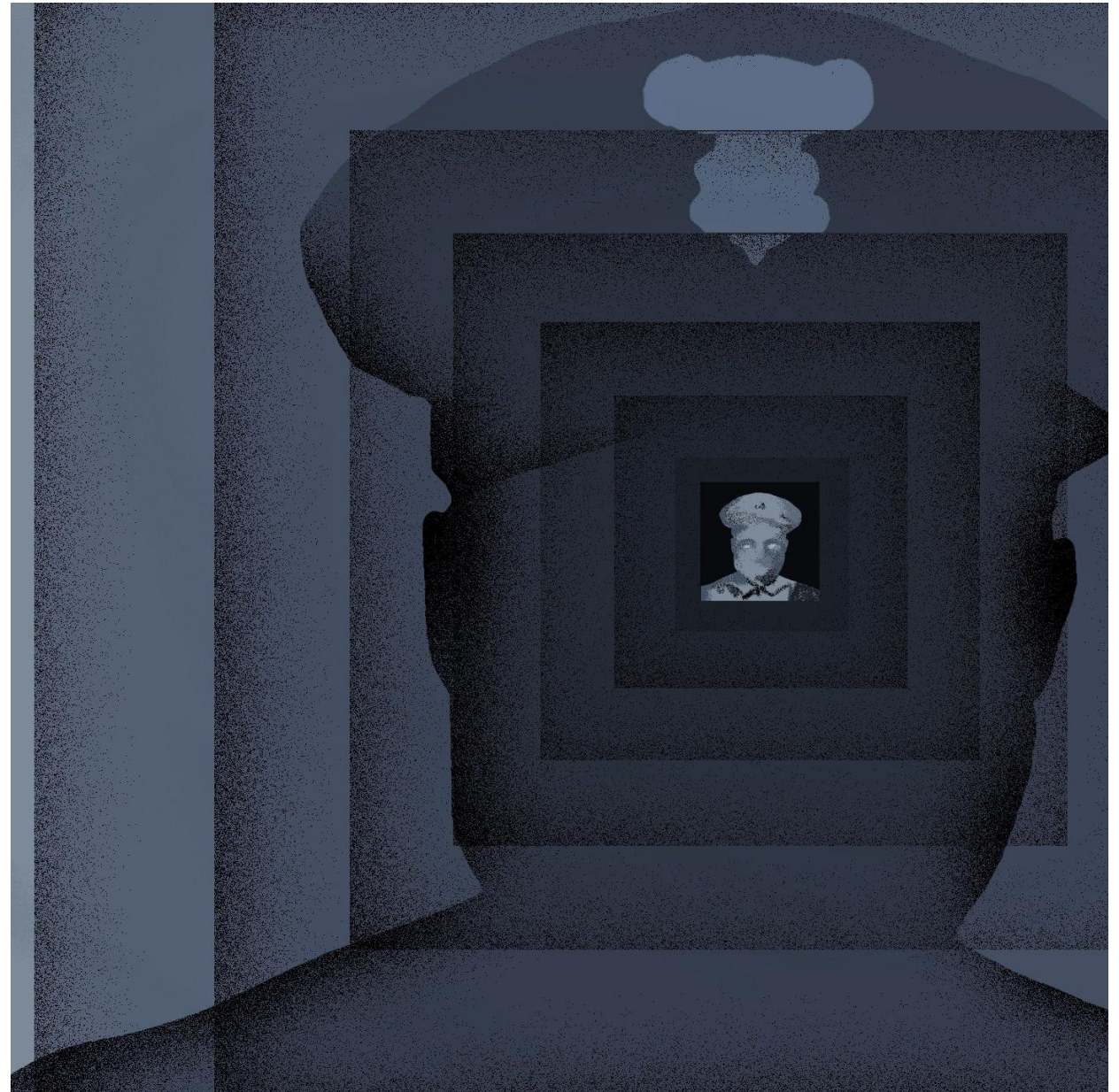
Wisdom from Those That Have Come Before

- No matter what rank or type of department
- Hindsight = my best friend
- Seen you in 5, 10, 20, 30 years
- Talked to seasoned veterans who share what they wish they knew, what they had done differently
- Cal's Story
 - Turned it around quickly, got out in front: Sleep, Transitions, Controlling Body, Communication tactics

25% of Police Officers are currently struggling with a mental health issue (2020)

25% think about suicide (2009)


First Responders attempt suicide more than 6-10x the rate in the general population



Suicide rates
are higher
than LODD

“At my worst, I could tell you what my pistol tasted like after firing a test round into the dirt. I truly believed without a shadow of a doubt that I was weak and going crazy. I thought that absolutely no one could begin to comprehend what I had seen. I thought I was alone, and because I was alone, I thought that asking someone, anyone, for help would be about as effective as yelling for help into a jet engine”

– Police Officer



4x the
rate of post
traumatic
stress

2x the
rate of
alcohol
problems

8x the
rate of depression

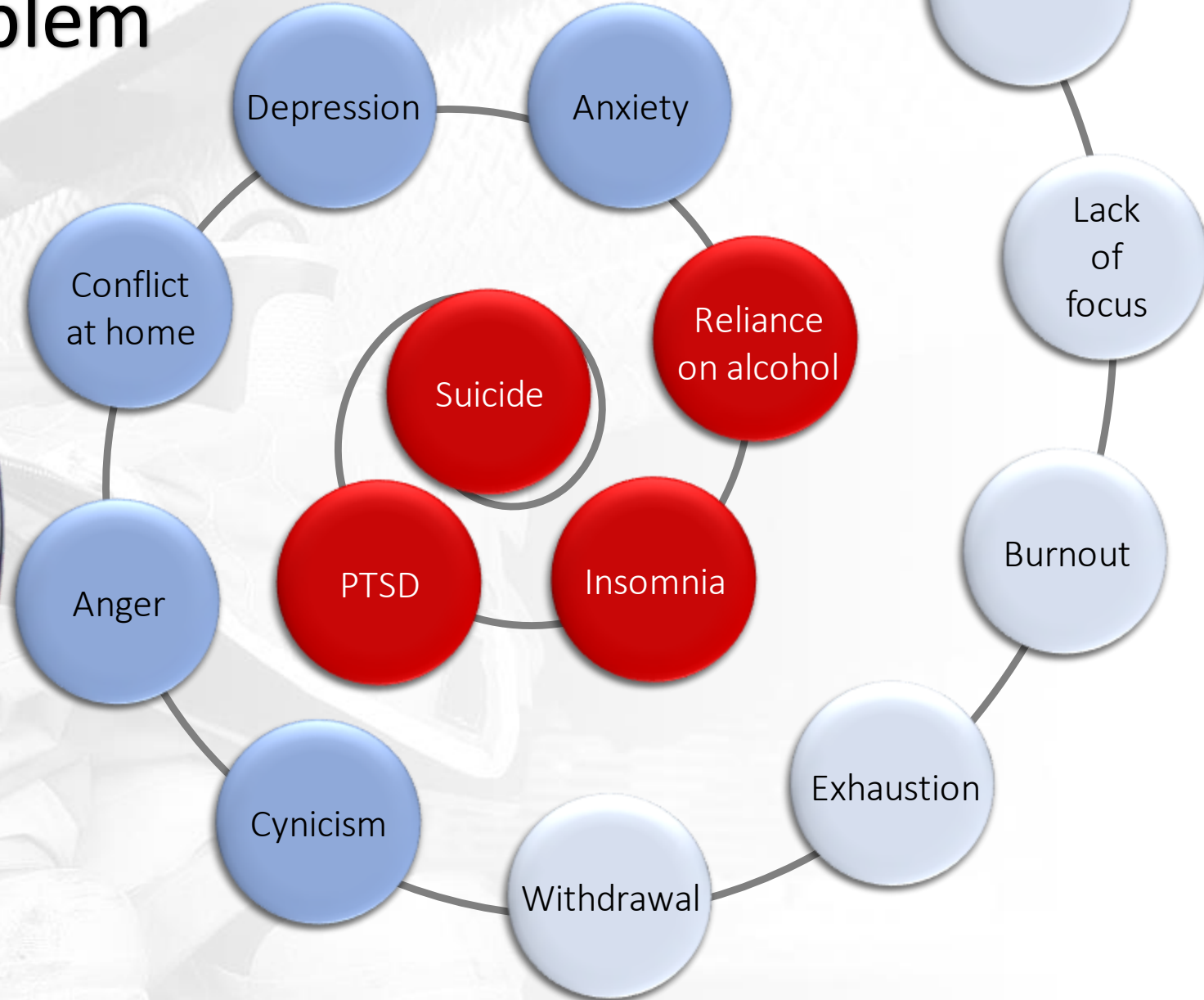
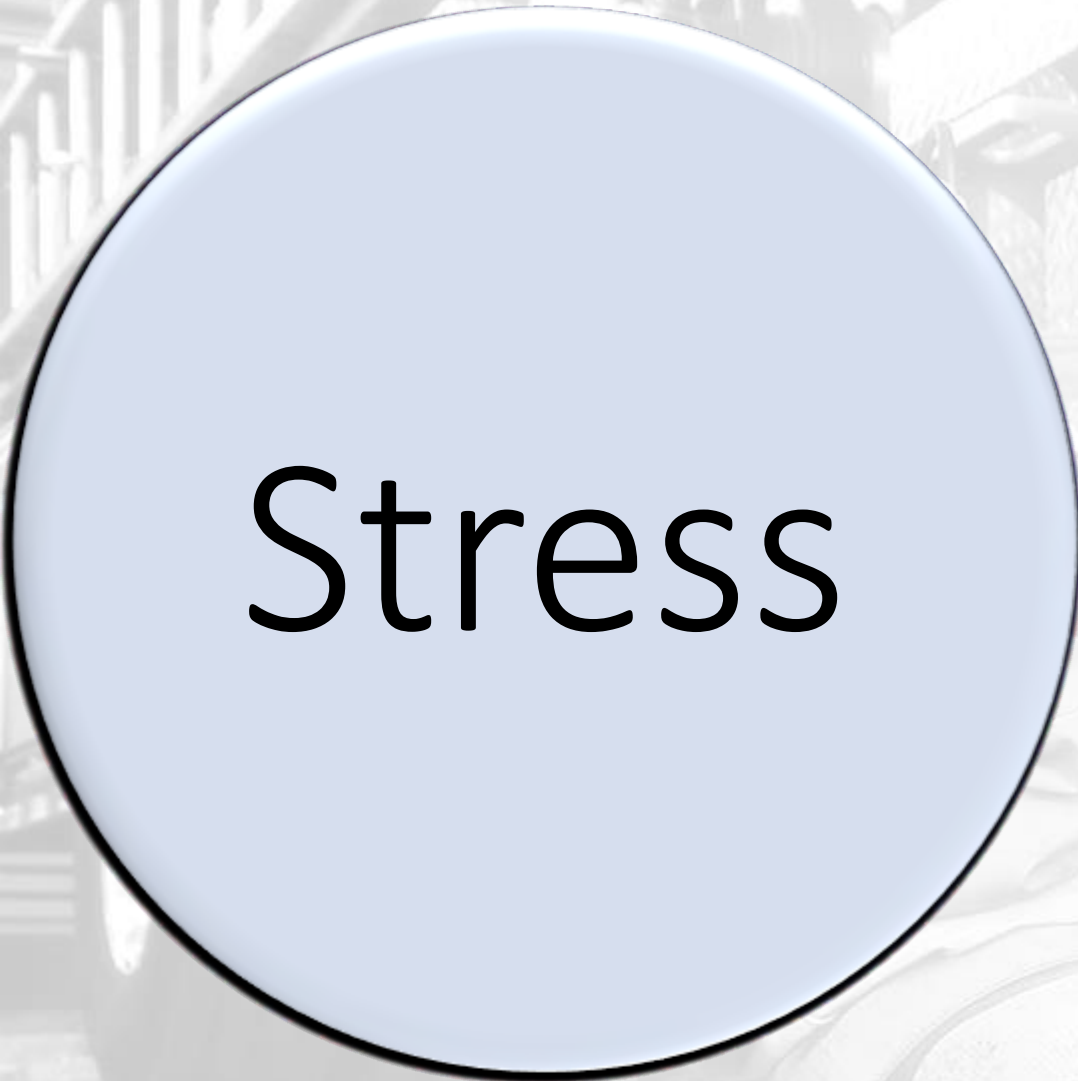
18x the rate of anxiety

A person is shown in silhouette, leaning their head against a window frame. They are looking out at a bright, hazy landscape, possibly a beach or a large body of water. The overall tone is blue and somewhat somber.

**Approximately 90% view
seeking help as a sign of
weakness**

Most wait too long

Emotional Costs of Not Addressing the Problem





The Plus Side

- HELPING OTHERS!
 - Not just airy fairy feel good stuff
 - Changes our brain chemistry
 - Increases your
 - Happiness
 - Self esteem
 - Social connection
 - Activity
 - Sense of belongingness
 - Reduces loneliness
 - Keeps things in perspective
 - **Gratitude** = key to cultivating a positive mindset
 - It's CONTAGIOUS!

YOU ALREADY KNOW THE JOB TAKES A TOLL

But I often hear:

“This is just how it is.”



Stress



Acute

Chronic

Post Traumatic

Organizational

STRESS

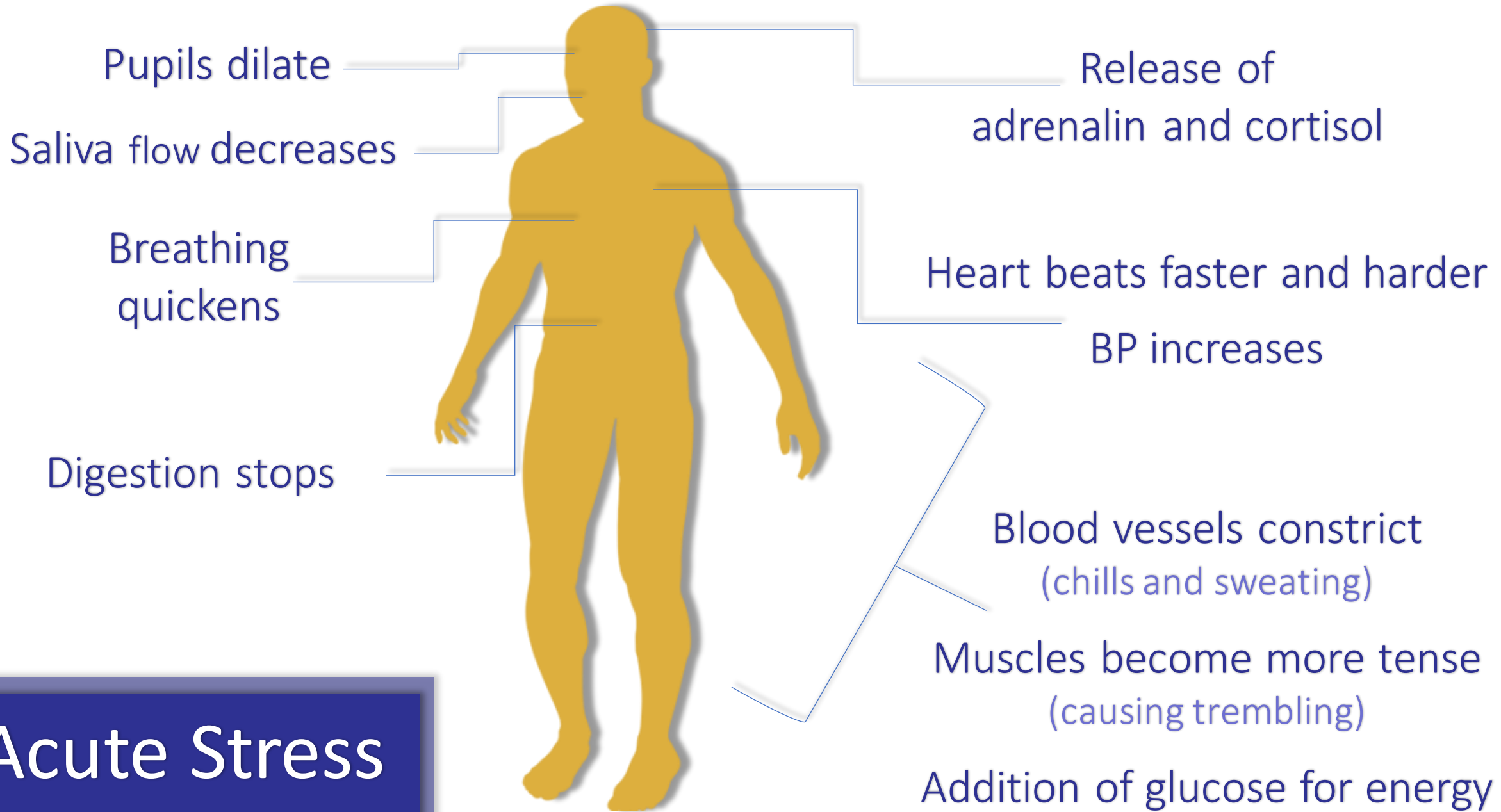


Stress Triggers





Acute Stress
Fight or Flight



Pupils dilate

Saliva flow decreases

Breathing quickens

Digestion stops

Release of adrenalin and cortisol

Heart beats faster and harder

BP increases

Blood vessels constrict (chills and sweating)

Muscles become more tense (causing trembling)

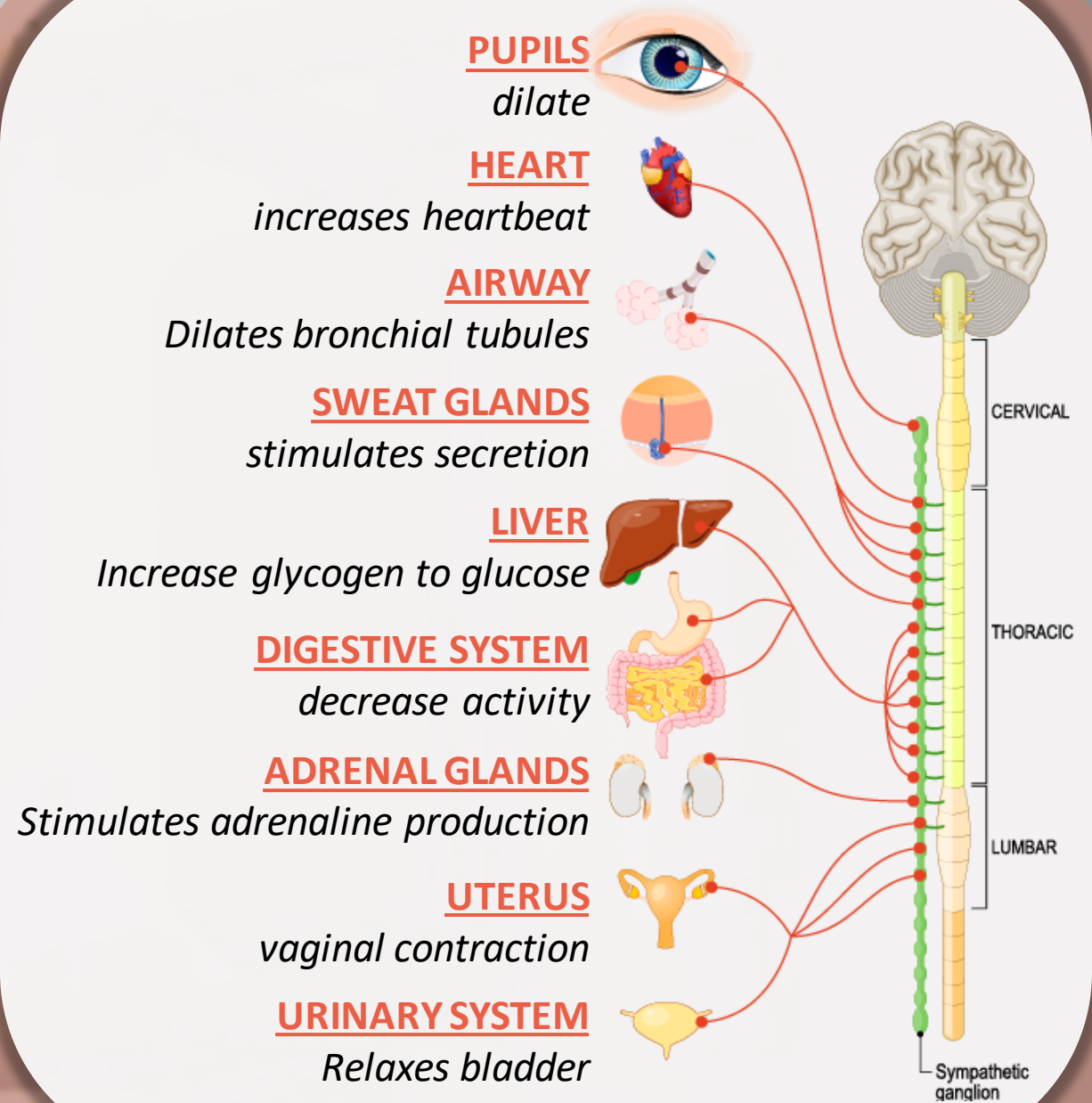
Addition of glucose for energy

Acute Stress
Fight or Flight

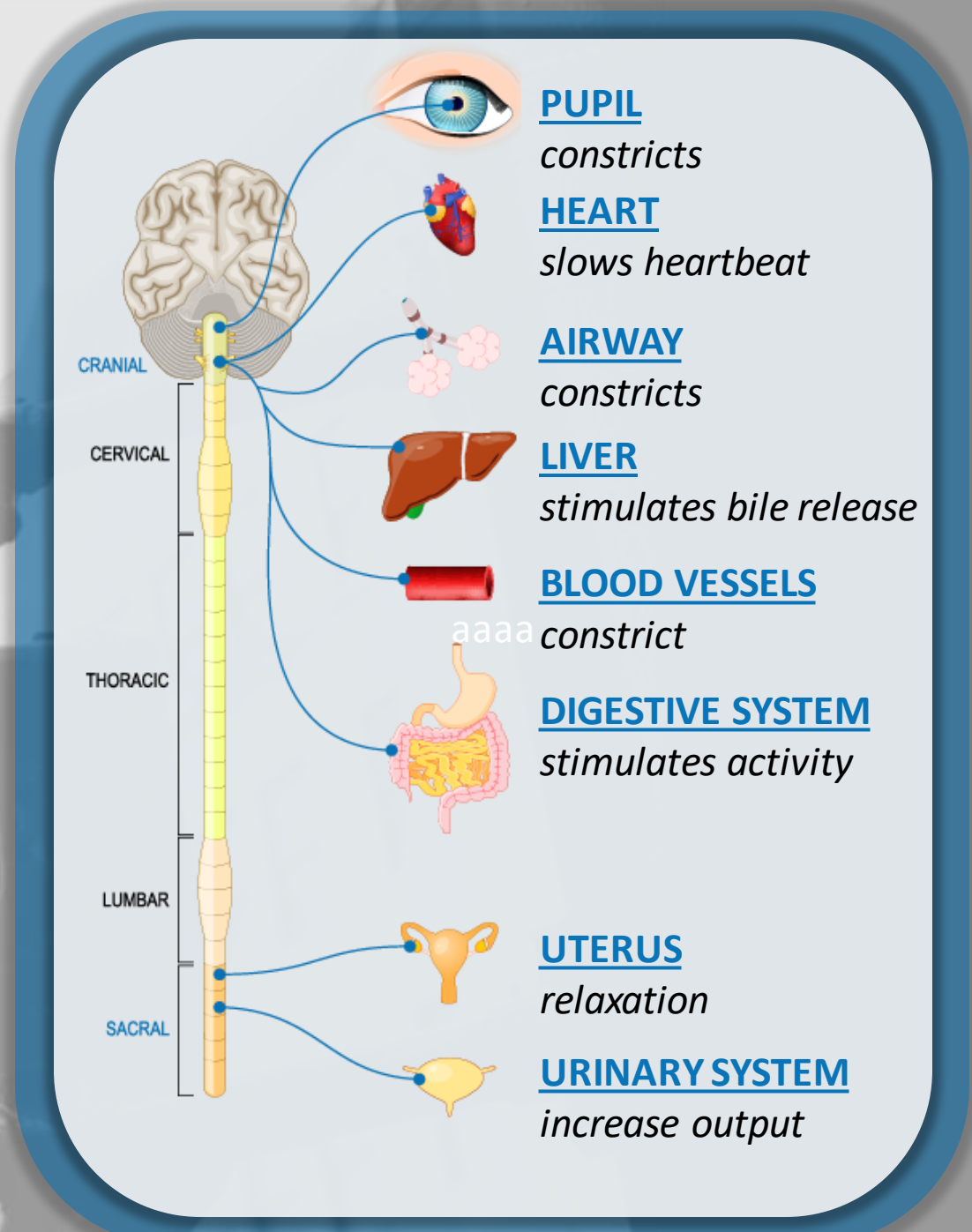
Freeze Response



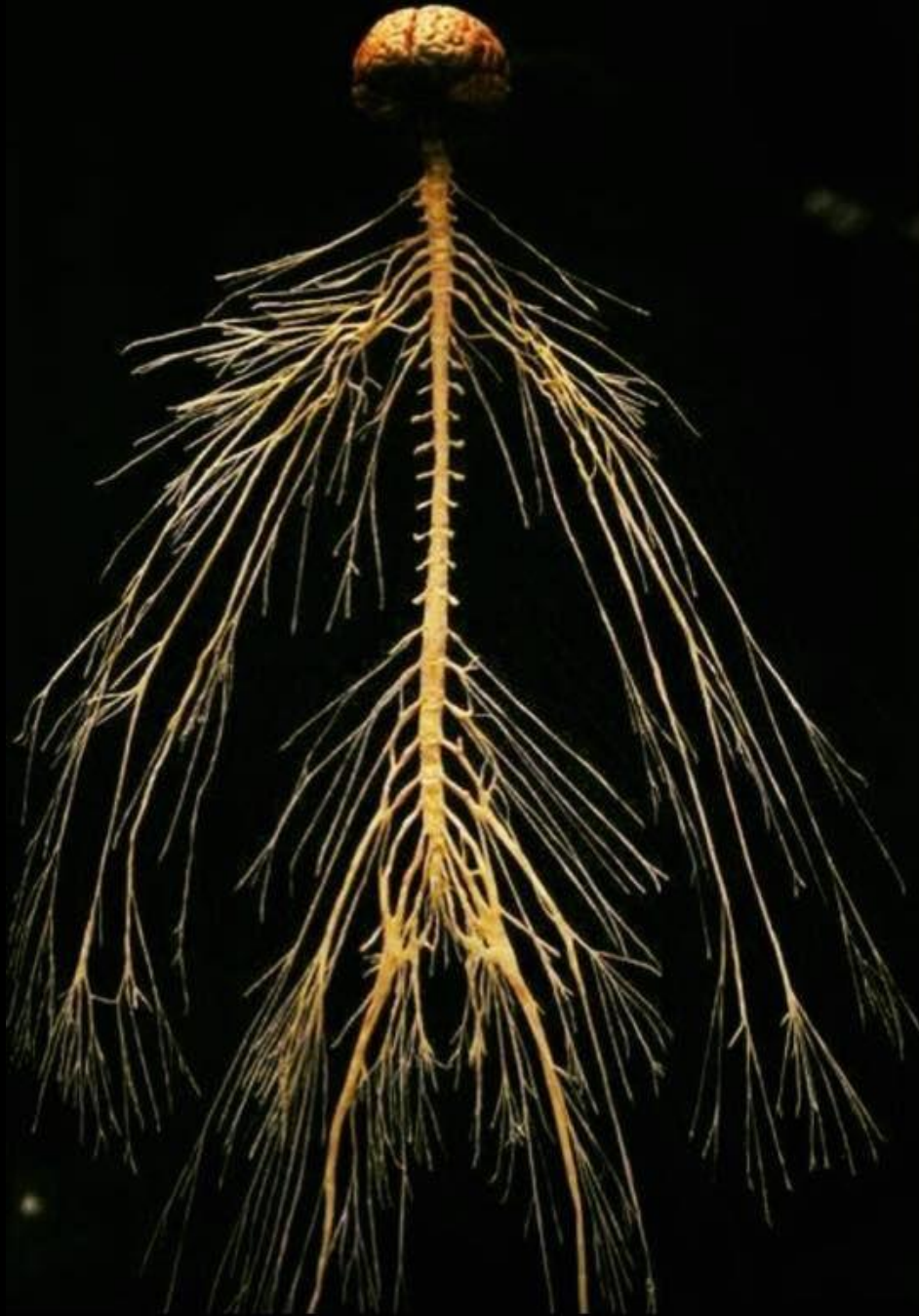
Sympathetic



Parasympathetic



Your Nervous System



Perfect Storm

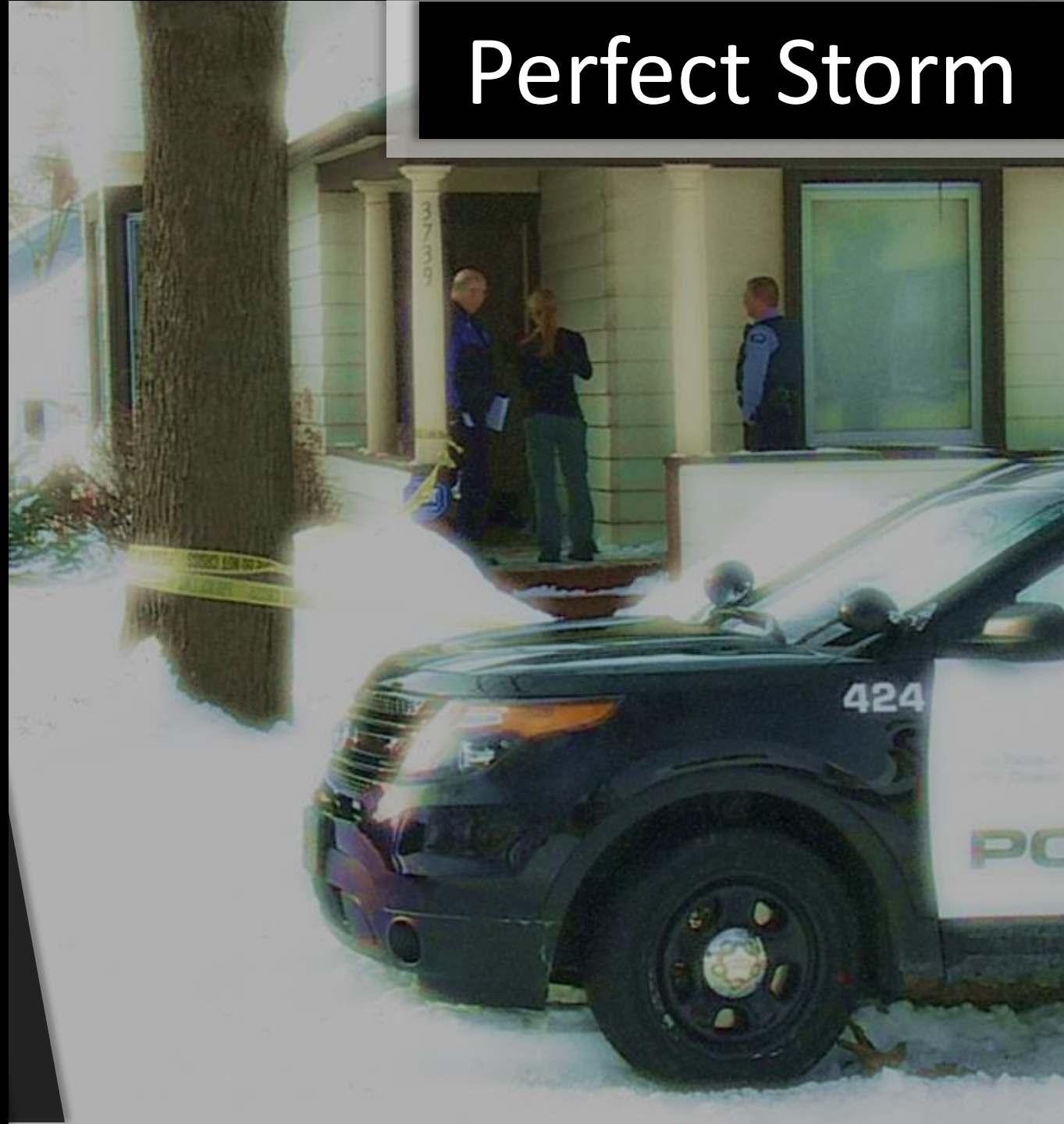
Sleeplessness

Hazardous conditions

Traumatic calls

Increased volume
of calls

Public Perception



Prolonged Stress Response

Cortisol ↑

Blood sugar ↑

Insulin ↑

Cholesterol ↑

Immune response ↓



Prolonged Stress Response

Heart disease

Diabetes

Cancer

Infections

Chronic pain



Prolonged Stress Response

Anxiety

Depression

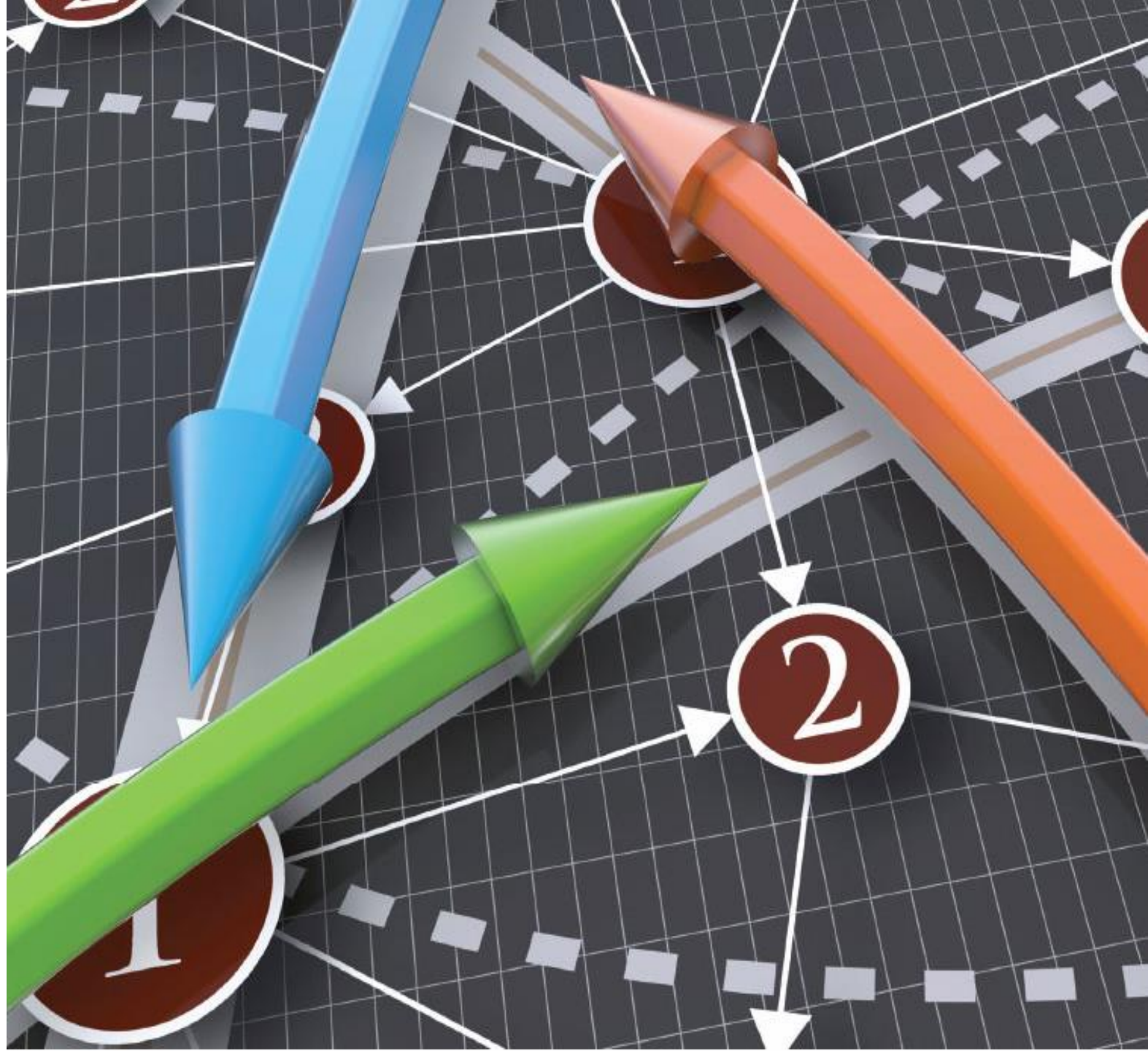
Sleep problems

Posttraumatic
Stress



Resilience Pre Plan

- Take the 360 of your YOU & your family
 - What are the danger areas?
 - What risks can you foresee and plan for?
 - What do you need to work on?
 - What problems have you encountered in the past?



Exercise



Effects in the Brain

Orbitofrontal Cortex

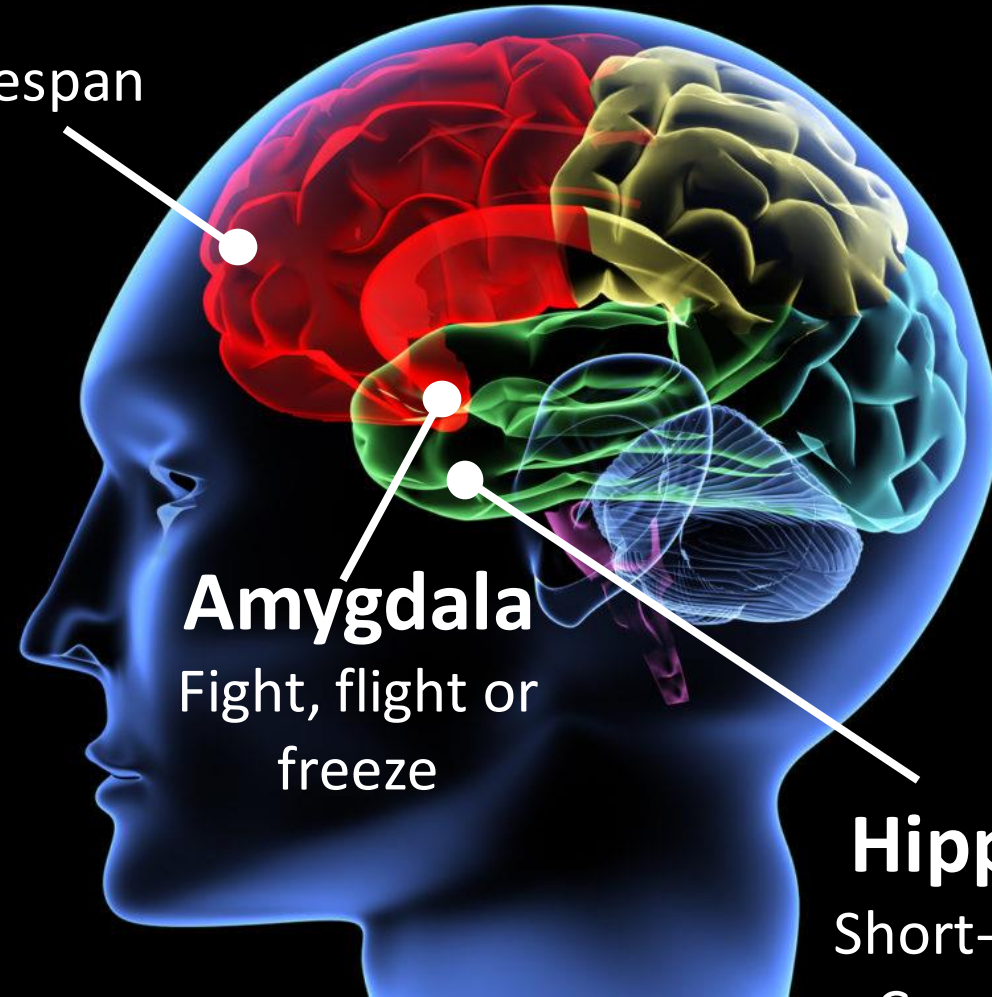
Social/Emotional Center
Open to change throughout lifespan

Neuroplasticity

Fear

Memory

Pre Frontal Cortex



Amygdala

Fight, flight or
freeze

Hippocampus

Short-term memory
Cause and effect
Cortisol

Anger



Physiological
arousal

More prone
to blow up

Sadness or
other feelings

Substance Use and Addiction

Problem Drinking

Men

15 drinks/week

≥5 in one occasion

Women

7 drinks/week

≥3 in one occasion



Addictive Behaviors

Eating

Gambling

Internet

Sex

Shopping

Working out

Work

Substance Use and Addiction



Post Traumatic Stress



Angry

Nightmares or
unwanted
memories

Startle easily

Always on guard

Feeling numb
or detached

Repeated
thoughts

Avoid
connections
to event

*Trauma isn't what happens to us.
It's what happens inside us.*

Gabor Maté, MD

Family Life

Distant / numb

Difficulty relaxing

Overprotective

Increased fighting

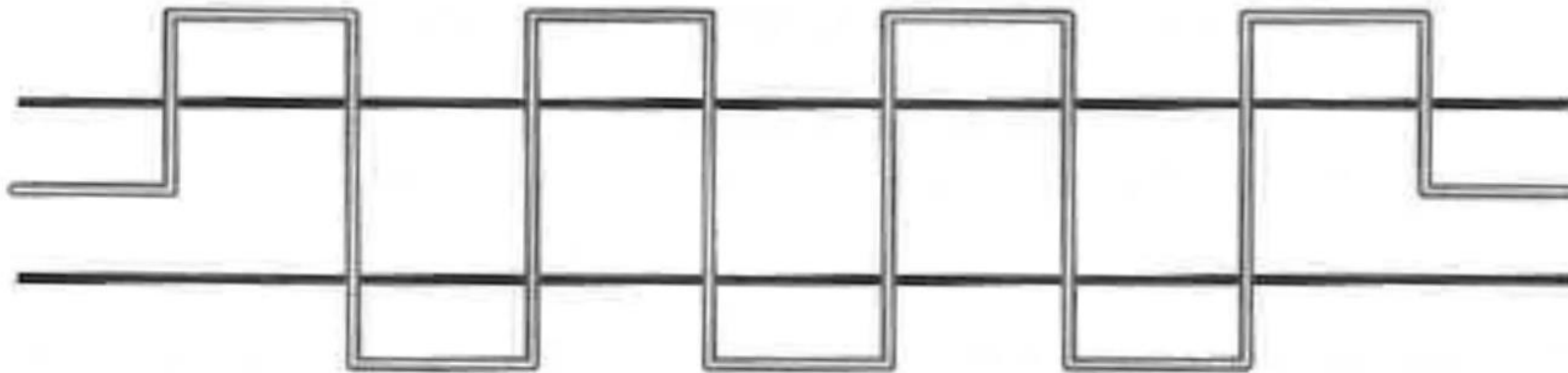
Avoid intimacy / closeness



The Hypervigilance Biological Rollercoaster[®]

On Duty

Alive, Alert, Energetic, Involved, Humorous



Tired, Detached, Isolated, Apathetic

Off Duty

Resilience

- the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties
- the ability to spring back into shape

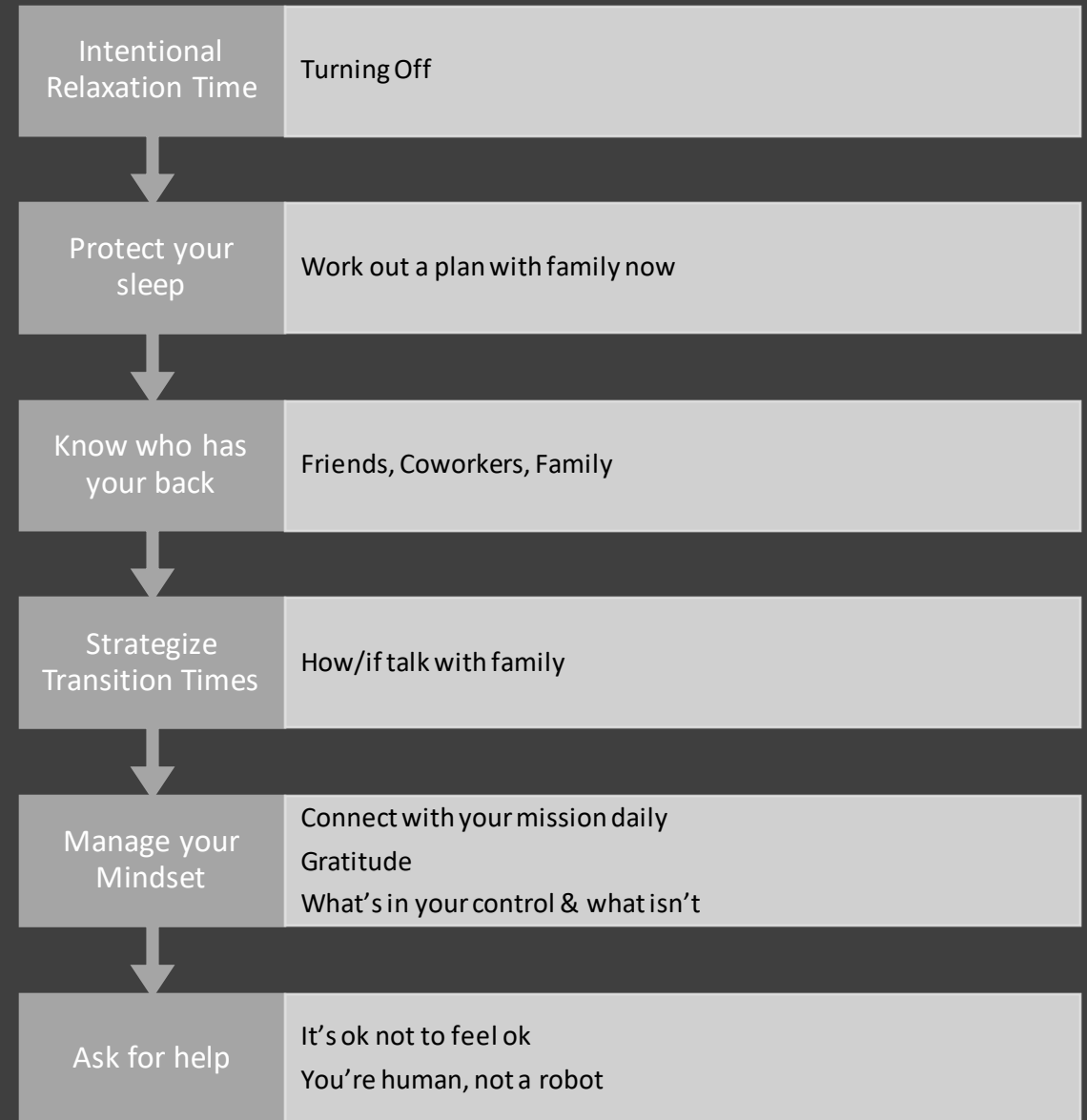


Resilience



How we PRE-PLAN and EMPLOY TACTICS to support our bounce

6 Key Strategies



Building Resilience



Practice & Build:

Mindset / Behaviors

With Others/Social
Resources

Specific Coping
Strategies

Resilience Pre Plan

- Take the 360 of your department/your family/YOU
 - What are the danger areas?
 - What risks can you foresee and plan for?
 - What do you need to work on?
 - What problems have you encountered in the past?



Mind-Body Pre Plan

BEFORE



- Who are your people to lean on?
 - Peer?
 - Partner?
 - Friend?
- Plan your intentional down time
 - Nature time
 - Relaxation time
 - Hobbies
- Sleep
- Your Fuel
 - Nutrition
 - Less alcohol
- Exercise
 - Stress lodges physically



DURING

- Breaks – be very intentional with your breaks
- “Brain Break” area
- Nutrition – water, not energy drinks/caffeine
- Breathing
- Soothing activities when possible (music)
- Partner/buddy/peer



AFTER

- Social support – who are your people?
- What are your Hobbies? Intentional down time
- Relaxation
- Rest
- Professional resources when needed

CALL TO ACTION

- **Train & Plan now for mitigating the stress response**
- **In order to excel in public service, to care for others, we HAVE to take care of ourselves**
- **Going through the motions & expecting to be fine is simply ineffective**

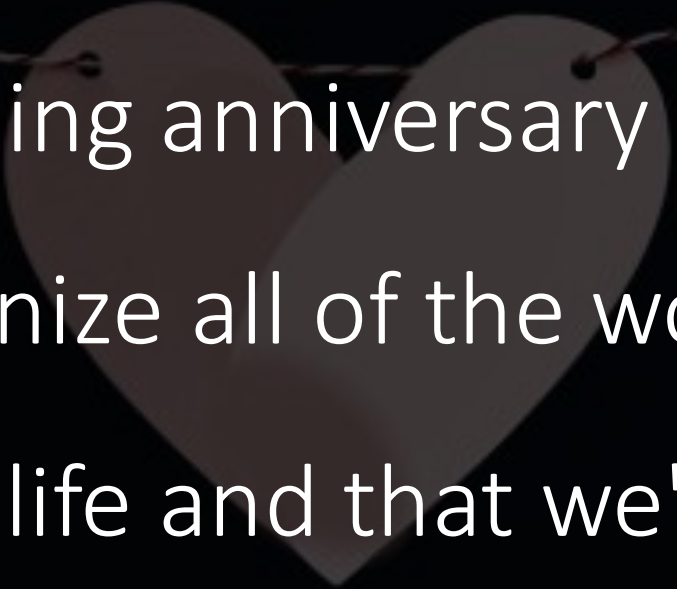


Jason's Story

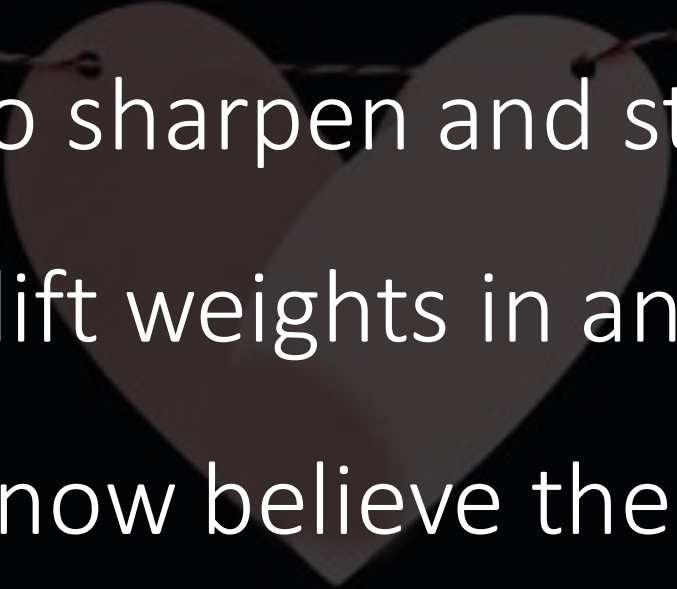


Jason's Story

“My home life has been going really well. My wife and I celebrated our wedding anniversary and I am so proud to look back and recognize all of the work we've put in and where we're at in life and that we're still continually planning on where we want to be and growing together.



I no longer look at pain and hardship as things I simply want to fix and move past or even ignore, but I look at them as a process - to sharpen and strengthen me. Just as we go to the gym to lift weights in an effort to tear and build our muscles so do I now believe the same is true for the struggles and pain in our lives, that they strengthen our will, our resolve, and ultimately lead to more gratitude.”





BLUE PEAK
RELIEF + RESILIENCE + WHOLE PERSON CARE

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