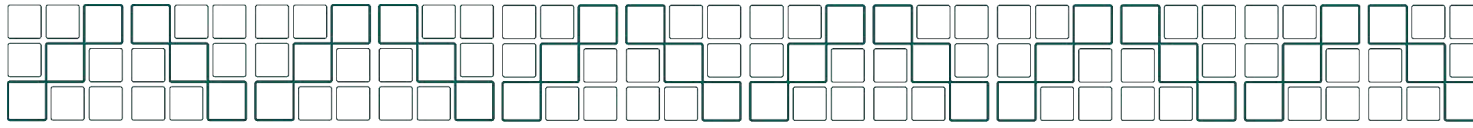
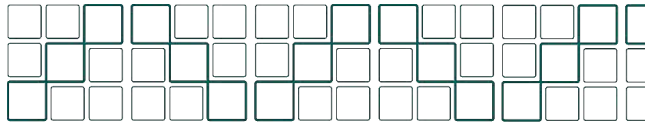

Promoting the Health and Well-being of Biomedical Researchers

Dr. Sharon L. Milgram, Director NIH OITE
On Twitter [@SHARONMILGRAM](#)
On Instagram [@Sharon_milgram_nih](#)





We are all forever changed by the experience we are going through now..... **let's make sure something positive comes of it**



#News

Mental Health Crisis for Grad Students

Study finds "strikingly high" rates of depression and anxiety, with many reporting little help or support from supervisors.

By [Colleen Flaherty](#) // March 6, 2018

72 COMMENTS

CBE—Life Sciences Education, Vol. 18, No. 2 | Article

Free Access

Burnout and Mental Health Problems in Biomedical Doctoral Students

Gabriela A. Nagy, Caitlin M. Fang, Alexander J. Hish, Lisalynn Kelly, Christopher V. Nicchitta, Kafui Dzirasa, and M. Zachary Rosenthal

Diane K. O'Dowd, Monitoring Editor

Published Online: 31 May 2019 | <https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.18-09-0198>

Researchers facing 'shocking' levels of stress, survey reveals

Nearly two thirds of those who took part had witnessed bullying or harassment

Comment | Published: 10 July 2020

Addressing racism and disparities in the biomedical sciences

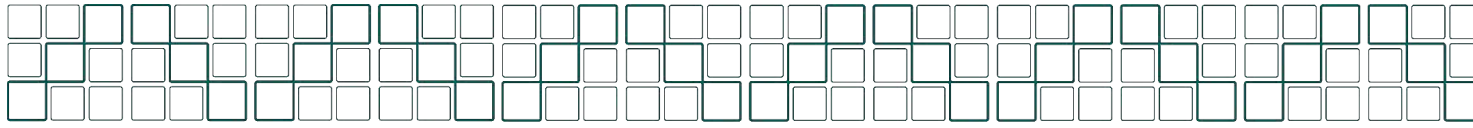
[Uraina S. Clark](#) & [Yasmin L. Hurd](#)

Nature Human Behaviour 4, 774–777(2020) | [Cite this article](#)

8467 Accesses | 7 Citations | 195 Altmetric | [Metrics](#)

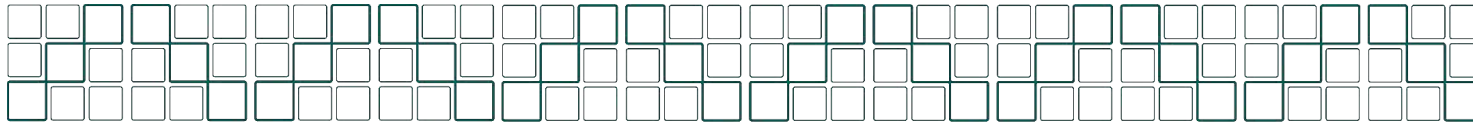
It Takes An Integrated Approach

- Work at the individual and group level
 - Self-reflection on our blind spots, biases, and behaviors
 - Community listening sessions leading to community agreements
- A focus on learning AND unlearning and leading to personal and culture change
- Requires....
 - A serious commitment to training (for PIs and trainees)
 - Changes in institutional policies
 - Accountability for everyone and at all levels
 - Transparency when things go well and when they don't

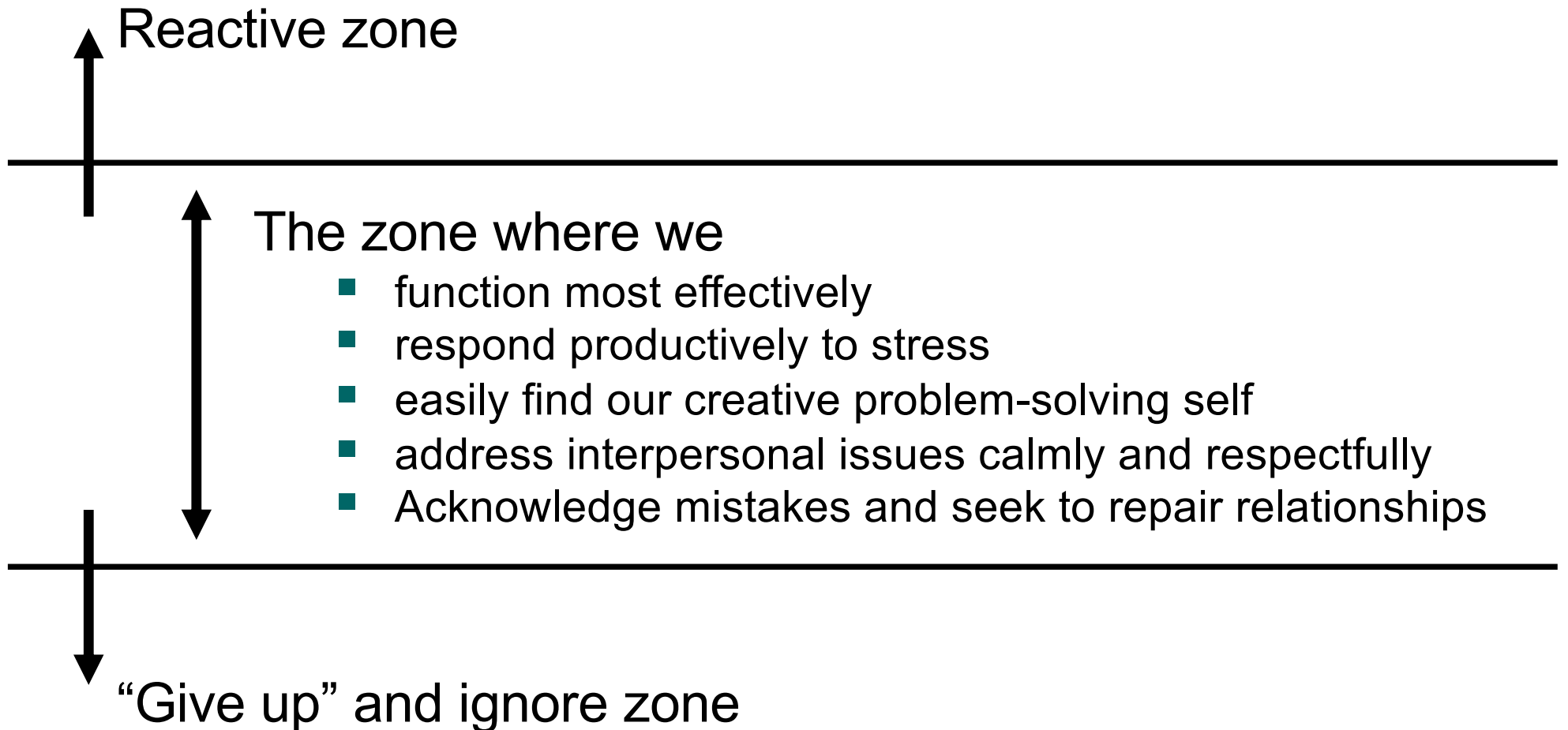


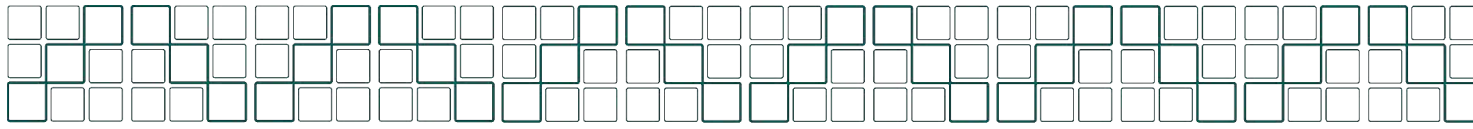
An Interesting Hypothesis

- Changing the culture of science will also involve an-going dialogue and an openness to talk about stress management and wellness for scientists



Our Window Of Tolerance





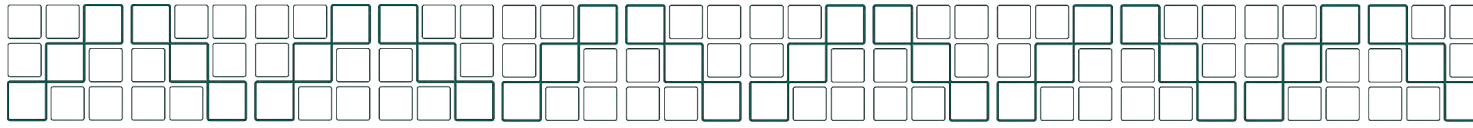
What Is Wellness?

- The active pursuit of activities, choices and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health
 - much more than the absence of disease
 - an on-going and regular process of working to thrive at school, work, and life
 - includes multiple dimensions
- Wellness is a right.....and a responsibility

<https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/what-is-wellness/>

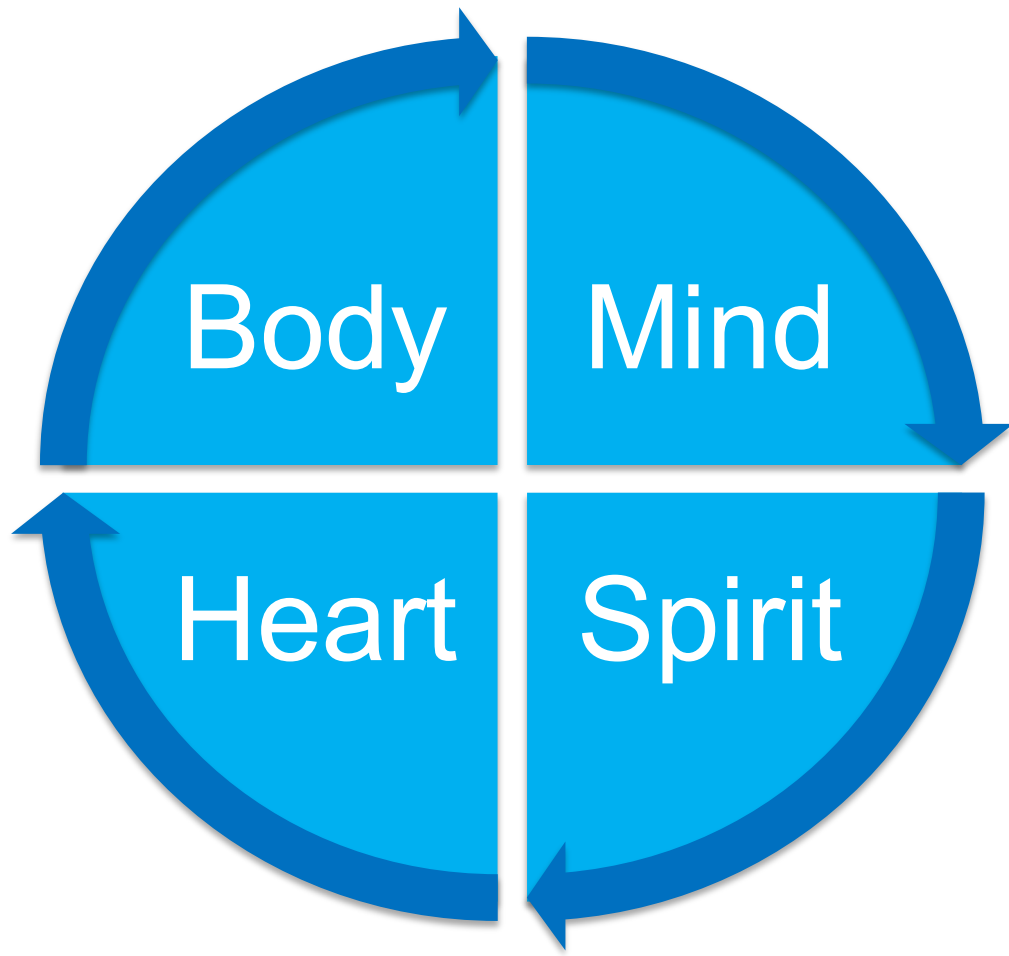
To Do Well We Have To Be Well

To Treat Others Well We Need To
Be Well Ourselves

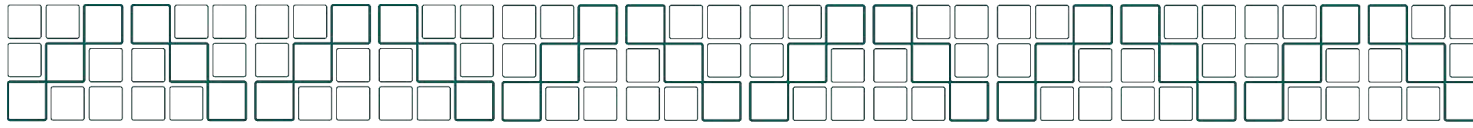


OITE Wellness Model

- The things we do, and don't do, to maintain our....



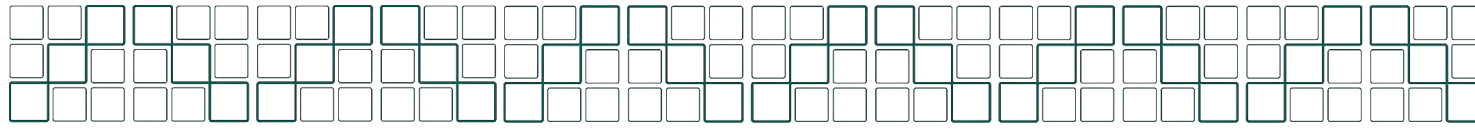
- Wellness is a foundation of resilience.
- Resilience is required for educational, science and career success



Wellness Assessment - Body

Never 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 Always

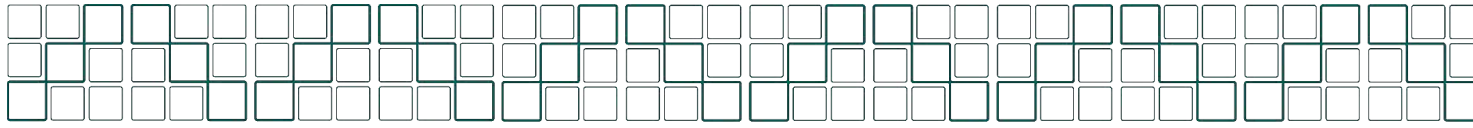
- I am getting enough sleep (7-9 hours)
- I am eating balanced, nutritious meals
- I avoid excessive use of caffeine
- I avoid numbing out behaviors (alcohol, other drugs of abuse, video games, etc.)
- I am getting regular exercise (at least 3 times a week)
- I am getting regular health care for myself
- I take care of myself when I am sick, need rest, or just need a break



Wellness Assessment - Mind

Never 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 Always

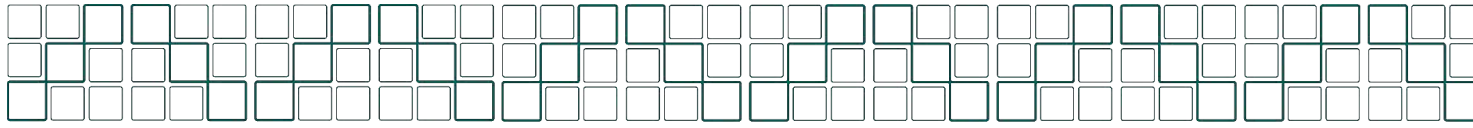
- I avoid getting caught up in perfectionism
- I focus on the present vs. rehashing the past or worrying about the future
- I avoid negative or deceptive self-talk
- I practice self-affirmations and positive self-talk
- I avoid judging myself compared to others
- I give myself time to explore and learn about new things
- I am open to counseling as a tool to maintain and improve my health and wellbeing



Wellness Assessment - Heart

Never 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 Always

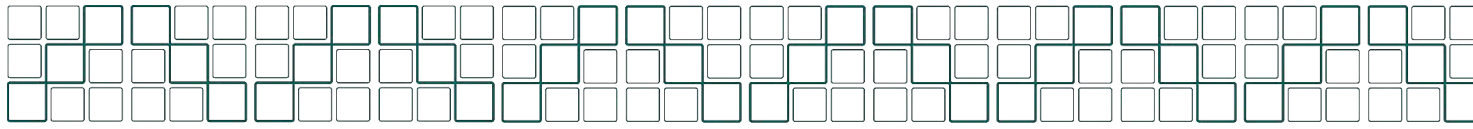
- I'm in touch with and let myself feel all my emotions
- I reach out to others for support when I need it
- I communicate my needs and feelings directly and honestly
- I make time to spend with my friends and 'family'
- I engage in activities that are fun and relaxing
- I avoid extreme use of my phone as a coping tool/ avoidance strategy
- I demonstrate compassion for myself and others



Wellness Assessment - Spirit

Never 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 Always

- I feel connected to something that is bigger than me – however I define that
- I seek out resources (practices, activities, people, places) that nurture me spiritually
- I reflect on and invest in what is meaningful to me
- I read writings or watch media that are inspirational to me
- I think of and care about the lives of others who are different than me
- I allow time to just be (human *being* vs. human *doing*)
- I engage in activities that support my life's purpose

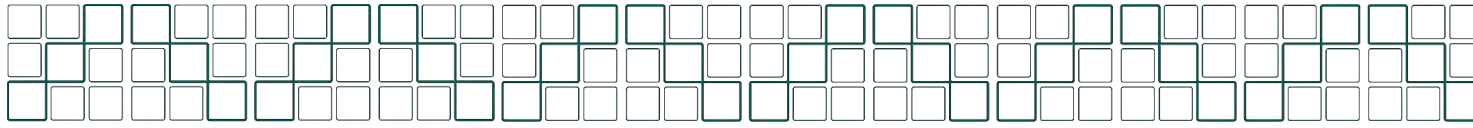


Some Important Questions

- What am I pleased about?
- What am I not so pleased about?
- What do I need to learn more about?
- What do I want to work on now? and in the future?

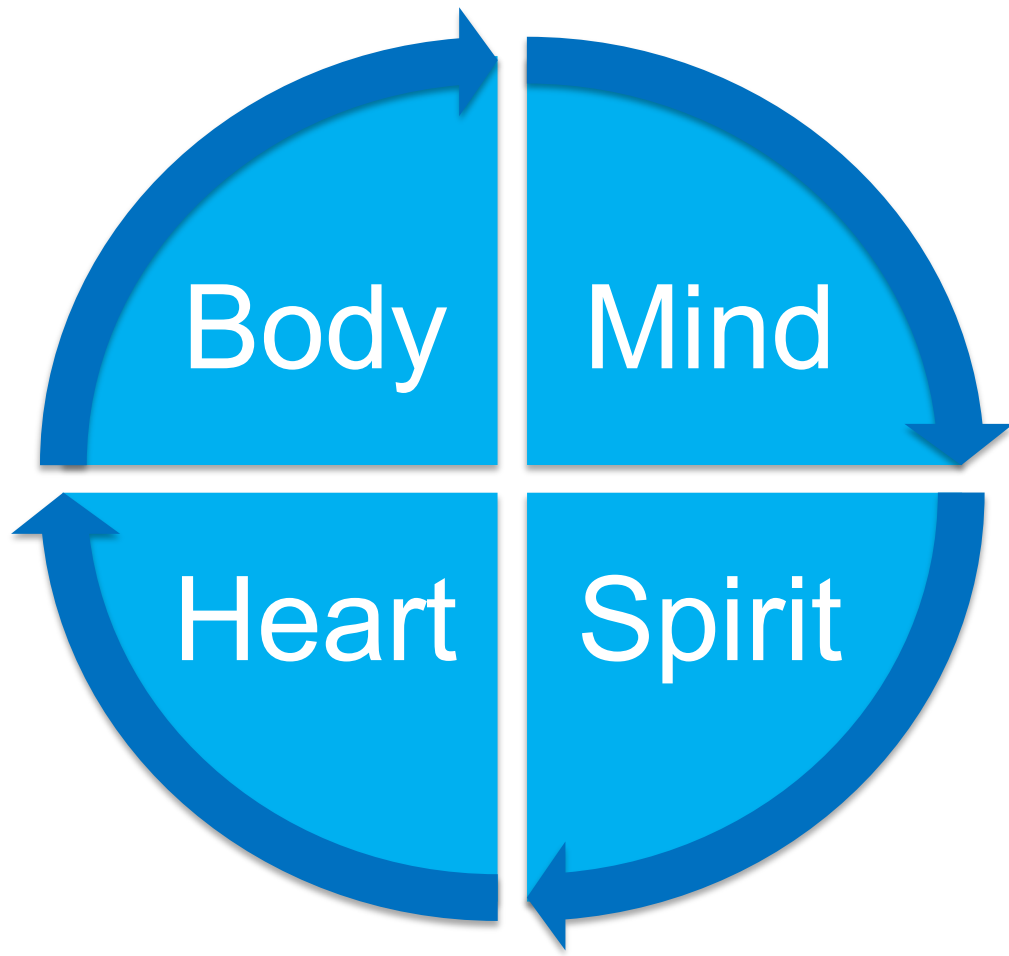
REMEMBER: This is not a one-time thing! Pull out the assessment and see how you are doing every few months.

For PIs – remember the wellness of your trainees and staff!

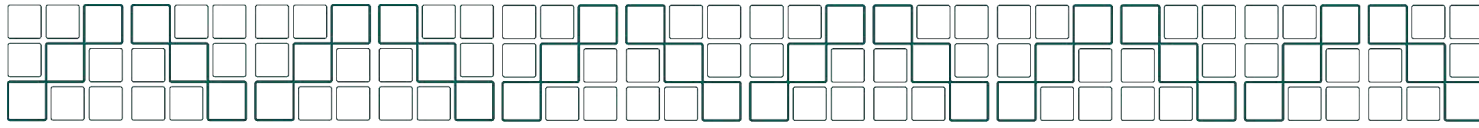


OITE Wellness Model

- The things we do, and don't do, to maintain our....



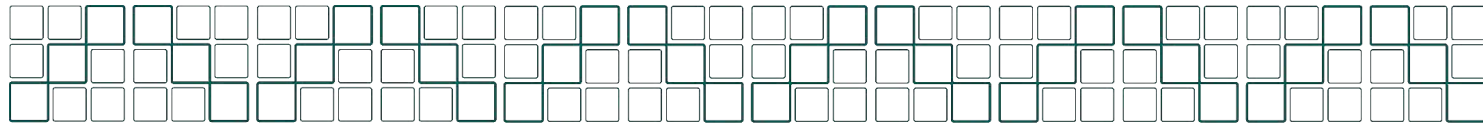
- Wellness is a foundation of resilience.
- Resilience is required for educational, science and career success



What is Resilience?

- The ability to:
 - adapt and grow through **adversity**
 - navigate **difficult challenges** with awareness, intention, and skill
 - find a constructive way forward during **challenging times**
- A set of attitudes and behaviors that can be learned and developed through education, self-reflection, and practice

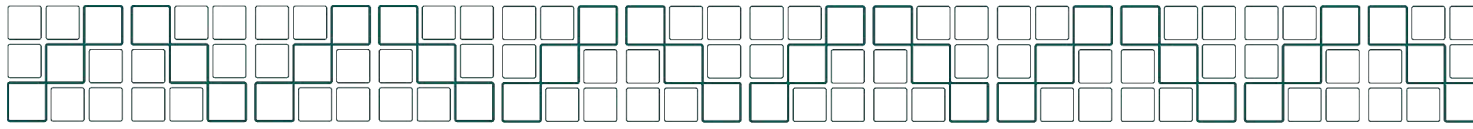
<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience.aspx>



How Do We Develop Our Resilience

- Practice holistic self-care / develop our stress management toolkit
 - Find community and engage authentically with peers and mentors
 - Find and connect with our purpose day-to-day
- Use resources – proactively and in times of stress and setback
- Have strategies for dealing effectively with set-back and disappointments
 - Develop our emotional intelligence
 - Understand how distorted self-talk undermine our confidence and progress
 - Develop our growth mindset (the work of Carol Dweck)

Resilience = People + Process + Preparation



Four Powerful Tools

■ Journaling

- let's us be with our thoughts and feelings without worrying what others think of us
- helps us see patterns and growth over time

■ Mindfulness

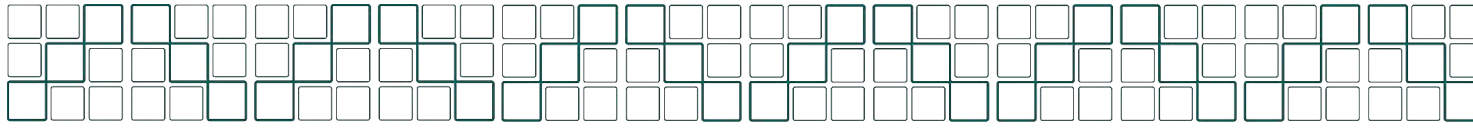
- helps us "be" with our thoughts, feelings and struggles without judgement

■ Community

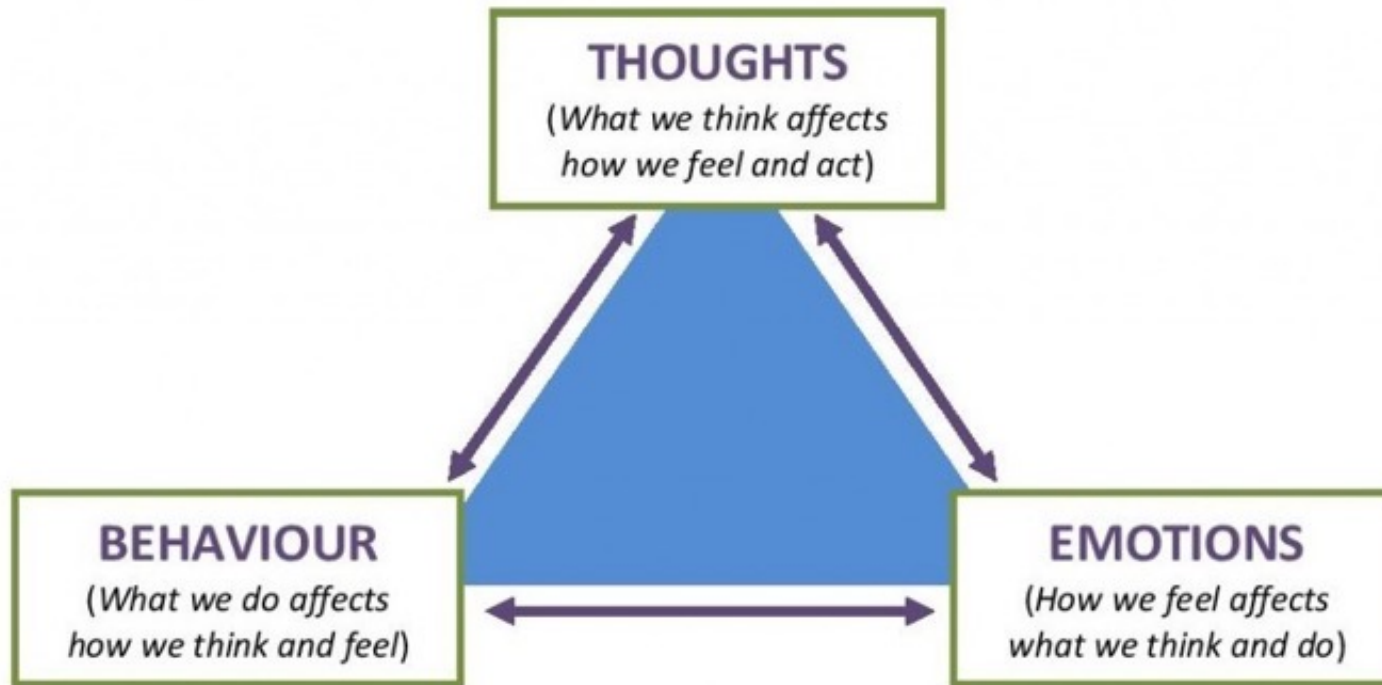
- we can learn from others and build resilience by helping others

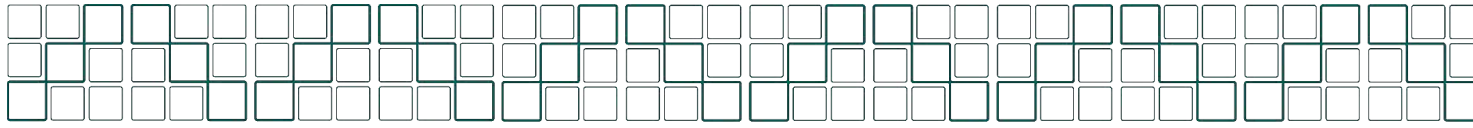
■ Therapy

- can help us identify maladaptive coping strategies and replace them with adaptive ones

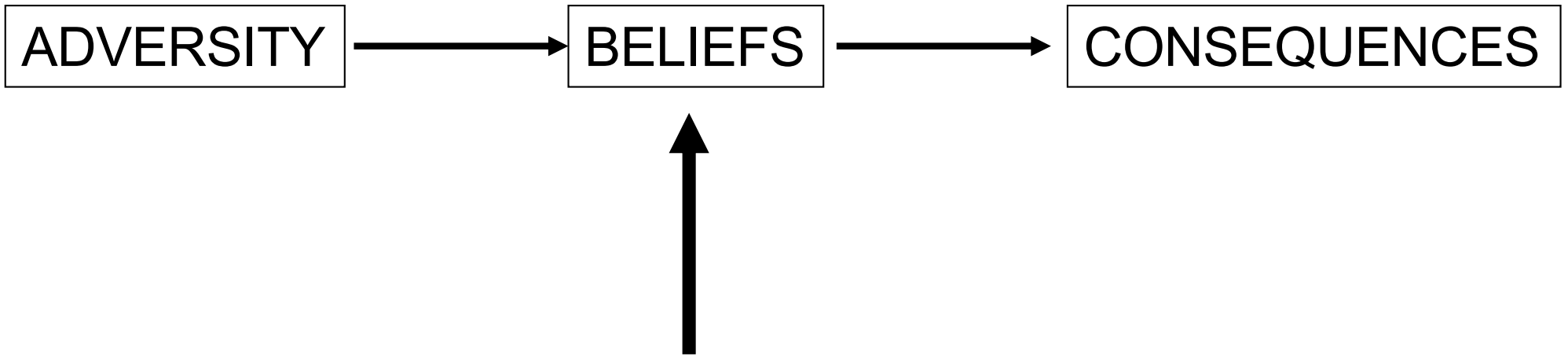


Three Loci Of Control





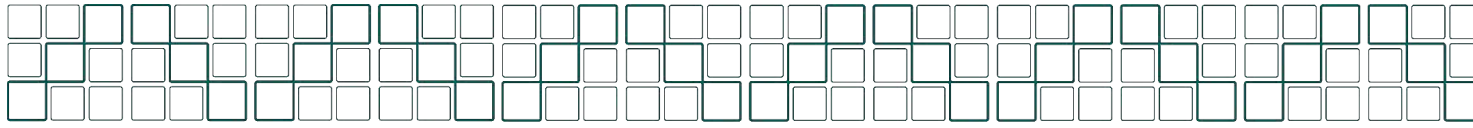
The ABC....D's



the stories we tell ourselves

Based on the work of Drs. Albert Ellis and Martin Seligman

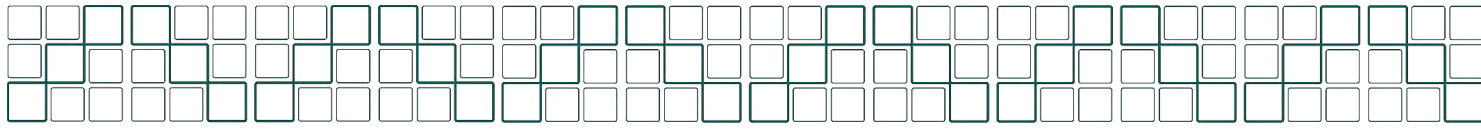
<https://positivepsychologynews.com/news/nicholas-hall/20070606273>



Cognitive Distortions

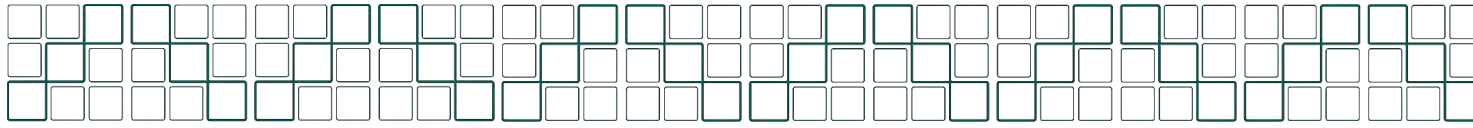
- Habitual ways of thinking that are usually inaccurate and distorted
 - Are often negative in nature, leading us to feel bad about ourselves and the situation
- Everyone experiences cognitive distortions to some degree, but for some of us, these distortions get in the way of our daily activities and functioning

NOTE: Our brain has a built-in negativity bias -- this makes good sense from an evolutionary biology perspective.



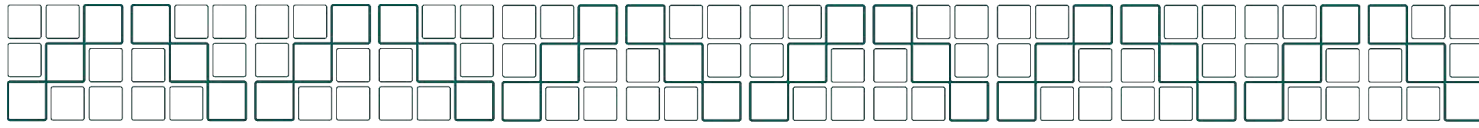
Some Common Cognitive Distortions

- **All-or-nothing thinking:** Our performance is either perfect or it is a complete failure; something is either all good or all bad
- **Catastrophizing:** We exaggerate the implications of a set-back or mistake
- **Mind Reading:** We make assumptions about what someone else is thinking
- **Fortune Telling:** we predict the outcome of an event before it happens
- **Over-generalization:** We reach a conclusion about one event and apply it to all similar events
- **Discounting the Positive // Minimizing:** We discount positive outcomes and attributes by insisting “they don’t count” (the distortion underlying imposter fears)



Key Points

- Cognitive distortions are common, normal and not our fault
 - driven by a combination of nature and nurture
 - we each have our go-to signature distortions
 - when we are stressed, burned-out or otherwise unwell, our distortions are magnified and amplified
- When we engage with others, we need to remember that distortions and distorted thinking are swirling around us
 - our own distortions, some hidden and some that we share
 - their distortions, some hidden and some they may share

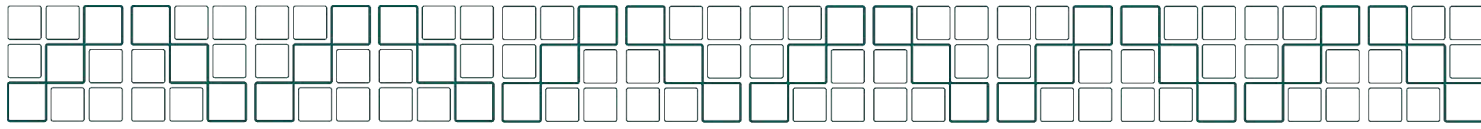


Imposter Fears

The fear of being seen as not good enough, intelligent enough, capable enough or creative enough.... despite evidence of high achievement

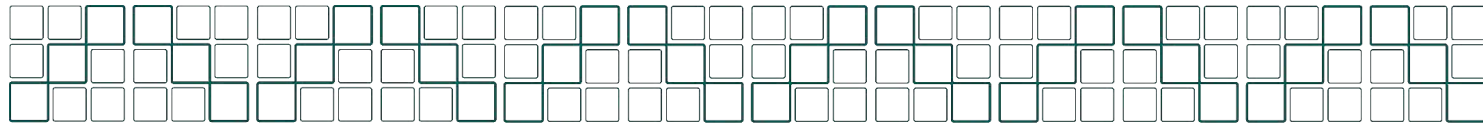


- Stems from the cognitive distortion of minimizing
- Imposter fears lead us to feel that we don't belong... and we need to feel that we belong to take risks and to learn and grow



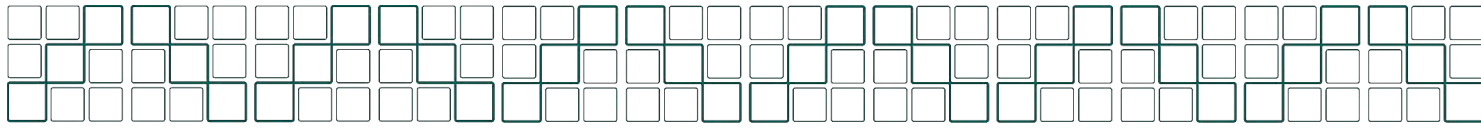
Causes of Imposter Fears

- Being a student
 - Being in an environment that feels foreign to you
 - Messages from family and childhood
 - Organizational culture and messaging
 - Stereotype threat (the stress of 'representing' your entire social group)
 - Working in a creative field
- NOTE: 70+% people report experiencing imposter fears at some point in their educational and work journey. SO... **there is NOTHING wrong with you and you are not alone.**



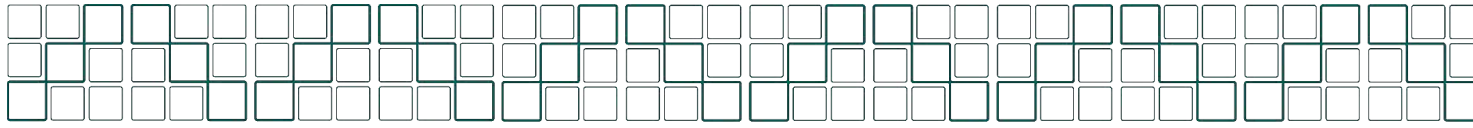
Distorted Thinking Can Be Driven By External Factors

- External factors can amplify our distorted stories
 - Toxic and bullying work environments
 - Absent or difficult mentoring relationships
 - Bias – conscious and unconscious
- Beyond amplifying the message, external factors can make it harder to reach out for support
- It is important to appreciate that external factor can soften our stories and make it easier to reach out for support



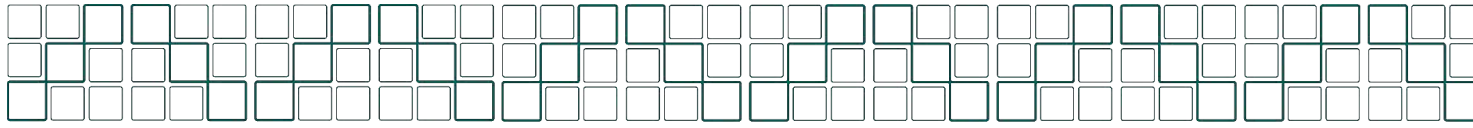
Consequences of Our Distorted Stories

- At times, and in small doses...
 - negative distortions may motivate us to work hard and to use resources to thrive
 - positive distortions may decrease our stress and buffer us from difficult feeling
- However, when unchecked and unquestioned (or when they are inappropriately dumped on us by others), they can hold us back, add to our struggle, and lead to many types of self-sabotaging behavior

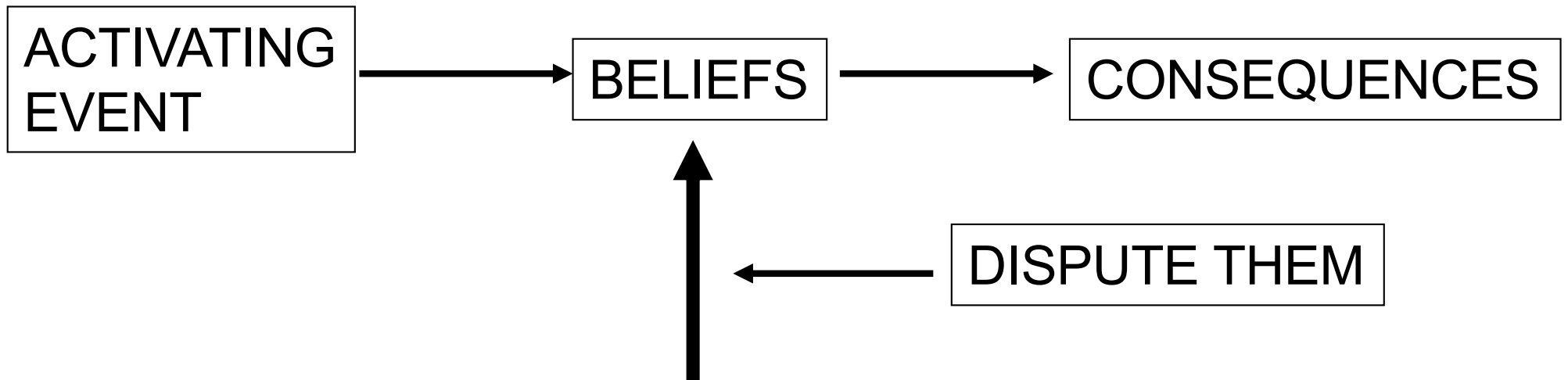


How Might We Self-Sabotage

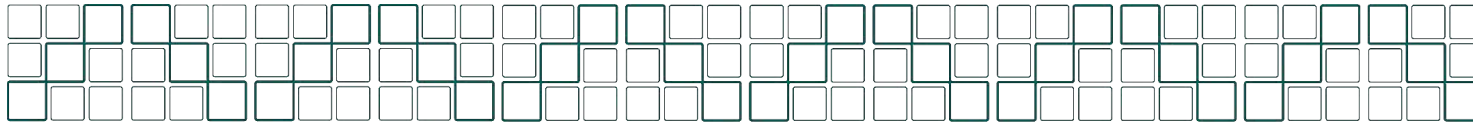
- We avoid..
 - asking questions we really need to ask or talking with people we really need to talk with
 - applying for appropriate schools, positions, fellowships and awards
 - volunteering for assignments and for leadership positions
- And....
 - withdraw from community
 - use unhealthy behaviors to try and feel better
- This can become a negative cycle that leads to poor outcomes in school, internship, work and life



The ABC...D's



the stories we tell ourselves



What Types Of Stories Do You Tell?



- Unrealistic
- Unhelpful
- Unkind
- Closed
- Disrespectful
- Fixed mindset

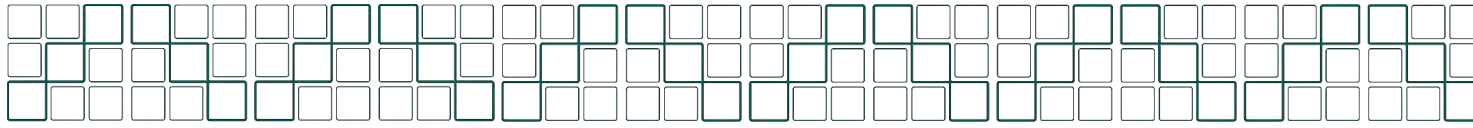


- Realistic
- Helpful
- Kind
- Open
- Respectful
- Growth mindset



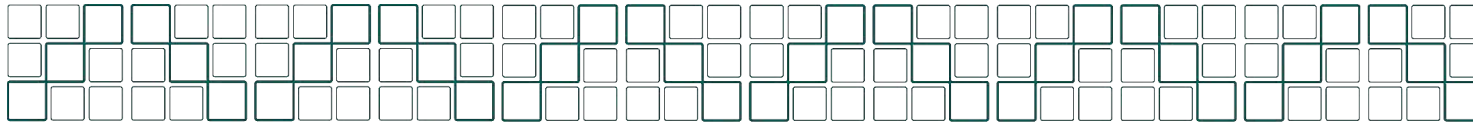
- Unrealistic
- Unhelpful
- Complicated
- Closed
- Disrespectful
- Fixed mindset

Jackal and giraffe based on work at <https://www.cnvc.org/>



Explore Your Stories

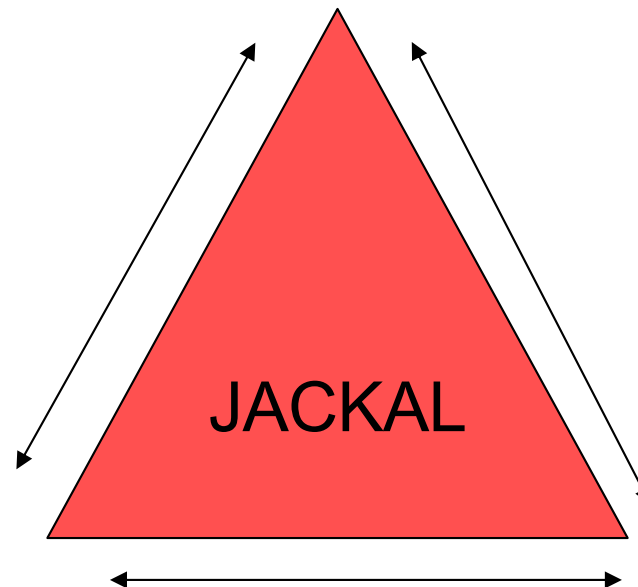
- Use journaling for self-reflection and discovery
 - Ask yourself what you currently believe and if those beliefs are helpful or hurtful?
- Keep a jackal - giraffe - ostrich log for a few days
- Talk about cognitive distortions and imposter fears with family, friends, colleagues, mentors
- Really getting in the way? Find a counselor, explore why, and learn skills for dealing with them



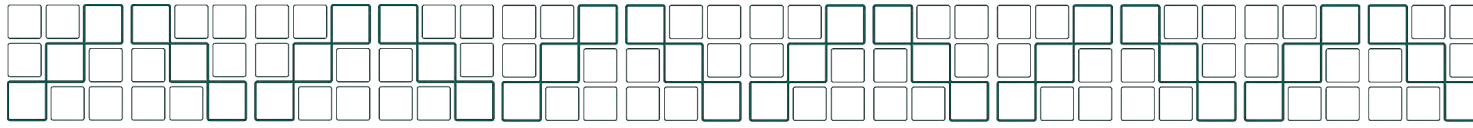
How Distorted Thinking Holds Us Back – Not This

Thought: I can't believe that seminar went so poorly. I will probably do just as poorly when I give the talk at the meeting. Nobody will come to my poster. My PI will be angry and never sponsor me to go to another meeting. I am not cut out to be a scientist.

Behavior: Difficulty concentrating, skipping work, avoiding your PI, lots of numbing out behaviors.



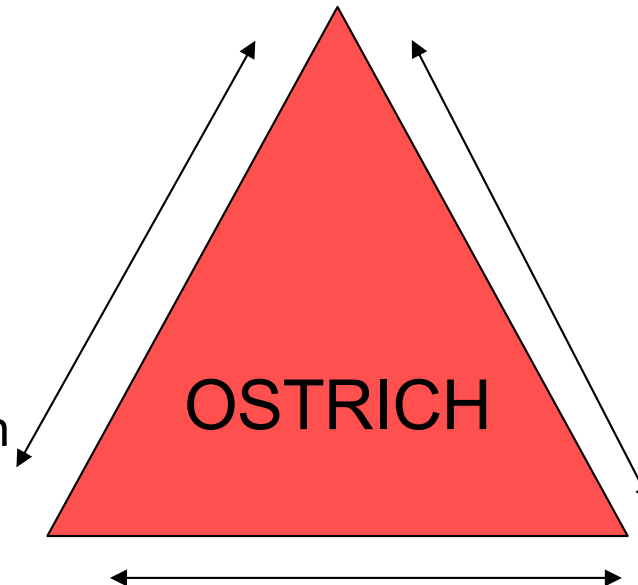
Feel: Panicked, stressed, worried, embarrassed, angry, overwhelmed, distracted, sad, resigned.



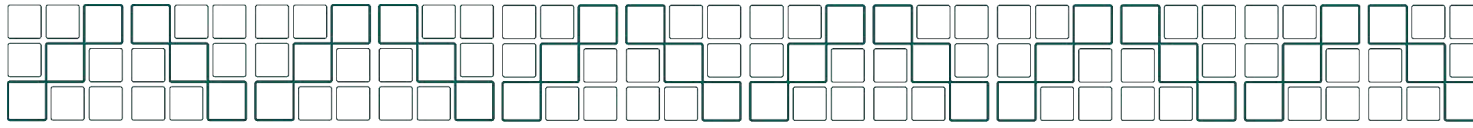
Or This.....

Thought: That talk could have gone better. The first question threw me off and then I just got a bit distracted. Oh well – no worries, now that I practiced, it will be fine when I give it at the meeting next week.

Behavior: ignore exploring any needed changes, do not check in with your PI for suggestions, do not schedule another practice, continue with strategies that may not be working.

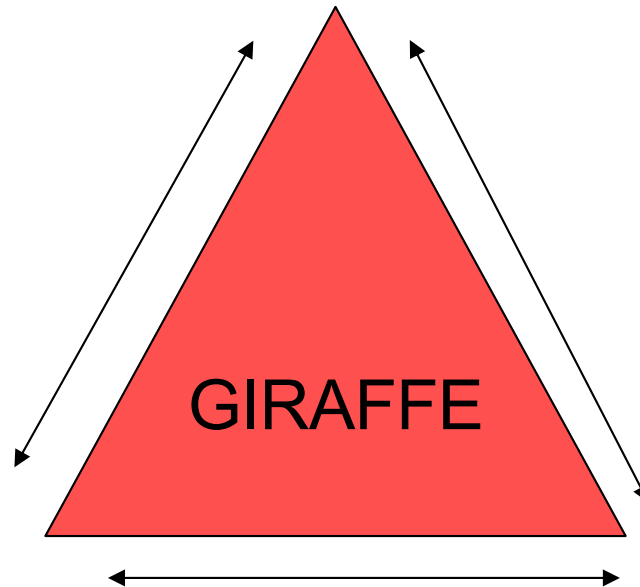


Feel: confident or overly confident, relaxed, calm, unworried.



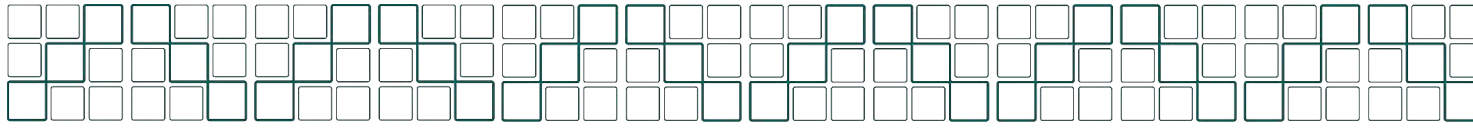
Instead – Aim For This

Thought: That seminar did not go as well as I had hoped. I am disappointed. If I practice some more, I can improve. The talk at the meetings matters a lot so I need to let go of this disappointment and make a plan to practice more.



Behavior: go talk to your PI, re-work slides, find some friends to practice with,

Feel: hopeful, focused, motivated, worried, stressed, embarrassed, disappointed.



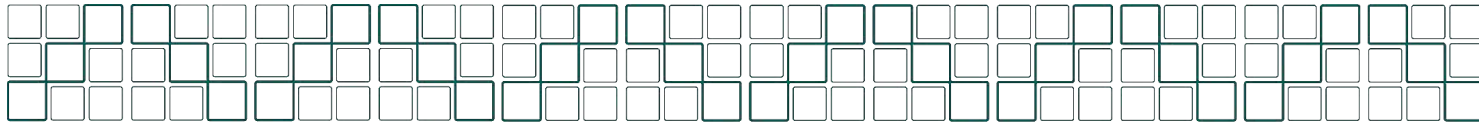
An Acronym To Help - HATS

Hear your [negative] self-talk

Appreciate you have a choice and fact check it

Talk back like a **realistic** giraffe

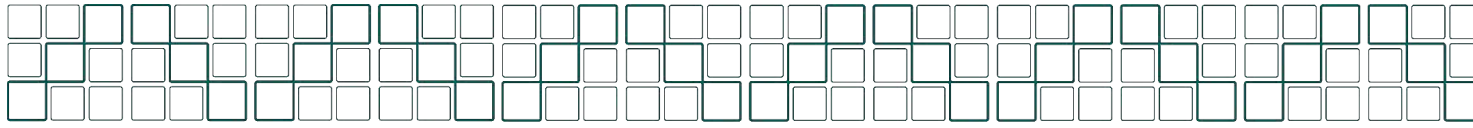
Seek help and access resources



And A Hack That Works For Me

Are these thoughts helping me or hurting me?

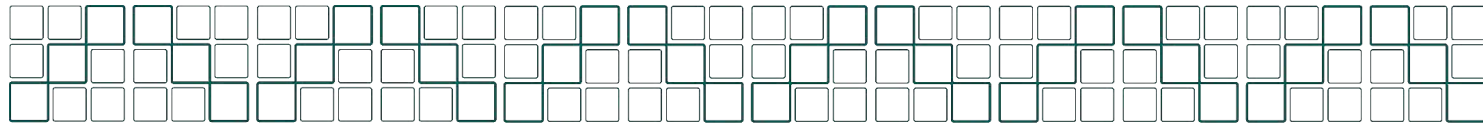
NOTE: Helps for actions too!



There Are Some

Elephants In the Room



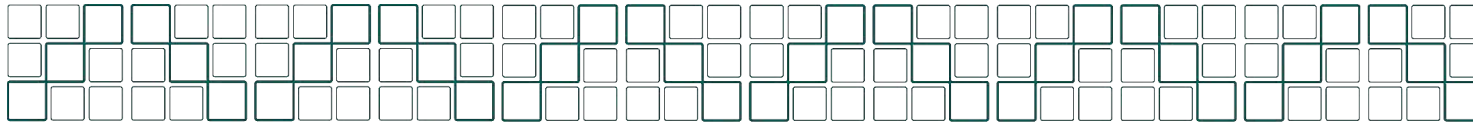


What About When They Come From Others?

- Workplace culture, discrimination, bias and poor mentoring often triggers cycles of distorted thinking and imposter fears
- HATS still holds
 - Hear the jackal for what it is
 - Appreciate you have a choice to listen, or not, AND to talk to the other person, or not
 - Talk back - even if only to yourself
 - Seek resources and community
- Setting boundaries, being assertive, dealing with feedback, being a part of supportive communities, additional training, and finding/working with mentors are all a part of the process.

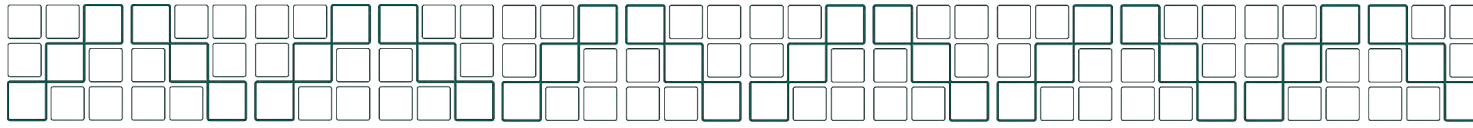
Building a Wellness Culture

- Participate in the OITE Resilience Training Program
- Attend other trainings on wellness, mentoring, emotional intelligence, diversity and inclusion, etc
- Create a supportive circle of colleagues interested in wellness
- Highlight the relevant wellness implications in any discussions – including scientific, academic, career topics
- Include wellness in all mentoring conversations with trainees, including at all committee meetings for PhD students



Make AND SHARE a wellness collage

- Is a great reminder of who we are and...
 - what helps us stay well
 - what brings us joy
 - of the power of community
 - doing for others
- Reminds us of the things we have to be grateful for (even where there are a lot of things to feel beaten down by)



Online Resources

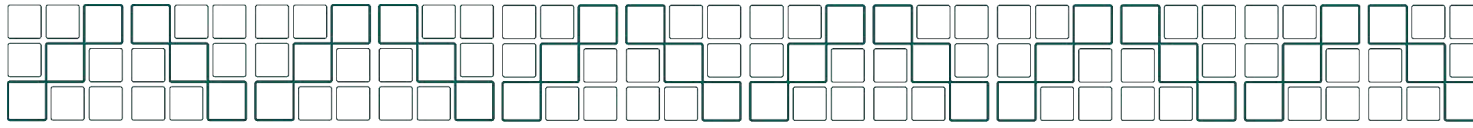
www.youtube.com/channel/UCQQHo_QnuBxdfcsRy4INGGw

Mental Health & Well-being of Biomedical Researchers Seminar Series ▶ **PLAY ALL**

Mental Health & Wellness Series Pt 1: Suicide in the... NIH OITE 1K views • 6 months ago CC	Mental Health & Wellness Series Pt 2: Mental Health... NIH OITE 478 views • 5 months ago CC	Mental Health & Wellness Series Pt 3: Managing... NIH OITE 431 views • 4 months ago CC	Mental Health & Wellness Series Pt 4: Supporting the... NIH OITE 239 views • 3 months ago CC	Mental Health & Wellness Series Pt 5: Anxiety and... NIH OITE 446 views • 2 months ago CC

Becoming a Resilient Scientist Series 2021 ▶ **PLAY ALL**

Becoming a Resilient Scientist Series Pt1: An... youtube.com	Becoming a Resilient Scientist Series Pt2:...	Becoming a Resilient Scientist Series Pt3:...	Becoming a Resilient Scientist Series Pt4: Self-...



OITE Mental Health Series

Topic	Date	Time (ET)
Suicide prevention and Awareness	October 5, 2020	1:00 – 3:15 pm
Mental health and wellness through a cultural lens	November 2, 2020	1:00-3:15 pm
Addictive behaviors	December 1, 2020	12:00-2:15 pm
Wellness assessments and strategies for individuals and groups	January 11, 2021	1:00-3:15 pm
Anxiety and anxiety disorders	February 1, 2021	1:00-3:15 pm
Depression and other mood disorders	March 1, 2021	1:00-3:15 pm
Executive function	April 6, 2021	12:00-2:15 pm
Psychology of career decision-making	May 3, 2021	1:00-3:15 pm
Trauma (individual and group)	June 7, 2021	1:00-3:45 pm
Welcoming colleagues on the Autism Spectrum	July 12, 2021	1:00-3:15 pm

Talks are archived on the NIH OITE You Tube Channel