



Caring for Others, Caring for Ourselves

Billerica Library Virtual Series

September 14, 2021

Resilience – our natural impulse

“Resilience is built into the very cells of our bodies. It is as much a part of us as our ability to heal...resilience can ripple outward, changing the lives of people, families, neighborhoods, and communities in positive ways.”

– Resmaa Menakem, My Grandmother's Hands





Today's Objectives

- **To better understand the need for self-care and how our body responds to daily and past stressors**
- **To identify easy calming practices and mindfulness techniques to enhance our own well-being AND that of our loved ones.**
- **To understand what meaningful respite means.**
- **To increase the tools in our self-care toolbox to support our our own health and well-being and that of our loved ones.**



Today's Flow


- **Welcome**
 - **Agenda and Objectives**
 - **Self Check-In Survey – how are we doing?**
 - **Understanding Stress**
 - **Understanding Stress' Impact on Our Bodies**
 - **Exploring Calming Practices for Ourselves and Our Loved Ones**
 - **Reframing Respite**
 - **Self-Care Practices**
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Oxygen Mask – Ourselves First

Showing up for Life – a marathon that requires pacing

- **Pause**
- **Check-in: What is my Oxygen Level?**
- **Get Support: Keeping full tanks - resources**
- **Practicing Self-Care: Increasing Oxygen**



Quiz #1 Where Are You Today? For each question, consider your experience in the past month. Mark each item according to how often an experience has occurred, as follows:

1 – Not at all or once at most

2 – Sometimes

3 – Fairly Often

4 – Often

- ___ I was depressed.**
- ___ I felt worried and anxious.**
- ___ I had to go to the doctor's office.**
- ___ I was in pain but didn't go to the doctor's office.**
- ___ A chronic health problem was present.**
- ___ I ate the wrong foods, fast food, or junk food.**
- ___ I was under pressure.**
- ___ I felt stressed out.**

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- I had trouble getting to sleep.
 - I didn't get enough sleep.
 - I didn't control my weight.
 - I had a headache.
 - I had a backache.
 - My relationship didn't go well.
 - I got seriously angry.
 - I neglected exercise and physical activity.
 - I had self-doubt or self-esteem issues.
 - I felt lonely.
 - I felt unloved or uncared for.
 - There were troubling family issues.
 - I was worried about the future

Quiz #2: Your Highest Positive Experiences

For each question, consider your experience in the past month. Mark each item according to how often an experience has occurred, as follows:

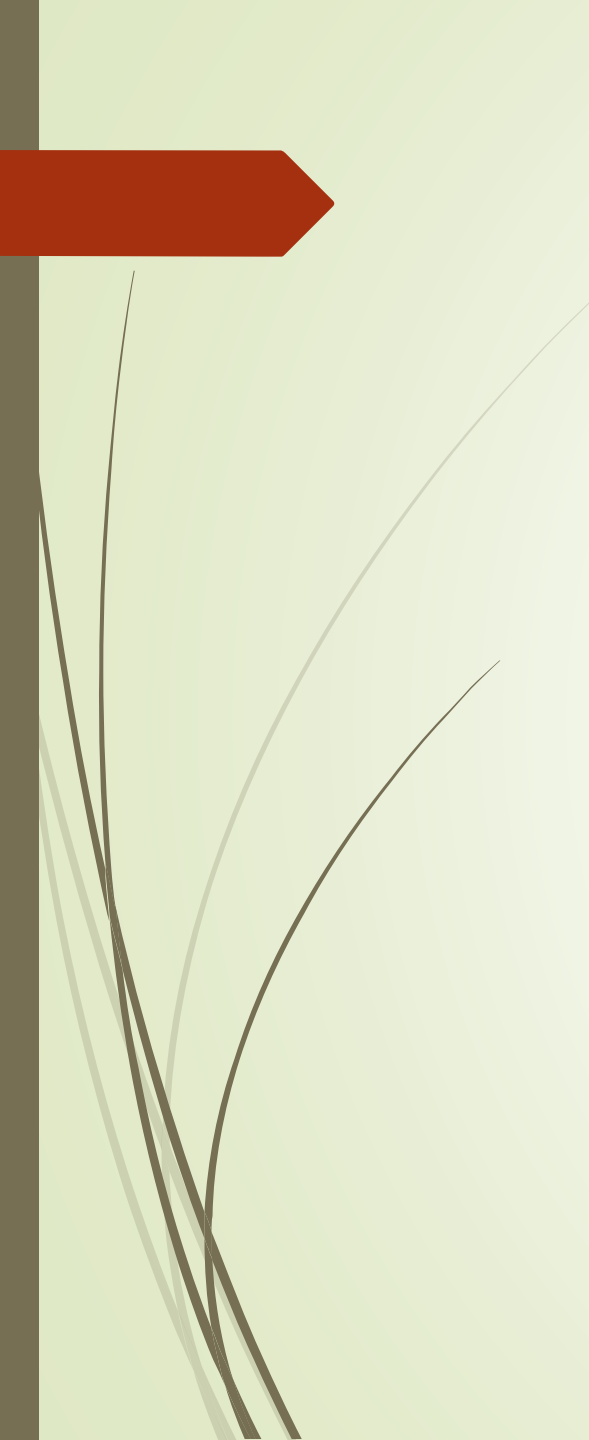
1 – Not at all or once at most


2 – Sometimes

3 – Fairly Often

4 – Often


- ___ I felt contented inside.**
- ___ I expressed love openly to someone else.**
- ___ I felt free and liberated.**
- ___ I saw myself without blame or judgment**
- ___ I was appreciated and praised by someone at work or in my family.**
- ___ I felt inner peace and tranquility.**
- ___ I felt myself to be part of a larger plan or vision.**

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- I experienced a loving gesture toward me.
 - I had a spiritual experience.
 - I felt lovingkindness and compassion.
 - I forgave someone.
 - I forgave myself.
 - I let go of something negative from the past.
 - I developed an emotional bond with someone.
 - I felt blessed.
 - I sensed what I'd call a divine or holy presence.
 - I was lighthearted.
 - My faith in human goodness was affirmed.
 - I felt blissful or ecstatic.
 - I saw or experienced inner light.

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- __ I experienced pure Being or unbounded awareness.
 - __ I saw the sacredness of another person.
 - __ I meditated, prayed, or did another contemplative practice.
 - __ I felt creatively inspired.

(Source: *The Healing Self*, by Deepak Chopra, MD and Rudolph E. Tanzi, PhD)





Showing Up – Caring for Ourselves – and for Others

➤ Relationships and Caregiving?

Defined: provides care for another person - child, aging parent, partner or spouse, relative, friend, neighbor, others

➤ Paid professional who provides care

➤ Informal caregivers or family caregivers - unpaid

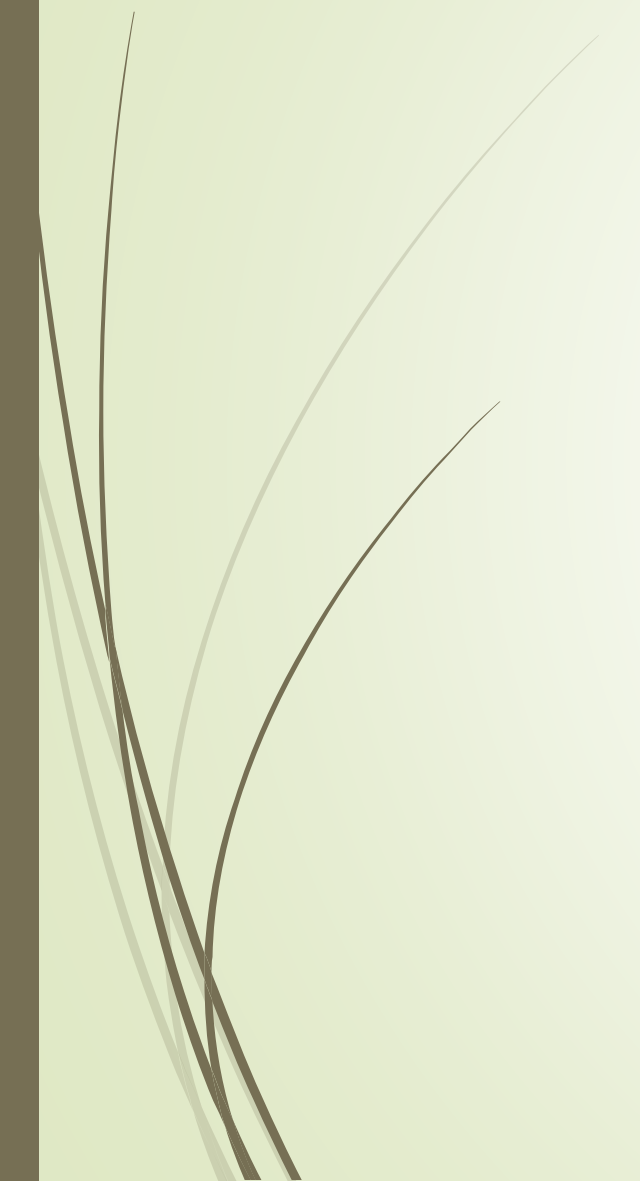
➤ Mostly women BUT not all!

➤ Nearly three in five family caregivers have paid jobs in addition to their caregiving.

(Source: Dept. of Health and Human Services, Office of Women's Health)



Causes of Stress – showing up!

- **emotional and physical strain**
 - **24/7 on call**
 - **traumatizing - experiencing feeling overwhelmed**
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Signs of Stress

- **Frustration, anger, helplessness**
- **Feeling overwhelmed**
- **Feeling alone, isolated, or deserted by others**
- **Sleeping too much or too little**
- **Gaining or losing a lot of weight**
- **Feeling tired most of the time**
- **Losing interest in activities you used to enjoy**
- **Becoming easily irritated or angered**
- **Feeling worried or sad often**
- **Having headaches or body aches often**
- **Substance Abuse – alcohol, drugs**
- **Over or under eating**

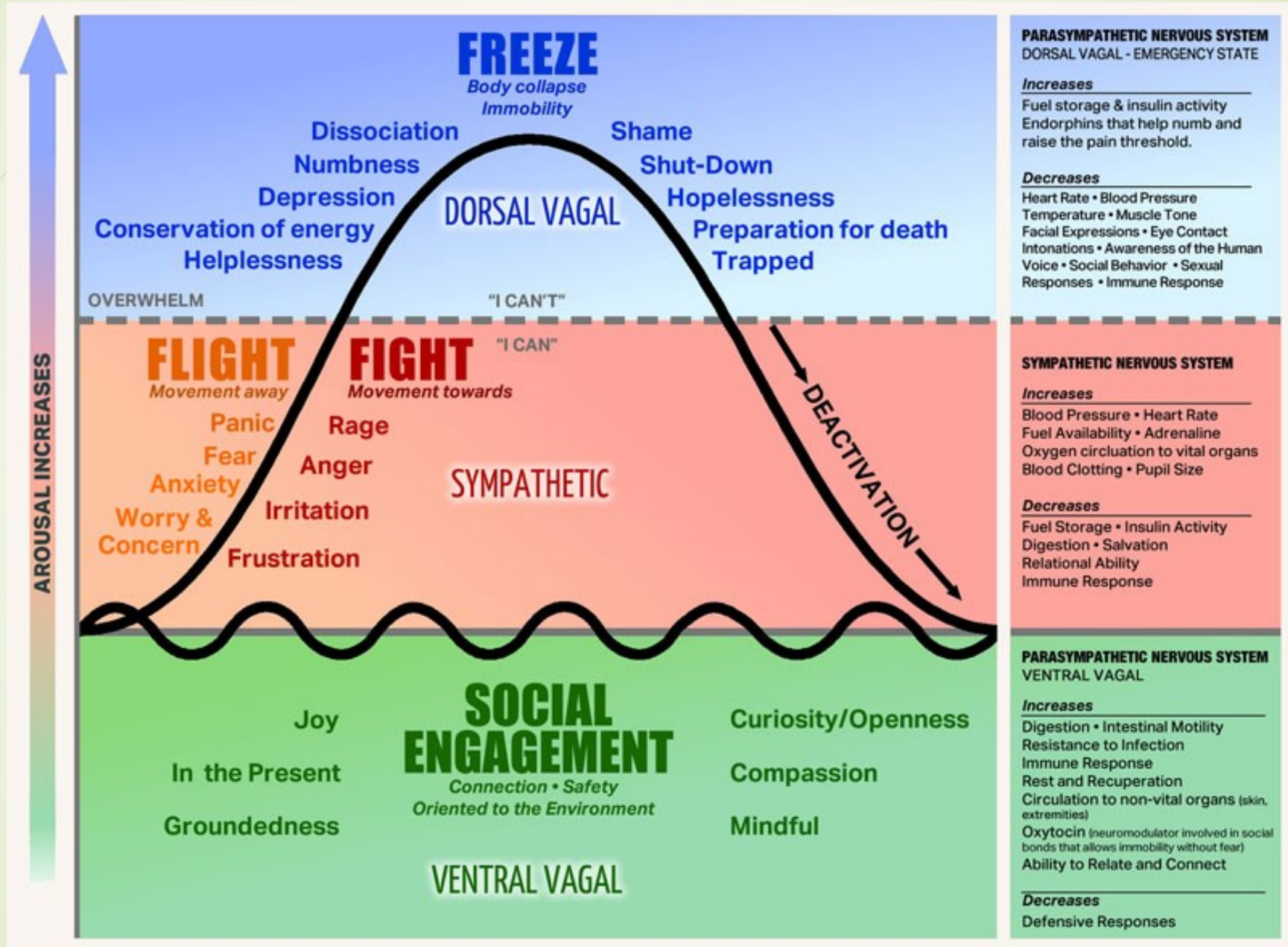


Health Affects

- **Depression and anxiety**
- **Weak immune system.**
- **Obesity**
- **Higher risk for chronic diseases – inflammation (*heart disease, cancer, diabetes, or arthritis*)**
- **Memory and Focusing Difficulties**

(Source: Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Women's Health; <https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/caregiver-stress>)

Polyvagal Theory – Understanding Stress and Dr. Stephen Porges





Windows taskbar showing icons for Word, Firefox, PowerPoint, Teams, Spotify, Adobe Reader, File Explorer, and OneDrive. A battery indicator shows 24% charge. The system clock displays 2:10 PM on 2/9/2021.



Choosing Healing - Recipe for Body/Mind/Spirit Health

- **Mediterranean diet**
- **Adequate Sleep (7-8 hours)**
- **Daily Exercise – walking**
- **Cultivate humor**
- **Reduce Stress – mindfulness practices: meditation, prayer, chant, sing, walk, and more**
- **Learn New Things**
- **Stay Socially Engaged**
- **Sense of Purpose**
- **Counseling**

Mindfulness

➤ Defined:

“Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally,” says Kabat-Zinn. “And then I sometimes add, in the service of self-understanding and wisdom.” – Jon Kabat-Zinn

➤ Many types of practices: meditation, yoga, singing, prayer, and more

➤ Shared characteristics:

➤ Slows us down

➤ Helps us be present – not fearing the future, not longing for the past

➤ Physical Effects – reduces stress

➤ slows heart rate, decreases anxiety, rests the brain, reduces inflammation

Calming Mindfulness Practices – for you AND your loved one

Somatic Practices – Body-Focused: the intelligent body


- **3 Sync Meditation: body, thoughts, emotions**
- **Resourcing Meditation: comfort, joy, strength**

Other Meditations

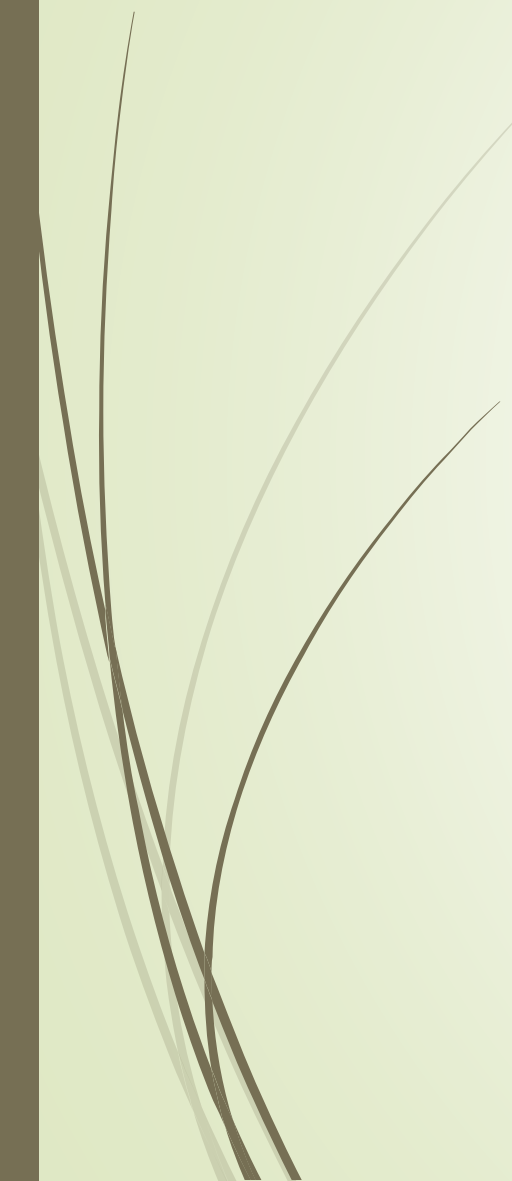
- **Music**
- **Color**
- **Visualization – favorite people, places, things**

Other Practices

- **Laughter Yoga**
- **Self-Reiki**
- **Forest Bathing**



Mindful Respite - key to resiliency

- **Traditional definition for respite – a short break**
 - **International Movement - annual conferences – share innovations: memory cafes, adventure travel**
 - **National Movement Leadership- ARCH national network and annual conference**
 - **State-wide Movements - respite networks**
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Mindful Respite – restorative remedy for stress

- **Traditional respite – we separate to get a break from one another – we leave them; they leave us (day programs, in-home companions, etc.)**
- **Restorative respite - care partners do not need to separate to enjoy a break; mindfulness activities done together.**
- **Restorative aspect - care partners are able to be together to enjoy their relationship and their former, pre-caregiving roles – spouses, parent/child, etc.**
- **Care partners find shared relief from their exhausting caregiving dynamic - too often centered on medical visits and support groups - in the normal community setting of the café.**

Meaningful Respite – Dr. Dale Lund’s Findings

What does “meaningful” respite mean?

- More than a break – it must allow the care partner to do activities that gives them satisfaction - not paying bills or cleaning house or running errands.
- **Ask Ourselves: What brings us joy?**
 - **unless the respite opportunity allows the care partner to continue with some activity they love, such as an exercise class or reading a mystery novel – an activity tied to some goal of the care partner - the respite “break” can actually leave the caregiver MORE depressed, less satisfied with caregiving, and feeling more burdened in many ways – physically, socially, emotionally, and more.**

(Source: <https://archrespite.org/webinars-and-teleconferences/making-respite-more-effective>)

Mindfulness, Wellness, and Healing Resources

Meditation for stress reduction and pain management – see Jon Kabat- Zinn

<https://www.mindful.org/jon-kabat-zinn-defining-mindfulness/>

Healthy Living – Practical Guide to Health and Healing – see Deepak Chopra, MD

***The Healing Self*, by Dr. Deepak Chopra, MD and Dr. Rudi Tazni, MD**

<https://www.amazon.com/Healing-Self-Revolutionary-Supercharge-Immunity/dp/0451495527>

More Resources – Stress and Trauma

The Body Keeps the Score, by Bessel Van der Kolk

<https://www.amazon.com/Body-Keeps-Score-Healing-Trauma/dp/0143127748>

Healing Back Pain, by John Sarno, MD

<https://www.amazon.com/Healing-Back-Pain-Mind-Body-Connection/dp/0446557684>

The Unspoken Voice, by Peter Levine

https://www.amazon.com/Unspoken-Voice-Releases-Restores-Goodness/dp/1556439431/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&hvadid=78134170237418&hvbmt=be&hvdev=c&hvqmt=e&keywords=unspoken+voice+levine&qid=1623859818&sr=8-1



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