

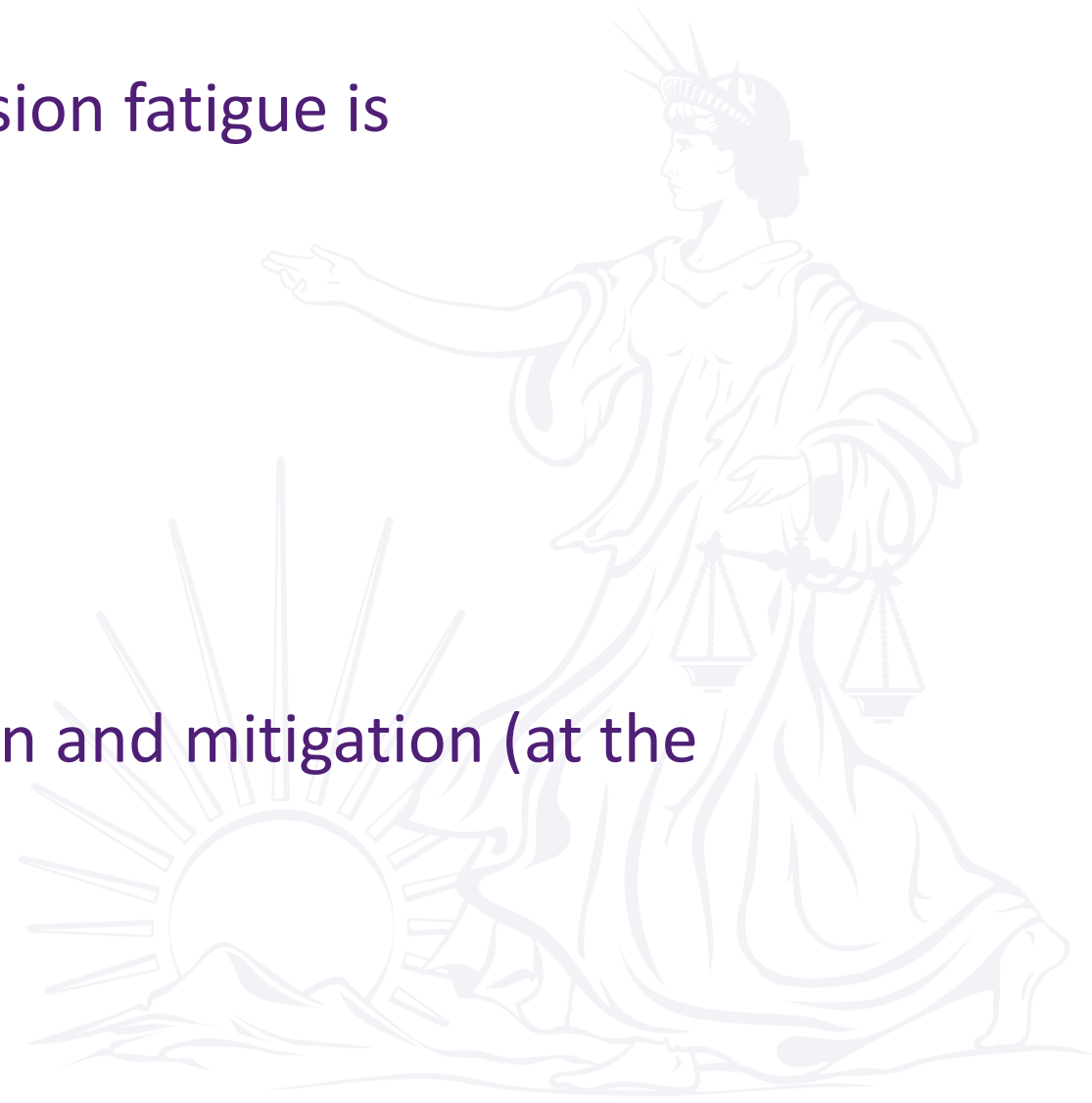
The Price We Pay As Professional Problem Solvers

An Examination of Compassion Fatigue

Brought to you by:
NC Lawyer Assistance Program
& LAP Foundation of NC, Inc.

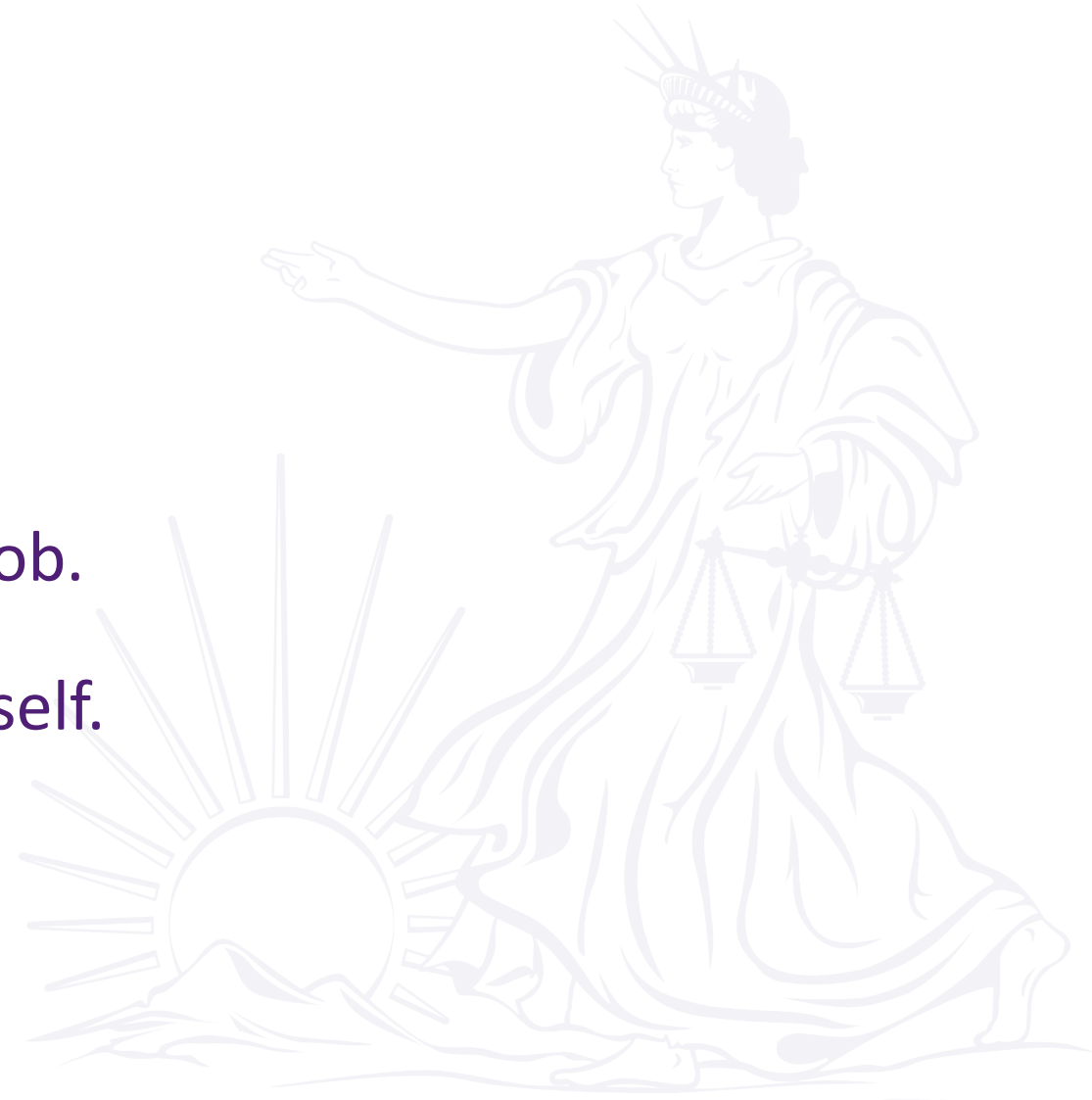
Training Objectives

- Gain an understanding of what compassion fatigue is
- Identify signs and symptoms
- Recognize contributing factors
- Understand best practices for prevention and mitigation (at the individual/personal level)



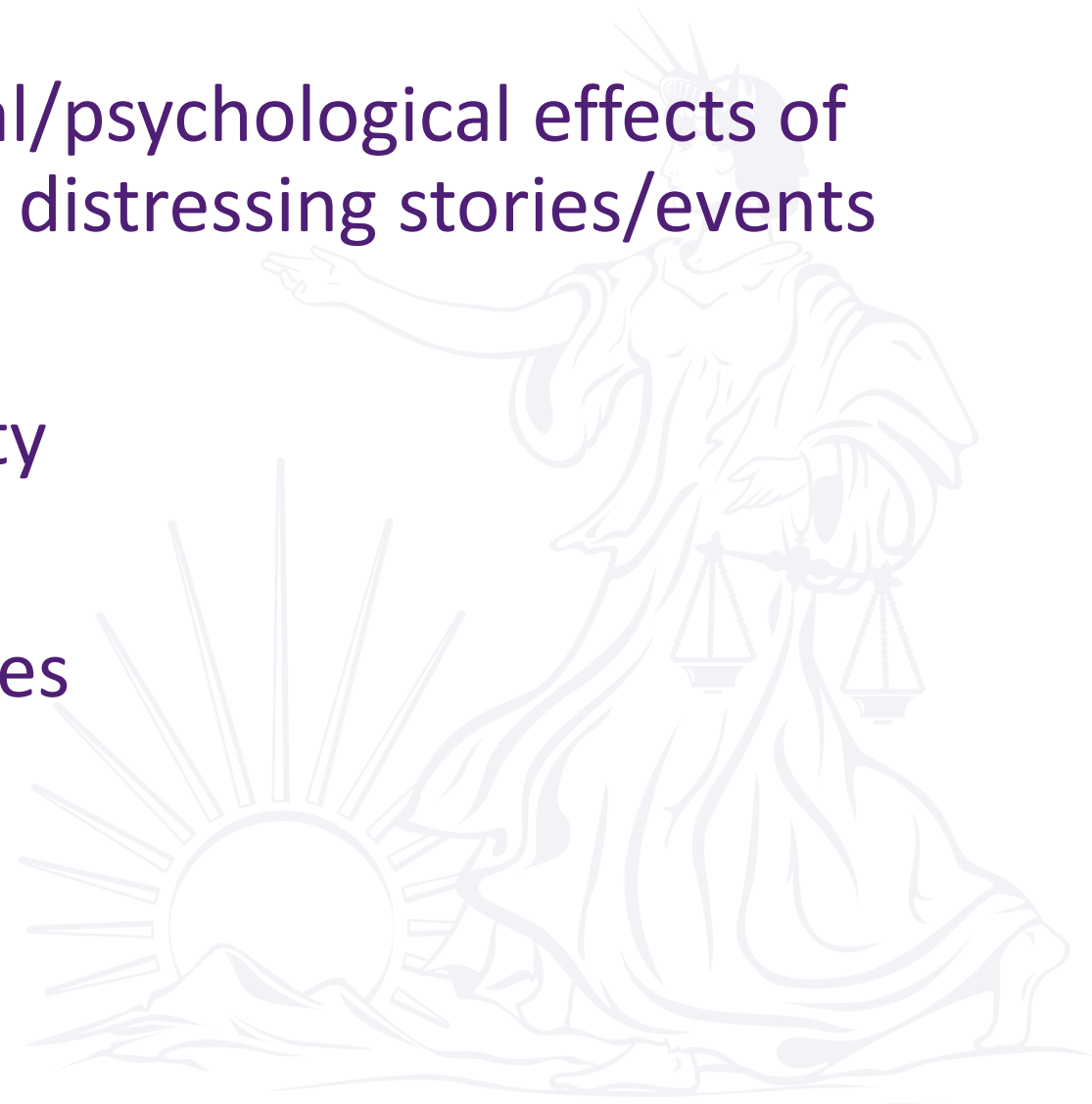
Fill in the blanks...

- The world is a _____ place.
- Life is _____.
- I am _____ as a human being.
- I want to change _____ about my job.
- I want to change _____ about myself.
- Most often I feel _____.



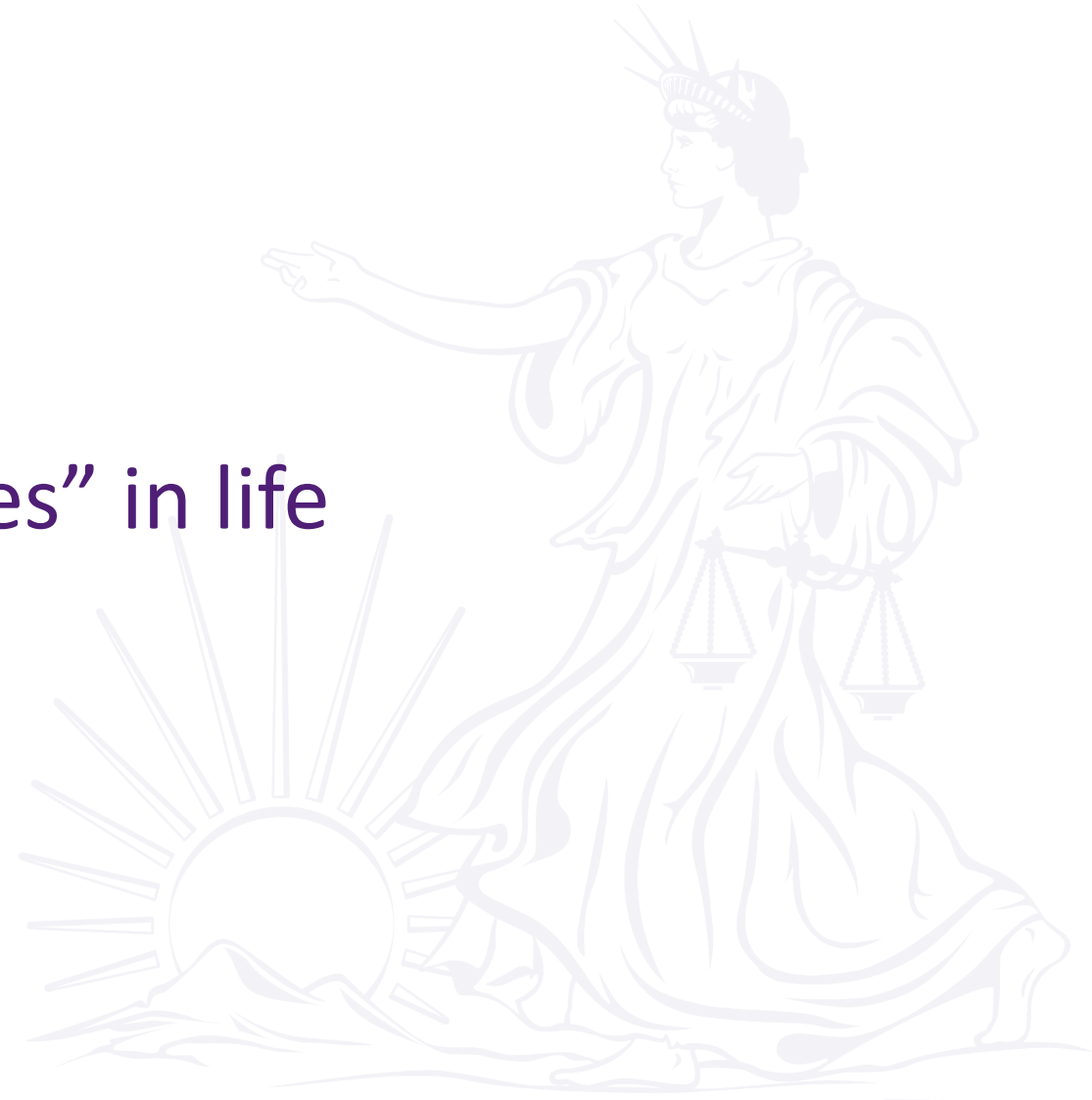
Compassion Fatigue Defined

- The cumulative physical/ emotional/psychological effects of continual exposure to traumatic or distressing stories/events
- When working in a helping capacity
- Where demands outweigh resources



Doing...

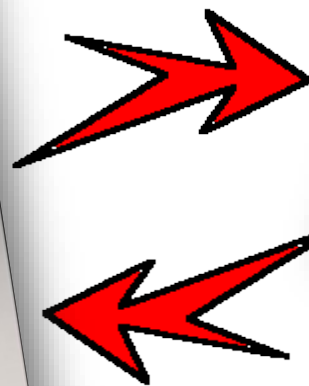
- Too much
- For too long
- With too few resources
- And working with the “big uglies” in life



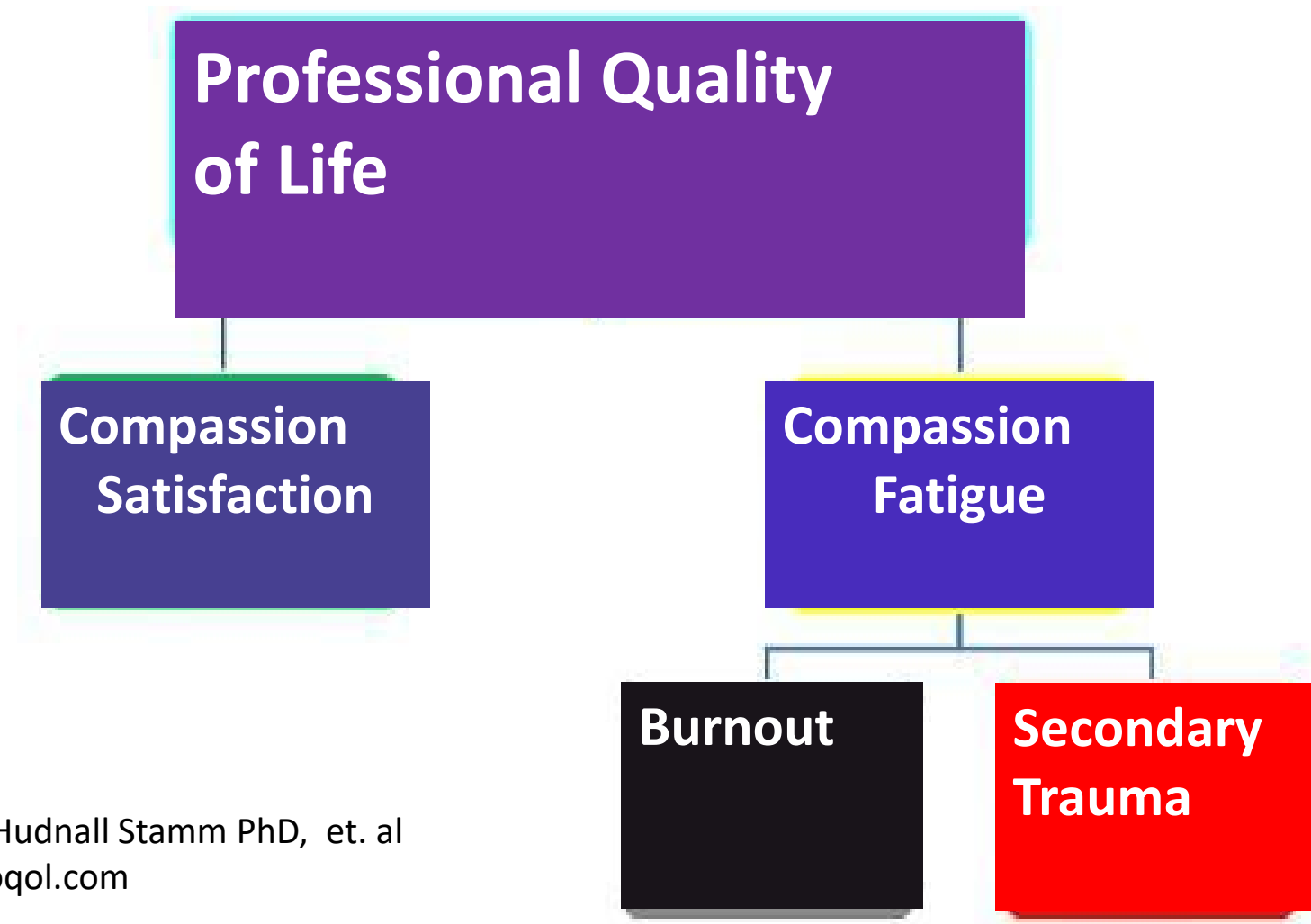
The Two “Big Uglies”



Workload/Hours

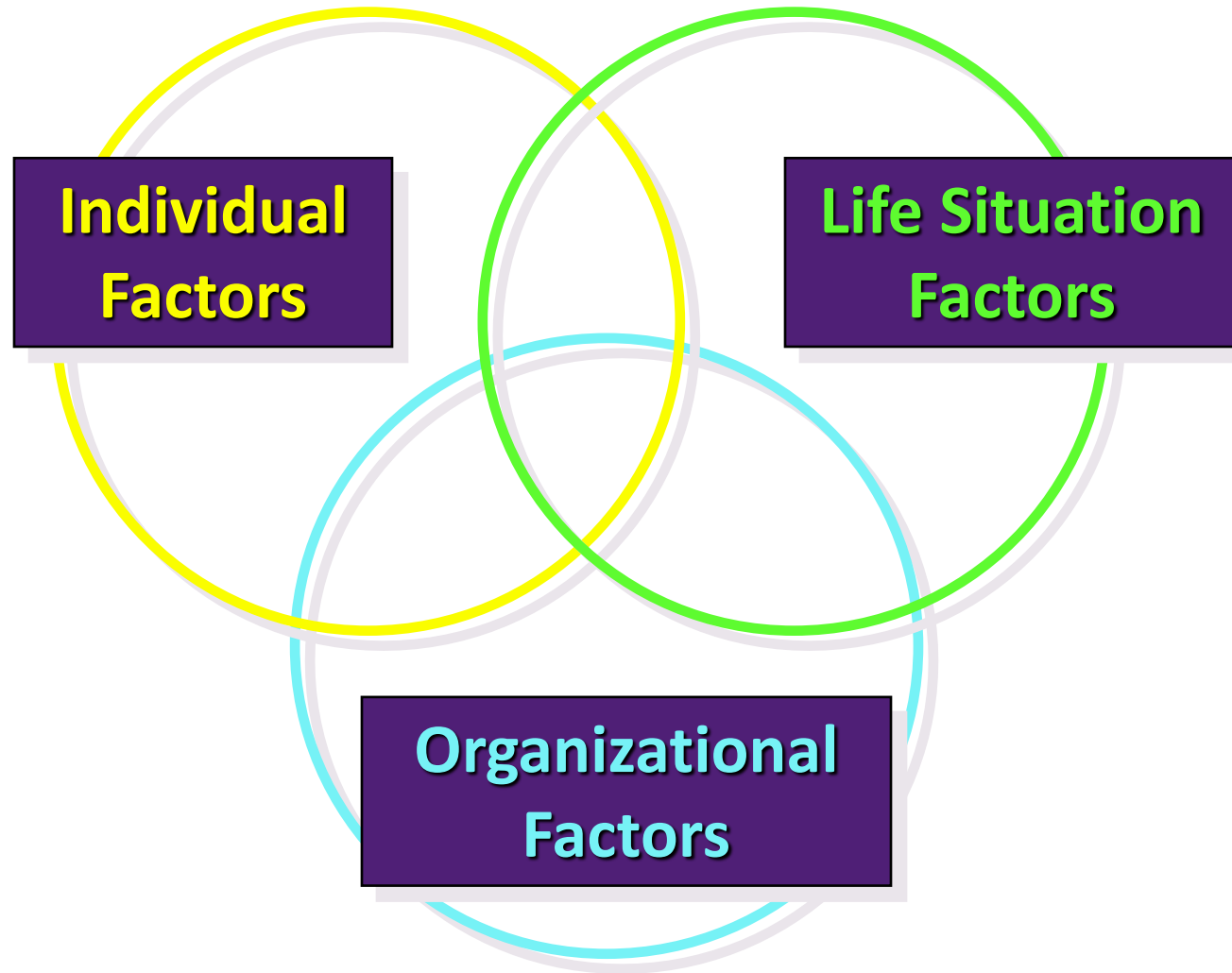


Trauma Exposure



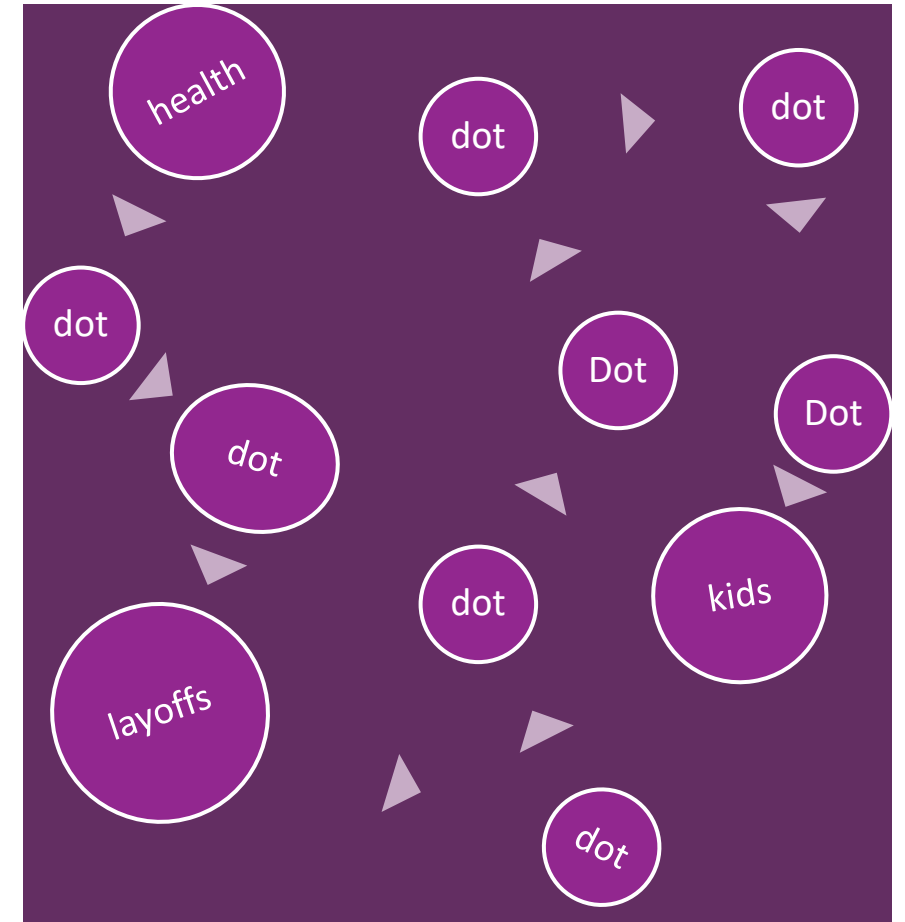
By Beth Hudnall Stamm PhD, et. al
www.proqol.com

Factors that Influence a Person's Vulnerability to Compassion Fatigue



Individual Vulnerabilities and Life Situations

- History of or current trauma
- Health problems
- Alcohol or drug use/troubles
- Poor job performance
- Depression or anxiety
- Generic life problems-
 - Spouse/partner,
 - Children,
 - Parents,
 - Finances



Organizational Stressors

- Unrealistic expectations
- Unrecognized accomplishments
- Budget cuts
- Eliminating positions
- Performing multiple jobs
- Personalities and politics
- Intense competition (within and without)





MIKE SHAPIRO

Our ideal employee can function without sleep while working a 120 hour week. And is, of course, highly family oriented.

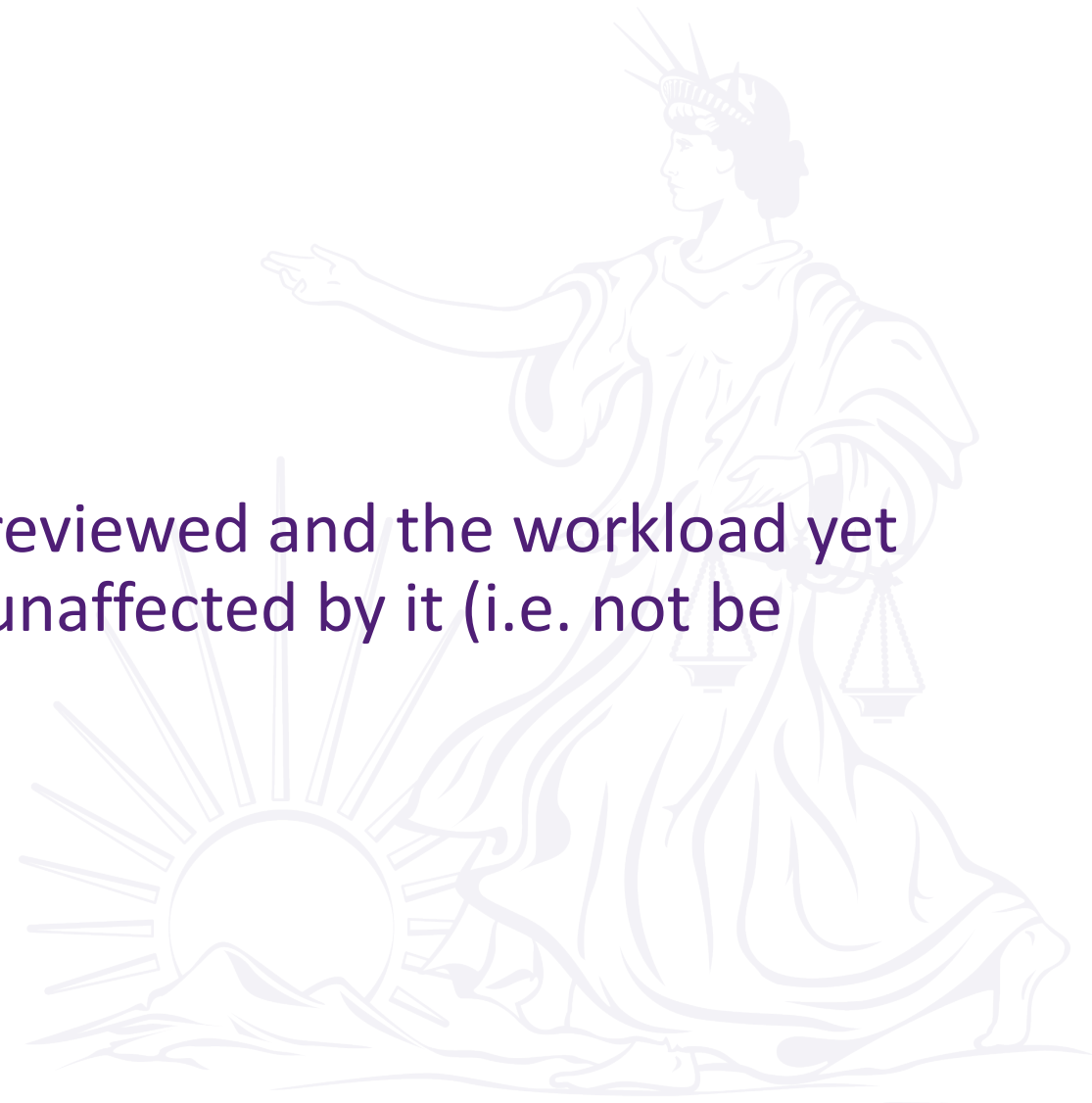
Workload: Look & Feel Familiar?



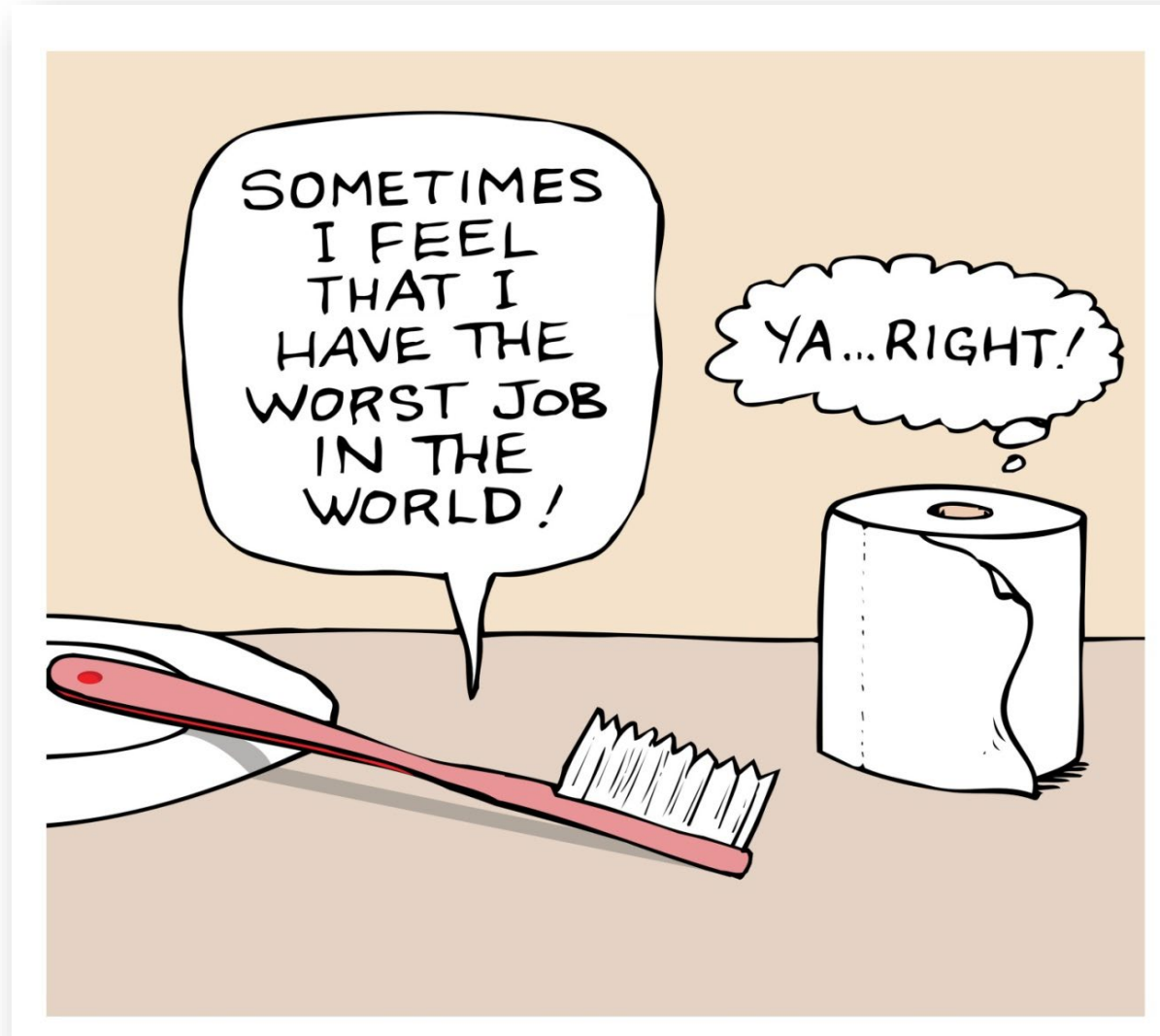
Statistically significant correlation with CF

Client Expectations/Stressors

- Unrealistic
- Want it now
- Unhappy, sad, mad, frustrated
- Stress from the pressure
- Stress from the difficult material being reviewed and the workload yet expected to appear and be completely unaffected by it (i.e. not be human)



Competitive Nature of Stress





Compassion Fatigue Advisory...

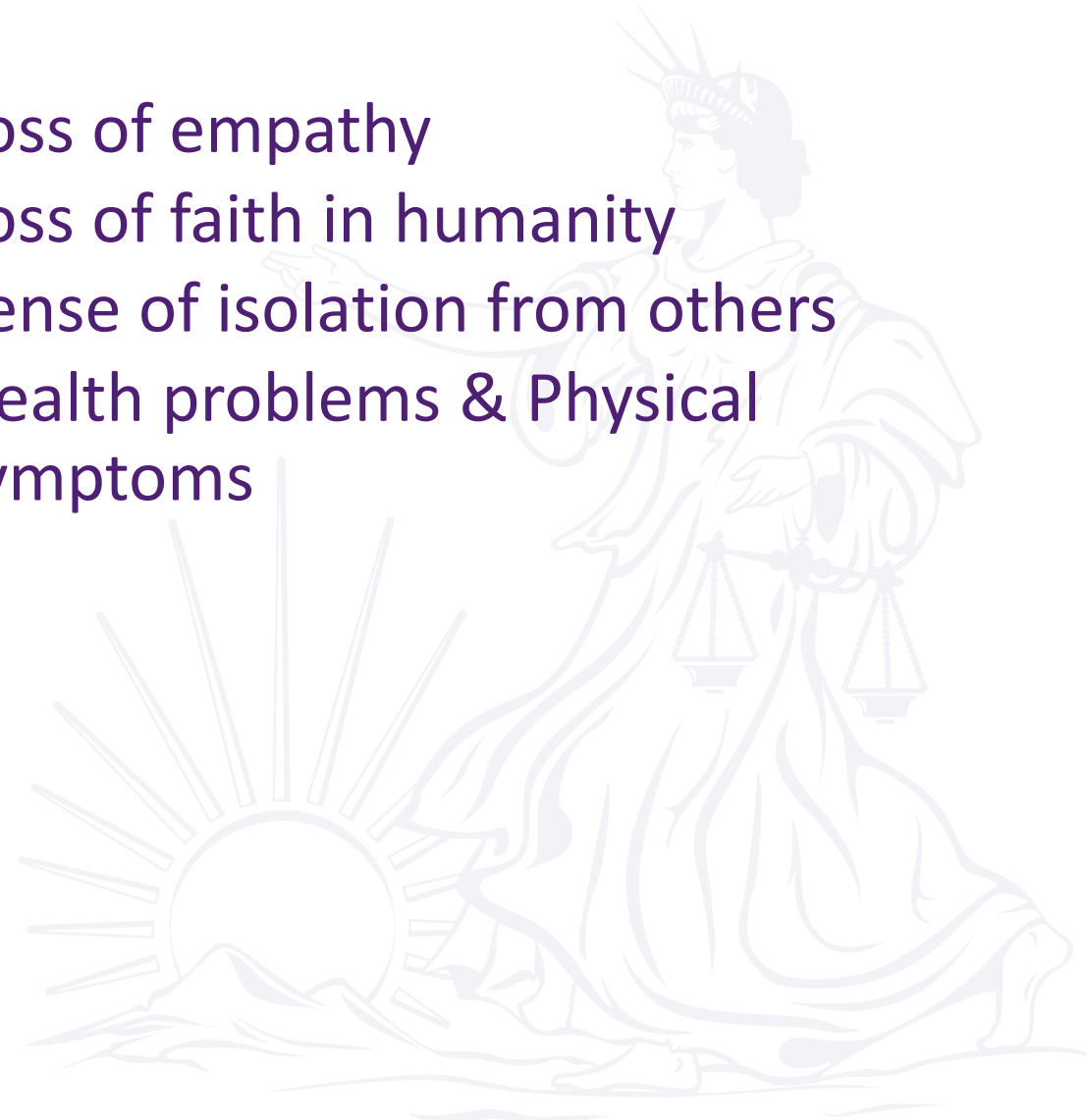
- Any person regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, age, occupation.... develop this condition
- Doesn't imply weakness, just "human-ness"
- Is more about "dis-ease" than disease.



Symptoms Reported

- ▶ Intrusive thoughts
- ▶ Anger/anxiety/fear
- ▶ Sleep disturbance
- ▶ Fatigue
- ▶ Loss of Appetite
- ▶ Loss of empathy
- ▶ Loss of faith in humanity
- ▶ Sense of isolation from others
- ▶ Health problems & Physical symptoms

Source: Vrklevisi et al. (2008) and Levin et al. (2003) and Jaffe et al. (2006)



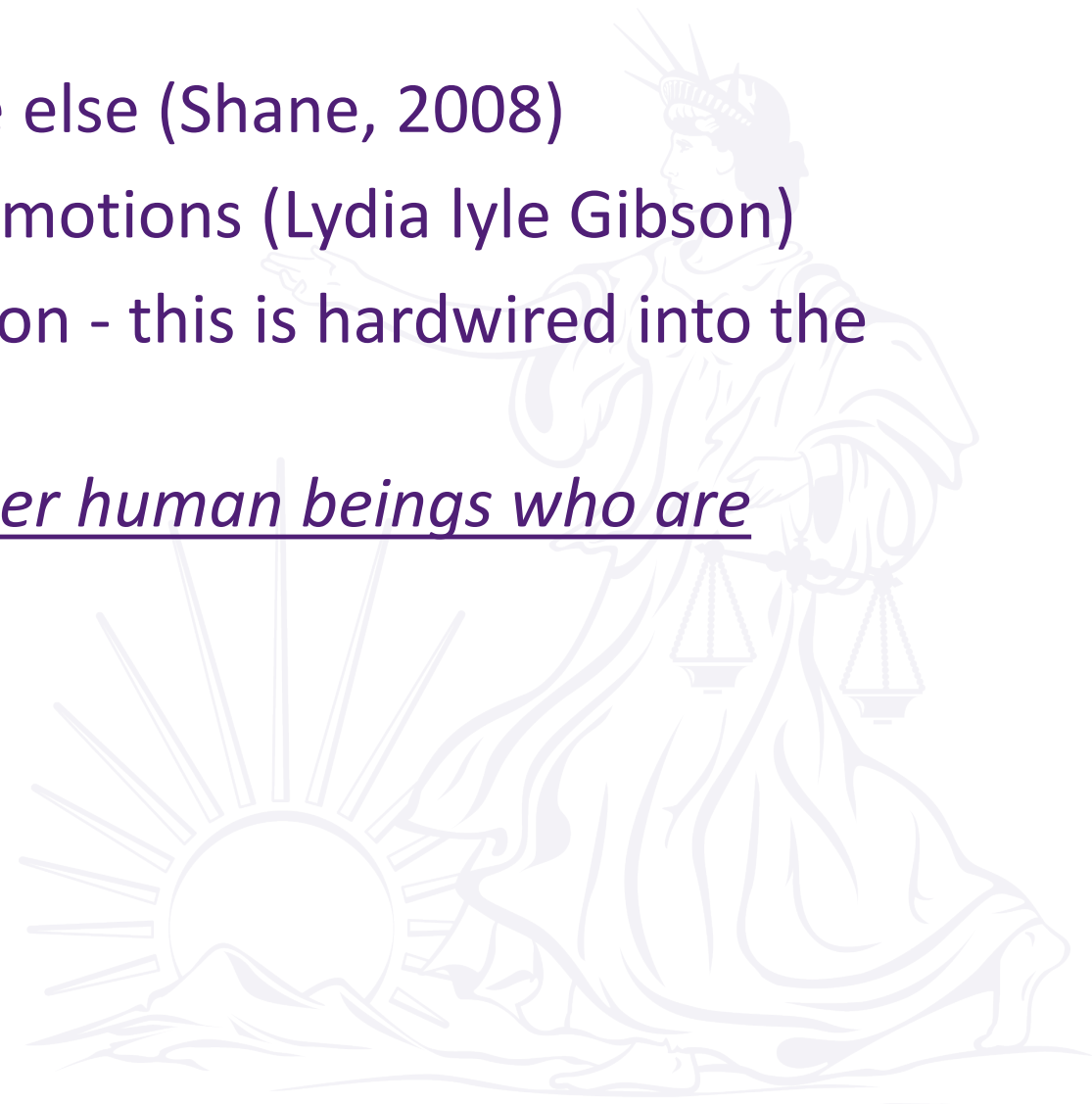
Role of Mirror Neurons in the Brain



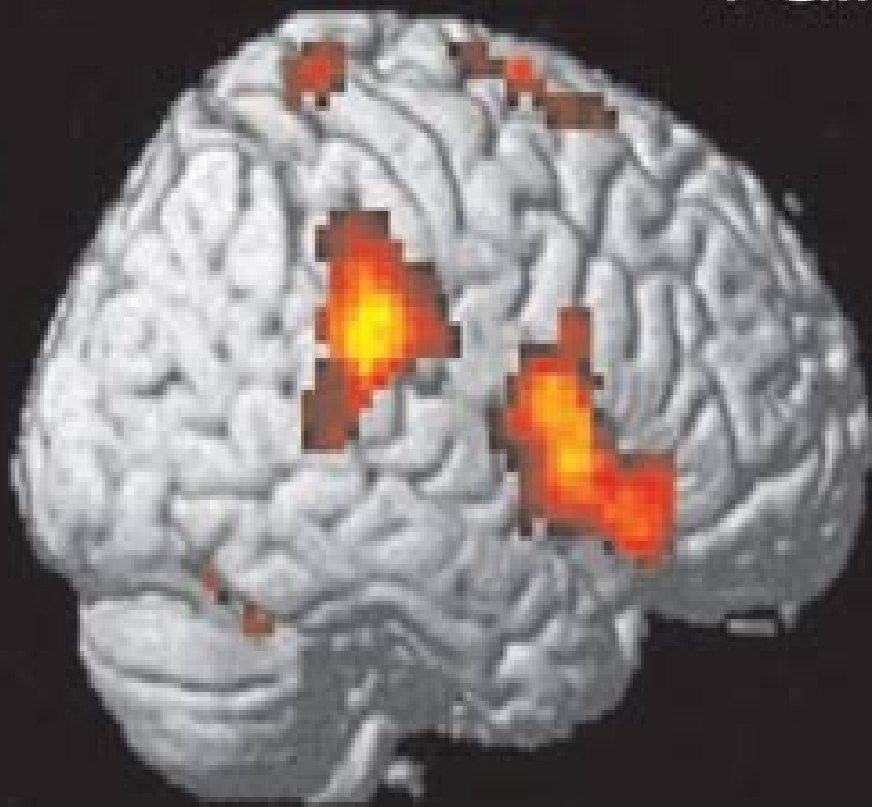


Empathy

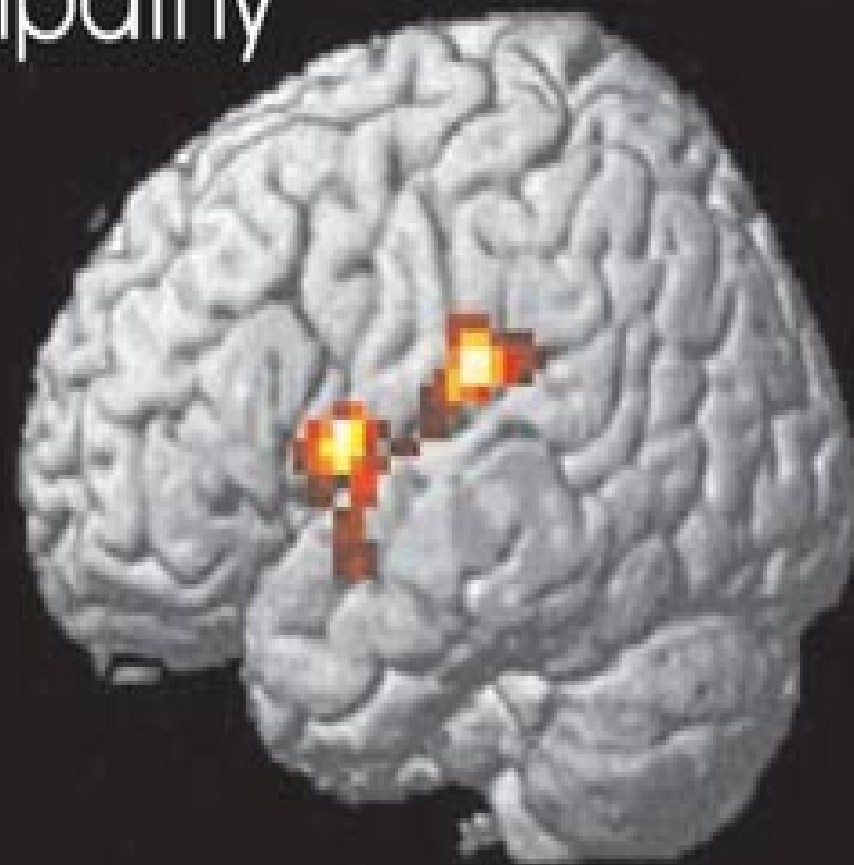
- Experience the experiences of someone else (Shane, 2008)
- Enduring those same experiences and emotions (Lydia lyle Gibson)
- Empathy is involuntary: a shared emotion - this is hardwired into the brain (L. Gibson)
- *Human beings who spend time with other human beings who are empathetic tend to feel better*



Pain



Empathy



Hand

Pain



No Pain



Foot

Pain



No Pain

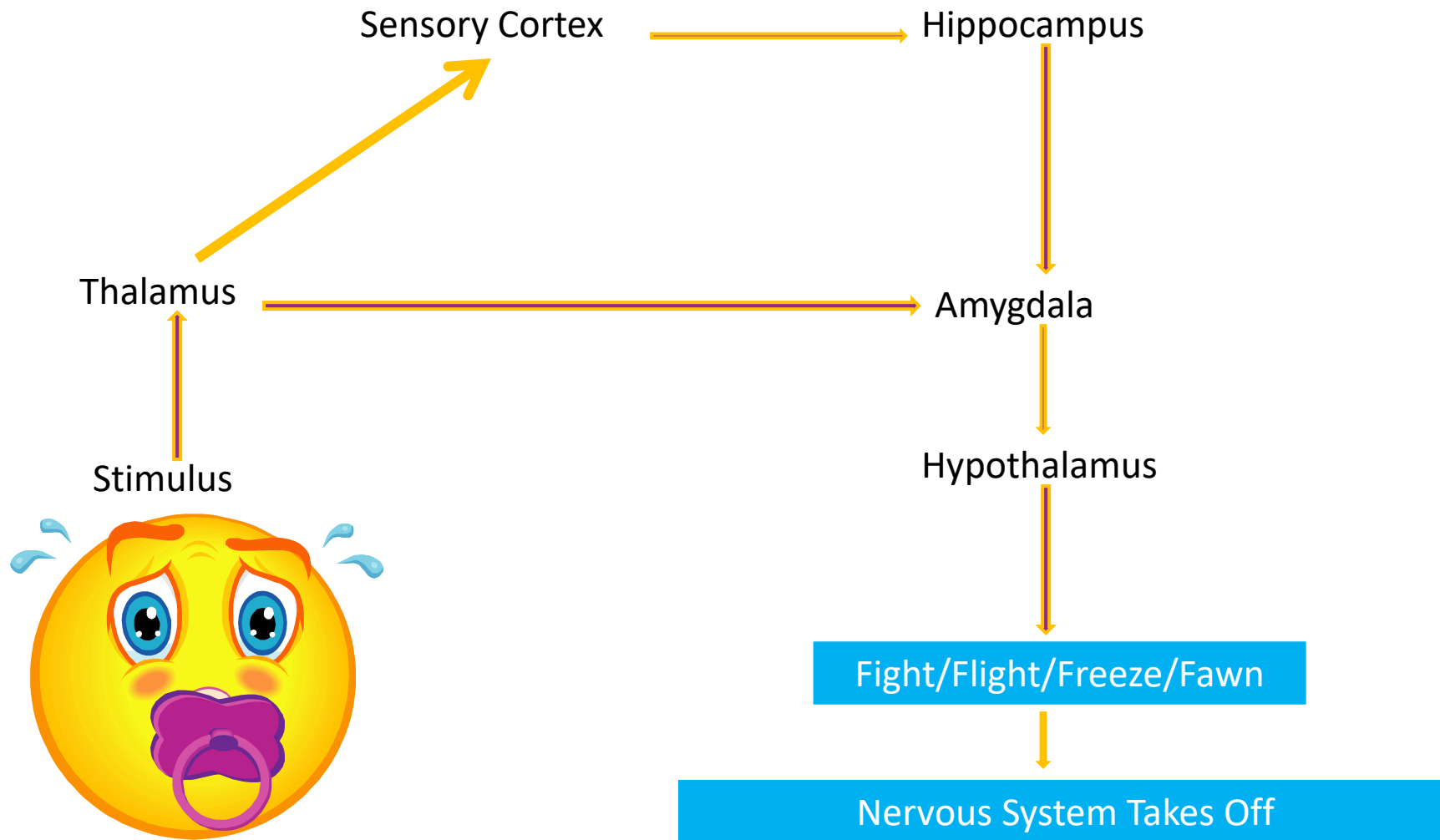


Brain Chemistry

- Reptilian Brain (instincts)
 - Limbic Brain (emotion, memory)
 - Frontal Lobe (reason)
- These work together, while we think, something else is going on.



The Fight/Flight/Freeze/Fawn Response

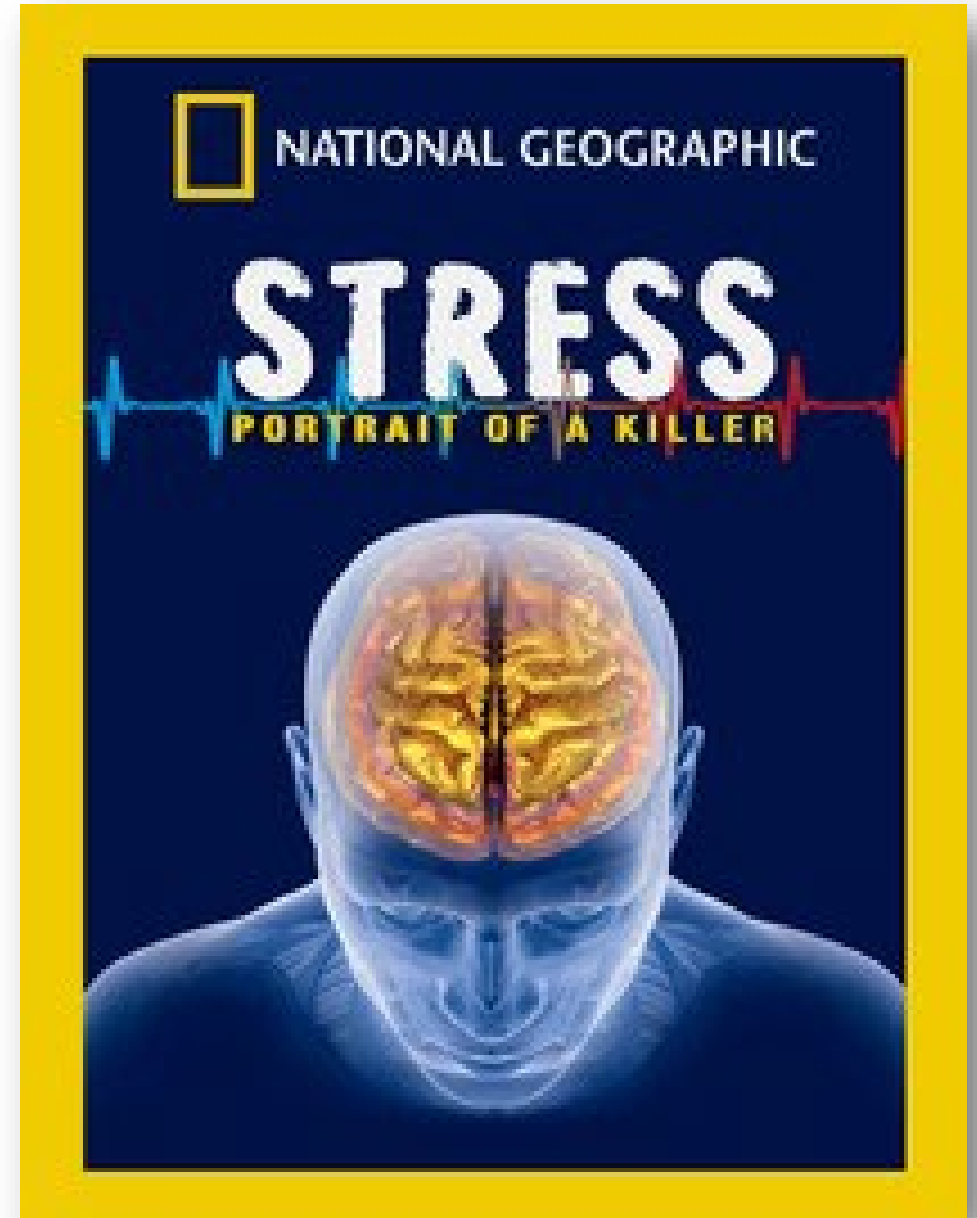


Stress: Portrait of a Killer

This movie sheds wonderful insight into the propagation of illness in today's society via the inner workings of the human stress response.

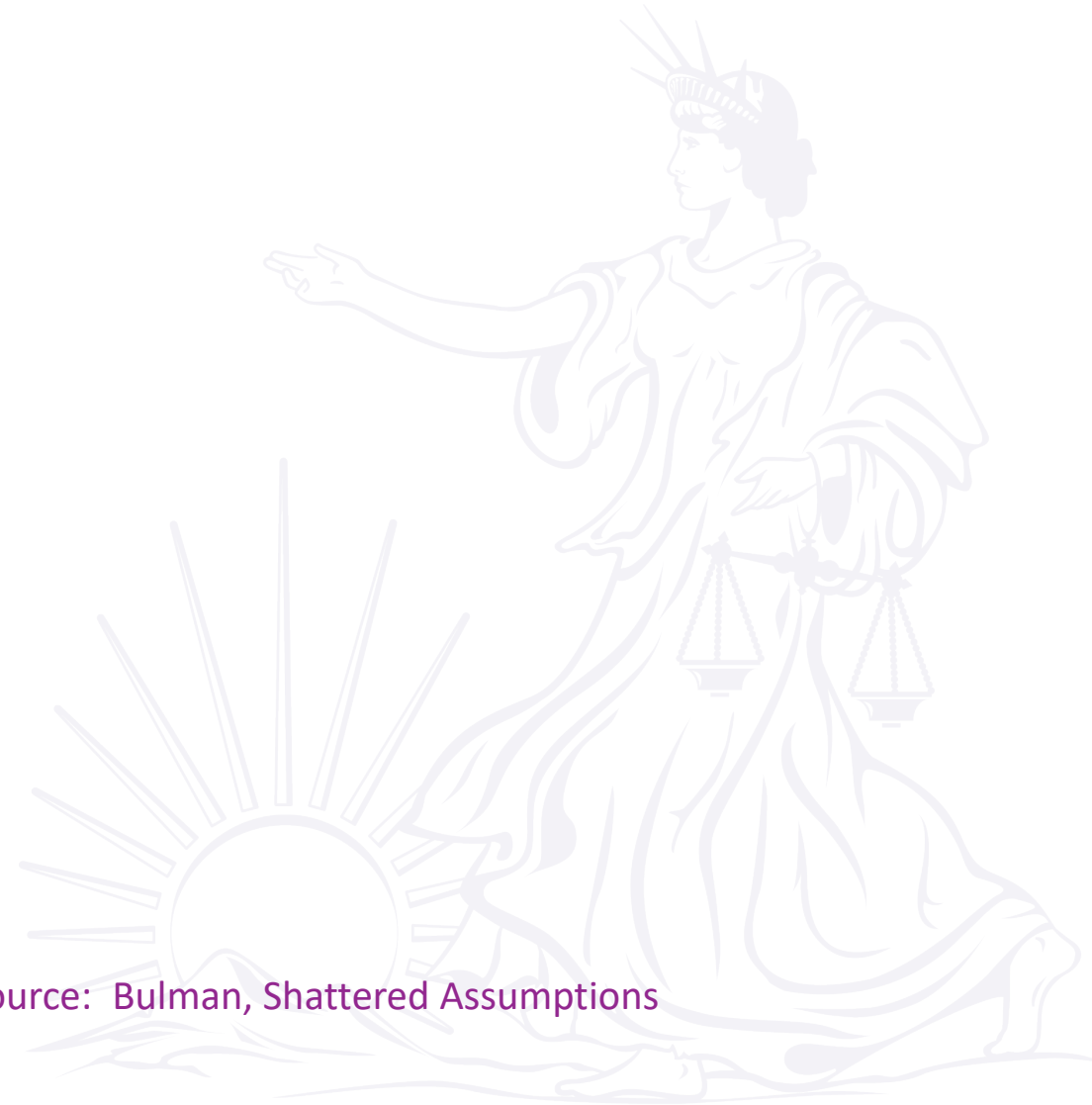
Only 50 minutes long.

Available on You Tube.



Impact on Primary Assumptions

- The World is Benevolent
- The World is Meaningful
- The Self is Worthy



Source: Bulman, Shattered Assumptions

One Attorney Says...

“I think this happens to everyone whether they admit it or not or show it or not. It is inevitable with that kind of caseload that one will at least at times go bonkers. This wears on all of us and on some of us more than others. We see colleagues severely affected all the time. I think the practice leaves scars. Some make it better than others, obviously, but everyone suffers....”

--criminal lawyer, PD office in Wisconsin

Source: WisLAP Program permission granted

JUDGES SPEAK OUT

Some of the things 56
Canadian judges told U.S.
psychologist Isaiah
Zimmerman about their jobs:

“Cases of horrible, sexual, predatory exploitation of children haunt me. I keep my balance and my job as a judge by profoundly guarding myself against being swept away by the gruesome evidence I have to confront.”

“It’s no fun to be disliked in a small community where you also need to be a member of the church, the neighbourhood and raise your kids.”

“So little of our work involves legal issues to be truly adjudicated. At our level in family court, we are the dumping ground for massive social and economic issues and the acts of very dysfunctional families. I feel I am more a social worker than a judge.”

“I always take work home. I’m the workaholic. I work evenings, seven days a week. If I didn’t do it, I’d be hopelessly behind. You speak of control? I can’t even control the thermostat in my courtroom.”

“I wasn’t prepared for the isolation of this position. It slowly overtakes you, and then you realize indeed how alone often you are, despite your friends and family.”

“You’re always on – except in the sanctuary of your home. You watch in public what you say, how you appear, where you appear.”

“The sheer volume of each day’s work makes me fear I’m just processing people and have lost touch with my better self. Am I becoming indifferent to horror?”

“Cases of horrible, sexual, predatory exploitation of children haunt me. I keep my balance and my job as a judge by profoundly guarding myself against being swept away by the gruesome evidence I have to confront.”

Zimmerman, (2002). Trauma and Judges. Canadian Bar Association Annual Meeting

Fill in the blanks

- The world is a _____ place.
- Life is _____.
- I am _____ as a human being.
- I want to change _____ about my job.
- I want to change _____ about myself.
- Most often I feel _____.



So slow, is it even moving?



That which is to give light must endure burning...



Victor Frankl

Rather slow and insidious...then increases...
then overwhelming



Burning

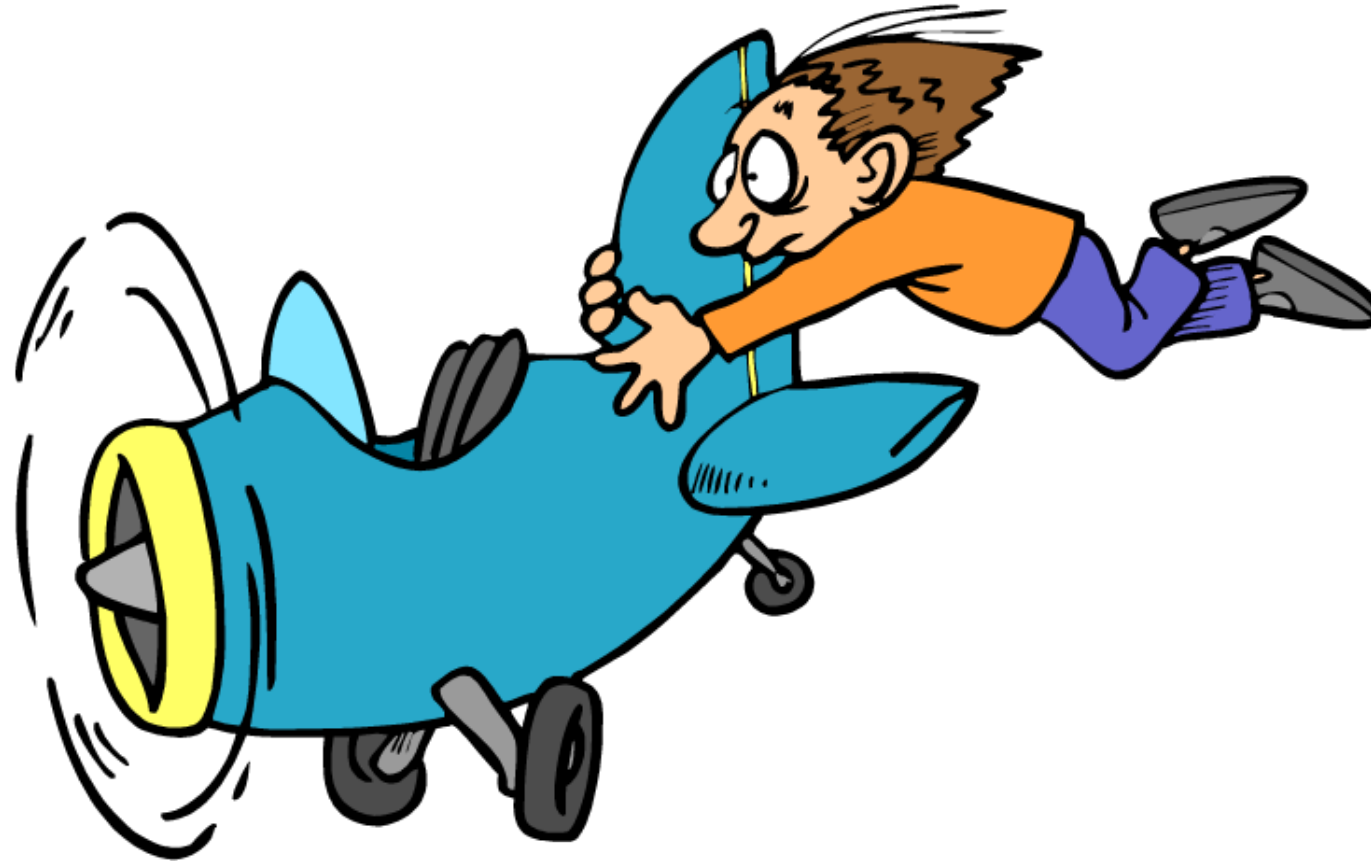


Uncomfortable



Overwhelming

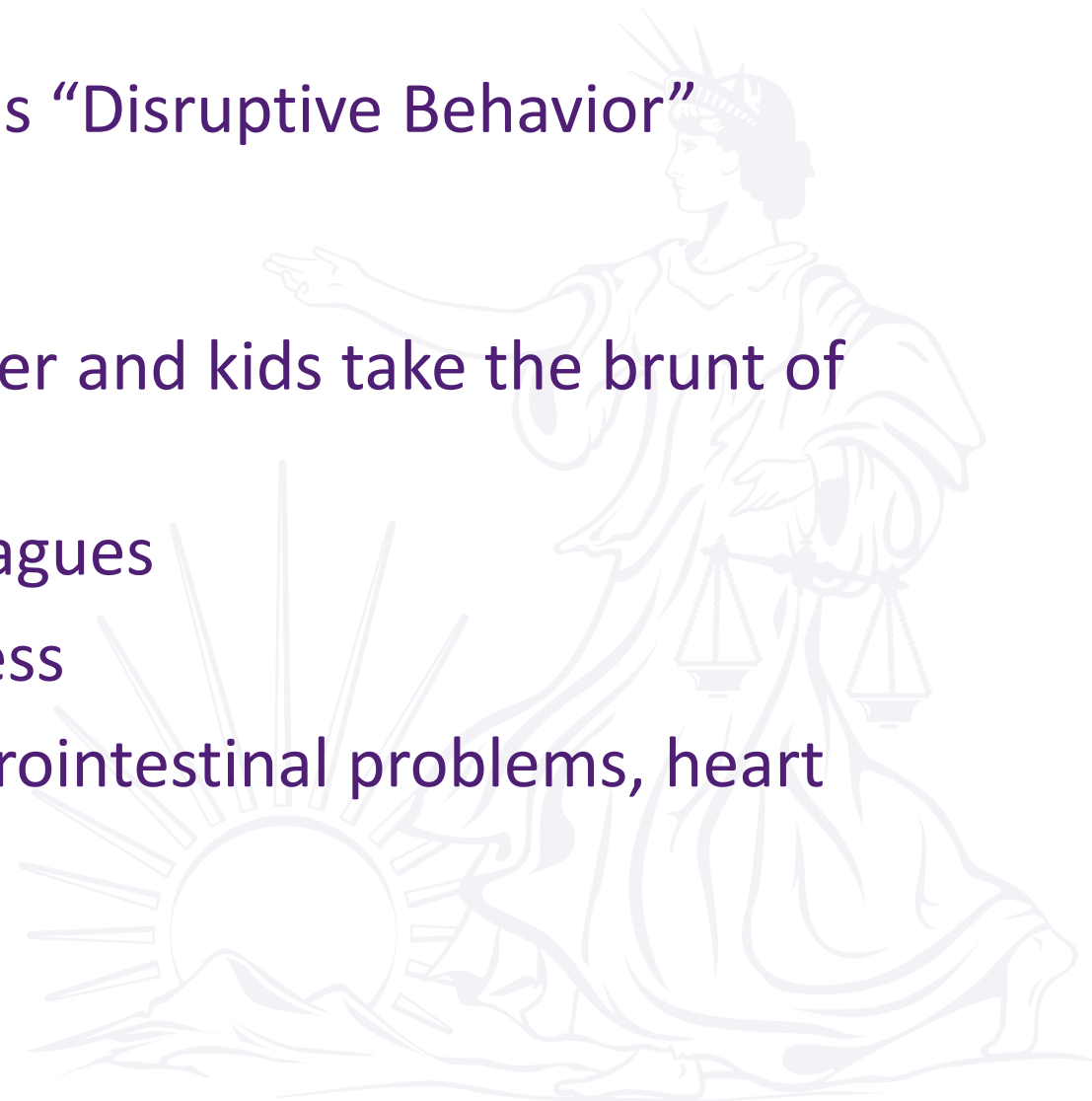
So what happens?



We crash.

Visible Results

- Strong correlation with what is known as “Disruptive Behavior”
 - Intimidation, Anger and Lashing Out
 - At opposing counsel, support staff, associates
- “Kick the dog” syndrome: spouse/partner and kids take the brunt of the frustration
- Isolate/withdraw from clients and colleagues
- Enter the grievance and discipline process
- Physical manifestations: migraines, gastrointestinal problems, heart issues



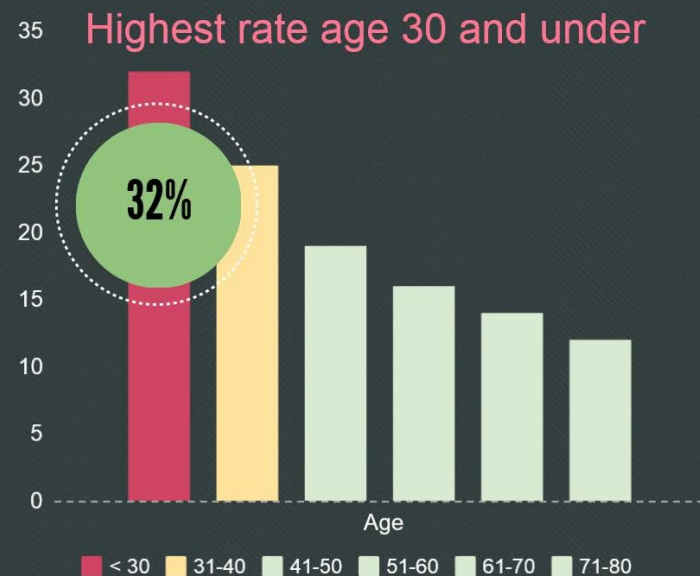
Problematic Drinking



Most at Risk?

Younger lawyers in first 15 years, working in private firms

Problematic Drinking



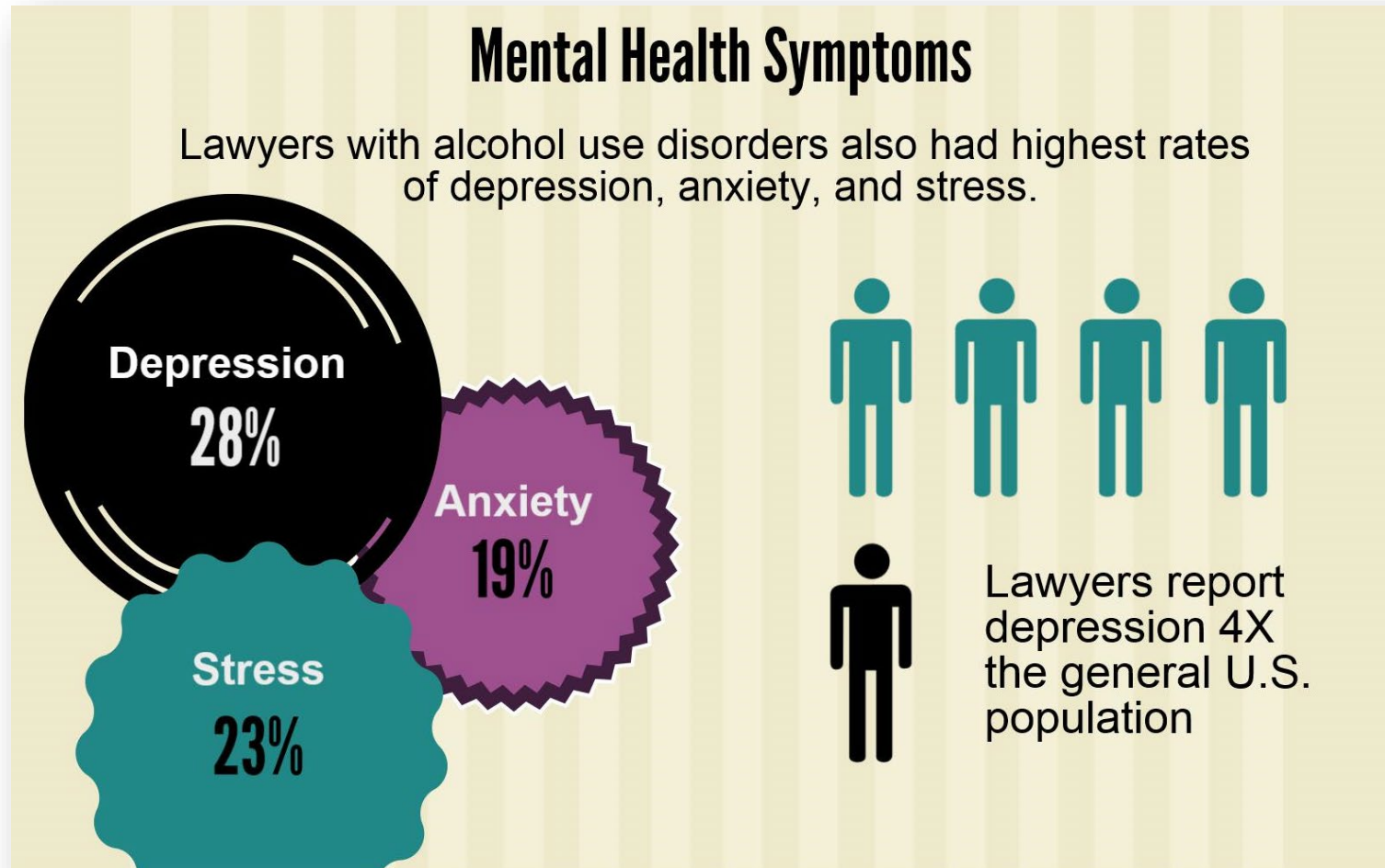
General U.S. population

6%

21%

Lawyers surveyed

Mental Health



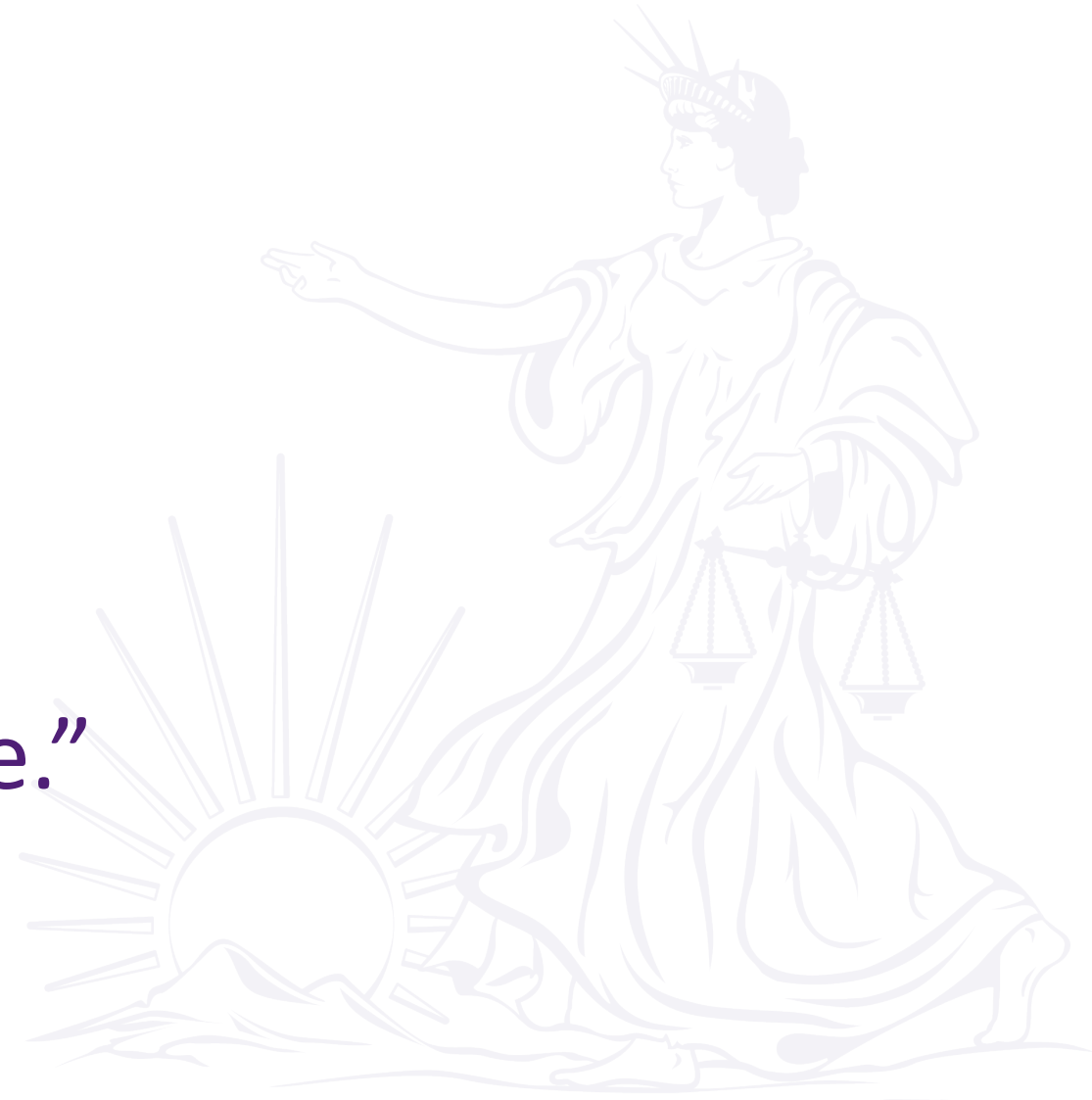
Impact on Lawyers

- Powerlessness
 - Indecisive/Anxious
- Alienate from others



Most common client complaints & grievances

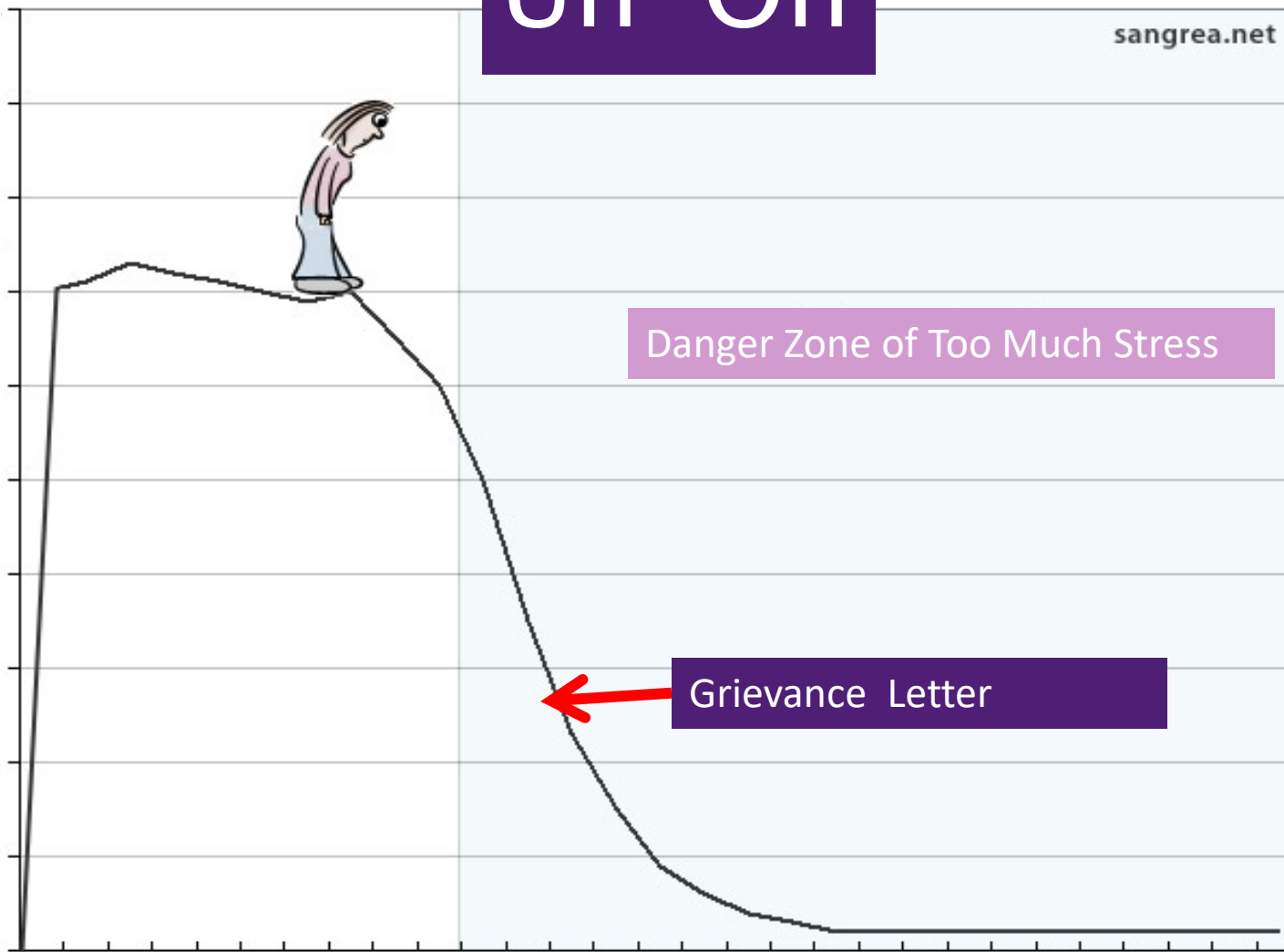
- Lack of communication
- Apathy (improper advocacy)
- Lack of Diligence
- i.e. “I just don’t care anymore.”



Uh-Oh

sangrea.net

Happiness and Comfort Level



Danger Zone of Too Much Stress

Grievance Letter

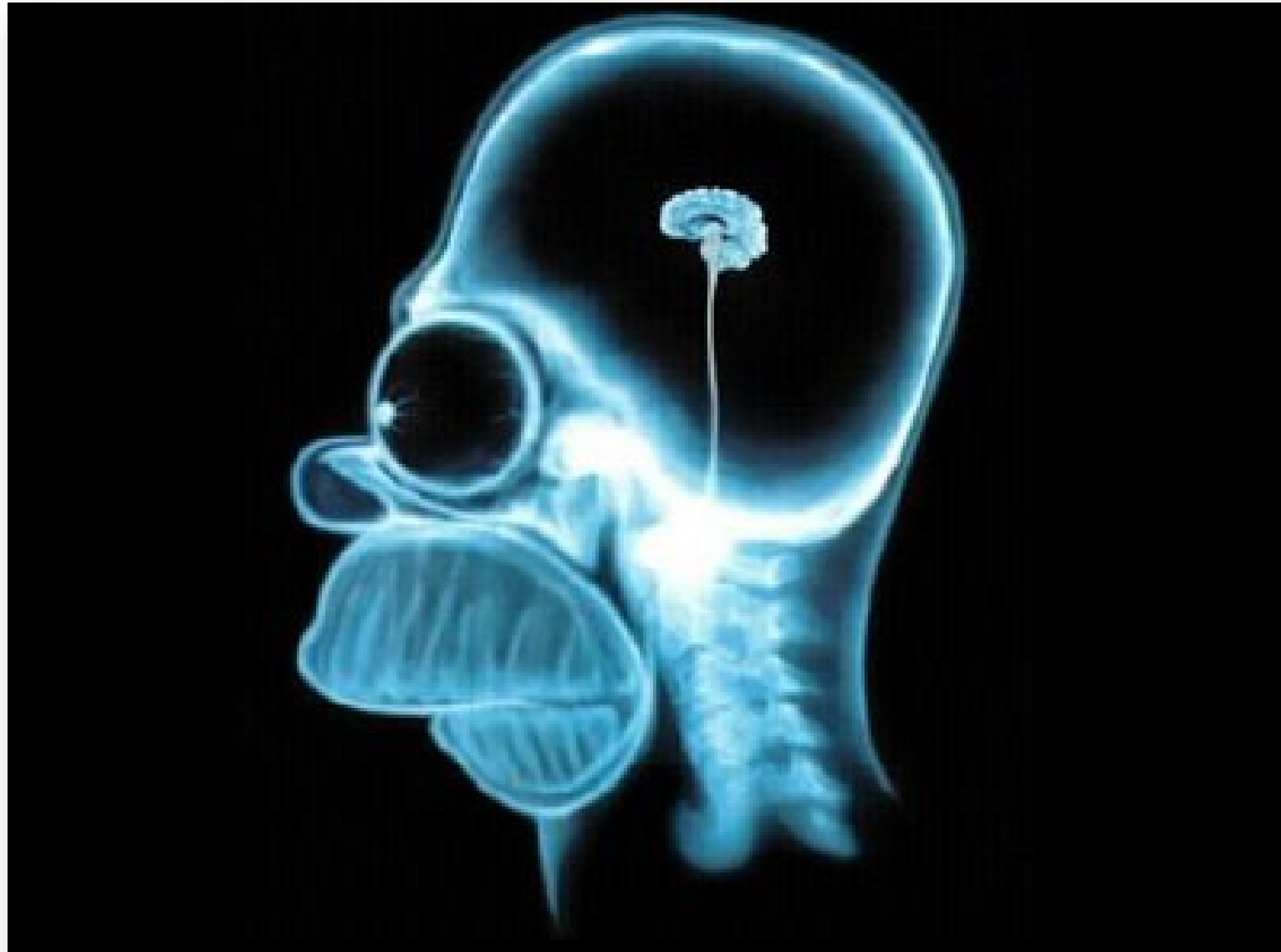
Stress level

Who most at risk?

- Personal Injury, Workers Comp, Bankruptcy, Wills, Trusts and Estates and Criminal or Family Law Attorneys/Judges
- High caseloads; long work hours
- High exposure to graphic evidence, 911 tapes, photos, videotapes, victim statements
- Serving clients with high levels of distress
- Little if any education on the subject of CF
- Little support from peers; isolation



There is Hope for all of us...



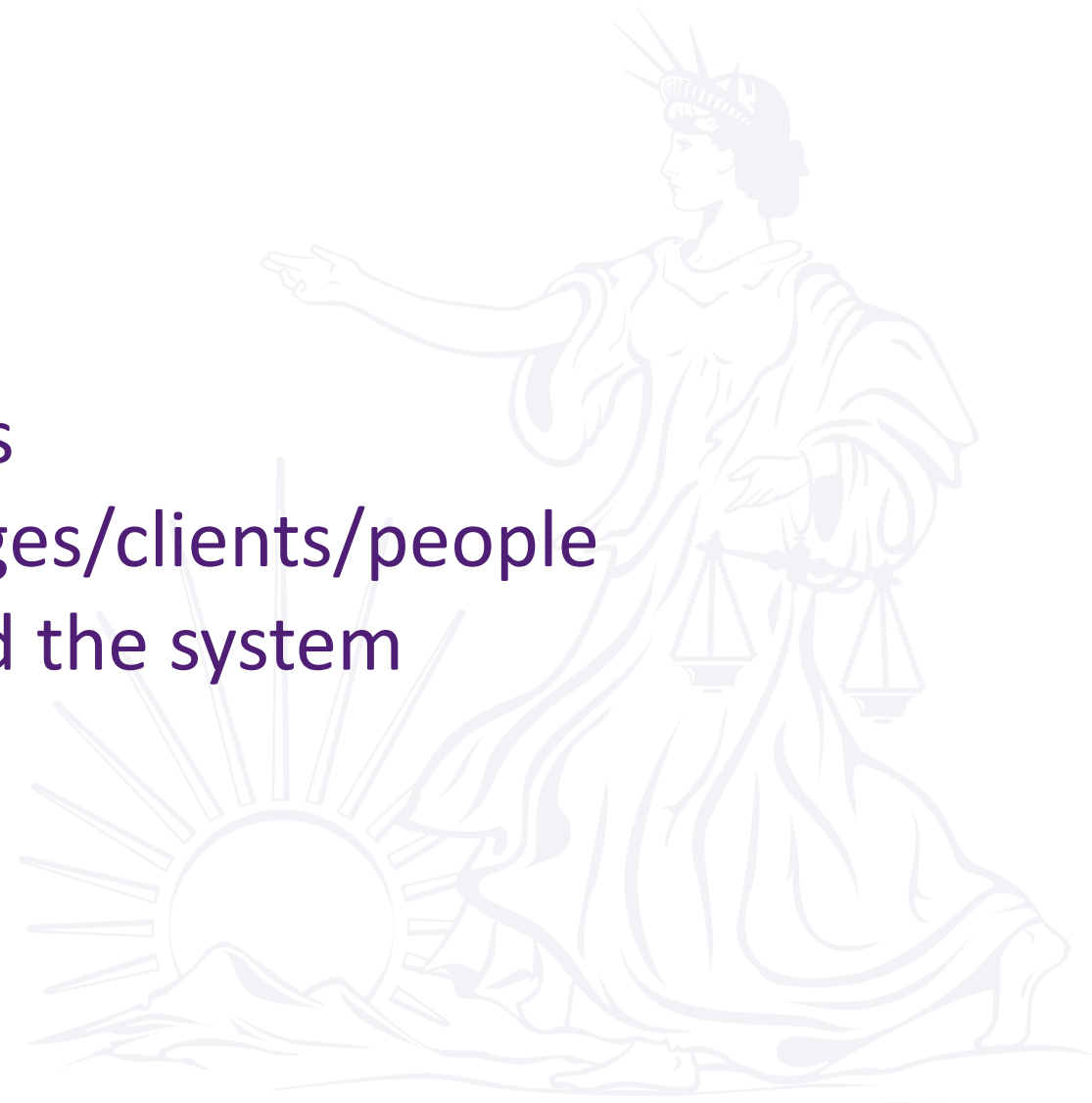
Understanding Triggers



Emotional triggers are events or personality types that cause an intense emotional response.

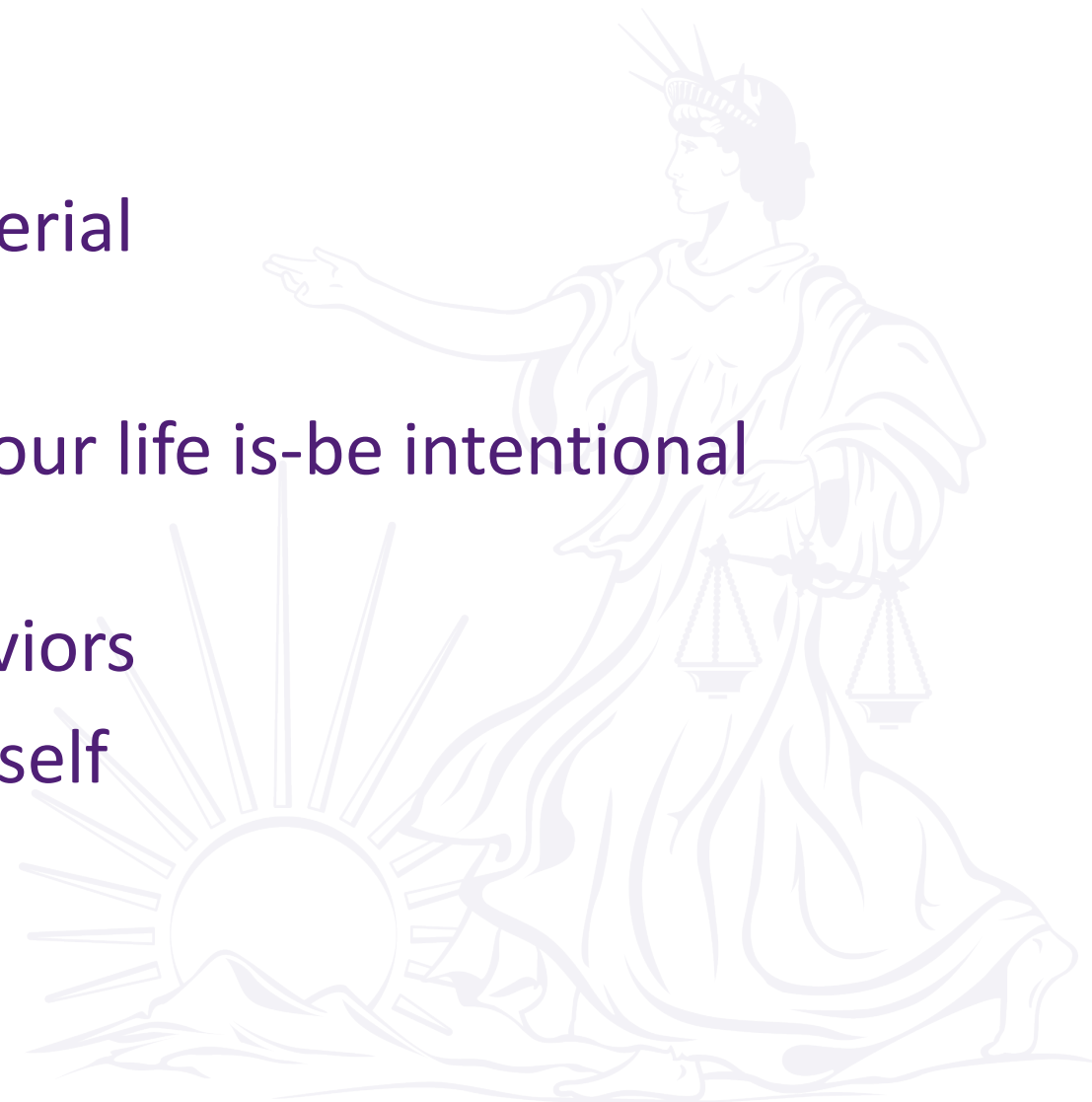
Understanding Triggers

- Different for each one of us
- Examples:
 - Double Bind
 - Abuse of vulnerable populations
 - Disrespect from colleagues/judges/clients/people
 - Unfair, unjust realities of life and the system
 - The line at your door



Research-based suggestions for improving mood, increasing life satisfaction and mitigating stress

- Recognize the risks for yourself
- Find a way to debrief distressing material
- Work on self awareness every day
- Take an inventory of how balanced your life is-be intentional about balancing it out
- Evaluate your tension reducing behaviors
- Be intentional about protecting yourself



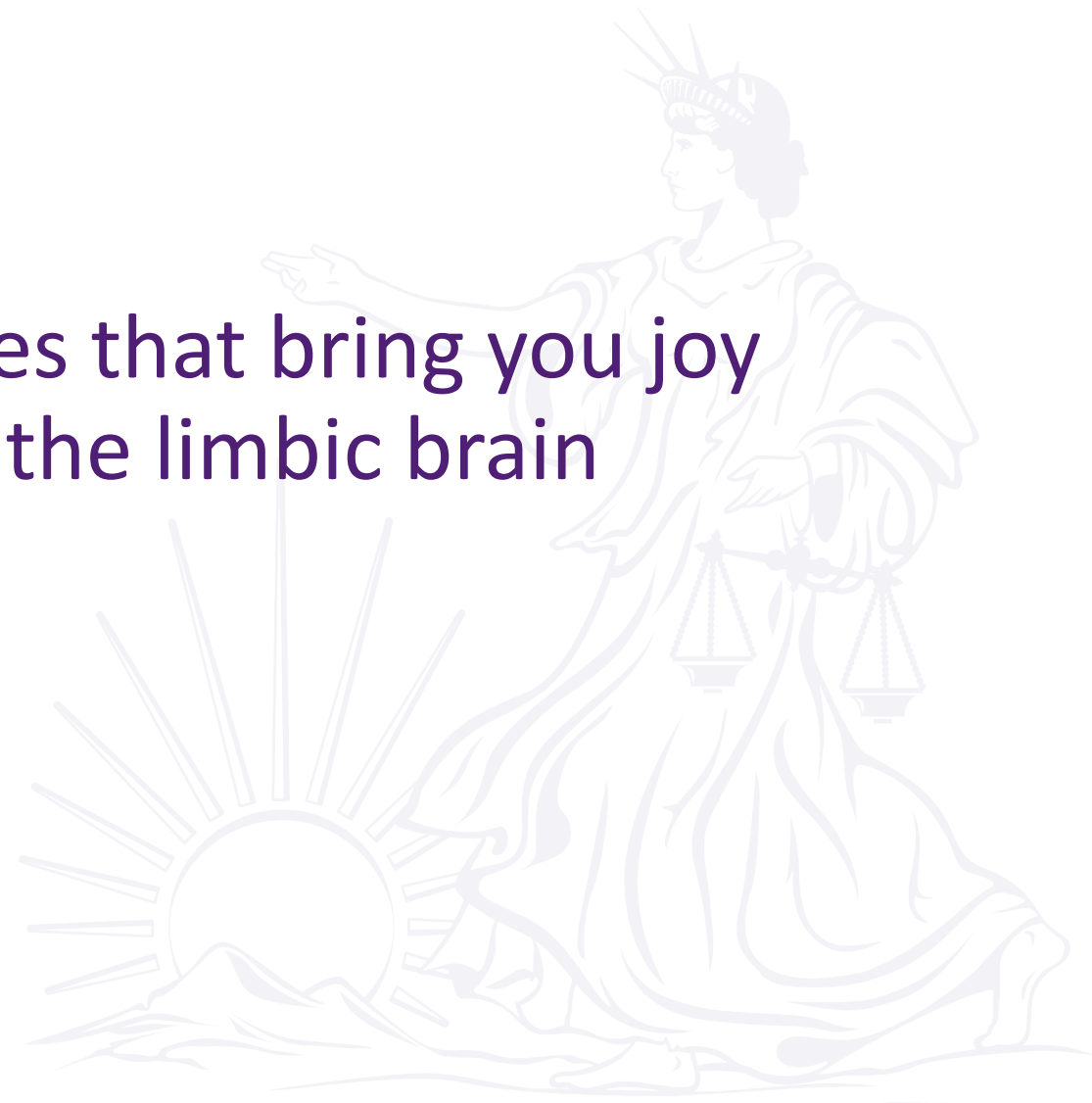
Nurturing the Limbic Brain



How many plates are you spinning?

Becoming Happier

- Spin fewer plates:
 - Squeeze in less.
 - Resume hobbies and activities that bring you joy and trigger the good stuff in the limbic brain



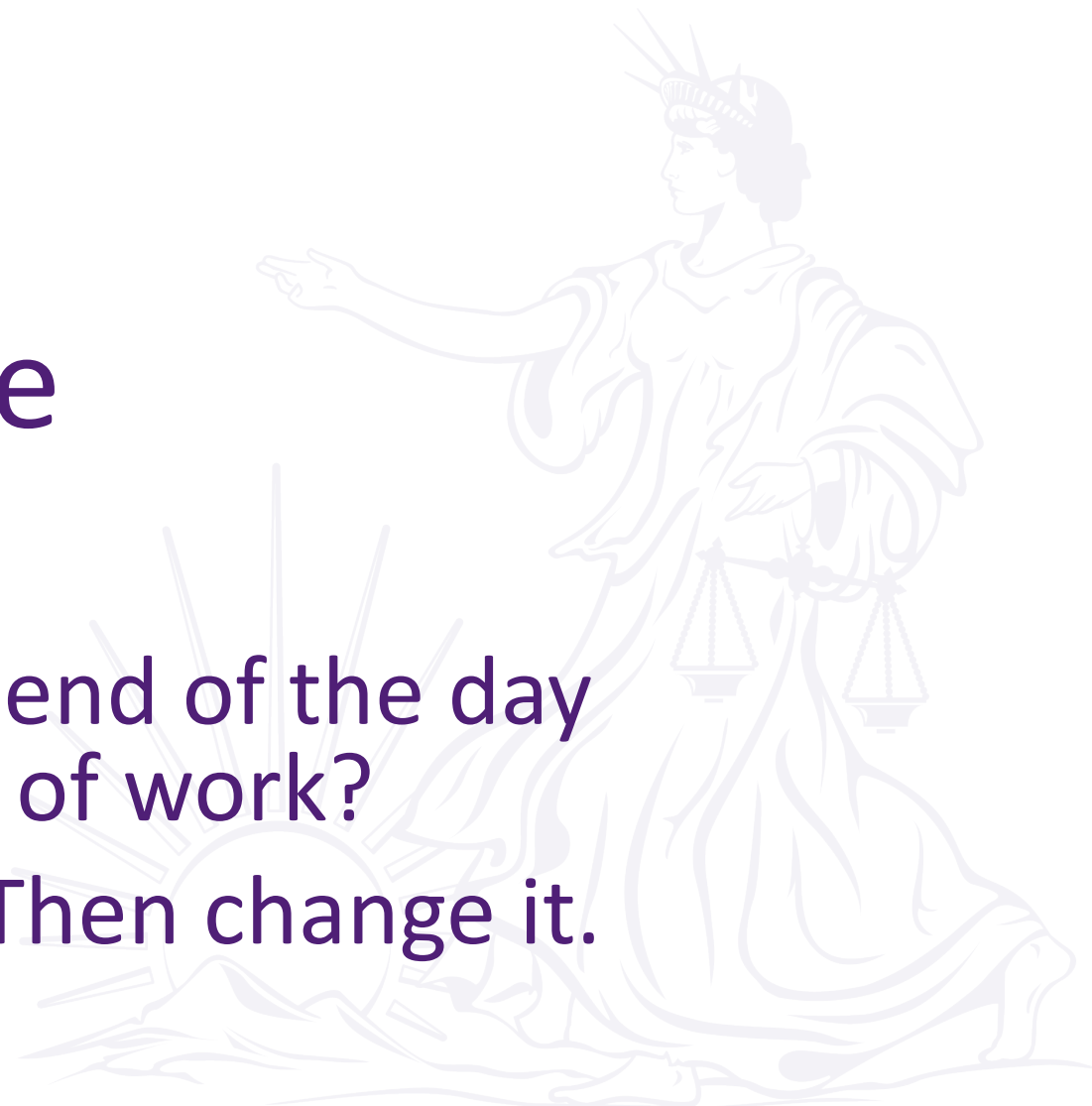
Becoming Happier

- It is the obvious:

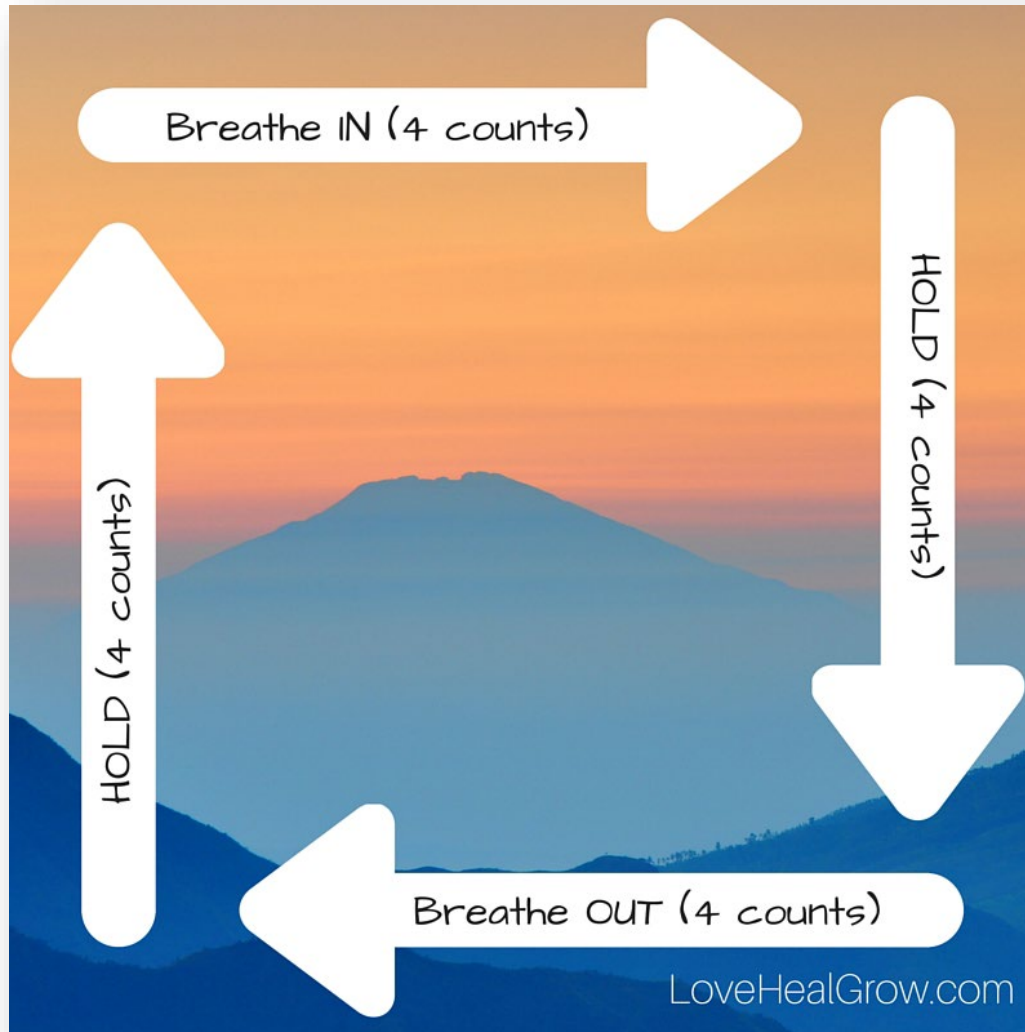
Sleep
Exercise
Eat

What do you do at the end of the day
to transition out of work?

If nothing, admit that. Then change it.



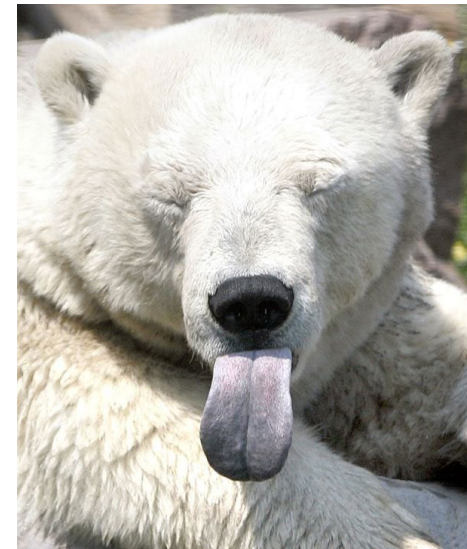
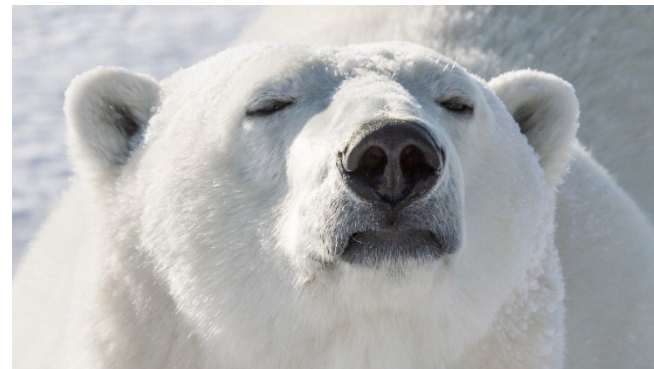
Square Breathing



Body Scan Exercise

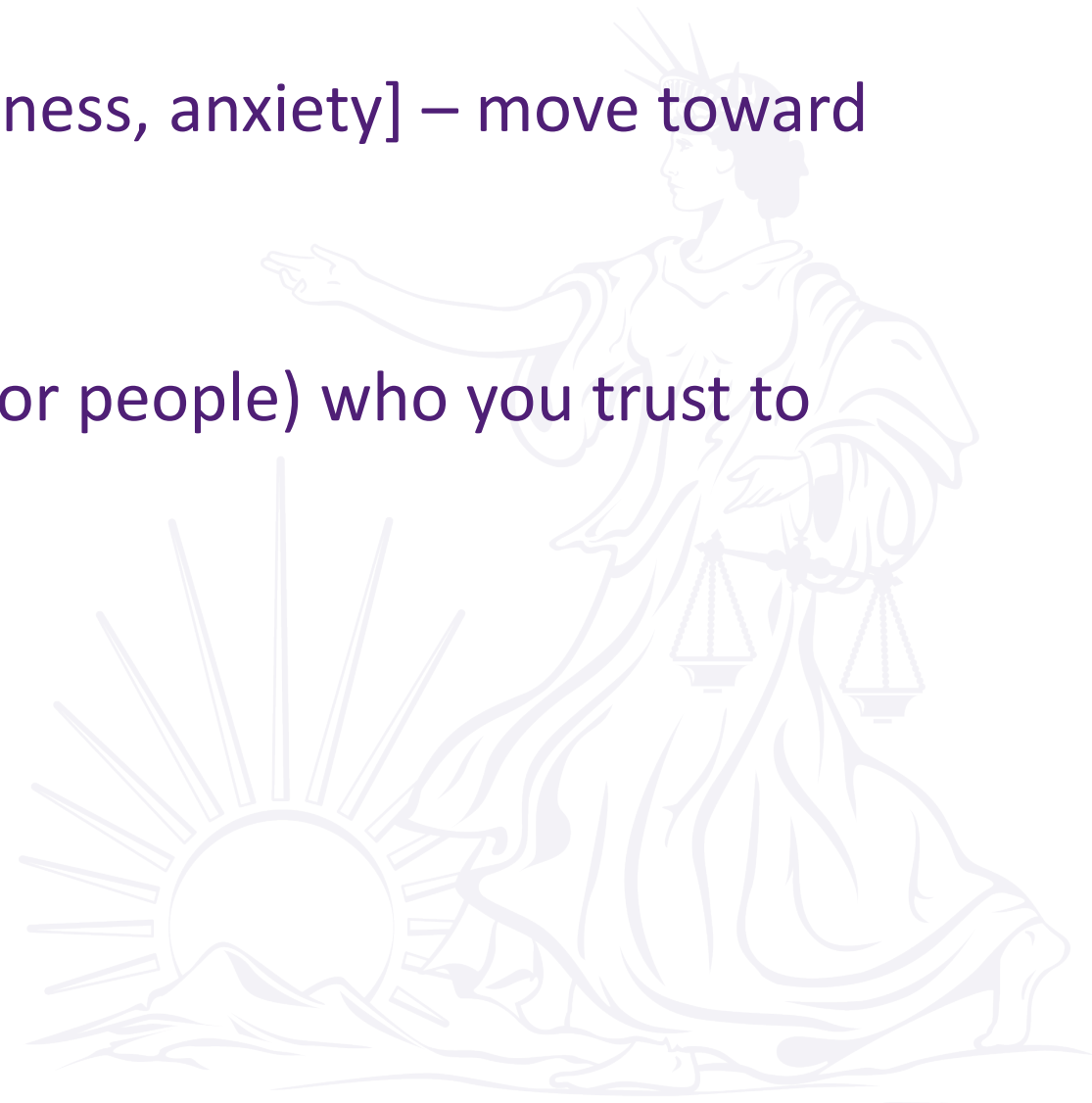


5-4-3-2-1 Grounding

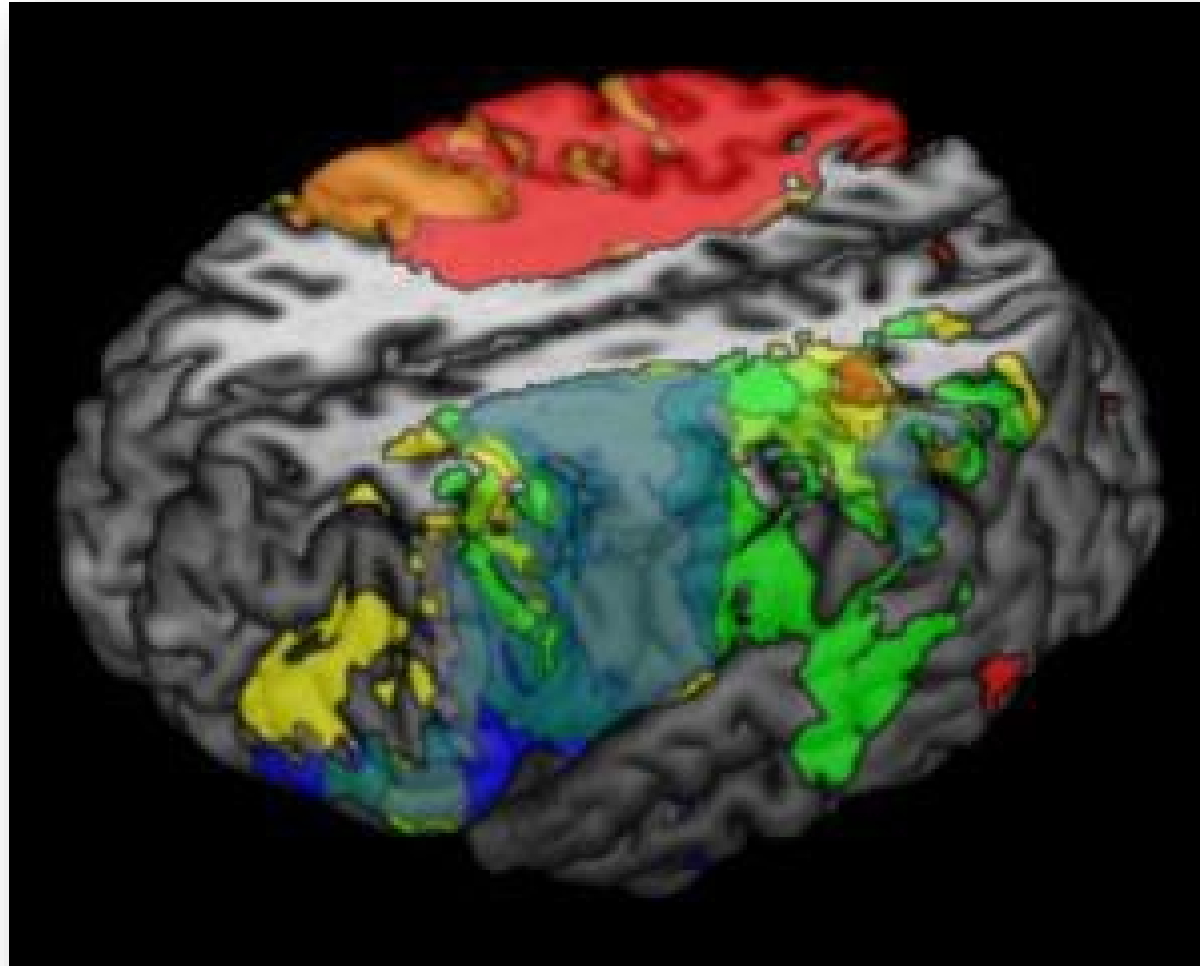


Becoming Happier

- Don't deny negative emotions [fear, sadness, anxiety] – move toward them and accept them.
- Identify and speak with a close person (or people) who you trust to share your internal experience.

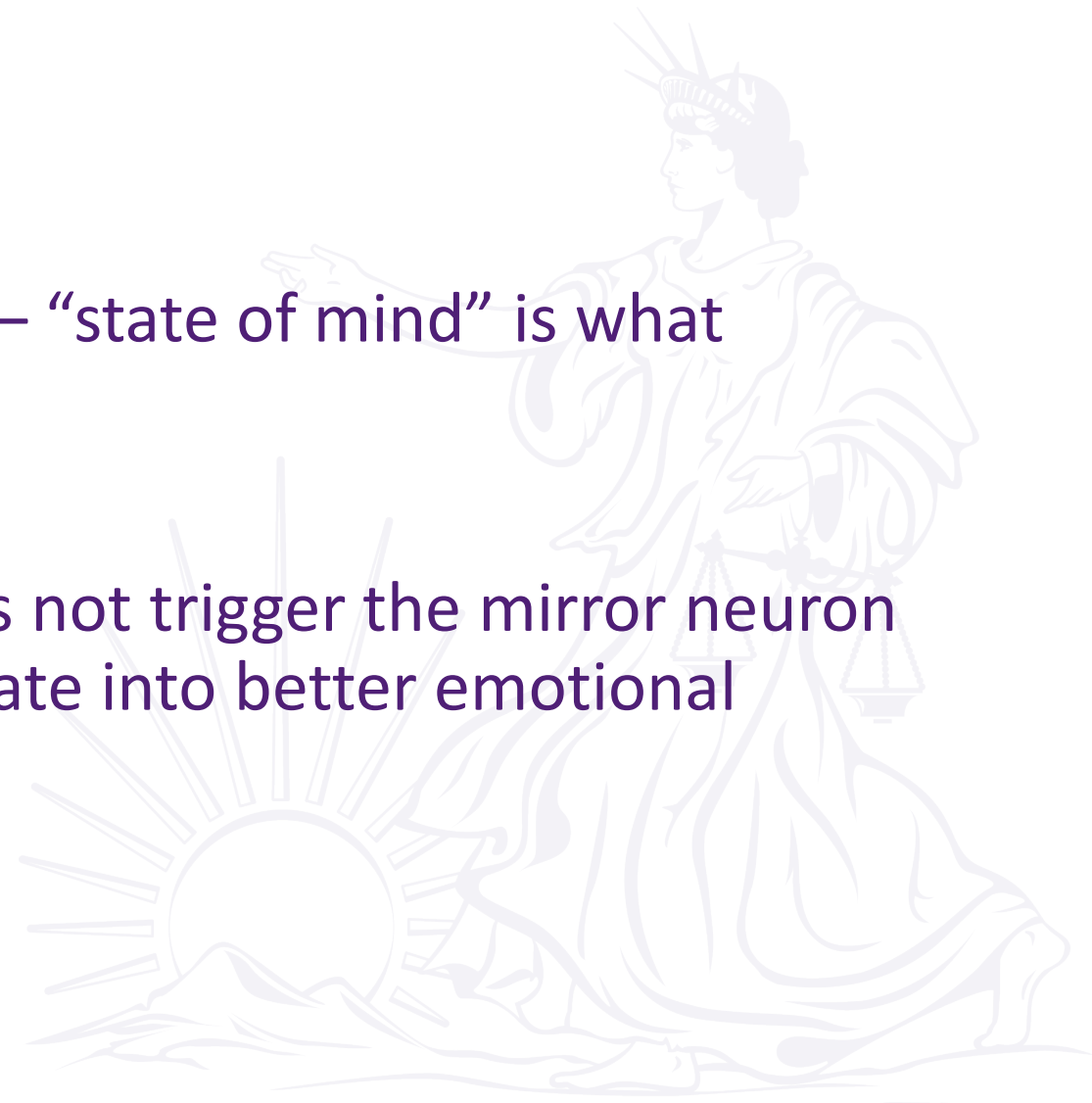


Talking and Connections Help the Brain



Becoming Happier

- A word about \$\$\$
- It is not state of status or bank account – “state of mind” is what matters most.
- While we may be paid well, money does not trigger the mirror neuron stimulus we (all humans) need to translate into better emotional health in our bodies and psyches.



Becoming Happier

- Intersect pleasure and meaning → interests are central.
- Express Gratitude
- Try making a gratitude list every morning of 3 things you are grateful for. Do it for a few months and see what you notice. It will change your life.

Adapted from T. Ben-Shahar

If you need to reach us

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Thank you!