

# STOP STRESSING ABOUT STRESS

SIX STRATEGIES

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# STRESSING ABOUT STRESS

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# Presentation Structure

- ▶ **BRAIN FUNCTIONING**
  - AMYGDALA
  - IMPLICIT MEMORY
  - DEFENSE MECHANISMS
  - PROTECTIVE STRATEGIES
- ▶ **MIND FUNCTIONING**
  - WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO SIMPLIFIED
- ▶ **SIX STRATEGIES**
- ▶ **QUESTIONS & COMMENTS**

# INTRODUCTION

- ▶ STRESSING ABOUT STRESS

- ▶ ***“YOUR BRAIN LOVES STRESS!!!”***

# OLD BRAIN BEHAVIOR

- ▶ **Amygdala**
  - Am I safe
  - Reptilian brain
  - Bypasses the new brain
  
- ▶ **Blood flows away from the Neocortex**
  - Thinking brain
  - Rational brain

# OLD BRAIN

## ▶ TRIGGERS MEMORY PATHS

- Explicit—we know we are remembering
- Implicit memories—we are unaware old memory paths are firing
  - *Emotions flood*
  - *Feels current*
  - *Connected to mistaken beliefs about ourselves*

# OLD BRAIN

- ▶ Amygdala and “Am I safe?”
- ▶ ANIMALS LEARN SKILLS—HUMANS THINK
  - “Yes” or “No” activates different neuronal nets
  - Triggers
    - Our own feelings/emotions
    - Others emotions
    - Visual cues
    - Similar or “like” experiences

# OLD BRAIN

- ▶ Am I competent or capable?
- ▶ Do I fit in? Do I belong?
  - Fears of being rejected
  - “Am I loveable” In our close relationships
  - Fears of being abandoned or rejected
- ▶ Am I important?
  - Do I make a difference? Am I valued?
  - Is what is important to me, important to others?

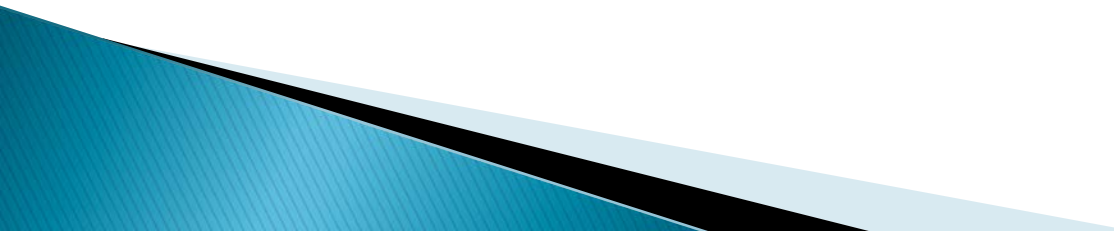


# OLD BRAIN

- ▶ Am I worthy?
- ▶ Core feelings
  - Less than
  - Unworthy
  - Inadequate
  - Bad
  - Shamed

# OLD & NEW BRAIN

## ▶ DEFENSE MECHANISMS

- Psychological & behavioral adaptation of fight or flight mechanism
  - Protects against painful feelings
  - Protects against painful thoughts
  - Work backwards
  - Everyone uses them automatically
  - Range from healthy coping to dysfunctional
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# OLD & NEW BRAIN

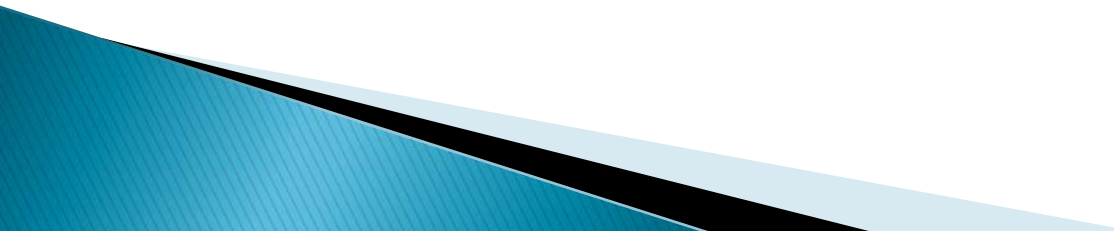
## ▶ PROTECTIVE MECHANISMS

- Work forward to prove/escape our identity issues
- SUPER HERO, SUPER MOM
- SUPER SLACKER

▶ ***“WE BUY THINGS WE DON’T NEED WITH MONEY WE DON’T HAVE TO IMPRESS PEOPLE WE DON’T LIKE.”***

▪ ***DEEPAK CHOPRA***

# OLD & NEW BRAIN

- ▶ EXAMPLES:
  - ▶ I'M NOT IMPORTANT (CHARLOTTE)
  - ▶ I'M NOT COMPETENT (DAVID)
  - ▶ I'M NOT WORTHY (BETH)
  - ▶ I'M NOT LOVEABLE/DON'T BELONG (SARA)
- 

# NEW BRAIN

- ▶ WE MAKE UP A STORY
  - Makes sense to us
  - Based on our perspective
    - Values
    - Needs
    - Preferences
    - Interpretations
    - Self serving
  - Biased by active neuronal paths
  - Sound bites
  - We don't know we made up a story

# OLD & NEW BRAIN

## ▶ THREE LURES FOR THE HUMAN MIND

- 1) THREAT—MOST SALIENT
- 2) PLEASURE
- 3) NOVELTY

# OLD & NEW BRAIN

## ▶ TWO CORE IMPERFECTIONS

- 1) RESTLESSNESS
- 2) IRRATIONAL/DENIAL

# BRAIN MODE ONE: WANDERING

## ▶ MIND WANDERING

- DEFAULT MODE
- RUMINATING ON PAST OR FUTURE
- NOT IN THE PRESENT
- MORE THAN 50% OF TIME

▶ ***“THE QUALITY OF YOUR THOUGHTS IN THE DEFAULT MODE DETERMINES YOUR EXPERIENCE.”***

- AMIT SOOD, MD, MAYO CLINIC COLLEGE OF MEDICINE



# BRAIN MODE TWO: FOCUSED

## ▶ TRAINING YOUR ATTENTION

- 3 Levels
  - Direction
  - Duration
  - Depth

# STRATEGY ONE: LISTENING

## ▶ PHYSICALLY

- Know where your body feels / holds stress
- Signs
  - Sleep disturbance
  - Blood sugars off
  - Headaches
  - Frequent illnesses
  - Memory lapses
- ENVIRONMENTAL CUES

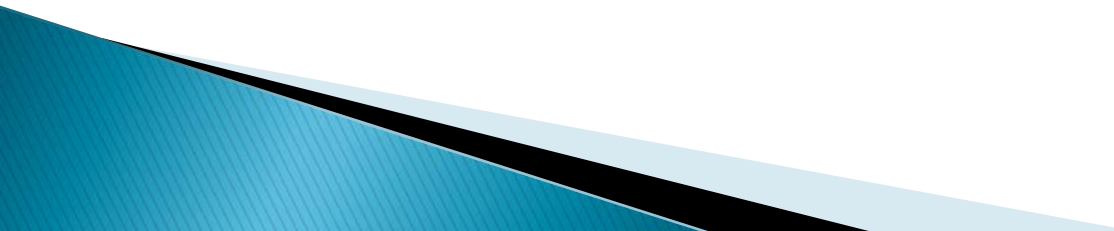
# STRATEGY ONE: LISTENING

## ▶ EMOTIONALLY

- Irritability or agitation
- Depression
  - Down mood
  - Loss of pleasure in things you usually enjoy
  - Anxiety
  - Worry
  - Feeling guilty or overwhelmed
  - Trouble thinking
- Headaches
- Frequent illnesses
- Memory lapses

# STRATEGY ONE: LISTENING

## ▶ BEHAVIORALLY

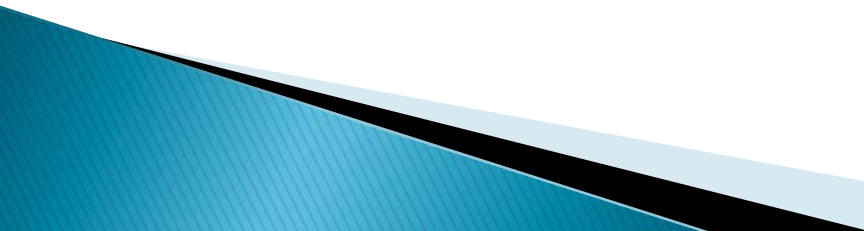
- Anger
  - Hyperactive
  - Underactive
  - Startle Reaction
  - Isolation
  - Reactive
  - Increased use of drugs/alcohol
  - Escalation in defense/protective strategies
- 

# STRATEGY ONE: LISTENING

- ▶ LISTEN with your focused mind
  - Know your intentions—make them genuine
    - Your own
    - Congruent with purpose, preferences, passions
  - Make evaluations
  - Make decisions
  - Take action
  - Rinse (review) & repeat

# STRATEGY TWO: CHANGE

## ▶ NUDGES

- Small adjustments can reap huge returns
  - Brainstorm outside the box
  - Can you do less
  - Can someone else do more
  - Can you tag team or relay
  - Develop a plan
  - Or develop a plan to develop a plan
  - Do one thing
  - Do the easiest first or the hardest first
- 

# STRATEGY TWO: CHANGE

## ▶ MACK TRUCKS

- “If I attracted this to me for a reason...”
- Big changes
- Life style
  - Career
  - Relationship
  - House
  - Debt
  - Location
  - Extended family

# STRATEGY THREE: ACCEPT

## ▶ REFRAME YOUR PERCEPTION

- Actively choose
- Watch your language
  - “I get to...”
  - “I want...”
  - “I choose...”
  - Exciting
  - Rewarding
  - Challenging



# STRATEGY THREE: ACCEPT

- ▶ ACCEPT WHAT YOU CANNOT CHANGE
  - i.e. other people
  - The hand you were dealt (outside your control)
    - Health
    - Strengths and weaknesses
  - Politics
  - Economy
  - Weather
  - Accidents
  - Fate

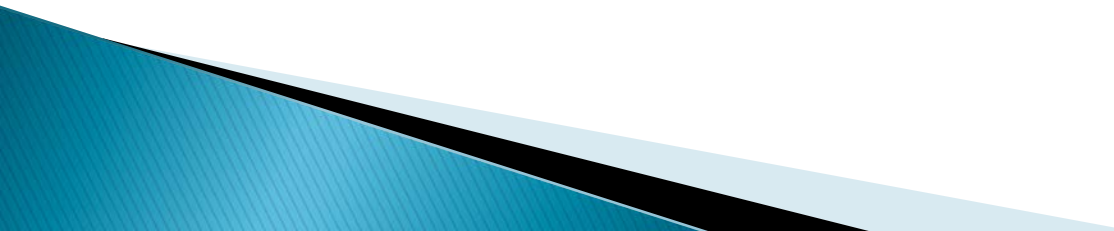
# STRATEGY FOUR: PREVENTION

- ▶ Positivity Offset
- ▶ Physical self care
  - Exercise
  - Eat right
  - Get enough sleep
- ▶ Mental & Emotional self care
  - Train your focused attention mode
  - Challenge your story
- ▶ **YOUR BRAIN THRIVES ON MEDITATION**

# STRATEGY FOUR: PREVENTION

- ▶ BE INTENTIONAL
  - Plan ahead
  - Say NO
- ▶ LIVE WITHIN YOUR FINANCIAL MEANS
- ▶ DO NOTHING YOU HAVE TO LIE ABOUT

# STRATEGY FIVE: MANAGE

- ▶ BREATHE
  - ▶ PRACTICE EXTERNAL FOCUS
  - ▶ ANSWER CATASTROPHIC QUESTIONS
  - ▶ TAKE A BREAK
  - ▶ TAKE A WALK OUTSIDE
  - ▶ REPEAT YOUR COPING MANTRA
- 

# STRATEGY SIX: RECOVER

- ▶ PHYSICAL EXERTION
  - ▶ DIFFUSE (WITH OR WITHOUT OTHERS)
  - ▶ POSITIVITY OFFSET
  - ▶ LISTEN, ANALYZE, & REVISE
- 