



BURNOUT:

**KNOWING WHEN AND
HOW TO TAKE BREAKS**

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April 2, 2024
Harm Reduction ECHO



AGENDA

Trauma Responses

General Adaptation Syndrome (Hans Selye)

Considerations for People Working in Harm Reduction

Harm Reduction Work and Stress Management

Stress Management and Taking Breaks

Knowing When to Take Breaks

What does It Look Like to Take Breaks?

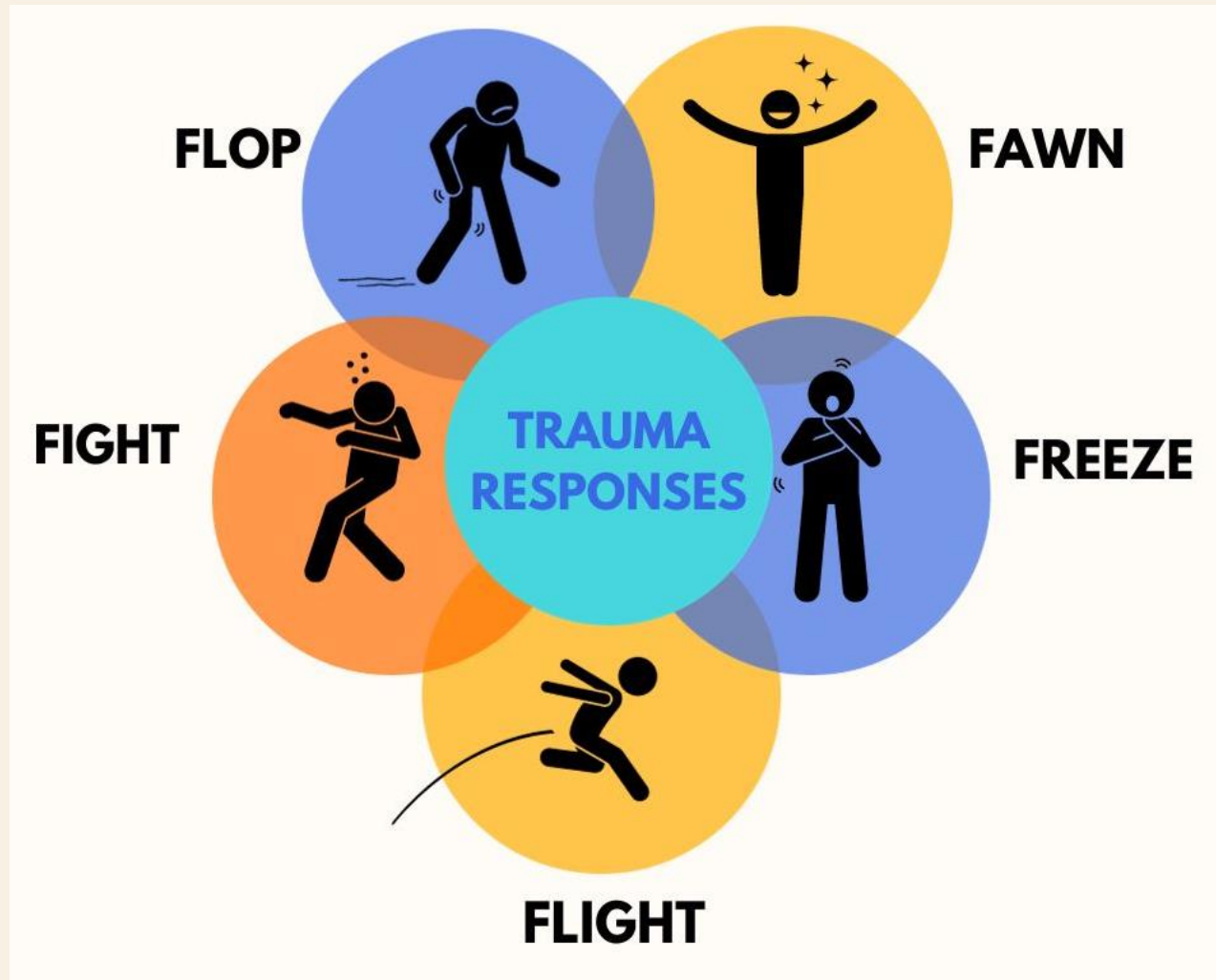
An abstract geometric design on the left side of the slide. It features a grid of colored squares: a bright pink square at the top left, a grey square below it, a dark purple square at the bottom left, and a blue square at the bottom. The pink square contains a white semi-circular pattern of concentric lines. The grey square contains a white semi-circular pattern of concentric lines. The dark purple square contains a white semi-circular pattern of concentric lines. The blue square contains a white semi-circular pattern of concentric lines. A white horizontal line with a small white circle at its right end extends from the top left towards the center. The background of the slide is a solid magenta color.

TRAUMA RESPONSES

TRAUMA RESPONSES

There are 5 responses to a dangerous, traumatic, or stressful situation:

- Fight
- Flight
- Freeze
- Fawn (or fix)
- Flop



FIGHT RESPONSE

Aggressively responding to a threat. This can look like:

- Physical violence
- Shouting
- Verbal abuse
- Hostility
- Crying



FLIGHT RESPONSE

Running away from real or perceived danger. This can look like:

- Avoiding people or conflict
- Isolation
- Difficulty sitting still
- Excessive exercising
- Excessive working, staying busy



THE AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

The part of our nervous system that influences our internal organs

The sympathetic nervous system

'FIGHT AND FLIGHT'

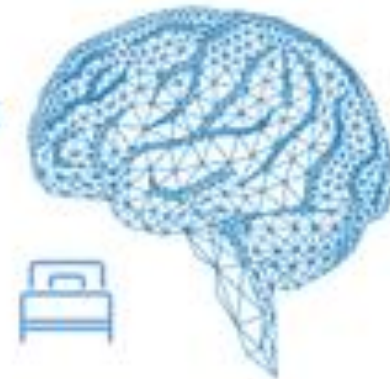


This part of our nervous system makes us active

Dilates pupils
Inhibits flow of saliva
Accelerates heartbeat
Dilates bronchi
Inhibits digestion
Relaxes rectum

The parasympathetic nervous system

'REST AND DIGEST'



This part of our nervous system makes us calm

Constricts pupils
Stimulates flow of saliva
Slows heartbeat
Relaxes bronchi
Stimulates digestion
Contracts rectum

FREEZE RESPONSE

Inability to move or act in the face of real or perceived danger. This can look like:

- Avoiding texts, phone calls, or emails
- Restricted or shallow breathing
- Holding tension in the body
- Dissociation



FAWN RESPONSE

People-pleasing to avoid conflict and attempt to establish safety. This can look like:

- Constantly scanning others to gauge their emotions and respond to their needs
- Overcommitment, struggling to say "no"
- Inability to identify your own feelings
- Prioritizing the needs of others
- Difficulty setting boundaries
- Excessive work
- Caretaking, codependence
- Dissociation
- Constant apologizing "sorry"

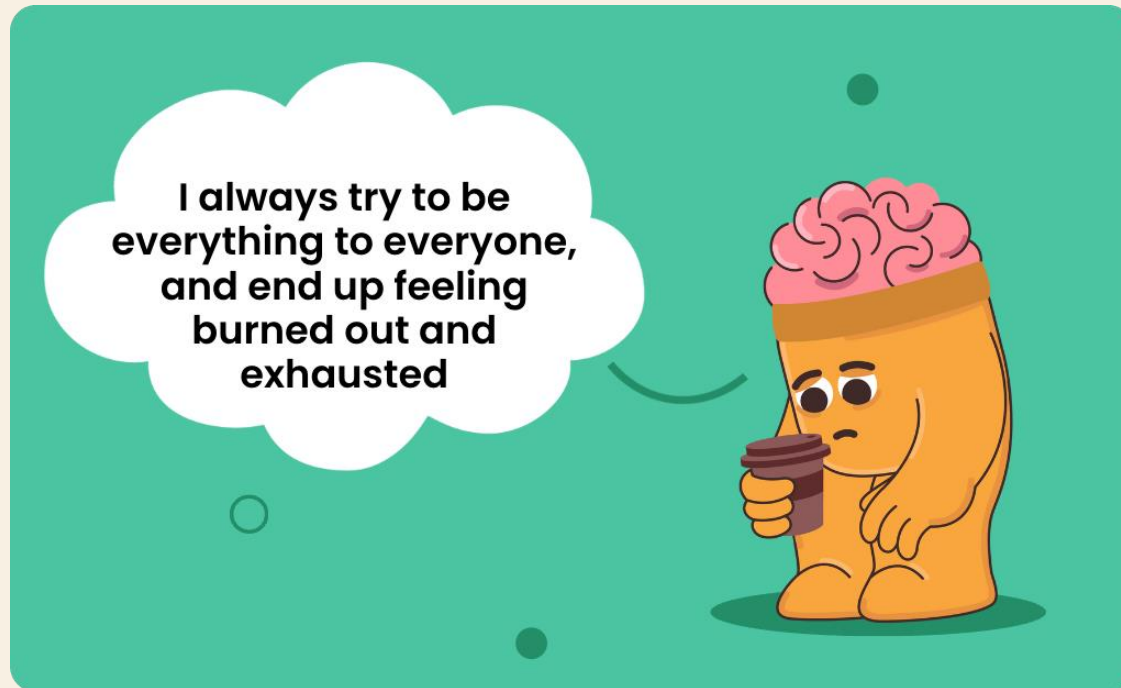


FAWN RESPONSE

- This is often a response to a constantly unsafe environment, such as an abusive home.
- Many children who experience ongoing abuse will fawn in an attempt to minimize the danger or threat and feel safe. They can't feel safe unless others get their needs met.



FAWN RESPONSE



consequences of people pleasing

burn out



poor boundaries



Resentment



disconnection



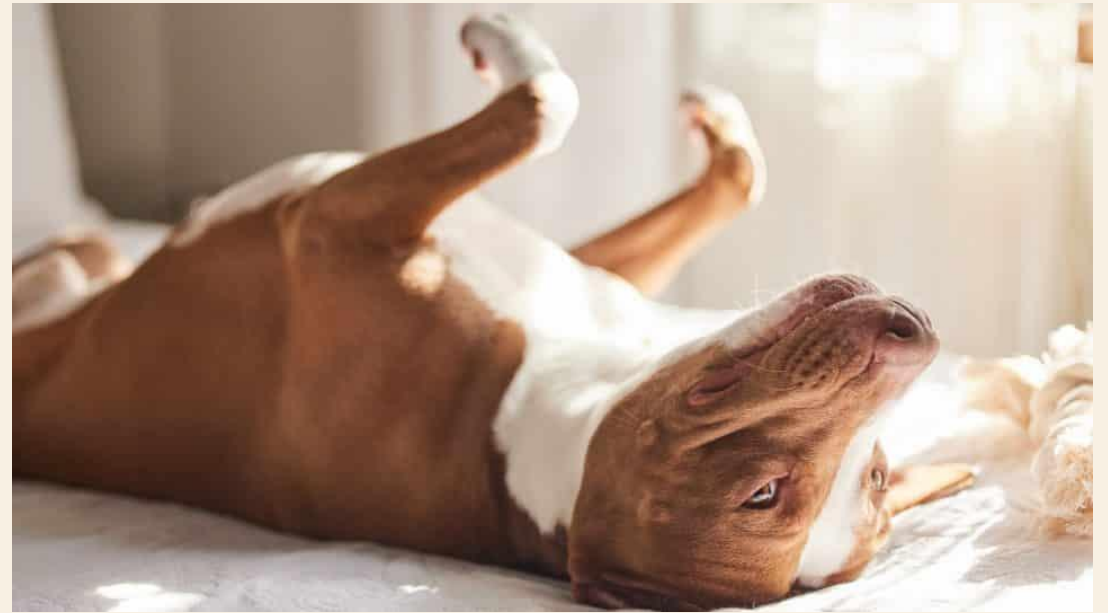
unfulfillment



FLOP RESPONSE

Buildup of stress over time causes a person to flop or collapse. This can look like:

- Inability to speak or think
- Fainting
- Hopelessness
- Apathy
- Loose muscles
- No energy



FREEZE VS FLOP RESPONSE



FREEZE

- The client is **HYPER**aroused.
- The muscles are tense and full of energy, but can't release it.
- In this stage, there are similar levels of sympathetic and parasympathetic activation.
- Increased heart rate/blood pressure
- The client might say, "I feel stuck," "I can't move," or "I feel like I am encased in cement."
- Eyes widen
- The body is ready to return to fight/flight as soon as the threat passes.

Knowing the differences between these two responses can help you determine which therapeutic strategies you should use with a given patient.

SHUTDOWN/COLLAPSE

- The client is **HYPO**aroused.
- The muscles are flaccid and loose.
- The parasympathetic nervous system is dominant.
- Decreased heart rate/blood pressure/temperature
- The client may not be able to speak at all.
- Blank stare
- Sensory info stops at the thalamus. It doesn't reach the cortex (so it's not integrated). The client is less aware of their internal and external world.
- Endorphins release to numb pain. Dynorphins release, which can make the client feel detached from their body.
- Can result in fainting



GENERAL ADAPTATION SYNDROME

GENERAL ADAPTATION SYNDROME

- Hans Selye noticed physiological changes in lab rats during an experiment where they were exposed to stressful events.
- He determined that this was not the exception, but the rule in how we respond to stressors.



General Adaptation Syndrome Triggers



Daily stress



Positive stress

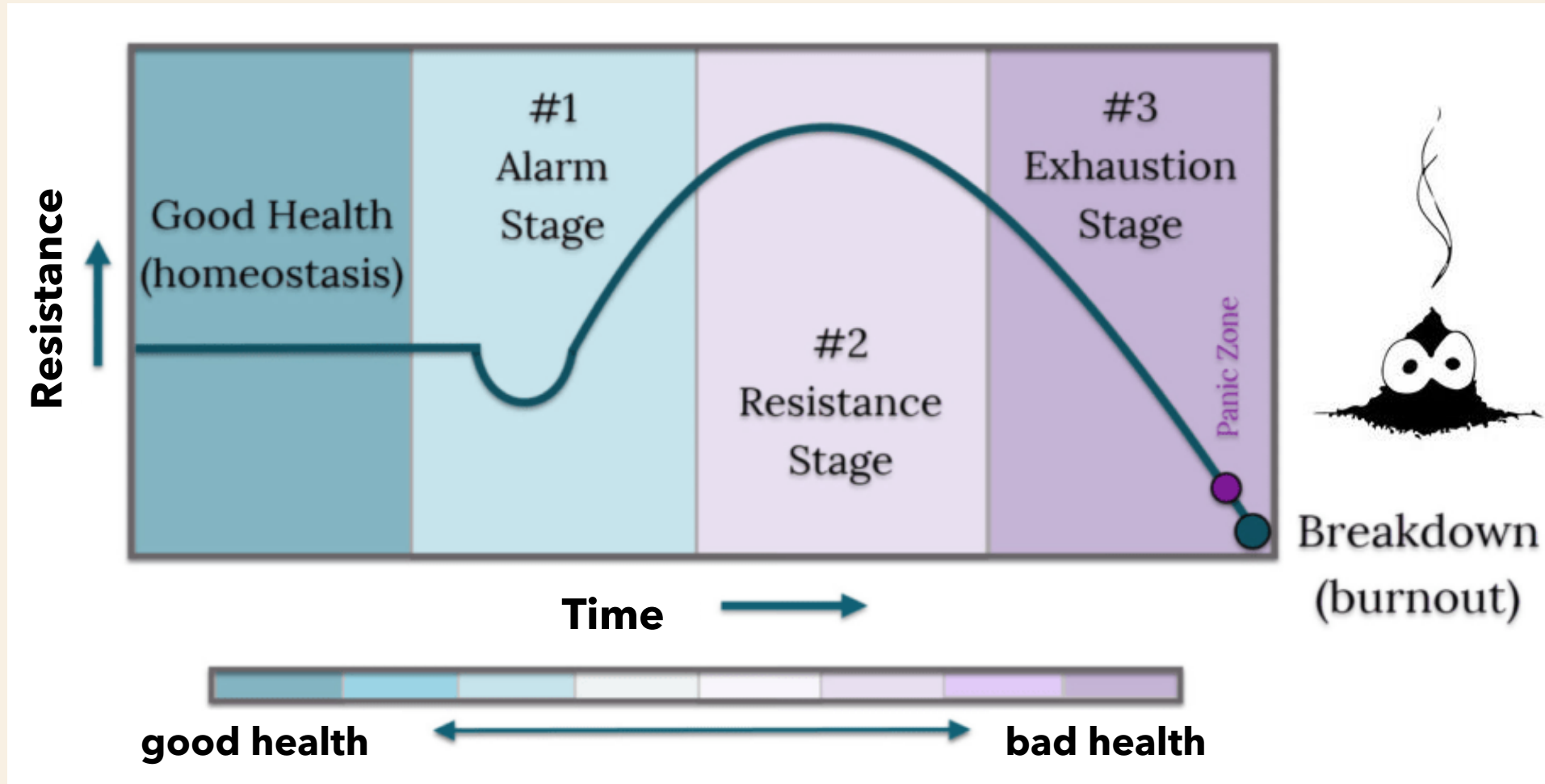


Sudden change



Trauma

GENERAL ADAPTATION SYNDROME



Images from: <https://drandrewneville.com/hans-selyes-general-adaptation-syndrome/> and <https://www.shutterstock.com/image-vector/cute-cartoon-illustration-pile-ashes-260nw-796178776.jpg>

LONG TERM EFFECTS OF STRESS

- Increased risk for cardiovascular disease, including heart attack and stroke
- Increased pulse and blood pressure
- Widespread inflammation, joint pain
- Chronic pain from tense muscles
- Digestive issues and ulcers
- Decreased function of immune system
- Increased risk for autoimmune disorders



CONSIDERATIONS FOR PEOPLE WORKING IN HARM REDUCTION

COVID-19

- Many people working in harm reduction were already tired when COVID-19 hit.
- We had a choice to either continue working during a pandemic- or shut down essential services.
- The news and information being shared was a constant message that we were in danger and could possibly die.



HARM REDUCTION PROGRAMS

- Many harm reduction programs do not have sustainable funding
- Ongoing community & political opposition
- The drug supply is changing rapidly, and education and interventions must change to reflect the current trends
- Participants experience overdose, stigma, sweeps, and structural violence

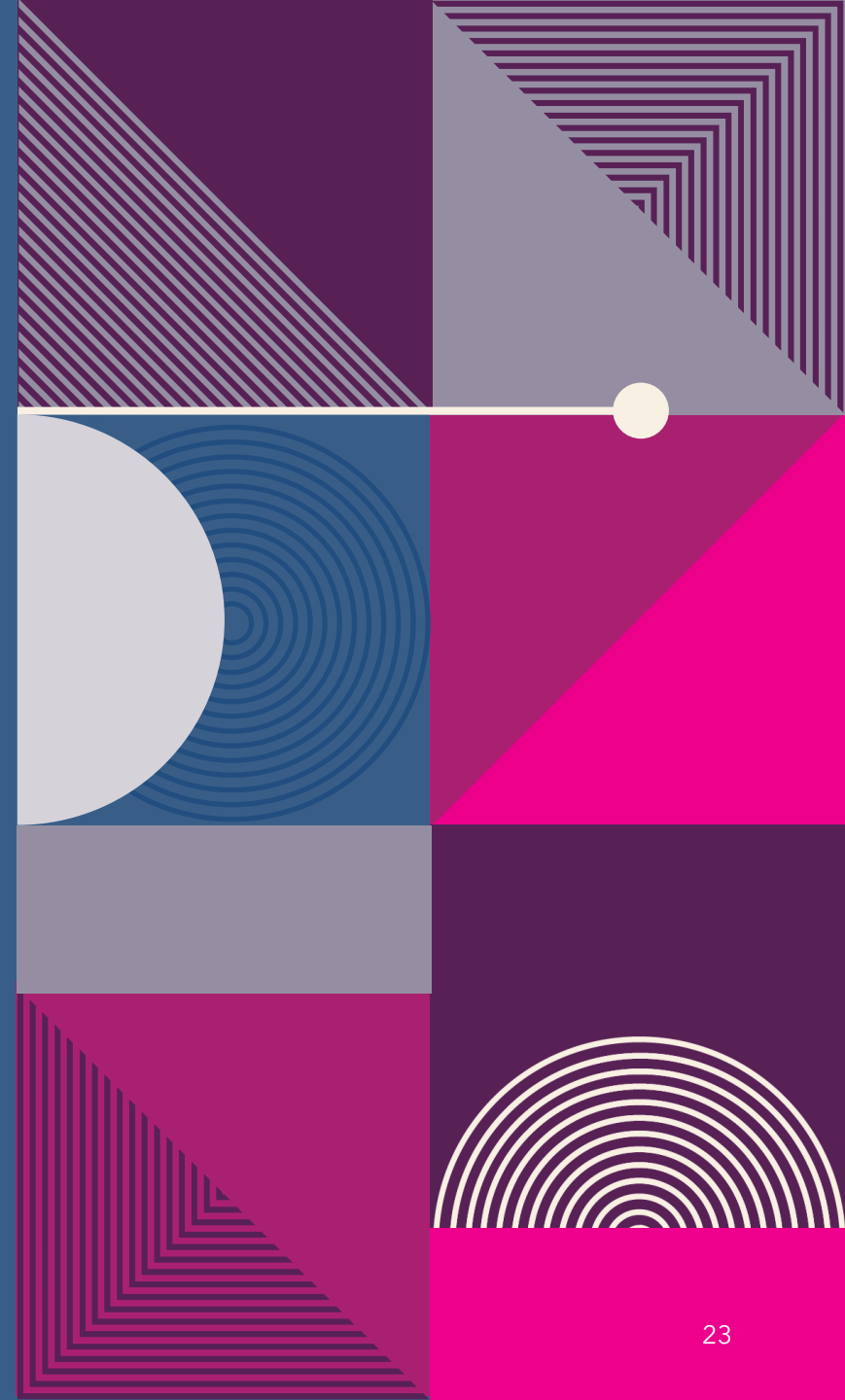


HARM REDUCTION WORKERS

- Peers, friends, and loved ones are dying from overdose
- Substance use may increase to deal with stressors and feelings of isolation
- Some may return to use and have to hide that use from others
- Those that are actively using are trying to navigate an unsafe supply and may have a difficult time using safely



HARM REDUCTION WORK AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

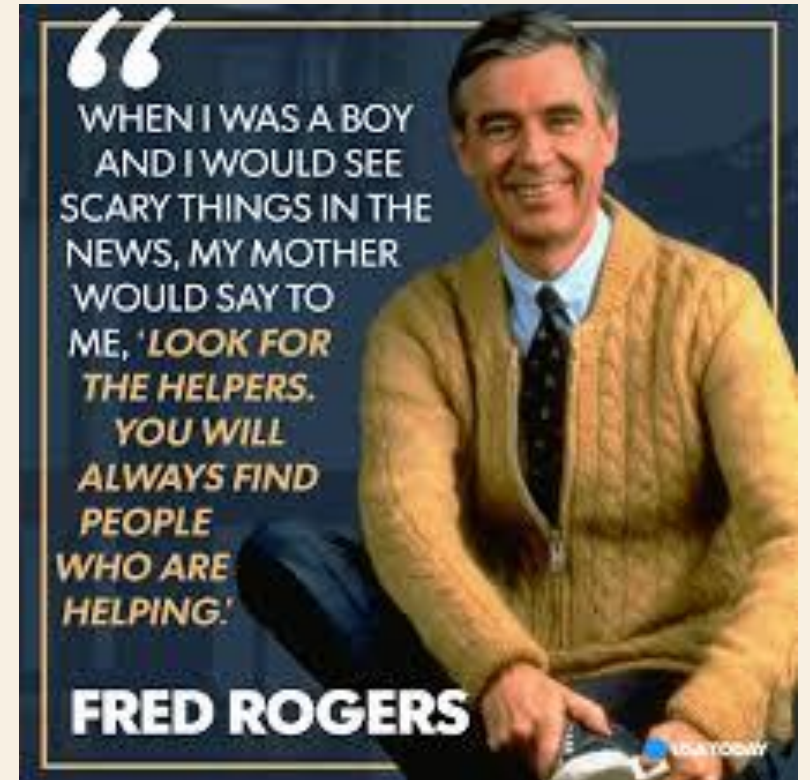


HARM REDUCTION WORK AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

Many people who work in harm reduction are “helpers” and may have also experienced trauma which has wired them to people please or stay busy.

Healing trauma can help people sustainably work in harm reduction.

Taking breaks can help people sustainably work in harm reduction.



FAWN RESPONSE



consequences of people pleasing

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Resentment



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unfulfillment

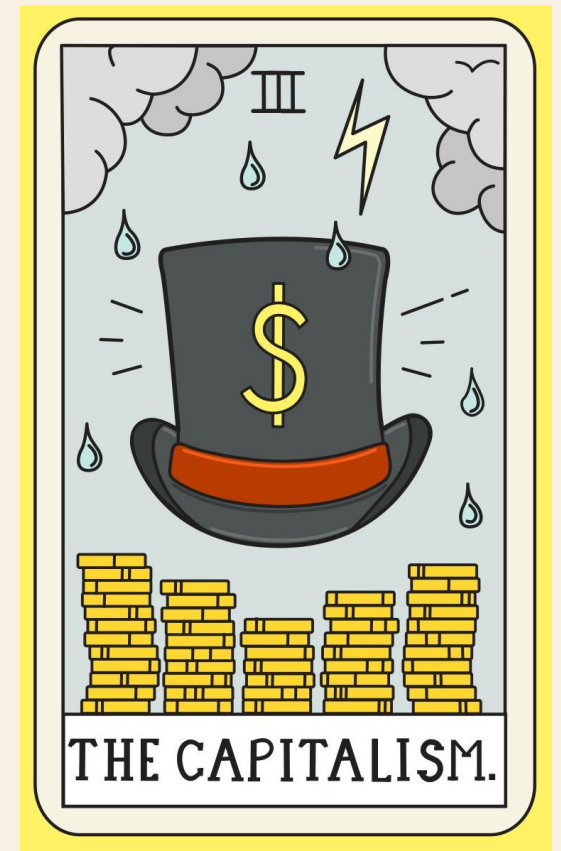




STRESS MANAGEMENT AND TAKING BREAKS

STRESS MANAGEMENT AND TAKING BREAKS

- It can be difficult for many to walk away from a job that is not done.
- It is important to recognize that we will not be able to meet everyone's needs, even if we were to attempt to work 24/7 (which is obviously not sustainable).
- We need to recognize that both unmet needs and unfinished work are bigger than us, and not a reflection of us or our work.



STRESS MANAGEMENT AND TAKING BREAKS

Many forest fires burn for days, weeks, or even months.

Firefighters need to take breaks and walk away from a fire that is still burning.

If they continue to try to fight the fire, they will become exhausted and can put others in danger or die.



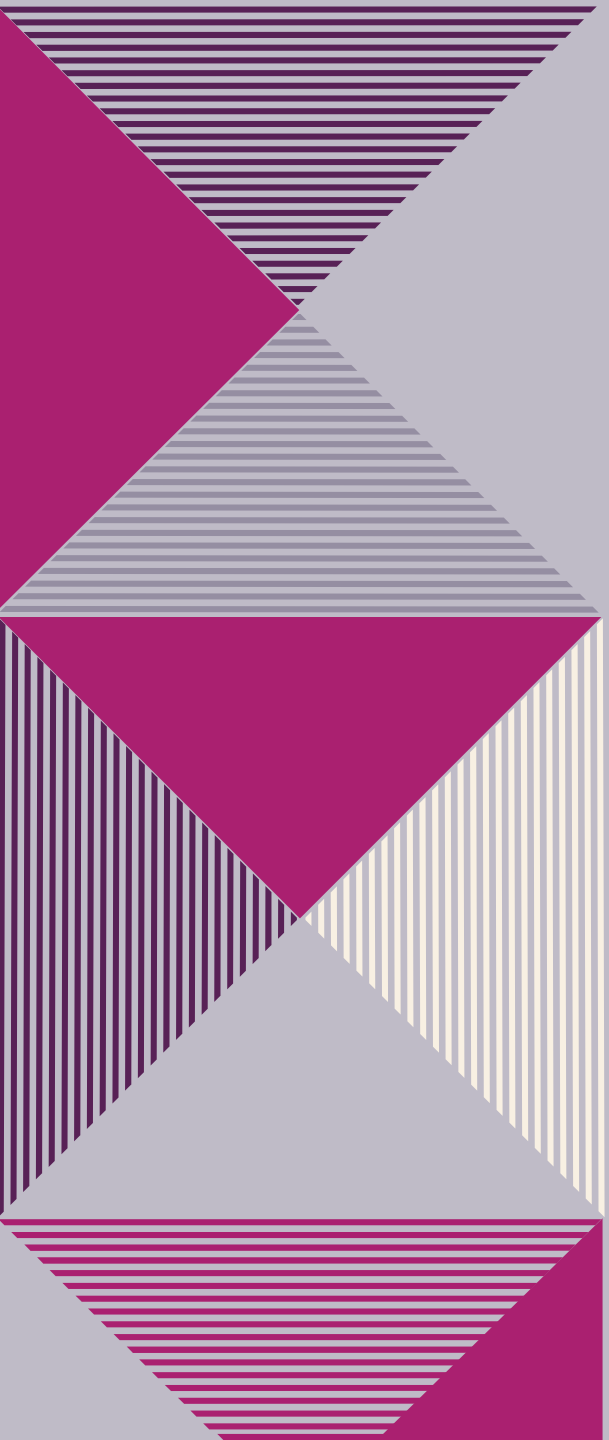
STRESS MANAGEMENT AND TAKING BREAKS

Taking breaks can establish safety, even if it is not a permanent feeling. This allows your nervous system to reset and get out of fight-or-flight mode.

You can help your body by taking breaks from:

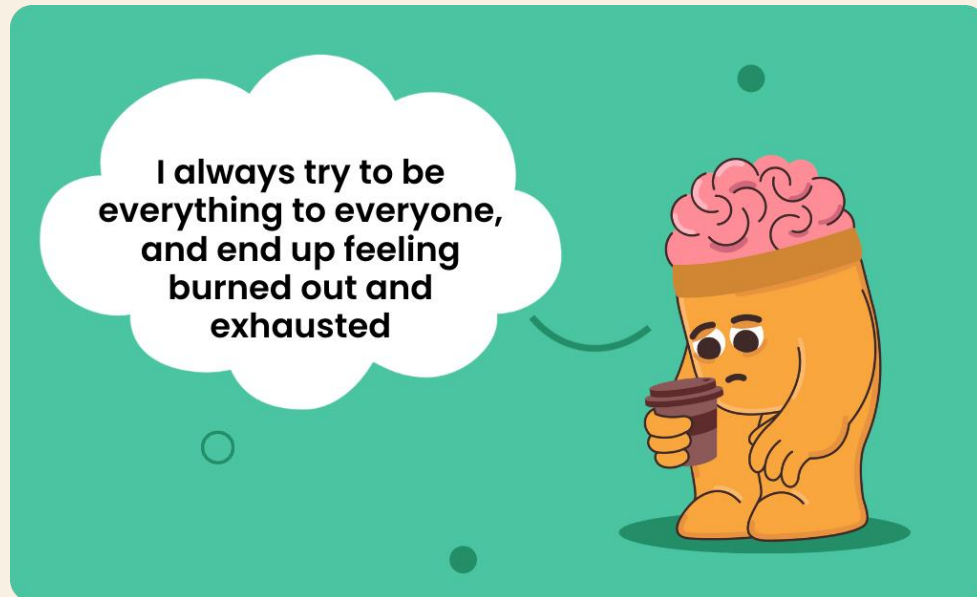
- Thinking about anything stressful
- Stressful environments
- Work
- People
- Finances





KNOWING WHEN TO TAKE BREAKS

FAWN RESPONSE



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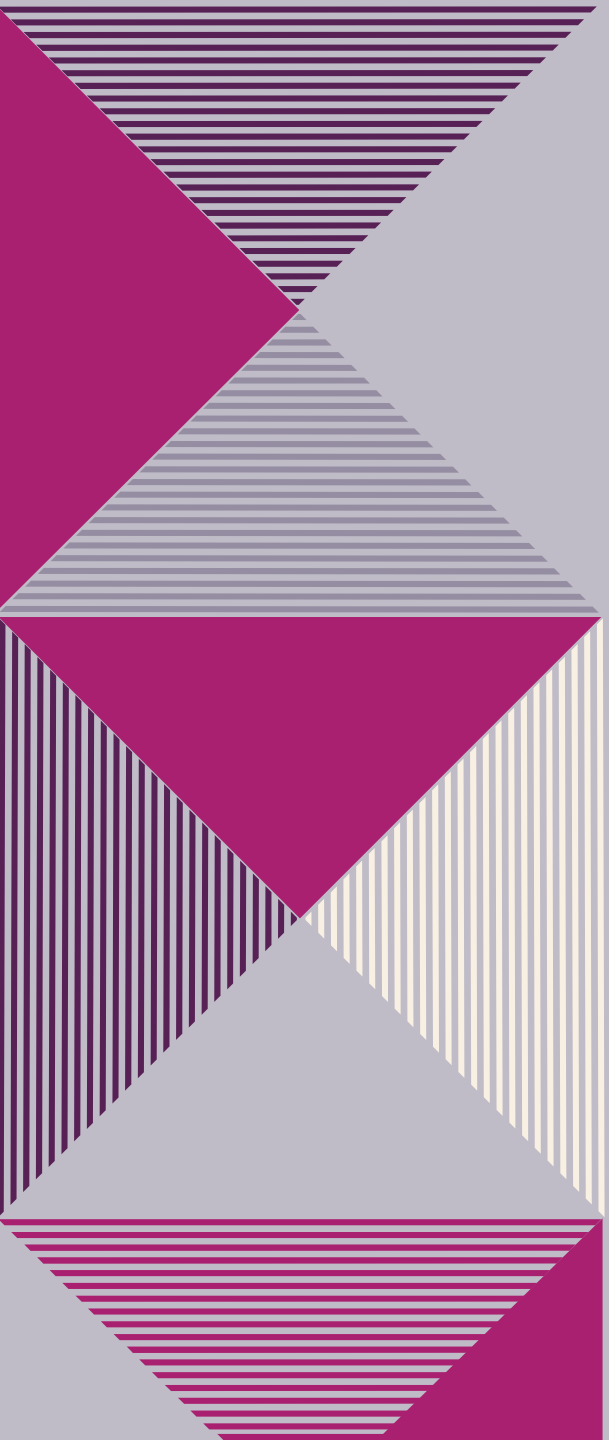
EVERYBODY NEEDS TO TAKE BREAKS. YOU NEED TO TAKE BREAKS!

Guilt and shame can come packaged
in propaganda about goal setting
and productivity. Beware.

You are enough now!

Your worth not measured by check
marks on a to-do list. Rest.

The Nap Ministry
@thenapministry



WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO TAKE BREAKS?

TAKING BREAKS

Taking breaks can look like a change in:

- Thoughts (watching a tv show or movie, gratitude, animals in costumes)
- Activity (coloring, puzzles, crafts, naps, dancing, toys)
- Sensation (grounding in the earth, stress balls, squishmallows, fidget toys)
- Location (trip to a park, going outside)
- Awareness (meditation, somatic experiencing)



TAKING DAILY BREAKS

- Meal breaks and rest breaks from work
- Walking outside and listening to nature
- Phoning a friend
- Petting an animal
- Blowing bubbles
- Moving your body
- Meditation
- Coloring
- Singing



TAKING WEEKLY BREAKS

- Mutual aid support groups
- Hiking or exploring a new place
- Making a collage
- Somatic experiencing therapy
- Napping
- Doing less
- Playing an instrument
- Going on a picnic
- Drag queen story hour
- Yoga



**It shouldn't be radical to rest,
but after centuries of living
under and participating in
capitalism and white
supremacy, here we are.
We can disrupt and resist.
Let us nap.**

THE NAP MINISTRY

TAKING BREAKS

- This is a practice, especially because it is not easy
- Have some fun, as a treat!
- Be gentle with yourself and others
- Do your best
- Try new things
- Don't be afraid to be silly





THANK YOU

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BOOKS

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- Rest is Resistance by Tricia Hersey
- Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma by Peter Levine
- Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle by Emily Nagoski and Amelia Nagoski
- Adult Children of Emotionally Immature Parents: How to Heal from Distant, Rejecting, or Self-Involved Parents by Lindsay C Gibson
- The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma by Bessel van der Kolk