



# Thriving in a High-Stress Environment

Grow your resiliency and navigate personal well-being when the going gets tough.

As you grow older, you will  
discover that you have two  
hands, one for helping yourself,  
the other for helping others.

*Maya Angelou*





# Session Outline

- High-Stress Environments
- How to Thrive
  - Completing the Stress-Cycle
  - Building Resiliency
  - Engaging in Flow Activities
- Breakout rooms throughout
- Q & A





# Session Objectives

1. Participants will be able to identify at least 3 actions they can take to complete the stress-cycle.
2. Participants will be able to select at least 1 action step they can take today to build their resilience.
3. Participants identify the 2 factors needed to enter into the Flow Channel.





# Get to Know Your Speaker

## Meagan Young, CTRS

- 10+ Years as Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS)
- Manage a TR Division - IDD & PD
- Founder of **Grow Through Flow LLC**

## Therapeutic Recreation:

- The purposeful use of recreation, leisure, and play to help improve quality of life.
- Positive Psychology Theories:
  - Flow & Flourishing (PERMA-V)





# High-Stress Environments

A High-Stress Environment (HSE) is one in which both staff and patrons experience an influx of environmental stressors on a regular basis.

## HSE Stressors Include:

- Staff shortages
- Increased needs of patients/clients
- Isolation/Social Distancing protocols
- Working from home
- Unpredictable conditions
- Demanding workloads
- Loud noises & bright lights
- etc.





# The Effects of HSE



## Languishing

A sense of stagnation and emptiness. Low mental well-being in the absence of a diagnosable mental health condition.



## Burnout

A syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.



## Compassion Fatigue

The exhaustion and emotional withdrawal experienced by those who care for sick or traumatized people over an extended period of time.



# How Do We Thrive?



1. We complete the  
**Stress Cycle.**



2. We build our  
**Resiliency.**



3. We engage in  
**Flow Activities.**



# 1. We Complete the Stress Cycle

- To avoid the long-term effects of stress, we need to complete the stress cycle.
- Evidence-based techniques we can use after experiencing a stressor in order to release the physiological effects of stress.





# What is a Stressor vs. Stress



## Stressor

The thing/factor that induces and stress response

- **External** - pandemic, work, finances, family, etc.
- **Internal** - body dissatisfaction, PTSD, ruminating thoughts, etc.

## Stress

The physiological and psychological response our bodies and minds experience when we encounter a stressor.



# The Physiology of Stress



## Physiological Response

- Release of epinephrine & endorphins
- Heart rate quickens
- Pain sensitivity decreases
- Attention narrows.
- Digestion slows and,
- Immune function is suppressed.

What happens when the stressor is not life-threatening?

->The remaining stress wreaks havoc on our bodies.



# Long-Term Effects of Stress

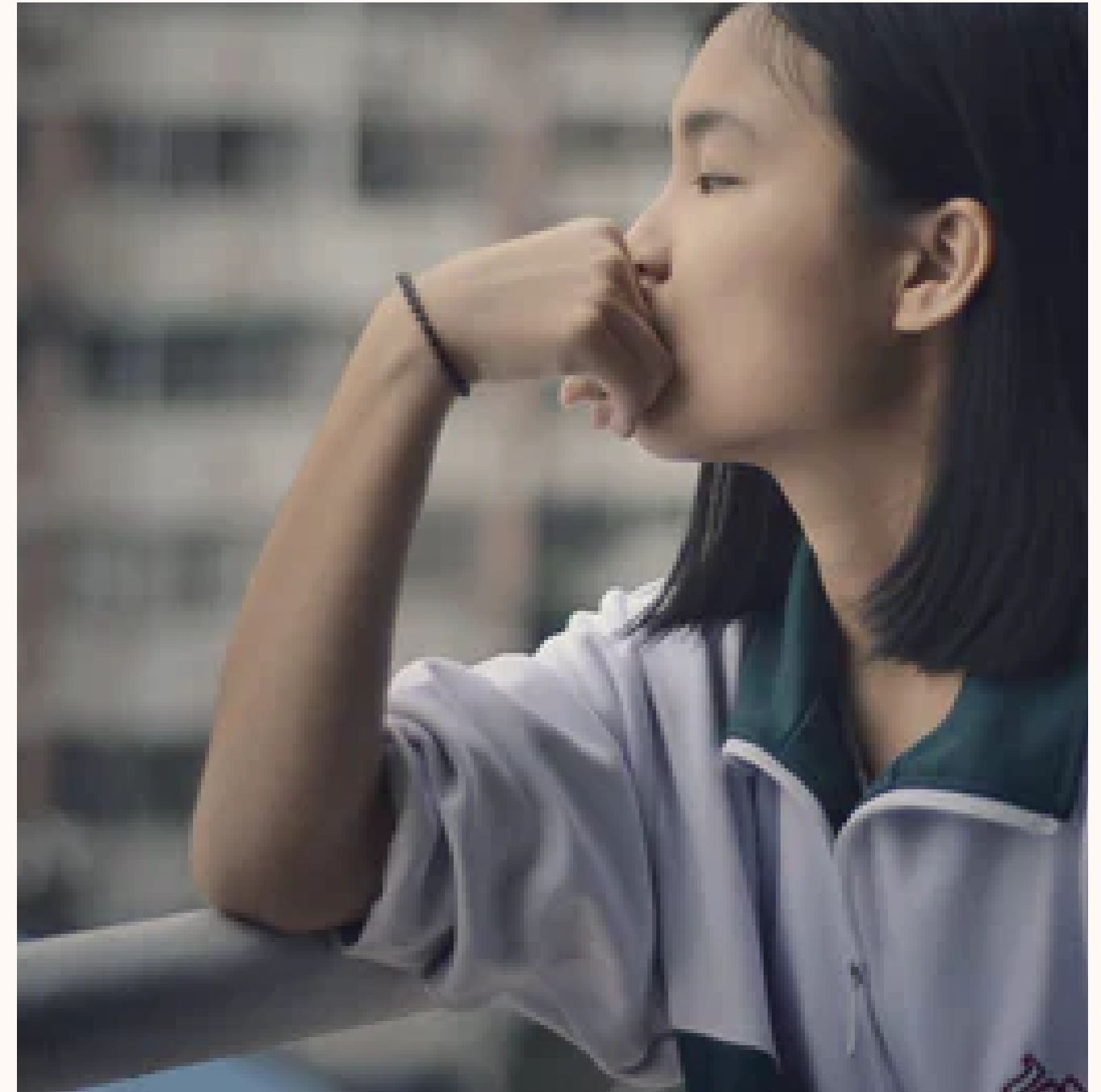
The long-term effects of stress can damage our health:

## Physical conditions:

- headaches
- digestive issues
- sleep disturbances
- High blood pressure & heart disease
- Weakened immune system.

## Psychological and emotional conditions:

- confusion
- anxiety
- depression





# 7 Ways to Complete the Stress Cycle

## 1. Physical Activity



## 2. Breathing



# 7 Ways to Complete the Stress Cycle

## 3. Positive Social Interactions



## 4. Laughter



# 7 Ways to Complete the Stress Cycle

## 5. Affection



## 6. Crying

## 7. Creative Expression





# Breakout Room



# 2. We Build our Resiliency

“The process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress.” - APA

How to Build Resiliency:

1. Focus on Wellness
2. Prioritize Connection
3. Healthy Thinking
4. Create Meaning







# 1. Focus on Wellness

The health of our bodies and minds are directly related to our dopamine levels which fuel the decision-making process.

Interconnected relationships between:

1. Quality Sleep
2. Healthy Eating
3. Physical Activity



# 1. Focus on Wellness



1

Identify your  
sleep intruders.



2

Understand  
willpower is a  
**limited** resource.



3

Find movement  
YOU enjoy.





## 2. Prioritize Connection

Humans are social creatures to varying degrees, but one thing that is innate in our DNA is the need for connection.

Meaningful relationships provide benefits:

- Higher reported rates of happiness
- Improved quality of physical health
- Supporting recovery from mental illness
- Friendships at work = increased performance





1

Join a  
group/activity  
you enjoy.



2

Take an **interest**  
and **make** time.



3

Practice  
**vulnerability.**

## 2. Prioritize Connection





## 3. Healthy Thinking

Our thoughts will affect how we will feel and ultimately our ability to remain resilient during times of high stress and change.

Analyzing the types of frequency of our thoughts will help us identify any patterns we can shift, such as catastrophizing and rumination.





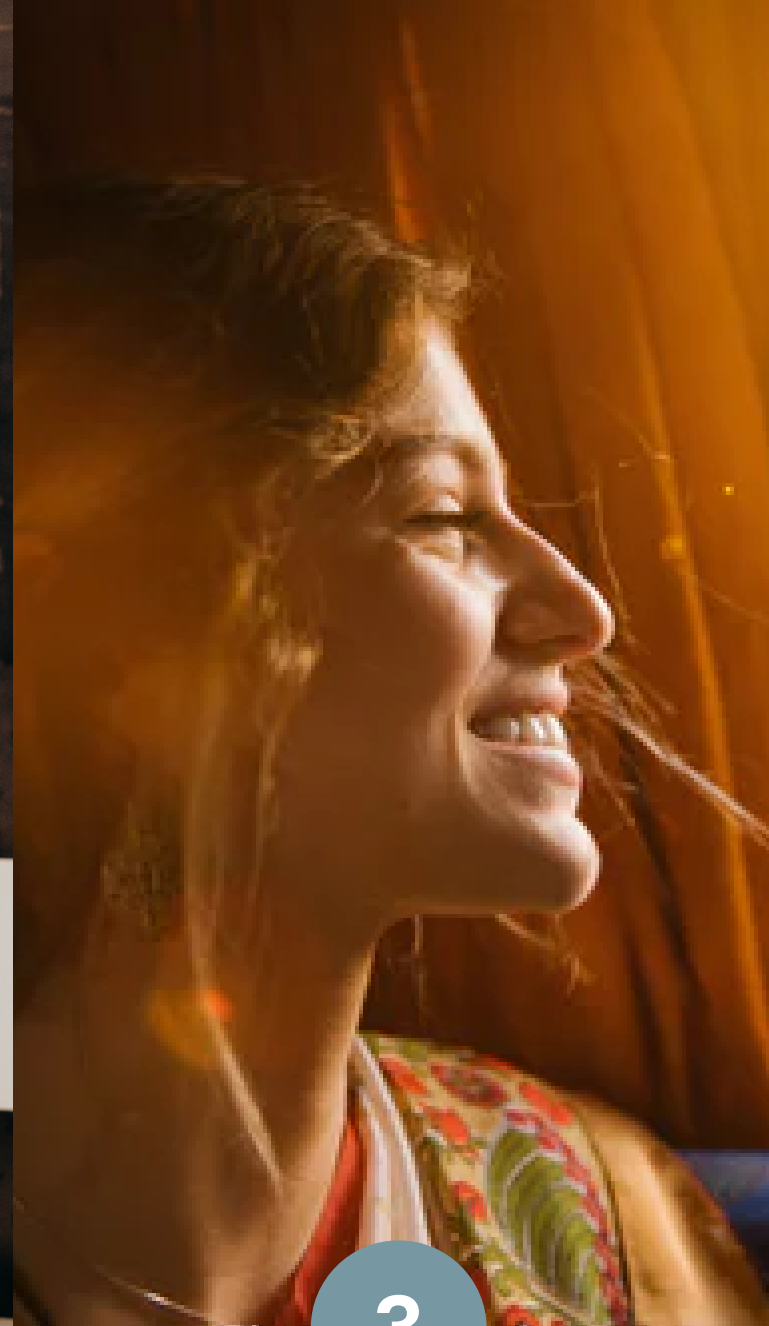
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Challenge  
destructive  
thoughts.



2

Remain **hopeful**  
and adaptive.



3

Smile on  
**purpose**.

## 3. Healthy Thinking



## 4. Create Meaning

When life feels purposeless with little direction, we have the opportunity to create meaning in our lives.

When we resonate with a mission or a purpose, we find meaning.

We can align our unique strength's with the bigger picture.







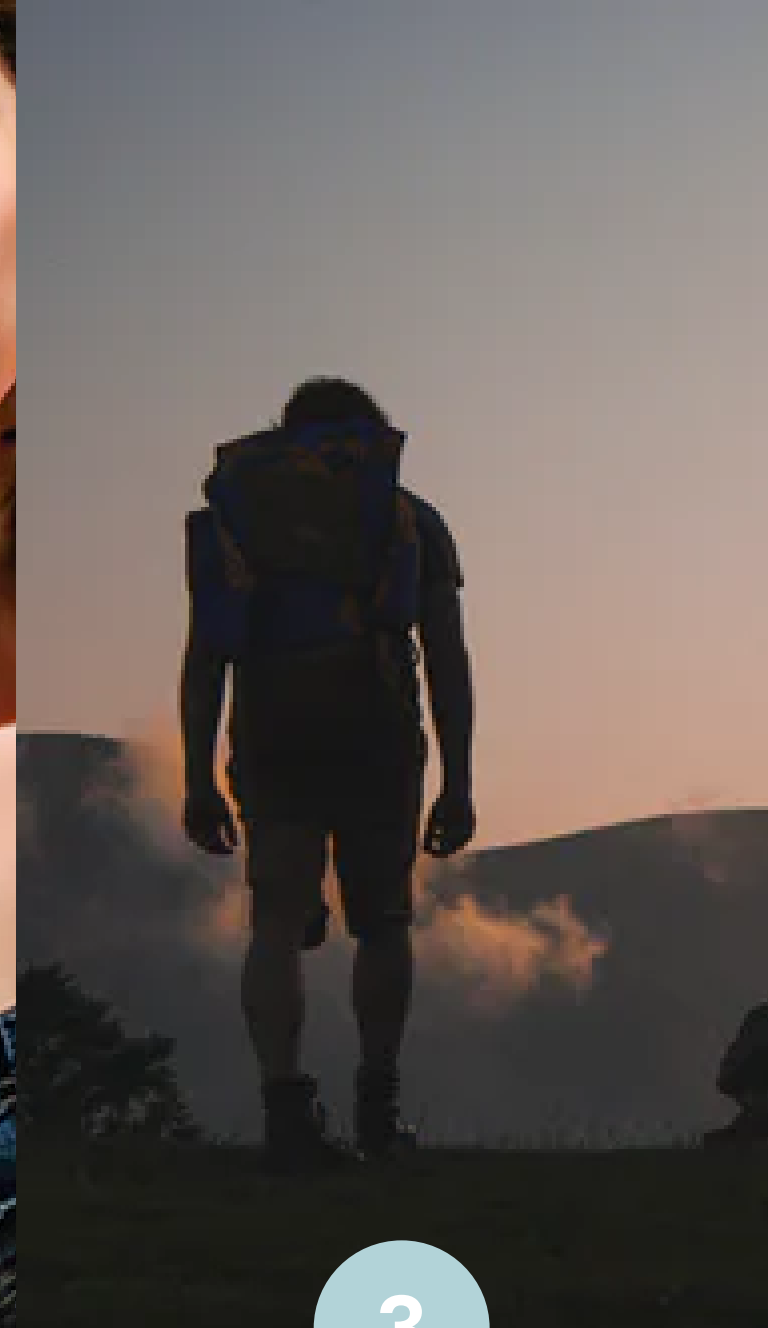
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Clarify your  
**values**



2

Set goals and  
work towards  
them.



3

Define your **why**.

## 4. Create Meaning



# Breakout Room





# 3. We Engage in Flow Activities

Flow is a state of mind in which a person becomes fully immersed in an activity.

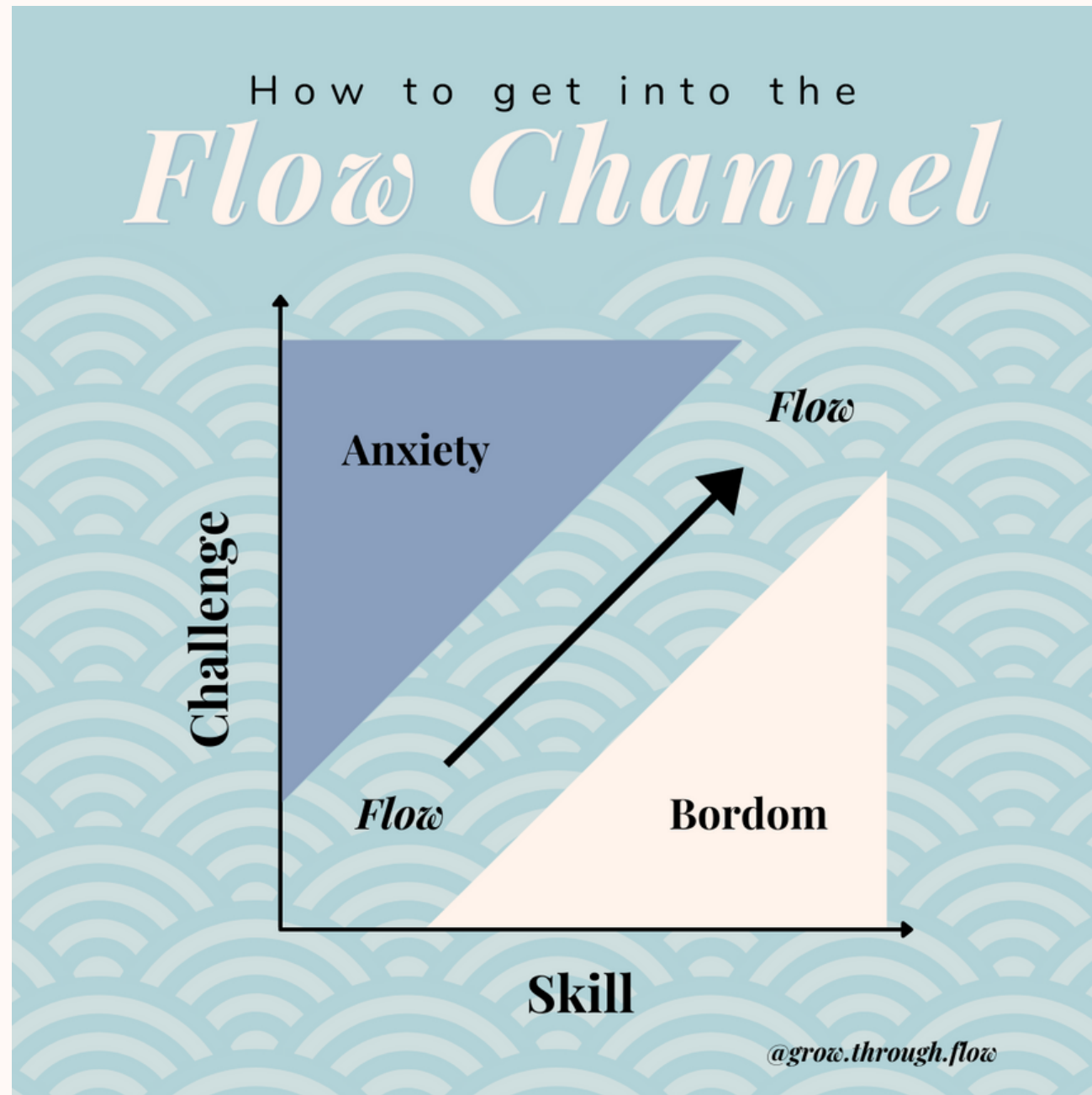
Complete **concentration**, altered sense of **time**, and **effortlessness** are all characteristics of flow.

- Better emotional regulation
- Greater enjoyment and fulfillment
- Improved performance
- More creativity





# The Importance of the Flow Channel



- Balance between:
  - Challenge
  - Skill
- Full concentration and use of learned abilities.
- Requires practice, experience, and expertise.



# Flow Activities



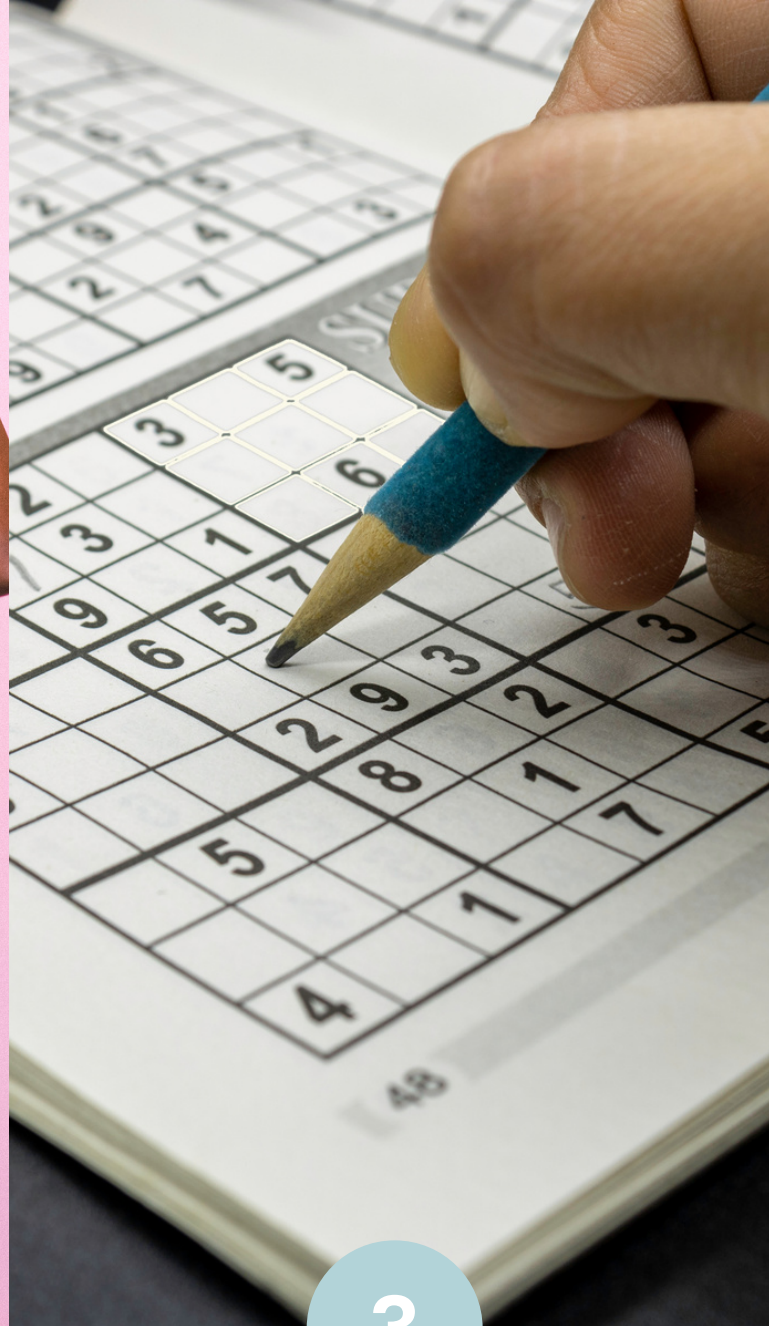
1

Creative



2

Physical



3

Cognitive



# Breakout Room





# Self-Care is Healthcare

1. Languishing, burnout, and compassion fatigue are not signs of inadequacies - they are symptoms of our environment.
2. We can not intellectually rid stress - we must complete the cycle.
3. Everyone can build resiliency with intentional practices.
4. They are called practices for a reason - they take time.
5. Time spent in recreation, leisure, and play is invested - not wasted.

"When we as providers thrive,  
we show others around us what is possible".





# Let's Connect



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