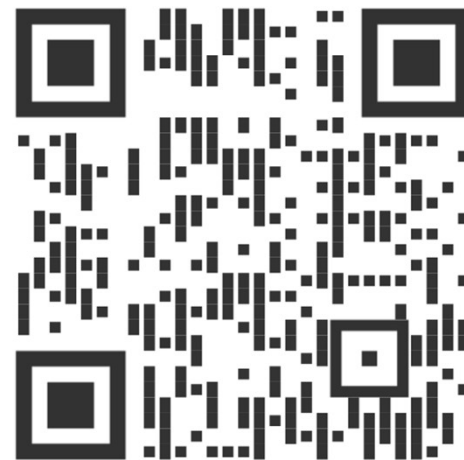


WEBINAR WILL BEGIN AT 10 AM CENTRAL



**Disaster
Emotional and Spiritual
Care Academy**
Spring 2026

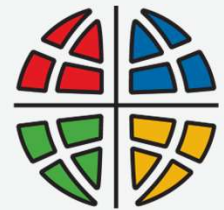
**Tuesdays
March 24 – April 28
10 to 11:30 a.m.
Central**



<https://www.crisiscareministries.net/ccmwebinarhub>

Calm in Crisis

An Introduction to
Disaster Mental,
Emotional, and
Spiritual Care



Lutheran
Disaster Response

Our time together today

- Understand what Disaster Emotional and Spiritual Care (DESC) is and its role in the disaster space
- Understand what stress is
- Understand the core components of Psychological First Aid
- Understand some of the core components of long-term support care
- Know how to access training resources available from LDR

For today

- This is an introduction, not a certification
- PFA was developed by National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) and National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (NC-PTSD)
- MESS was developed by MESS Ministries, Inc. out of a Peer Support for Law Enforcement program. The transition was supported by LDR and our Emotional Spiritual Care Workgroup.

What is DESC?

- DESC = Disaster Emotional and Spiritual Care
- Provides compassionate support to disaster survivors and responders to address trauma, loss, and existential questions in both crisis and support contexts.
- Focuses on presence, active listening, and honoring diverse faith traditions or secular perspectives to help individuals regain a sense of meaning and hope during crisis.



Let's Talk About Stress



Stressful / Traumatic Experiences

- Deeply **distressing or shocking** event
- **Overwhelms ability** to cope
- **Affect anyone**, regardless of age
- Can have **lasting impacts** on well-being or behavior.





Common Reactions to Trauma

- Can be **immediate** or **delayed**
- Reactions **depend on variety** of things
- Let's look at some **common reactions** people can experience after a trauma.

Physical Reactions

Physical reactions include:

- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Digestion problems/Stomachaches
- Muscle tension
- Shakiness/weakness
- Dizzy spells
- Pounding heart/increased heart rate
- Elevated blood pressure
- Rapid breathing
- Sweating
- Having your ongoing medical problems get worse



Emotional Reactions

Emotional reactions include:

- Fear, anxiety, panic or feeling unsafe
- Shock or numbness
- Depression or crying
- Helplessness, hopelessness or meaninglessness
- Guilt or shame
- Anger or irritability
- Unexpected mood swings
- Disproportionate reactions



Cognitive/Mental Reactions

Cognitive/mental reactions include:

- Confusion or disorientation
- Reduced concentration and memory
- Difficulty making decisions
- Intrusive thoughts about the event
- Worrying about the event
- Flashbacks/preoccupation with the event
- A sense that things aren't real
- Amnesia for the event
- Loss of joy



Behavioral Reactions

Behavioral reactions include:

- Changes in sleeping patterns
- Changes in eating patterns
- Changes in other common activities
- Decreased personal hygiene
- Increased substance use such as alcohol, cigarettes and coffee
- Problems at work or school
- Keep thinking and talking about what happened



Social Reactions

Social/interpersonal reactions include:

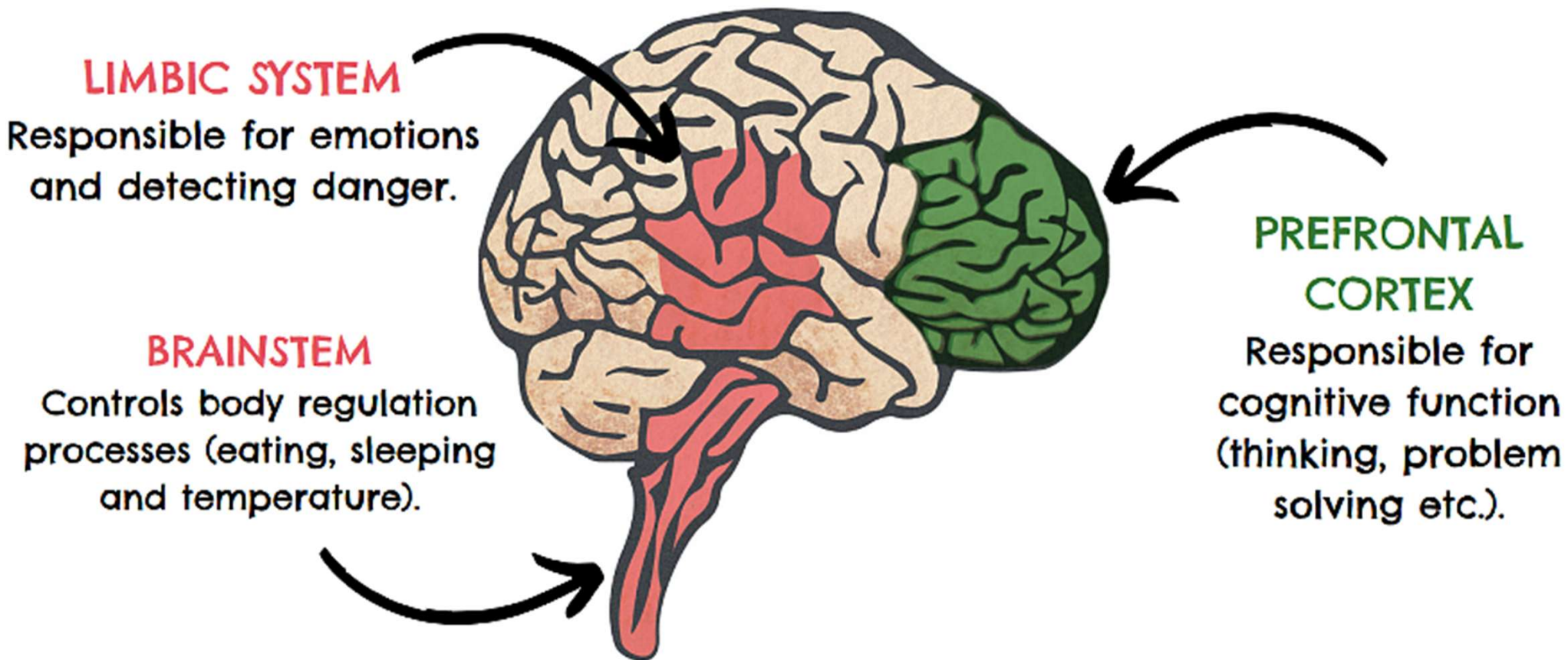
- Frequent disagreements
- Fear/nervousness in crowds
- Shaken religious/spiritual faith
- Loss of confidence/trust in self or others
- Domestic violence
- Withdrawal, detachment or avoidance of people
- Neediness, not wanting to be alone

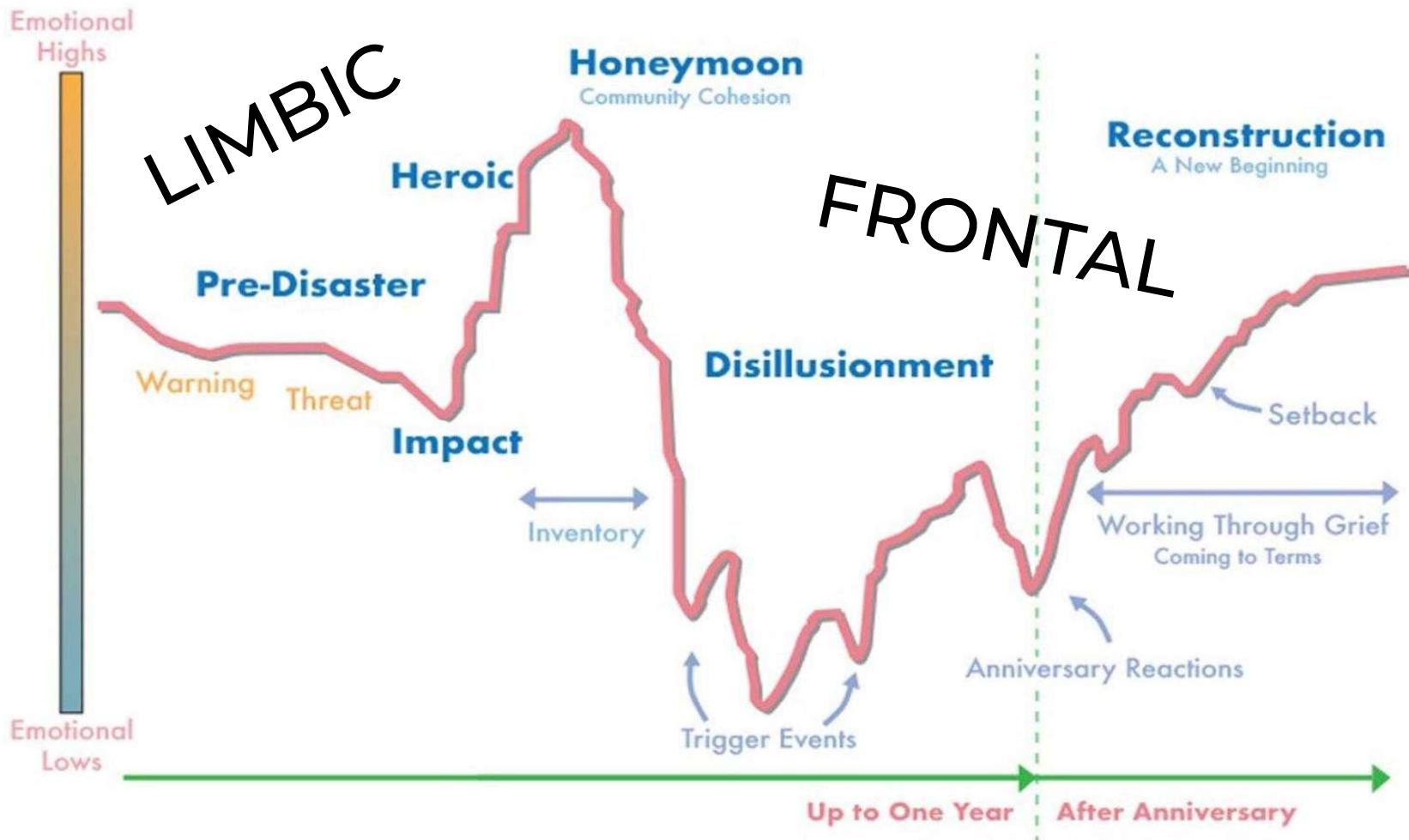


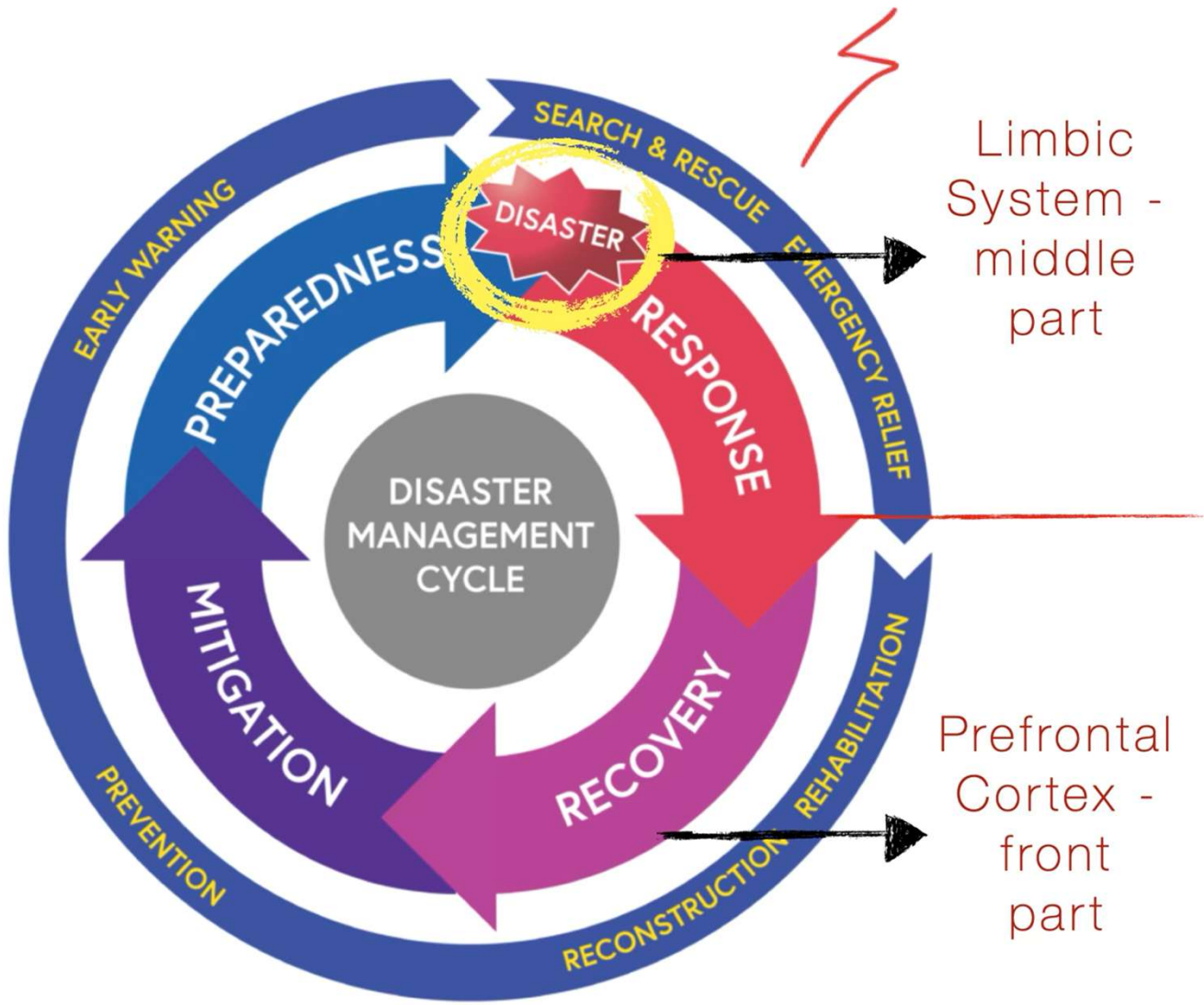


The Brain Science









Psychological First Aid



Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Support



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Psychological First Aid Fundamentals

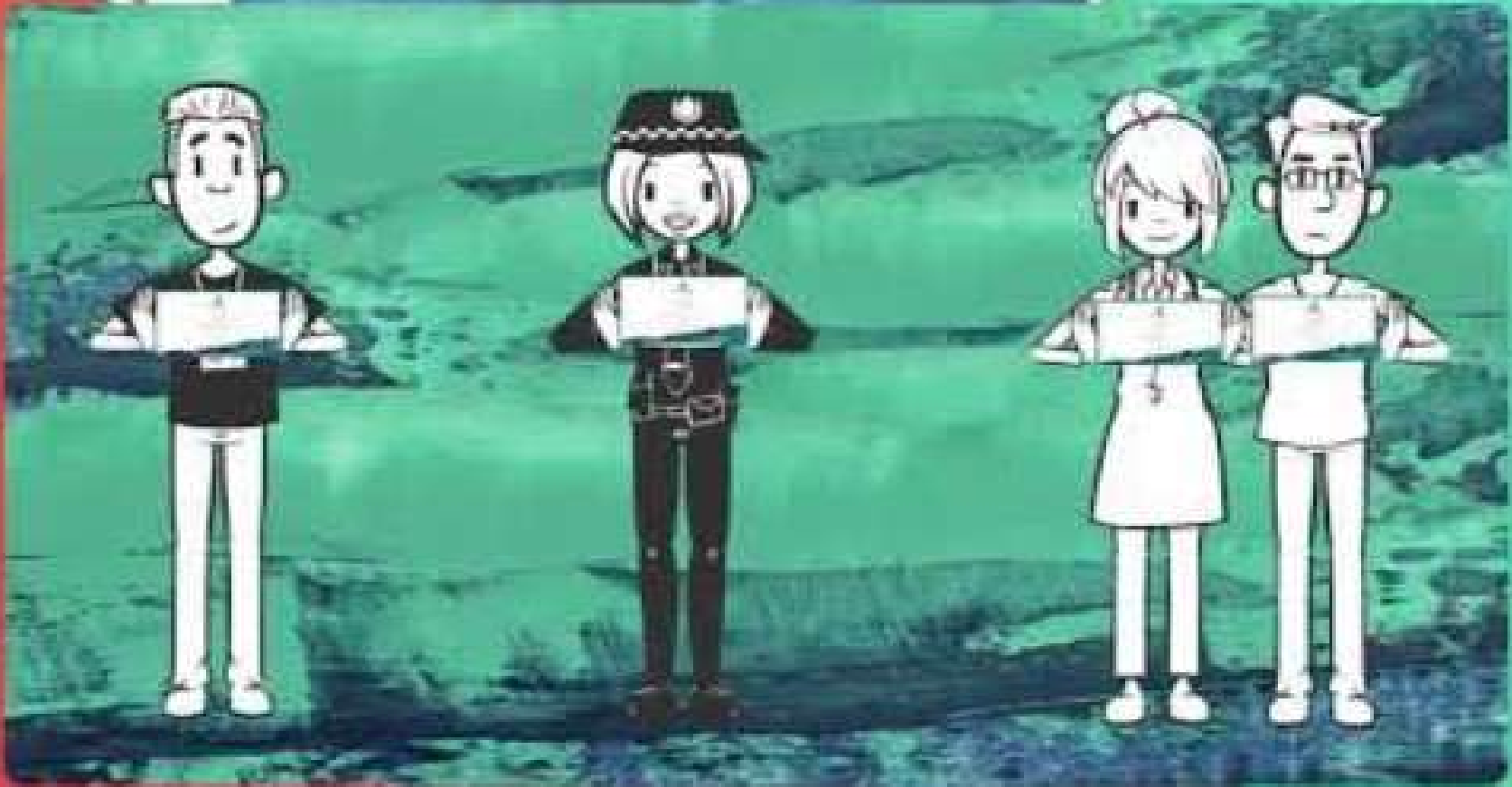


What is Psychological First Aid?

- Psychological First Aid (PFA) is a **supportive intervention** designed to **reduce initial distress** and foster short- and long-term adaptive functioning.
- **Compassionate and practical approach** to help individuals cope with aftermath of a crisis
- Provide **humane, supportive** and **practical assistance**



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOzuMlaxfek>



What PFA is and is not...

PFA is not...

Something only professionals do

Counseling or therapy

Having all the answers or providing everything

Forcing people to share feelings or reactions

Pressuring for details or asking someone to analyze what happened

PFA is...

Non-intrusive, practical care and support

Active listening

Assessing needs and concerns

Comforting people, promoting a sense of calm

Helping people address basic needs, access to services or supports



Principles of PFA



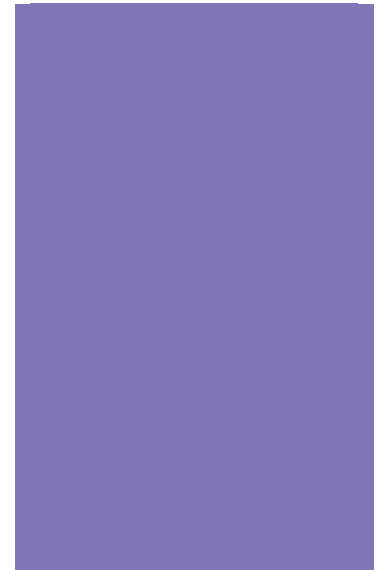
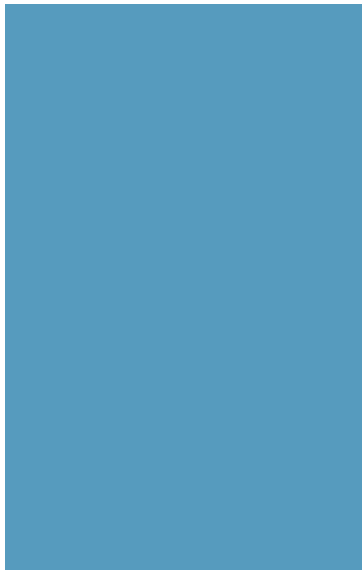
Safety

Calm

Connectedness

Self-efficacy

Hope



Safety



Goal: To **enhance immediate and ongoing safety**, and **provide physical and emotional comfort**

Ways to promote an environment of safety:

- Do things that are active, practical and familiar
- Get current, accurate and up-to-date information
- Get connected with available practical resources
- Get information about how responders are making the situation safer
- Get connected with others who have shared similar experiences

Calm



Goal: To **calm and orient emotionally** overwhelmed or disorientated survivors

Ways to promote an environment of calm:

- Remain calm, quiet and present
- Be available if they need you
- Listen
- Be friendly and compassionate even if people are being difficult

Connectedness



Goal: To help **establish** brief or ongoing **contacts with sources of support.**

Ways to promote an environment of connectedness:

- Help people contact friends and loved ones.
- Keep families together. Keep children with parents or other close relatives whenever possible.
- Link people with relevant services

Self-efficacy



Goal: To help people **have a sense of control** over positive outcomes.

Ways to promote self-efficacy:

- Give practical suggestions that steer people toward helping themselves.
- Engage people in meeting their own needs.
- Help survivors identify coping strategies they have used in the past and introduce new ones they may need to address current distress and worries.

Hope



Goal: To **instill a sense of hope** in survivors

Ways to promote an environment of hope:

- Find out the types and locations of government and non-government services and direct people to those services that are available.
- Help survivors to focus on those aspects that they can control and help them manage expectations about the difficult hours and days ahead.

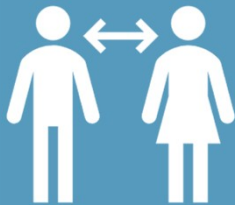
Safety

Calm

Connectedness

Self-efficacy

Hope



Putting the Principles into Action

LOOK
LISTEN
LINK



PREPARE



Learn:

- Crisis event
- Available services and supports
- Safety and security concerns

Be sensitive to culture

Be aware of at-risk populations

LOOK

Identify or recognize:

- What is/has happened
- Who needs help
- Safety and security risks
- Trauma reactions





LISTEN

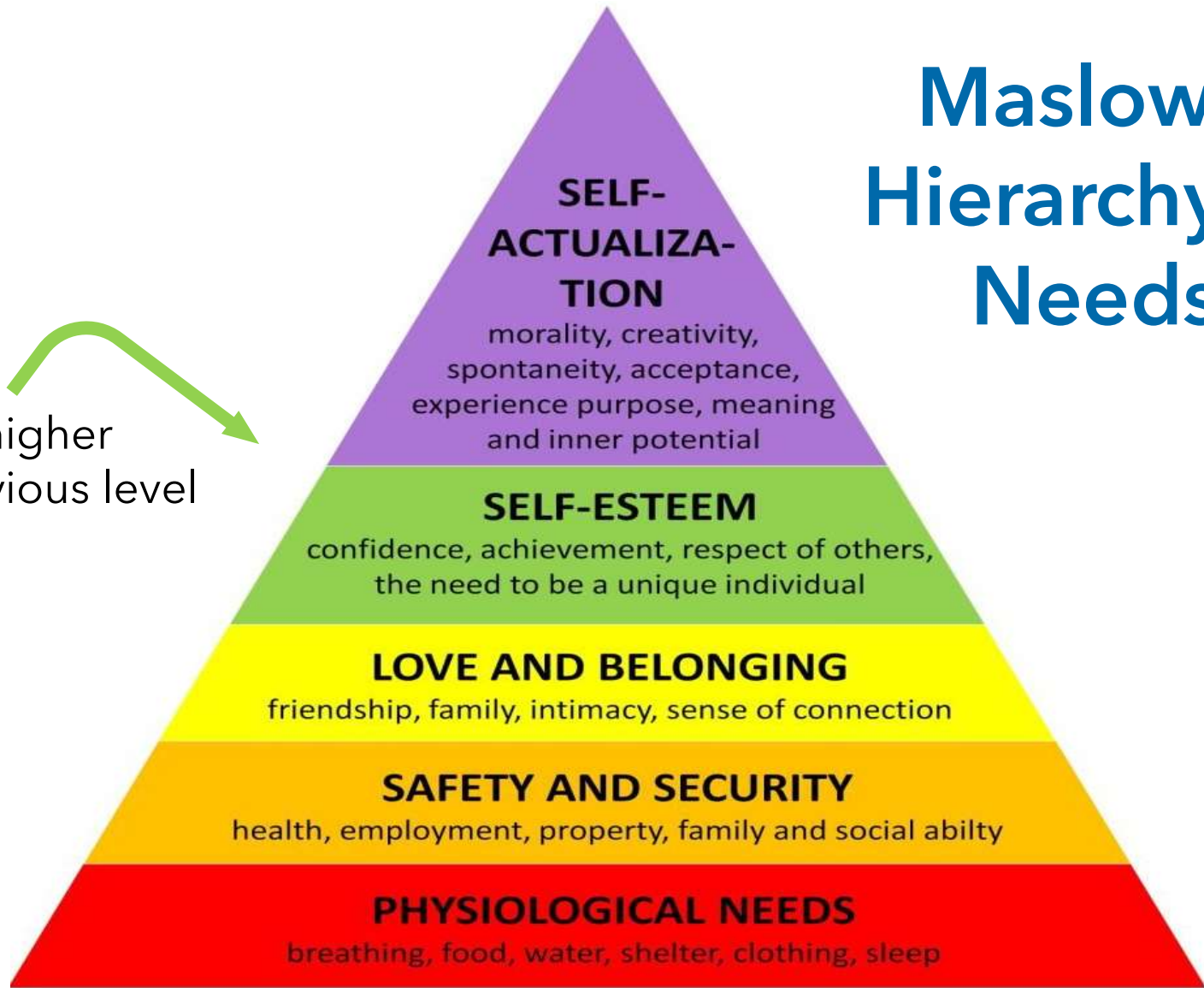
Approach in appropriate way:

- Active listening
- Calming words/actions

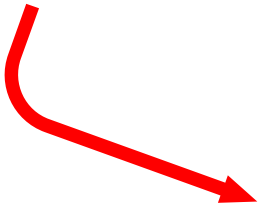
Encourage **accepting feelings**

Ask about **immediate needs** and **concerns**

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Can't focus on higher needs until previous level is satisfied

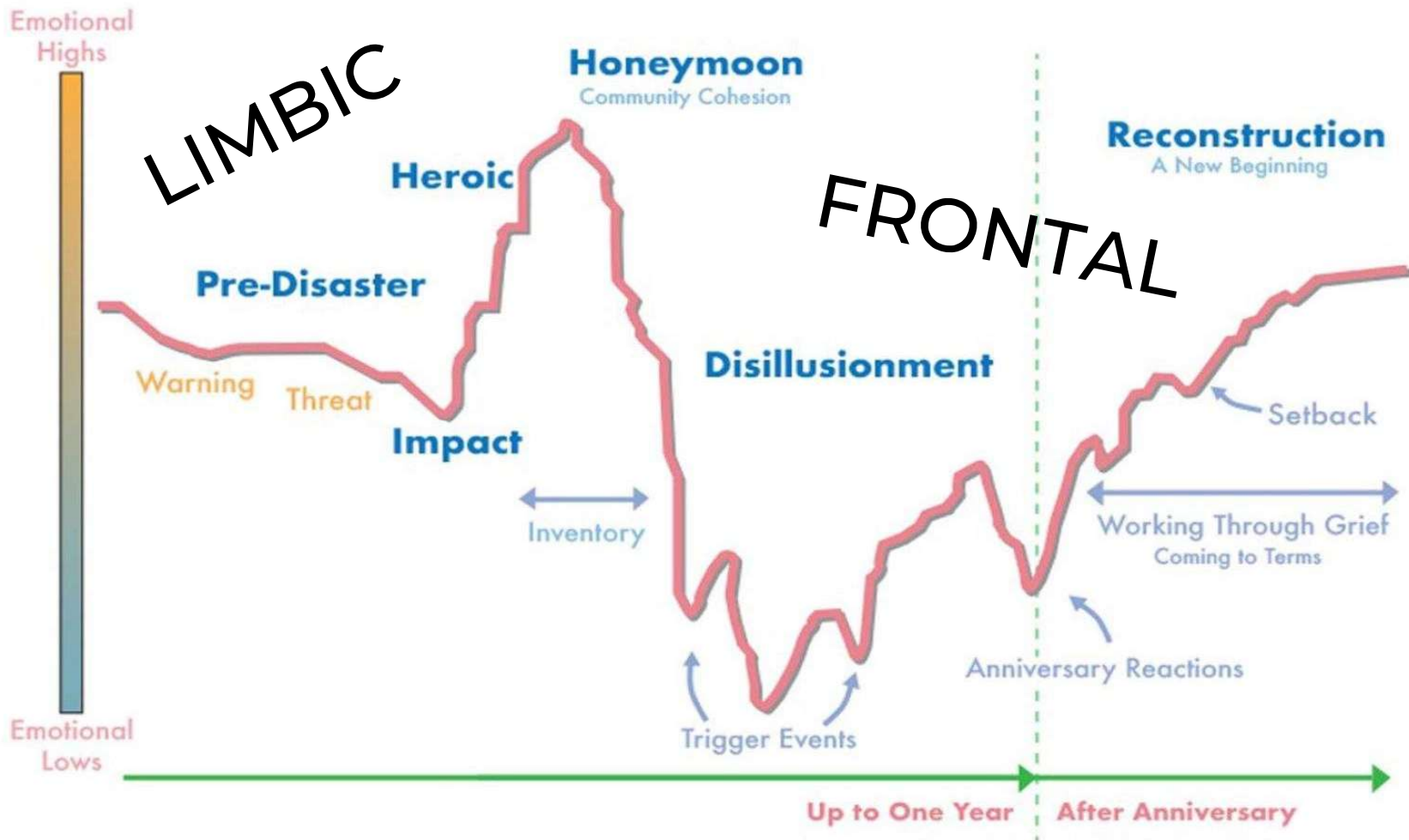


LINK

Link people to:

- Information
- Connecting with loved ones
- Tackling problems
- Accessing services





MESS Basic Training

Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Support
for clergy, lay leaders, and community responders

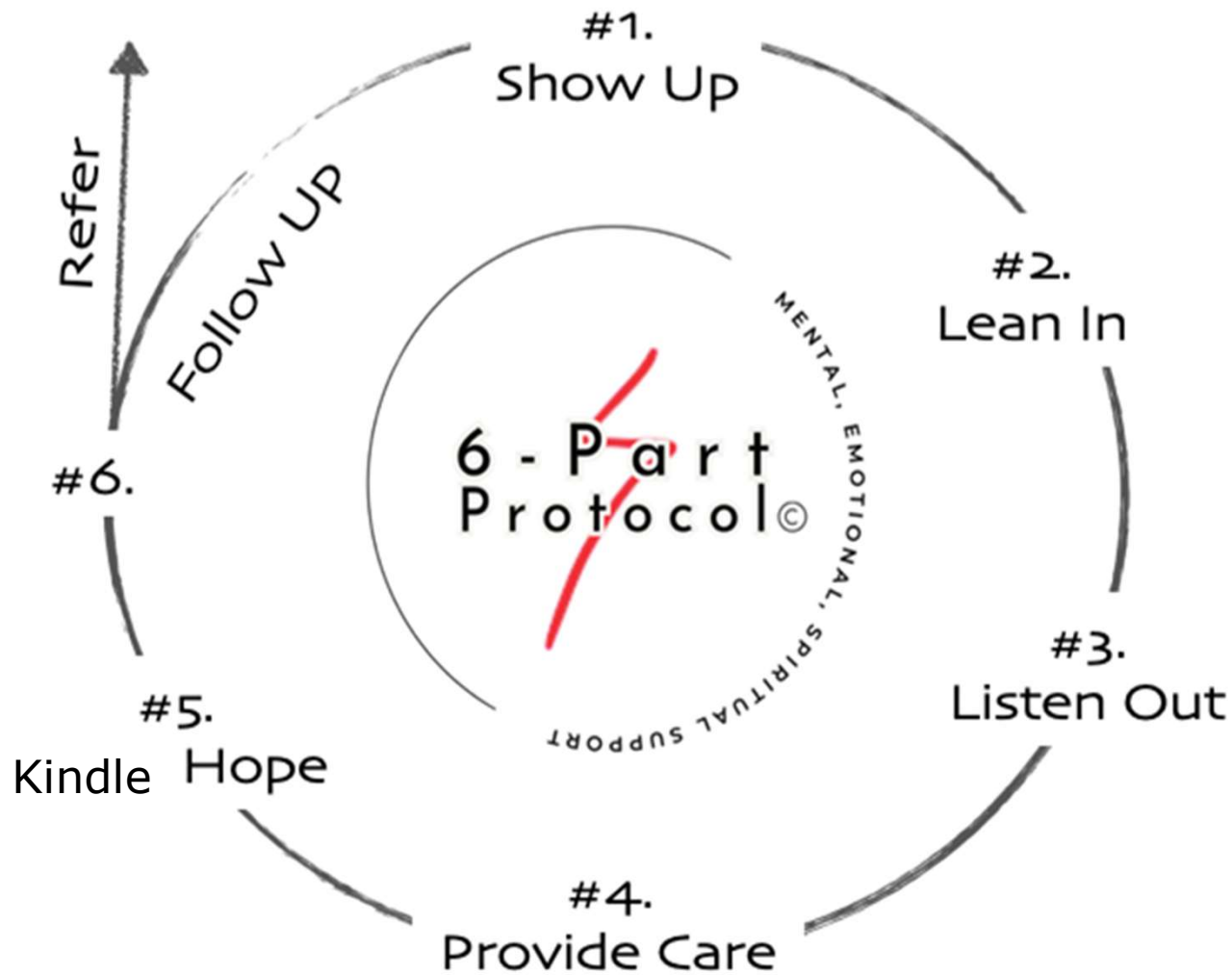


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MES/SUPPORT

To *stand with* and *walk beside* an individual struggling with stress in order to **increase awareness**, **encourage acceptance** and **empower action** in a way that promotes health and healing



Support – ★ "Star Skills" ★

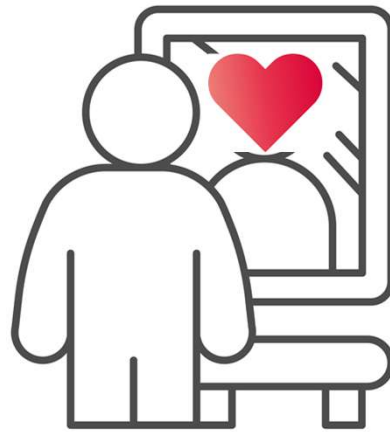
- 1. Show Up:** with compassionate, validating, and guiding presence.
- 2. Lean In:** by asking, listening, and exploring for more.
- 3. Listen Out:** for the problem *with* the problem.
- 4. Provide Care:** by compassionately challenging and encouraging compassionate acceptance.
- 5. Kindle Hope:** by identifying perseverance, introducing possibility, and inspiring progress.
- 6. Follow Up and/or Refer:** by continuing a caring connection &/or sharing appropriate resources.

Compassionately show up with 5 C's:

- 1. Caring** - participating... acknowledging... accepting who they are, where they are, when they are - - non-judgmental, non-critical, kind...
- 2. Considerate** - of time, safety, privacy... upholding dignity
- 3. Confidential** - becoming a trusted and safe person (see limits)
- 4. Competent** - Be compassionate. Be Capable. Balancing power and control (not overpowering or controlling - hijacking or one upping)
- 5. Curious** - genuinely interested... wondering with them...

Show up with compassionate validation:

At its core, validation is nothing more than **acknowledging** and **recognizing** an individual's situation and reactions (thoughts, feelings, behaviors) that follow.



They will not accept your **help**
until you first hear their **hurt**

<https://youtu.be/-4EDhdAHrOg>

IT'S **NOT**
ABOUT
THE
NAIL



What is the problem? (aka "presenting problem")



Typically, revolves around:

Situation

Outside-focused

"They"
"Them"
"Those"

People

Others-focused

Fear
Obligation
Guilt

Time

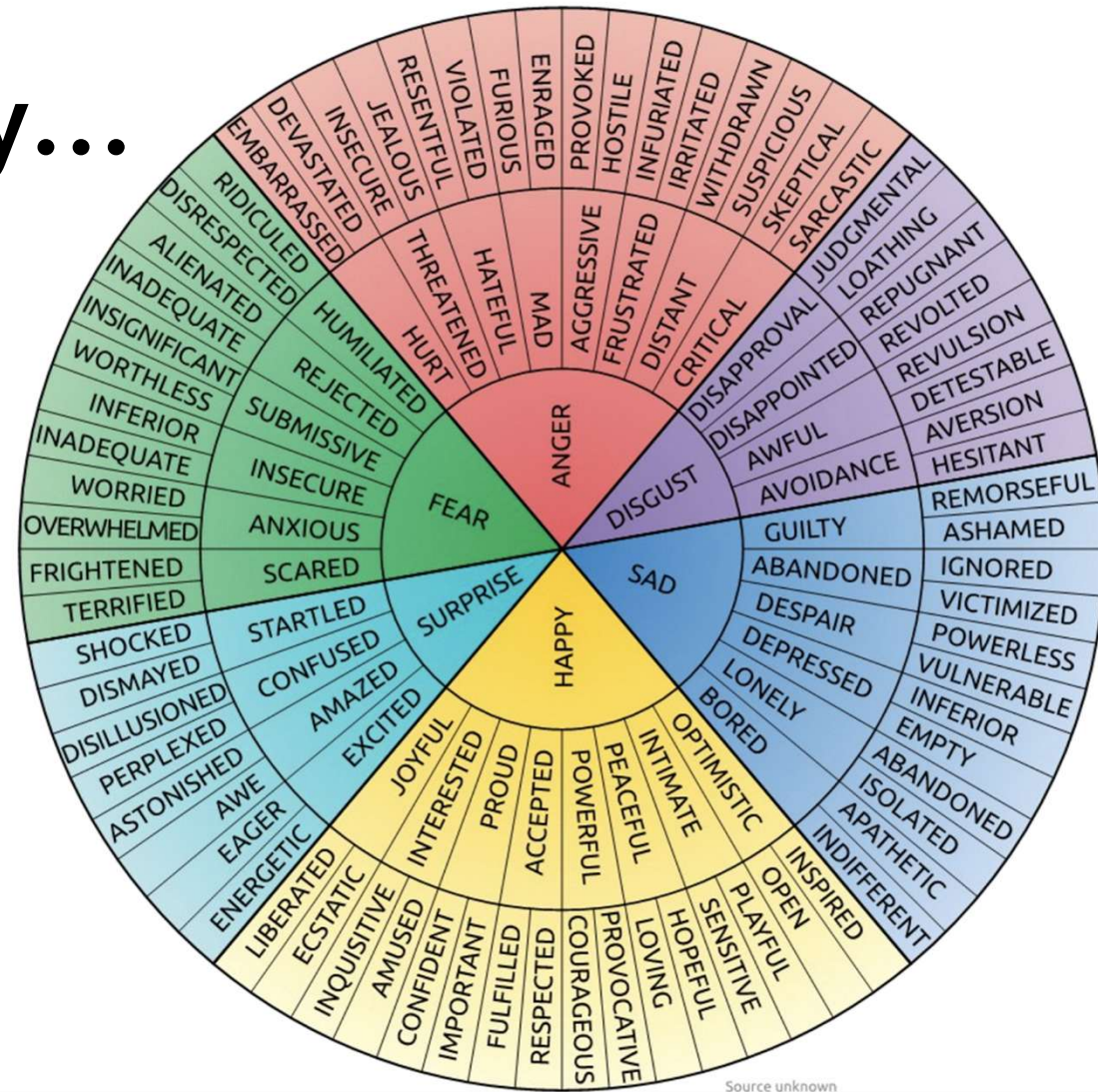
Past-focused or
Future-focused

“If it’s not about the nail,
then what’s it about?”

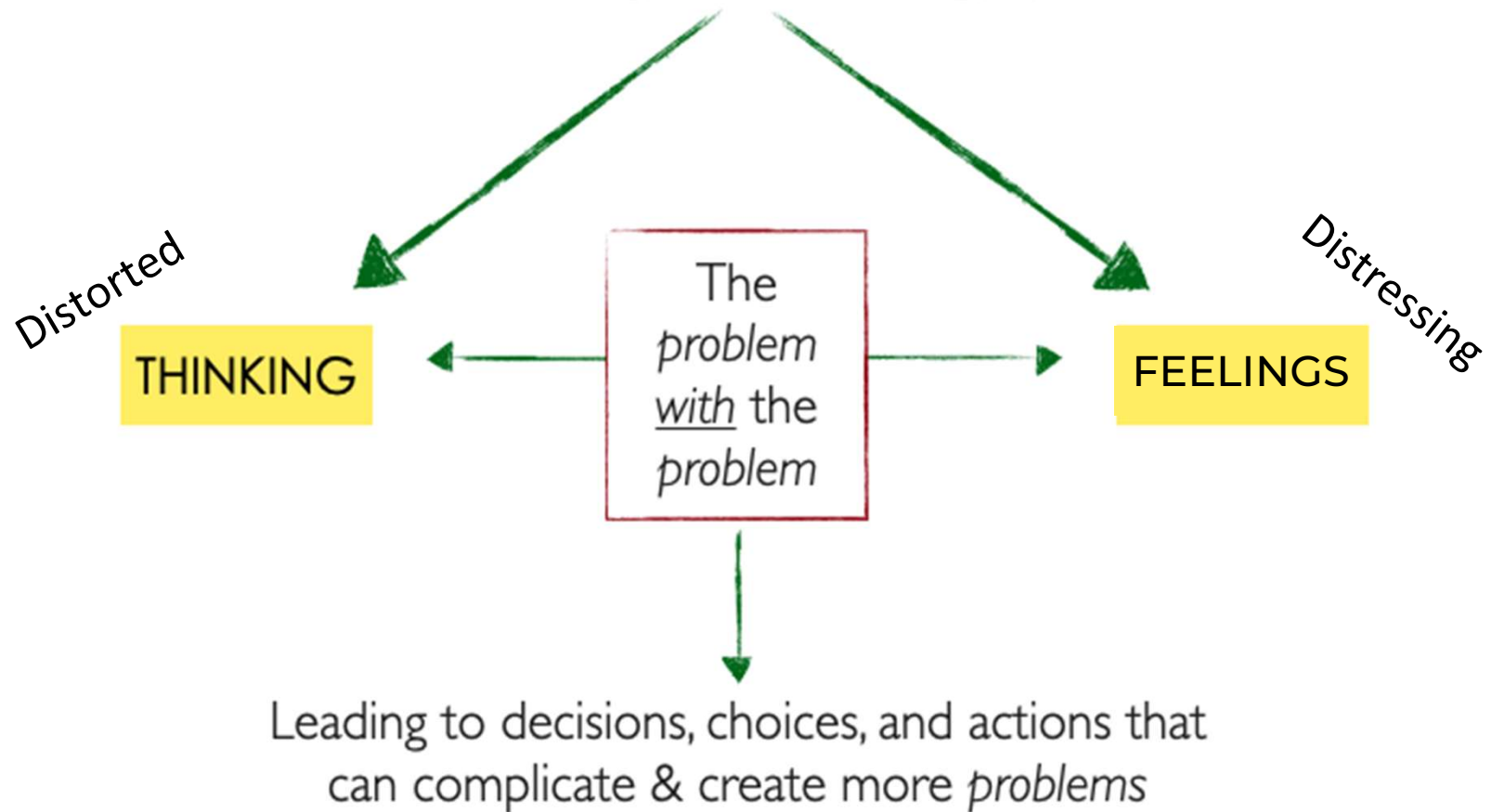


Helper can help by...

- Learn to **explore** distressing feelings
- Expand feelings vocabulary



Explore the *problem* the person has with the (presenting) problem



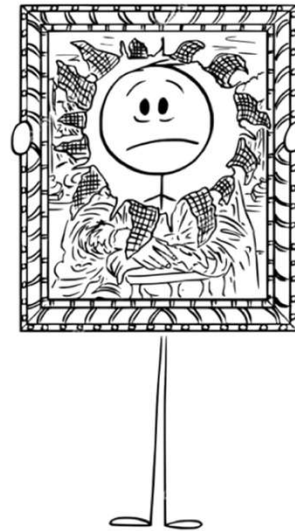
Helper can help by...

- Learn to **explore** distressing feelings
 - Expand feelings vocabulary
- Learn to **identify** distorted thinking
 - Thinking that is:
 - Not Accurate (not true, realistic, logical, etc.)
 - Unfair (not fair, not deserved, etc.)
 - Unhealthy
 - Unhelpful



Compassionately Challenge Distortions

- ▶ Help counter the narrative (*tell a different story*)... to help empower healthier thinking... that will help create healthier options... for chance to make healthier choices... that will lead to healthier outcome...
- ▶ How?
Take 'em to the (re)frame shop!



How to Reframe (3 Fs)



- **Find** = Identify the distortion (thought that is not fair, accurate or helpful). Just like a true/false test, find the part of the thought (nugget) that is false (flawed, inaccurate).

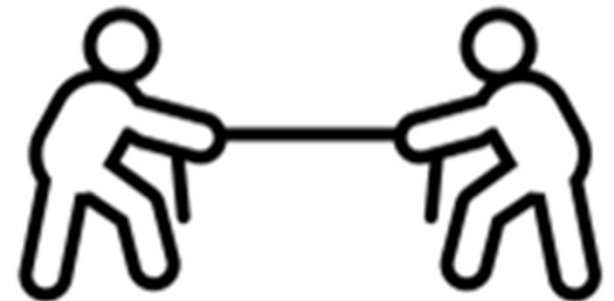
- **Flip** = No need to reinvent thought, simply isolate the “nugget” & flip to make more fair, accurate & helpful. Compassionately challenge the distortion.



- **Float** = Suggest healthier perspective vs. insist, command or demand. We tend to embrace, accept and implement ideas that are our own.

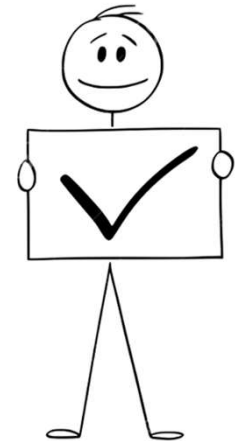
Encourage Compassionate Acceptance

- **Rooted in the Serenity Prayer:** “...accept the things I cannot change...”
- Acceptance isn't about giving up on you or others, it's about **giving up** the tug-of-war with reality.
- It's not passive... it's an *active choice* to stop resisting (*drop the rope*) and live in the reality that “is” not as I would have it to be...



Radical Acceptance of...

- Grief
- Hurt
- Human-ness / Limitations
- Reality



Acceptance is Healing

MESS Basic Training

Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Support
for clergy, lay leaders, and community responders



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Resources



Resource Opportunities

- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** – [SAMHSA](#)
- **No-cost, asynchronous training** from LDR via our online learning management system [CollaborNation](#)
- **Webinars and other in-person trainings** from LDR via our bi-annual [Training and Engagement Catalog](#)
- Resources used by most disaster-related organizations including [Light Our Way](#) from the National VOAD, links to the [Child Traumatic Stress Network](#), and information about [MESS Ministries](#)
- For more information, reach out anytime to Disaster@ELCA.org



**Thank You for
Joining Us**

