

Healthy living in challenging times



TRUMP'S HORRORS

- Kidnapping
- Tanking our economy
- racism
- Defying a supreme court ruling
- 34 felonies
- restricting Freedom of the Press (4 times)
- Deporting US Citizens
- Sexual assaults
- Hiring Incompetent Cabinet Members
- Threatening Musk to Chainsaw Government
- Threatening Members of Congress and Federal Judges
- Parkening Jan 6 Traitors
- DESTROYING OUR DEMOCRACY!!!

BFF with Putin
- DESTROYING OUR ENVIRONMENT
- Destroying Public Health Infrastructure

SAY NO TO DICTATORS

END: DOGE AND TARIFFS



CHRONIC STRESS
AFFECTS MENTAL
HEALTH

CURRENT POLITICS
AND THE NEWS
ARE CAUSING
CHRONIC STRESS



Just following the news...

- Daily news consumption and social media use are linked to elevated levels of stress and anxiety (Goyanes et al., 2021; McLaughlin et al., 2023).



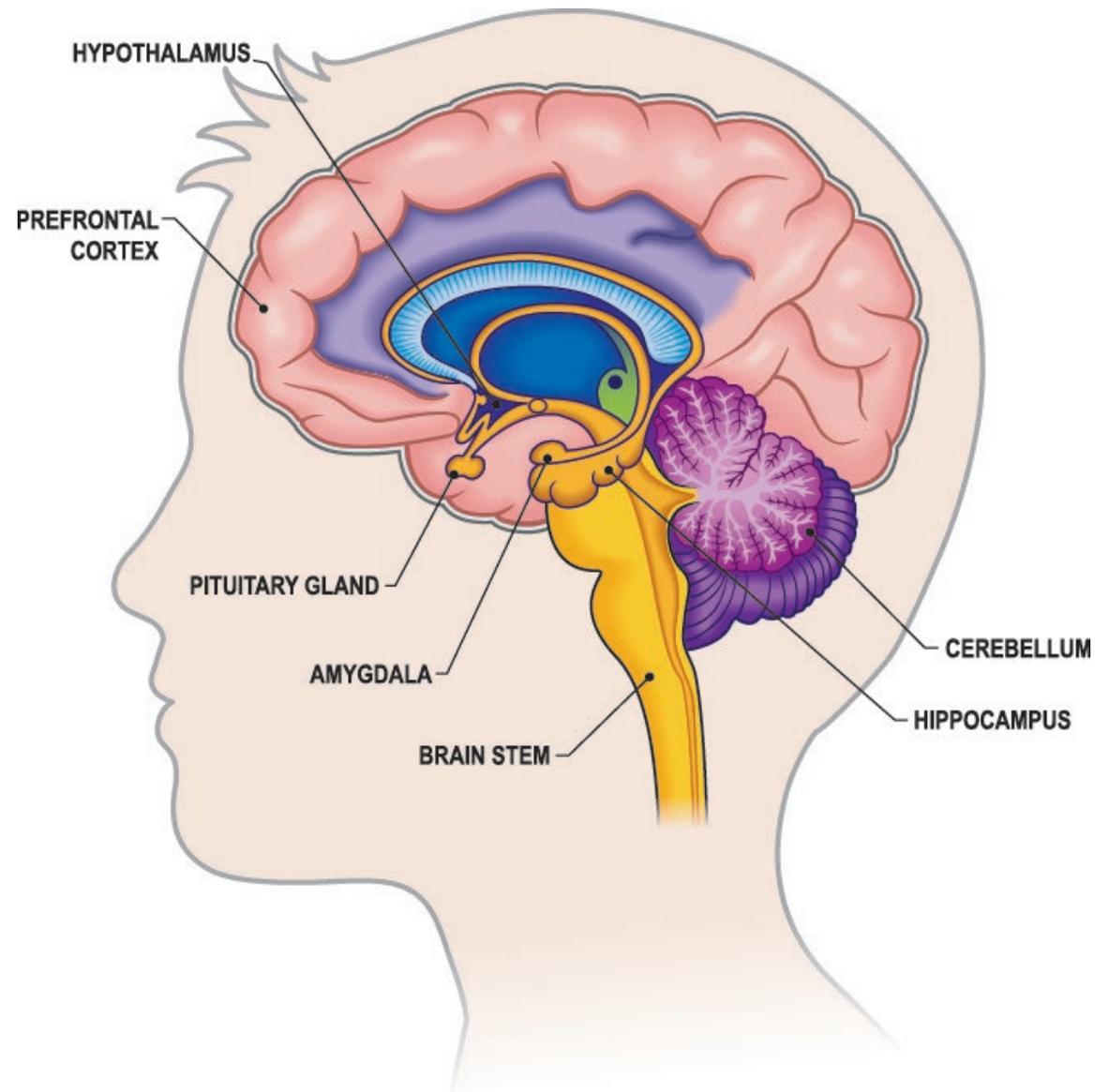
WHAT IS ANXIETY?



ANXIETY IS THE RESPONSE TO STRESS

- RESPONSE TO INTERNAL OR EXTERNAL STRESS
- EXCESSIVE WORRIES THAT ARE DIFFICULT TO CONTROL
- PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS: PALPITATIONS, SHORTNESS OF BREATH, INSOMNIA, DIFFICULTY FOCUSING, FATIGUE, IRRITABILITY, MUSCLE TENSION.
- BIOLOGY: INCREASE OF CORTISOL → SHUTTING DOWN OF THE DIGESTIVE, IMMUNE AND REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEMS → FIGHT AND FLIGHT RESPONSE TO FACILITATE ESCAPE.

Brain areas
for cognition
and
emotions



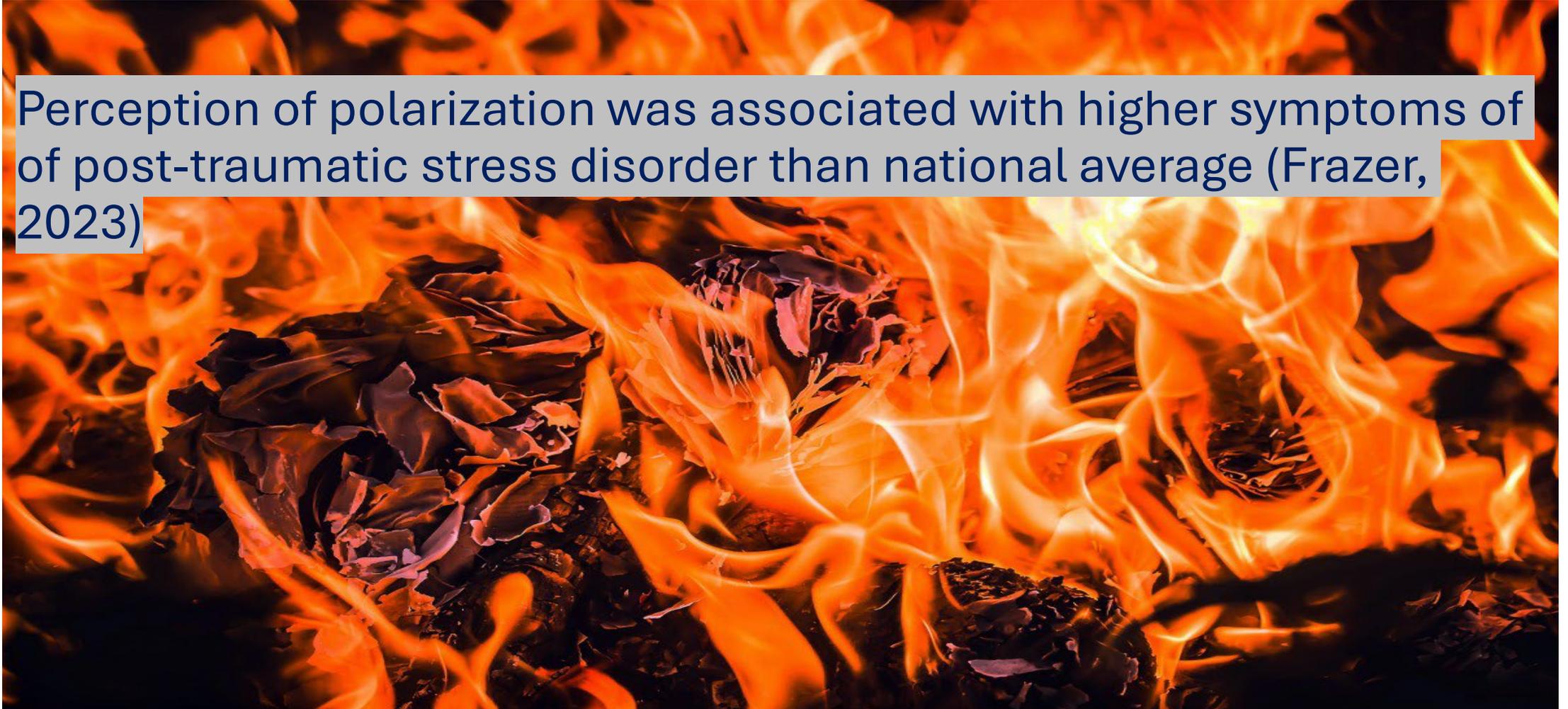


YOU ARE NOT ALONE !

- High level of depression and anxiety were related to political stress associated with the overturn of Roe vs Wade in 2022 and the results of the 2024 election in a sample of 148 women in Georgia, US. (Ortlund, 2023)
- Many Americans report that the political climate has negatively impacted their mental health (Brown, 2023).
- Daily political engagement was associated with negative emotions (Ford, 2023).

Political polarization makes things worse

Perception of polarization was associated with higher symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder than national average (Frazer, 2023)



So how do we cope?





Create alternatives to negative emotions

without suppressing them

by counterbalancing with positive emotions

finding your personal strategy



Yah right...
easier said
than done!
But...
how???



How to cope with a difficult person

- Think about what you don't feel comfortable about this person, then breathe, overcome the discomfort, disengage from the thoughts, disengage from the emotional response that follows the thoughts (anger or frustration)
- Be yourself, be an inspiration for other people
- Don't judge, be compassionate, be curious, what happened to this person for them to behave this way? We are all different and may respond to adversity in different ways
- Engage with this person, if possible, based on our shared humanity
- Change is always possible for anyone, at any age
- Only by talking with people that don't think like us, we can make a change in the world
- It may not always work, but we want to try without expectations, because it is the right thing to do, don't get discouraged, it takes time and practice.
- And remember...we are all struggling with this!

A close-up photograph of a person's hands tying the laces of a red and white running shoe. The shoe is resting on a concrete ledge. The person is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and blue athletic leggings. The background is a bright, outdoor setting with a paved area and some distant structures.

EXERCISE



SOCIALIZATION



Be in Nature



READING





YOGA





Mindfulness



Mindfulness is a window on the self without any expectations (Mark Epstein, MD)



Mindfulness, a mind-body practice

- Being aware
- Observing the mind
- Paying attention in the present moment
- Being non-judgmental with emotional neutrality
- Being curious about the experience
- Witnessing the emotions



Meditation is the formal act of mindfulness



Why mindfulness? 1

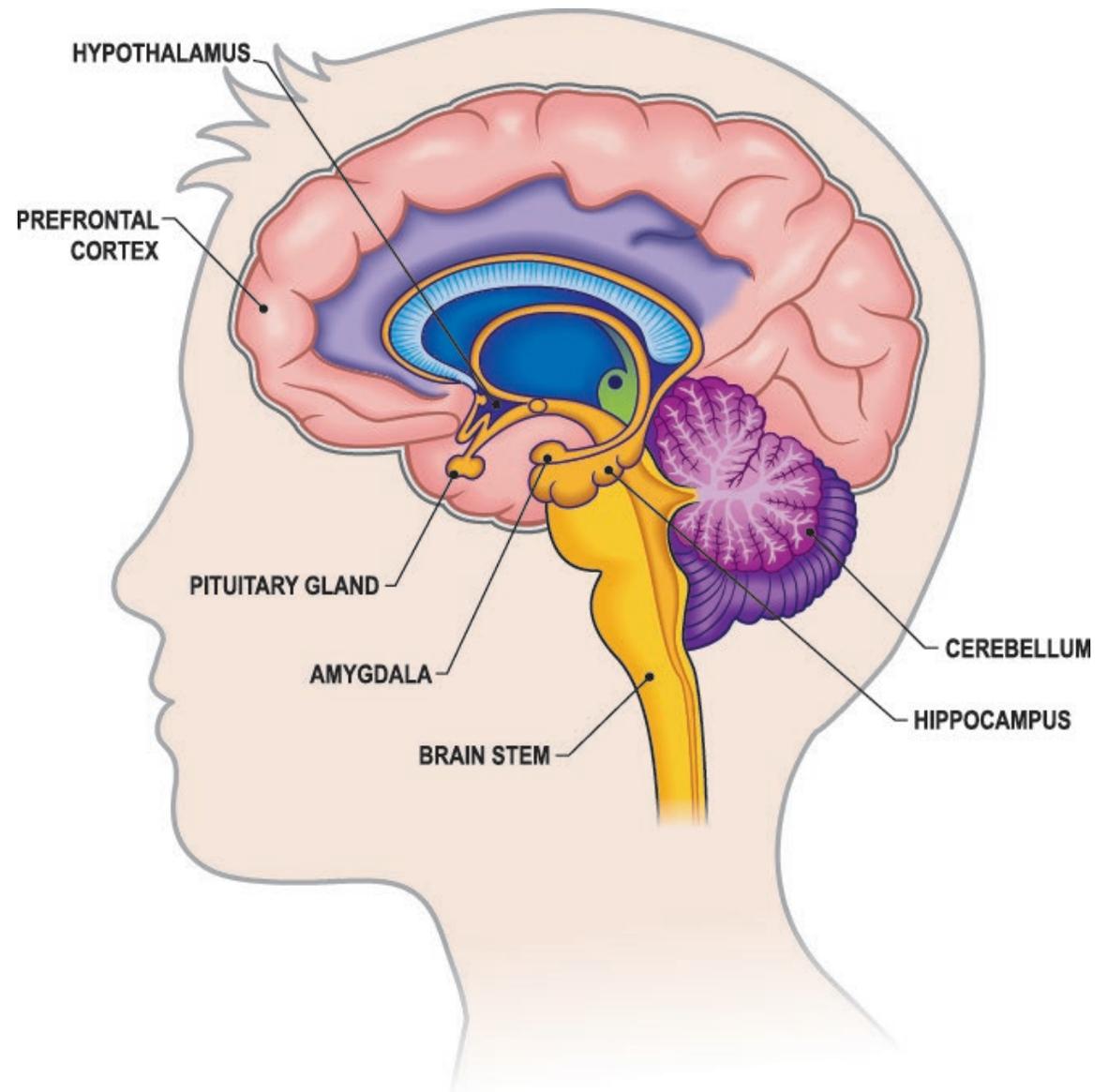
- Improvement of anxiety and depression
- Better emotional regulation
- Increase in impulse control
- Improvement of level of functioning
- Better sleep



Why mindfulness? 2

- Better cognitive functions
- Lowering perception of stress
- Lowering anxiety
- Lowering burnout
- -----→
- Brain changes in the prefrontal cortex and amygdala
- -----→
- Improvement in the individual well being.

Brain areas
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There are different types of Meditation

- Let go of thoughts (inward)
- Paying attention to nature (outward)
- Focusing on your breathing (4-7-8)
- Body scanning
- Love and kindness



Breathing during meditation

- What is diaphragmatic breathing?
- Diaphragmatic breathing activates the parasympathetic response and switch from the fight and flight response or sympathetic response to rest, relax and digest mode.
- Expiration longer than inhalation activates the parasympathetic response.



Mindfulness based interventions:

- MBSR= mindfully based stress reduction, a form of therapy based on cognitive behavioral principal using mindfulness (Jon Kabat Zinn 1979, University of Massachusetts Medical School)
- Dialectic behavioral therapy (DBT): targets impulsivity and disruptive emotions



When to look for professional help

- Lack of interest in pleasurable activities
- Low energy and motivation
- Problems sleeping
- Decreased or increased appetite with change of weight
- Feeling guilty
- Sad mood, feeling down
- Hopelessness
- Suicidal thoughts



LET'S TRY TO MEDITATE TOGETHER





Resources



**THANK YOU AND LET'S OPEN FOR
DISCUSSION!**

